

Shaping lives: Agency in young
adult transitions

by

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate how young adults making life transitions experience feelings of control and exercise personal agency. The primary aim was to examine how structural factors, particularly gender and institutional setting, are associated with agency. A secondary aim was to elaborate on Beck's individualisation thesis, by considering the significance of agency and gender in shaping lives.

A mixed methods approach was taken, incorporating both comparative and biographical strategies. A sample of 300 males and females aged 18 to 25, located in higher education, employment and unemployment in Derby, England, completed a questionnaire assessing subjective perceptions of their lives. Quantitative data were complemented by qualitative data from 7 focus groups, allowing a comparative analysis of individual agentic variables across six structuring contexts, based on gender and setting. Eight biographical case studies of young employees were compiled and used to explore social processes further.

Young people's perspectives reflected individualistic rhetoric pervasively. Personal agency appeared to play an important role in moving young people out of structurally predicted patterns. Planning orientations were identified as salient markers of agency, but these were also found to have structural foundations in social class and family background.

Agency was found to operate within varying levels of constraint, more closely associated with setting than gender. It is argued that the resources provided by young people's social networks (social capital), which vary more by setting than gender, are critical influences on young people's scope for action. Young women's and men's perspectives were close, but where differences were identified these indicated heightened feelings of control among women. Possible refinements to Beck's individualisation thesis are proposed.

The implications of these findings for public policy and institutional approaches concerned with young adults are discussed. Efforts should be directed towards increasing capital among the most disadvantaged groups.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introducing the research

This research is concerned with the interplay between personal agency and structural factors in processes of transition, as these occur for young adults aged between 18 and 25 in an English city. The question of how young people's lives take shape is of current interest in two respects. Firstly, it is during this period of the life course that the extent and operation of social reproduction, mobility and conversion in today's world is rendered most visible. In early adulthood, normative goals are to enter the work force and begin to negotiate transitions away from the family of origin towards establishing one's own family and/or independent living arrangements. The direction of future lives crystallise in the process of making these transitions. Secondly, developing effective policy and practice, capable of facilitating young people's transitions into adult life, requires a thorough understanding of how these processes occur. Empirical evidence is presented and discussed in relation to both of these issues.

1.1.1 Linked ESRC and doctoral projects

This doctoral research has developed within the broader framework of the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) project '*Taking Control: personal agency and social structures in young adult transitions in England and the new Germany*' which was funded under the ESRC's programme of research '*Youth, Citizenship and Social Change*' (YCSC). As such, the theoretical background and methodological approach taken in the larger project have substantially influenced the present research.

The ESRC project set out to investigate the extent to which young adults experience control and exercise personal agency in three institutional settings (higher education, employment and unemployment) and in three cities (Derby, England and Hanover and Leipzig, Germany). The ESRC project award holders were Professor Karen Evans (Project Director) of the Institute of Education, University of London, Dr Peter Rudd (Project Consultant) of the National Foundation for Educational Research and Dr Martina Behrens (Project Research Officer in Hanover). Jens Kaluza of ZAROF (Zentrum für Arbeits-und Organisationsforschung) was employed as the Project Research Officer in Leipzig. I was the final person to join the project team, at which point the research objectives and overall research design had been broadly defined. These objectives, as well as the contributions made by the ESRC project, are outlined next. A brief description of my role and responsibilities in the ESRC project follows.

The ESRC project was primarily exploratory and began with several objectives. The objectives were met through a research design which allowed comparisons to be drawn of the experiences and orientations of young people located in a matrix of nine institutional settings and areas. The project aimed to identify links between structural factors (at a number of levels i.e. culture, labour market conditions, situation with respect to the labour market and broad social characteristics) and young people's agency and control. Issues were explored such as whether recent social changes have resulted in young people experiencing extended periods of dependency on their families, and whether optimism increases or decreases as a result of age and greater experience of the labour market. The project's theoretical focus was to map out a conceptual schema to aid exploration of the interplay

between structure and agency, for use in future studies of youth transitions (cf Figures 2.2 and 2.3). A range of theories were positioned according to their emphasis on the significance of social structures or personal agency for shaping lives, as well as in relation to two other dimensions. The fit between theoretical stances included in the schema and the project data was considered, and the new concept of 'bounded agency' was proposed (cf §2.3.4).

I was employed (0.5 fte) from November 1998 to October 2000 as the Research Officer with particular responsibility for project fieldwork conducted in Derby. I am from Nottinghamshire, one of Derbyshire's neighbouring counties, and consequently had knowledge of the target locality. I was also then aged 23, which placed me within the age group of interest - constituting a further benefit for the project(s). In this role: I developed a detailed knowledge of salient contextual features of the locality; negotiated access to young adults within institutional settings; piloted the English versions of the questionnaire survey and focus group interview guide; conducted all of the subsequent data collection using these instruments and contributed to project analyses and dissemination. The doctoral project draws on the ESRC project's Derby data set and these aspects of the research process are described fully in chapter 4; however, all of the statistical and qualitative analyses presented in this thesis are my own.

This thesis complements and links with the ESRC project; an independent line of enquiry considers the significance of gender in relation to the processes under investigation. Thus, while the projects share the common goal of examining young adults' feelings of control and exercise of personal agency, the thesis is concerned with establishing how these vary by institutional setting and *gender* in the selected

location.

The concept of gender has been identified as shaping aspects of young people's transitions into adulthood, and therefore, as having explanatory value (Wallace, 1994; Schoon, Bynner, Joshi and Wiggins, 2001; cf Chapter 3). It is also the focus of recent debate in both popular and academic discourse, concerning the extent of recent changes in women's positions and opportunities in society and the effects of these on relations between men and women. Empirical evidence of relevance to these debates is currently mixed. Given the significance of personal agency to young people's transitions and changes in gender relations, the question of how young people's agency is related to their gender is of considerable theoretical and practical interest. This largely unexplored question is addressed by this thesis.

The cross-national comparative aspect of the ESRC project is not pursued here. The study's target population is young adults, aged 18 to 25, who live in the city of Derby, England, and who are engaged in the institutional settings of higher education, employment or unemployment. The project extends research to this under-researched age group, about whom there are gaps in our understanding. It has been suggested that significant transition events now regularly occur well into young people's third decade of life and that this period has become a critical period in the life course.

The present project's primary objective is to examine the ways in which structural factors, particularly gender and institutional setting, are associated with young people's scope for exercising agency. The relative importance of gender and setting are assessed and a deeper understanding of structure-agency interplay is developed.

A secondary objective is to elaborate, in the light of these findings, on Beck's (1992) individualisation thesis (cf §2.2.3), with regard to the significance of both agency and gender in shaping lives (cf §3.3 and §3.4).

1.1.2 Approach taken

Previous research has concluded that investigation of subjective perspectives and more holistic treatments are required in research on young people's transitions (Jones and Wallace, 1992; Evans & Heinz, 1994). Throughout, the focus is on young people's perceptions. An objective assessment is made of young people's views of their past, present and future lives, to ascertain social regularities in their perspectives, as these vary across structuring contexts. In doing so, the project takes as holistic an approach as possible. The study is based in Derby, England, and features of the local and national areas are considered to provide contextual information, and therefore, aid interpretation of the data. Young people's transitions are explored in relation to both their public and private lives (i.e. in relation to their lives in study, work or training and aspects of their domestic and personal lives). Young people located in all social positions, from the most privileged to the most disadvantaged and marginalised, are included in the study.

The concepts of social structure and personal agency are key concepts in this project. Sociologists use the concept of social structure to refer to factors accounting for patterns of relationships within a society. These are often abstract factors, which in a sense are beyond and external to individuals, but which seem to have a degree of causal effect on individual experience. The concept of structure is discussed in more detail in §2.2.3. The structural factors considered in the present project include

gender and institutional setting; aspects of the local labour market and culture, within their national context, are also relevant structural factors. Personal agency refers to the scope which individuals feel they have to shape their own lives. This is manifest in individuals' dispositions to act, as well as in their behaviours, and is signalled, for example, by the presence of confidence, independence and proactivity in pursuing personal interests and plans. The concept of agency, and the related concept of control, are discussed more fully in §2.3.4. Agency has recently been re-conceptualised as a temporally embedded process in which both past experiences and future perspectives shape orientations within the contingencies of the present moment (Evans, 2002a, cf §2.3.4). This recent development in the field has influenced the project's design by providing a framework for data collection and analysis.

The project builds upon the seminal work of Rudd (1996), who attempted to develop a research strategy in which both structural and individual factors in youth transitions could be taken account of. This involved developing new ways of investigating personal agency in further education college students using a combination of survey, group interviews and key informant interviews (cf §2.3.4). The ESRC and doctoral projects have employed these methods in new contexts, allowing their further development and consolidation. A questionnaire survey and group interview guide were designed for use in the ESRC project. The doctoral project draws on the data collected in Derby with these instruments, but adds an additional layer to the data set through the inclusion of individual biographical interviews.

Thus, a mixed-methods approach is taken. Both quantitative and qualitative data are collected. A quota-sampling technique is used to select young adults matched across

settings in terms of age and gender and with ethnic representation according to the setting. This allows comparisons of groups of young adults who are differentiated in terms of their structural environments, and specifically, their economic statuses, as well as comparisons of males and females located similarly in these respects. Thus, the project draws comparisons across a matrix of six structuring contexts, defined by gender and setting. Consistent with the conceptualisation of agency as a temporally-embedded process, the questionnaire survey was developed to enable the identification of differences in how young people perceive their past, present and future lives. These data are complemented by a series of focus group interviews, which are used to explore and account for the social regularities found in the survey data.

Together these data sets allow four key project questions to be addressed in Chapter 10. Variations by gender and setting (across a six cell matrix) in perceptions of opportunities and constraints, indicators of individual agency, indicators of collective agency and perspectives on the future are identified and discussed. The aim is not only to identify how manifestations of agency are associated with the structural factors of gender and setting however, but also to arrive at a deeper understanding of the processes involved. To this end, a number of case studies have also been carried out. Eight individual interviews conducted with four males and four females in the employed setting are analysed and reported. These record young people's experiences over time, identifying significant biographical events in their life histories. Connections between structure and agency within individual lives are explored.

The data set is considered in relation to a range of contemporary social theories

which take various positions in the structure-agency debate and in relation to questions of social reproduction and change (cf §2.2.3). The individualisation thesis (Beck, 1992) is concentrated on, since it places a high degree of significance on personal agency in influencing how lives take shape within current social conditions.

The approach taken is mixed-method and area-based, establishing a layered data-set which represents young people's perspectives in different ways. These data sets complement one another, together providing a more complete picture of young people's subjectivities. Variations in perspectives are identified across six structuring contexts and these are interpreted with reference to features of the institutional, local and national contexts.

1.2 Structure of the thesis

The thesis is divided into three parts. The first part of the thesis consists of five chapters that, taken together, describe a general framework in which the research undertaken is situated. Chapter 1 introduces the research. The following chapters detail the project's background and rationale; firstly, in relation to the academic literature (Chapters 2 and 3), secondly, by explaining the methodological approach taken in collecting and analysing the project's data (Chapter 4) and thirdly, by contextualising the lives of the young people who are the focus of the project (Chapter 5).

The project results are presented in part II of the thesis (Chapters 6 to 10). Chapters 6 to 8 present survey and focus group data, reporting on gender differences in each of the three settings in turn: Chapter 6 on higher education, Chapter 7 on employment and Chapter 8 on unemployment. Chapter 9 presents the biographical

data collected through individual in-depth interviews with eight young employees. Chapter 10 draws comparisons in young people's perspectives across three settings and both gender groups, in answering the project's four key questions (cf §10.2 to 10.5).

Part III concludes the thesis. Chapter 11 provides further discussion and interpretation of the project's findings in relation to pertinent theoretical literature and other empirical evidence. The implications for policy and practice of consequence for young people's lives are also considered.

The thesis argues that the social resources provided by young people's social networks, particularly their families, are critical influences implicated in limiting and strengthening young people's agency. Social and economic resources are the key factors mediating structure-agency interplay. This finding serves to highlight a weakness in Beck's individualisation thesis and points to the salience of Bourdieu's concepts of social and cultural capital for the development of middle-range theories of young people's transitions. In relation to gender, young men's and women's perspectives were found to correspond closely, although where differences were identified these indicated heightened feelings of control and levels of agency among young women. It is suggested that this finding may be accounted for either by young men's expectations not having kept pace with the realities of the contemporary labour market or by young women's broader orientations to life concerns providing them with greater adaptability or greater protection from the insecurities of the labour market.

Chapter 2: Investigating structure and agency in young people's transitions

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews how the study of young people's lives has been approached in the academic literature. The present study seeks to incorporate consideration of the roles played by agency and gender in an exploration of young adult transition processes. Recent theoretical and methodological developments which have contributed to increasing understanding of the role of agency in young adult transition processes provide the chapter's focus. The sociological literature concerned with gender differences and inequalities will be reviewed in Chapter 3. Both these areas of literature are influenced by the structure-agency debate. This is a debate concerned with the relative importance of, and relationship between, individuals themselves and social structures in shaping life experiences. Connections between this debate and pertinent theoretical positions, both in studies of young people's lives and in relation to gender, are considered.

Chapters 2 and 3 make a case for taking a gender and agency based approach to the study of young adult transitions. Chapter 2 argues that personal agency is a significant factor in young people's transitions to adulthood. If transition processes are to be understood and facilitated it is necessary to take personal agency into account in empirical investigation, both theoretically and methodologically. These challenges are discussed. Chapter 3 identifies gender as a variable which contributes to the explanation and understanding of differences in life experiences, including transitions into adulthood. There has been little investigation of how gender affects

agency however, and the present study aims to address this gap in knowledge.

§2.2 reviews theoretical approaches taken in the study of young people's lives, both historically and contemporarily. It is argued that to further our understanding of young people's transition processes, the influences of both social structures and personal agency must be taken into account. This represents a significant theoretical and methodological challenge, which has been taken up in developing a new research agenda for studying young people's lives.

§2.3 discusses the development of this new approach. The section opens by identifying new directions and considering how the concepts of 'youth' and 'transition' have been re-assessed. Studies contributing to the new approach are reviewed in order to highlight their contributions, in terms of methodological and conceptual advances made. Two methodological approaches have been used extensively; these are the comparative and biographical approaches. The present study primarily takes a comparative approach, using mixed methods of data collection. Biographical approaches are also drawn on however, since some data have been collected by means of individual in-depth interviews which are used to explore young people's experiences over time and identify significant links in their life histories. The project's key concepts of 'agency' and 'control' are considered and their use in the present study is explained. The chapter concludes by arguing that there has recently been convergence on a view of transition processes as temporally and socially embedded. This is a view which has influenced the present study profoundly.

2.2 Theoretical approaches to studying young people

§2.2.1 outlines historical developments in perspectives taken on young people's lives during the second half of the twentieth century. Structuralist accounts of young people's situations predominated for much of this period. These were mainly concerned with explaining the processes by which young people became integrated into society through consideration of them as members of a particular generation or social group.

§2.2.2 describes the social and economic transformations which have taken place since the 1970s, altering young people's experiences of growing up. These changes highlighted the inadequacies of existing theories of youth, acting as a catalyst for development of more sophisticated theoretical approaches. The contributions made by young people to shaping their life courses were recognised. This resulted in the concept of agency being newly emphasised which advanced theoretical discussions significantly (Rudd, 1996; Wyn and Dwyer, 1999).

Thereafter, the debate hinged on the relative significance of the influences of structural factors and personal agency in transitions into adulthood. Variation in positions taken in the structure-agency debate provides the basis for presentation of a typology of theories which are used in contemporary study of young people's lives. This typology, and some of the theories included in it, are discussed in §2.2.3.

2.2.1 Historical perspectives on youth

The concept of adolescence originated at the end of the nineteenth century. Adolescence was conceived of as a unique life stage and characterised as a period of preparation for adulthood. The concept of adolescence provided the basis for

developmental theories of 'youth' (the term 'youth' has been used synonymously with 'adolescence') which became prominent among social-psychologists in the 1950s and 60s (Coleman, 1961). These theories assume a normative progression through a series of developmental tasks which, if completed successfully, lead towards mature adult status. Thus, young people are treated as a homogenous group on the basis of their age grouping (Wyn and White, 1997). This is problematic since, although all young people experience a similar process of biological change, the social demands of this period are culturally specific and vary across time. This is illustrated by the recent extension of transitions in industrialised societies (cf §2.2.2).

In the same era, functionalist perspectives adopted a similar stance but were elaborated from a sociological starting point. Social phenomena were described in terms of their functions for society as a whole. Parsons (1956) conceived of society as a system in which individuals are linked through the internalisation of social norms and values. Society's 'niches' were considered to be filled as a result of processes which socialised young people into their future working roles and responsibilities, through experiences at home (primarily) and in school (secondarily). Connections were identified between young people's home life, schooling and entry into the workforce and viewed as giving rise to a cyclical process of social reproduction (i.e. the reproduction of the social relations of production, Althusser (1971)). The experience of unemployment and associated marginalisation of a young person were, however, explained inadequately by this perspective as a failure in the socialisation process.

Both developmental and functionalist theories identify common processes in 'normal' youth development. In emphasising the similarities in young people's

experiences, they ignore important differences between groups of young people located differently with respect to geographical space, historical time and position in the social structure. Young people are treated as passive recipients of dominant societal structures and their capacity for affecting their life courses is considered to be negligible, which produces a static conception of society. Youth policy and practice has been influenced pervasively by these approaches, often to their detriment, ever since (Evans, 1998).

The functionalist approach was superseded by studies developed in the Centre for Contemporary Culture Studies (CCCS) at The University of Birmingham. The CCCS studies introduced a Marxist influenced analysis of youth sub-cultures, which became the dominant perspective of the 1970s (Hall and Jefferson, 1976; Willis, 1977). This perspective retained the functionalists' emphasis on the significance of societal institutions in shaping young people's transitions into adulthood; however, by adding a cultural dimension to analyses, socialisation processes were shown to be more complicated, and less passive, than in their earlier portrayal. Cultural analyses explored how people made sense of processes of social reproduction, and provided evidence of working class young people resisting dominant values and accommodating aspects of their personal cultural experiences. Peer-group values were found to be consistent with those of parents. Thus, young people were depicted as members of sub-cultural groups, delineated by the social class structure. The approach viewed the reproduction of societal structures as reflective of differential levels of power and inequality associated with membership of different social class groups.

Willis's (1977) ethnographic study of 12 working class 'lads' is a good example of

research undertaken from this perspective. In exploring processes of social and cultural reproduction, Willis sought to gain understanding of why and how it was that working class young men took jobs with the poorest conditions and prospects, apparently willingly. His answer was that by resisting school authority, rejecting working for academic qualifications and adopting modes of behaviour (such as drinking and smoking) and values (such as racism and sexism) consistent with a manual labouring culture, they organised their self-identities in relation to their futures and taking labouring jobs therefore felt authentic to them. Essentially, Willis argued that working class young men were effectively prepared to enter manual labour by their own culture (1977, p3). His ethnographic account of the processes observed allowed 'a degree of activity, creativity and human agency within the object of study to come through' (1977, p3). This was commendable, but the study was also criticised for typifying working class youth from a tiny sample size and for romanticising the study's young men and their racist and sexist attitudes (Ainley, 1993, p36-37).

An important contribution of the youth cultural studies tradition was that it highlighted the importance of considering young people's points of views to understand the development of their identities. This body of research initially only considered young men's transitions however, prompting feminist academics to redress this gender imbalance with investigation of the experiences of young women (Anyon, 1983; Davies, 1983; Griffin, 1985). Their studies stressed how feminine identities incorporate girls' *active* responses to their social environments and the contradictions inherent in these; further challenging notions of passive socialisation. Their analyses also showed how the domain of production (the public world of

work) had hitherto been privileged over the domain of reproduction (the private world of domesticity and family). It was recognised that both domains must be considered in order to develop a comprehensive picture of youth, accounting for the situations of both males and females (Wallace, 1987; cf §3.2.2). Gender continues to play a role in shaping many aspects of the transition into adulthood (Schoon, Bynner, Joshi and Wiggins, 2001; cf §3.3)

In the 1980s the focus shifted away from youth cultural studies towards more policy-oriented studies of the school to work transition (MacDonald, Mason, Shildrick, Webster, Johnston and Ridley, 2001). Questionnaire surveys of school-leaver cohorts were conducted and these documented young people's steps from school to work or, more frequently than previously, from school to unemployment and youth training schemes. This evidence that young people's transitions into adulthood were becoming increasingly 'fractured' (Roberts, 1984; Walker and Barton, 1986; Wallace, 1987, 1989) was a result of social and economic transformations which occurred through the 1970s and 1980s. These changes and their effects on young people's lives are discussed next.

2.2.2 Social and economic transformations: Effects on youth transitions

Until the 1970s the majority of young people left school at the minimum leaving age and entered the workforce successfully. On doing so they would earn a wage and have taken a first step towards making other personal transitions such as moving out of the parental home and starting a family. Unemployment was only a problem in chronically depressed areas (Roberts and Parsell, 1989). Transitions into adulthood followed normative patterns and were, to a high degree, predictable and stratified on

the basis of social class and gender. It was assumed that individuals exerted minimal control over their eventual labour market destinations, and this was reflected in the metaphorical description of transitions as 'pathways' or 'trajectories' (Evans and Furlong, 1997). Although structuralist accounts provided only partial explanations of young people's transitions, they had been capable of describing the realities of the times.

The pressures brought to bear on British industry by technological change and a major world-wide recession in the early 1980s increased levels of unemployment generally and resulted in a decline in the youth labour market particularly. It became more difficult for young people leaving school at age 16 to find work. Opportunities were reduced for apprenticeships in craft-related occupations, traditionally taken up by young men, and for administrative and clerical jobs, traditionally taken up by young women. Work was more frequently to be found in low skill occupations, with limited opportunities for training and advancement (Bynner, Elias, McKnight, Pan and Pierre, 2002). MacDonald (1998) illustrates the scale of changes which transformed youth transitions in the last thirty years, with reference to the industrial region of Teesside. Between 1975 and 1986 one quarter of all jobs were lost in the region and nearly half of all those employed in manufacturing and construction were made redundant. While in the late 1970s, 55% of 16 year olds entered employment, in 1994 this figure had fallen to just 4%. In 1997, one quarter of 16 to 19 year olds were unemployed and 44% of all unemployed persons were aged less than 30. Similar patterns were experienced across the country, but felt particularly keenly in industrial areas, such as Teesside and Derby (cf §5.1).

Youth policy and provision underwent radical revision throughout the UK in

reaction to these changes in the labour market (Wallace and Cross, 1990; Furlong and Cartmel, 1997). Youth training schemes were introduced and by the mid-1980s, a majority of 16 year old school-leavers were spending time on a government subsidised youth training scheme (Furlong and Raffe, 1989). At the same time, entitlement to social security benefits such as income support and unemployment benefits was withdrawn from 16 and 17 year olds (Jones and Wallace, 1992). Young people were subsequently assumed by the state to remain economically dependent on their families for a longer period. In the absence of paid work, young people were forced to choose between low 'allowances' in a 'surrogate' labour market and remaining in full-time education; thereby adopting an intermediary status as either 'student' or 'trainee'. Consequently, the further and higher education sectors underwent marked expansion during the 1980s and 1990s. This re-structuring of the youth labour market and growth in educational participation resulted in young people's transitions becoming generally more protracted (Roberts, 1995). Since housing and domestic transitions are dependent on earning a wage, these were also affected. The range of destinations following compulsory education diversified to include further education, Sixth Form colleges, Sixth Form in a school setting, training schemes, Modern Apprenticeships, employment on day release, part-time work and unemployment (Rudd, 1997). Straightforward transitions from education to employment and from dependence to independence were becoming less common. Some German theorists coined the term 'post-adolescence' to identify a new life stage (Gaiser, 1991 cited in Jones and Wallace, 1992; Zinneker, 1990), characterised by a period of dependency on parents extending well into young people's third decade (Irwin, 1995). It has been argued that there are now 'structured contradictions' between traditional markers of adulthood (Jones and Bell, 2000) and

that traditional markers are being contested by young people (Thomson and Holland, 2002; Maguire, Ball and Macrae, 2000a). Thomson and Holland (2002) conclude that while parenthood and an independent home remain at the centre of most young people's understandings of adulthood, other traditional markers are being reworked as markers of youth (e.g. sexual activity, drinking, drug taking, mobility and consumption).

Wallace (1987) examined the pathways out of school of over 150 young people on the Isle of Sheppey in Kent, England. It was hypothesised that in the existing context of high youth unemployment and the restructured labour market there would be a 'fracture' in the processes of social and cultural reproduction, since the roles into which young men and women had been socialised were no longer available for everybody (1987, p4). The study confirmed that post-school routes had diversified and become less clearly linked with eventual work destinations than previously. Furthermore, young people's experiences were polarising through a growing division between those mainly engaged in employment and those who experienced cumulative unemployment. There were also indications of young people's resistance to low-skilled and poorly paid work, although this diminished with age as domestic responsibilities grew. Despite the changes which had taken place, the ideologies of full male employment and the nuclear family persisted. In this new social context, normative models of youth transitions were inadequate for describing, as well as for understanding, young people's transitions.

Evidence that young people's experiences had become more complex, and their prospects less certain, grew throughout the 1990s (Jones and Wallace, 1992; Furlong and Cartmel, 1997). Wyn and Dwyer's review of international studies highlighted a

convergence of evidence from across the industrialised world (Wyn and Dwyer, 1999; Dwyer and Wyn, 2001). In their words:-

All the projects are concerned with elements of choice in young people's responses to the increasing contingency and risk which characterize transitions to adulthood.

Wyn and Dwyer, 1999, p6

The *Life-Patterns Project*, carried out in Australia, used longitudinal data with large sample sizes to investigate, and challenge, the relevance of the 'pathways' metaphor of transitions which underpins Australian youth policy frameworks (Wyn and White, 1997; Dwyer and Wyn, 1998; Dwyer, 2000). The initial sample of 30,000 young people completed a survey which asked what they had done since leaving high school, a year earlier, in 1992. A representative sample of 11,000 young people was re-surveyed in 1996, and subsequently 2000 young people completed surveys and 100 took part in interviews on an annual basis.

Young people's routes after school were found to be diverse and involve frequent changes in direction. Of those who had decided not to pursue further study after compulsory schooling, 80% had returned to study between 1992 and 1996. Similar findings emerged in a comparable Canadian data set; for example, in both studies the majority of young people were combining work with study and expressed a preference for doing so (Looker and Dwyer, 1998). A shift towards more flexible 'life patterns', with young people more frequently choosing not to prioritise vocational and occupational goals over broader, personal life goals, was documented. Interviews revealed young people's 'sense[s] of persistence and determination in the face of frustrated expectations' (Dwyer and Wyn, 2001, p12).

Wyn and Dwyer subsequently identified parallels between their findings and those of studies carried out elsewhere in Europe (Evans and Heinz, 1994; Chisholm, 1997; Rudd and Evans, 1998; Du Bois-Reymond, 1998) and the USA (Schneider and Stevenson, 1999) which suggested that contemporary transitions towards adulthood are characterised by diversity, pragmatism and resilience. These studies identified young people's high levels of ambition regardless of social backgrounds (Schneider and Stevenson, 1999); high levels of optimism and senses of control regardless of local labour market conditions (Rudd and Evans, 1998); and their attempts to keep options open and balance a range of life goals (Du Bois-Reymond, 1998). Wyn and Dwyer (1999) argued that young people are exhibiting a newly flexible approach in response to greater contingency, uncertainty and flexibility in the labour market. All these studies pointed to the importance of accounting for young people's personal agency in contemporary transitions towards adulthood.

Debate on the implications of new transition patterns ensued and has stimulated development of a novel approach to understanding young people's lives. This will be explored in §2.3, after the following discussion of a range of contemporary theories which have informed and influenced it.

2.2.3 Contemporary theories used in youth research

A typology of theories and ideas which are influential in contemporary studies of young people's transitions is presented in Figure 2.1. There are four major categories. The counter posed individualistic and structuralist perspectives will be considered in turn. The new approach to studying youth (referred to above and to be discussed in §2.3) draws on ideas from both of these perspectives and takes a

position in-between them, in the 'middle-range'. The relationship of post-modernist positions to these perspectives is also shown in the typology. Post-modern approaches have been taken in some recent studies of youth cultures, lifestyles and club-cultures (Redhead, 1997; Miles, 2000). Since such studies have a different focus from the present research and have generally failed to address questions of inequalities between groups (Holland, 2002), the influence of post-modern perspectives are considered to be beyond the scope of the present review. It is acknowledged that transition processes are influenced by cultural factors and this is incorporated through consideration of young people's subjectivities and processes of identity construction (cf §2.3.1).

Figure 2.1: Theoretical responses to recent social transformations¹

	Post-modernists	Individualists	Middle range theorists	Structuralists
Implications of social transformations for social theory	Social changes interpreted as start of a new post-modern world, characterised by plurality of perspectives. Foundations of traditional sociological theory can no longer be applied. Unifying theories are not possible.	Social changes interpreted as radical changes within modernity, requiring new frameworks of reference and new social categories to make sense. General unifying theories remain possible.	Changes not interpreted as representing a radical shift away from modernity, but traditional social categories may be composed in new ways.	Significant social changes are acknowledged but these are viewed as relating mainly to changes in subjective states. Objectively documented patterns have not altered and continue to be associated with traditional social categories.
Position on structure - agency debate	Social structure viewed either as having disappeared or as non-determinate. Individuals create their worlds independently.	Structural features and individual agency are important, but agency is focussed upon in shaping life chances.	The interplay of structural and individual features is considered. Individual agency is given scope to affect outcomes within structural parameters.	Social structure remains dominant in shaping life chances.
Implications for study of youth transitions	No standardisation	New forms of standardisation Central place given to agency concept. Importance of subjectivities	Asks whether there are new forms of standardisation, or not. Develop theory considering relative influences of structure and agency.	Previous forms of standardisation remain dominant. Retain focus on traditional social categories such as social class and gender.

¹ The boundaries are not as clearly demarcated as this typology depicts.

Figure 2.1 continued

Theories/concepts and theorists	Bauman (1992) Youth culturalists ¹ e.g. Redhead (1997) Miles (2000)	Beck (1992) Individualisation thesis Giddens (1984, 1991, 1995) Structuration theory. Reflexive project of the self. Baethge (1989) Individualisation among young people	Jones and Wallace (1992) Life course perspective and use of citizenship concept Evans and Heinz (1994) Agency has structural foundations Evans, Rudd, Behrens, Kaluza and Woolley (2000) Bounded agency Hodkinson and Bloomer (1996, 1999) Concepts of careership and learning careers Raffo and Reeves (2000) Individualised systems of social capital Ball, Maguire and Macrae (2000) Identities shaped by opportunities and obstacles	Bourdieu (1977) Theory of practice. Sociology of learning. Goldthorpe (1999) Rational action theory Roberts (1984, 1995) Opportunity structures. Structured individualisation Furlong and Cartmel (1997) Epistemological fallacy of modernity
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¹ Youth cultural analyses of the 1970s advanced structural explanations (cf. §2.2.1) but post-modern perspectives have influenced more recent studies of youth styles and cultures.

Pertinent theories can be clustered according to how recent social transformations are interpreted, and how this interpretation influences the positions they take in the structure-agency debate. In their purest forms, individualistic perspectives attempt to analyse the social world in terms of the agents occupying it (i.e. from the standpoint of individuals), while structuralist perspectives analyse the social world in terms of factors which structure society as a whole (i.e. from the standpoint of nation states, classes etc). Individualistic and structuralist perspectives are connected with different positions in the debate about the importance of structure and agency in shaping lives. The most extreme positions in this debate are, on the one hand, that individuals are able to shape their worlds independently through exercising their personal agency (cf §2.3.4), and on the other, that social structures determine individual lives.

Overcoming the division of structure and agency has been taken up as a significant challenge in all areas of sociological research. Theorists who have attempted this can nevertheless still be located as members of the counter-posed perspectives described above; for example, Beck's and Giddens's theories are primarily individualistic and Bourdieu's is primarily structuralist. Although each of these theorists recognises that outcomes are shaped by complex processes (few theorists dismiss the importance of either individual agency or social structure entirely) the conclusions they reach about the social determination of outcomes allow them to be viewed as counter-posed positions. It is the middle-range theorists however, who make an explicit attempt to analyse the *relative influences* of structural factors and agentic factors and hence further understanding of their interplay.

Individualist theories

Beck's (1992, 1998) and Giddens' (1984, 1990, 1991) theoretical frameworks were developed independently but overlap considerably in their arguments. Their theories are drawn on extensively in attempts to understand the interplay of structure and agency from an individualistic perspective. Beck's 'individualisation thesis' is used as a theoretical reference point in the present study. His argument will be discussed in detail, after outlining key areas of agreement in Beck's and Giddens' works and a brief summary of Giddens' theory of structuration. The implications of these social theories for study of young people's transitions are commented on.

Both theorists argue that society has entered a new phase, which requires the development of new frameworks of reference and concepts in order to understand it. This new phase referred to by Beck (1992) as the 'second phase of reflexive modernity' and by Giddens (1990) as 'high modernity', is characterised by new relationships between society's institutions and individuals' self-identities and subjective experiences. Their view is that, compared with the past and as a result of processes of globalisation and individualisation, society's institutions and individuals now operate with much greater reflexivity in a context of risk and uncertainty. The influence of the past in the form of tradition is losing significance. As a result, people must make choices for themselves. They are forced to construct their biographies actively, and engage in strategic life planning, in an attempt to exert some control over the uncertainties.

Giddens' (1984) theory of structuration set out the view that social structure is produced, reproduced and transformed in, and through, social practice. At the same time, social practices may change over time as individuals make adjustments (in

their actions) to new situations. Thus, social structure is viewed as both the producer and mediator of human action. These ideas attempt to describe how social change occurs with reference to both social structures and human action (which is related to personal agency). Giddens (1991) developed these ideas further, advancing the view that identities are becoming increasingly fluid as our self-identities and social structures are bound together in a process of reciprocal construction. Giddens maintains that the 'reflexive project of the self' is a key feature of high modernity. Although this framework incorporates reference to both structure and agency, it has been criticised for treating them as mutually constitutive.

Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (1998, 2002) have developed the arguments initially set out in *Risk Society: Towards a new modernity* (1992, English translation). The 'thesis of reflexive modernisation' is composed of two related arguments, referred to as the risk-society and individualisation theses. The crux of Beck's risk-society thesis is that society is undergoing transformation from a first phase, 'industrial modernity', to a second phase, 'reflexive modernity'. During the first phase, society was based on the social distribution of wealth (i.e. it was a class-based society). In the second phase, the distribution of perceptions of risk is increasingly important. Progress in industrial society (towards widespread wealth) has been accompanied by the production of hazardous side effects or 'risks' (e.g. environmental pollution). These new dangers have their roots in industry, and technology is used reflexively to moderate the effects of earlier technological and industrial applications. This makes them qualitatively different from previously experienced risks which were more obvious, palpable and observable than those of the present. Additionally, dangers in the risk society have a global and non-class specific nature. Beck argues that as a

scarcity of resources becomes less of an issue, society becomes organised by the distribution of perceptions of risk. A consequence of this is that feelings of anxiety about future risks do not produce antagonistic relations in the same way as class positions. Rather, modernisation risks globalise and individualise. According to Beck, the hierarchical model of social inequalities based on the class structure no longer applies to present-day society.

The individualisation thesis argues that a new network of regulations is shaping our lives. These new regulations result from the operation of industrial society (the labour market and related institutions) within the developing risk society. The labour market drives processes of individualisation, acting to remove individuals from traditionally important ties to such things as nation state, social class, family, ethnicity, neighbourhoods and gender. In turn, collective consciousness recedes and individuals feel increasingly responsible for the direction their lives take, but remain dependent on the labour market for this. The labour market constrains and shapes lives, acting as a new standardising influence.

Beck outlines several features of the labour market driving individualisation processes: education leads to, among other things, individual credentials and therefore to individualised career opportunities in the labour market; pursuit of a career or retention of a job often demands mobility, which encourages people to loosen social ties; the competitive nature of the labour market causes individualisation among homogenous groups (in terms of their education and qualifications) as individuals fight to stand out from the crowd.

Three significant results of individualisation liberating people from traditional roles

and constraints stand out: firstly, individuals are removed from status-based classes as they cease to identify themselves as members of a social collectivity. Secondly, gender roles weaken, leading to new situations for women and changing social relationships and family life. Beck's predictions on changing gender relations are explored in §3.3. Thirdly, previous forms of work routine decline as flexibility in the work-force and unemployment rise.

As people are liberated from traditional social roles and constraints, and collective consciousnesses and support networks disappear, they are left with the task of constructing their identities for themselves, without re-course to traditionally defined roles. Social class is no longer such an influence on people's actions. 'Leading a life of one's own' and 'taking control of one's life' become widespread desires, but achievement of these is mediated by the market (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002, p23). As dependency on the labour market and related institutions grows these operate as new standardising influences in society. Thus, 'dis-embedding' trends are accompanied by new forms of integration and control.

Beck's and Giddens' assessments of present-day society and how it differs from the past have resonated strongly with theoreticians studying young people's lives. In support of Beck's ideas, Baethge (1989) argued that individualisation processes are identifiable specifically among young people in industrialised societies. The adolescent phase has been de-structured. By this Baethge means that this stage in the life course has altered significantly from a recognisable period between childhood and adulthood as conventionally understood. Adulthood is now commonly postponed as increasingly protracted periods of education and later labour-market entry, delay access to an income. As already discussed, 'post-

adolescence' has been suggested as a new stage in the life course and young people's routes into the labour market have diversified (cf §2.2.2). Baethge argues firstly, that these factors encourage the formation of individualistic identities at the expense of collective identities, and secondly, concurs with Beck's view that class-specific socialisation structures have disappeared. Baethge summarises his analysis as indicating 'a trend towards double individualisation'.

All these accounts emphasise the significance of individuals' subjective perceptions of risks and opportunities in influencing how lives take shape. It is now widely agreed that it is important to take into account individual perspectives in any attempt to understand transition processes (cf §2.3.1). Nevertheless, the analyses described above are rudimentary theoretical sketches, which currently lack a sound empirical basis and require further development¹. The first step in this process is to evaluate their fit with the social world which they purport to describe, through empirical observation (Gudmundsson, 2000a). This is a task which the current project contributes to by considering the project's data in relation to the theories introduced in this typology. The individualisation thesis is focused on in this respect, since it places most emphasis on the significance of personal agency. It has also been argued that Beck's and Giddens' theoretical sketches misrepresent the nature of recent social transformations. This type of objection is most often raised from a structuralist perspective, which is considered next.

¹ Preliminary attempts to test aspects of the individualisation thesis empirically have now been made (e.g. Cieslik and Pollock's edited collection, 2002; Côté, 2002 (cf §3.4.1)).

Structuralist theories

A strong body of opinion criticises Beck's and Giddens' interpretation of recent social transformations as representing a radical shift. It is argued that patterns of inequality continue to reproduce themselves, and moreover, that the social structures of social class and gender continue to underpin the organisation of the social world and shape the lives of individuals within it. Examples of theories developed from a structuralist perspective include the works of Furlong and Cartmel (1997), Furlong (1998) and Roberts (1995), who take this position in theoretical approaches to youth. Other examples of structuralist approaches are Bourdieu's 'theory of practice' (1977), Goldthorpe's (1998) interpretation of Rational Action Theory, and Engel and Strasser (1998) who challenge their German colleague Beck specifically.

Furlong and Cartmel (1997) assessed the value of the individualisation theory using empirical data on young people's lives. They concluded that Beck's and Giddens' arguments exaggerate the extent, and misrepresent the form, of recent social transformations and the implications of these for young people's lives. In particular, they contest the significance given to individual reflexivity in affecting life chances, asserting that economic and cultural resources remain central to understanding differential life chances and experiences and that traditional concepts such as social class and gender continue to be of use in sociological analyses. Engel and Strasser (1998) maintain that social processes of individualisation introduce new sources of class conflict in addition to ones already in existence, and thus act to strengthen social inequalities. They defend a hierarchical model of social inequality structured by differential levels of 'resources such as economic, social and symbolic kinds of capital' (Engel and Strasser, 1998, p98).

Beck and Giddens do not deny that inequalities persist; in fact Beck agrees that individualisation intensifies inequalities; however, they do not view the patterns as bearing any relationship to social class. In *Democracy without enemies*, Beck (1998) explains inequalities as perpetuated by the ways in which individuals construct their biographies. He claims that a principle of self-normalisation operates in which individuals make choices in order not to set themselves apart from others around them. This results in aggregations of individuals with similar life contexts who nevertheless do not identify themselves subjectively as a collectivity.

Furlong and Cartmel (1997) and Roberts (1995) do not dispute that individuals' subjective experiences have altered. They agree that collectivist traditions have weakened and attribute this to processes of diversification, individualisation of lifestyles and the convergence of class cultures. They argue however, that these developments have served only to obscure, rather than to remove, structural foundations. Any impression of social class and gender weakening in their effects is false. Roberts maintains that it is only 'the vocabulary' of choice which has been revived, and the consequences of any greater degrees of choice are trivial compared with the extent to which prospects remain dependent on social factors. Furlong and Cartmel claim that this disjuncture between objective and subjective perspectives on life chances is the most significant feature of present-day society. They refer to this as the 'epistemological fallacy of late modernity' (Furlong and Cartmel, 1997, p109). The consequence of this is that problems resulting from wider social and economic trends beyond individual control (e.g. unemployment), are experienced and approached individually rather than collectively. Green, Mitchell and Bunton (2000) provided evidence of this, in relation to young people's experiences of living in a

marginalised community, while also showing that their perceptions and managements of risks and opportunities were shaped by their locality and its constructions of class and gender.

Bourdieu's theoretical framework has been taken up particularly by theorists sympathetic to the view that patterns in outcomes (associated with social class and gender) continue to be discernable, who therefore wish to challenge individualistic perspectives (Grenfell and James, 1998). How Bourdieu's framework has been used for research on young people's lives will be discussed at the end of §2.3.4 and in §3.4.2. Bourdieu developed a 'theory of practice' in reaction to the structuralism of Levi-Strauss and Parson's functionalism, both of whom used the concept of structure to denote a static 'thing', and also in opposition to Sartre's existentialism. Bourdieu's approach is culturally based. The organisation of society is viewed as giving rise to ideas, which in turn shape the organisation of society. Within his approach, structures are conceived as dynamic entities which are both 'structured' and 'structuring'. In Bourdieu's words:-

One must remember that ultimately objective relations do not exist and do not realize themselves except in and through the systems of dispositions of agents, produced by the internalisation of objective conditions.

Bourdieu, 1968, p105.

Bourdieu argued for the inter-dependency of theory and empirical research, by proposing a conceptual framework for use both in constructing theory and approaching empirical investigation. The concepts of 'field', 'capital' and 'habitus' are Bourdieu's building blocks. They interlock, each concept being defined in terms of the others. Research is driven by analysis of relationships between the three

concepts. Society is viewed as made up of different social 'fields' of practice in which there exist a structured set of social relationships. 'Habitus' is the concept used to link position in a field with an actor's stances and beliefs. The conditions of one's existence shape habitus, which in turn structures the strategies undertaken in response to external conditions (i.e. structures social practice). Individuals are thus conceived of as possessing structural, generative schemes (habitus) which orient social practice within fields (Grenfell and James, 1998). Habitus is derived from past experiences and produces stability in social practice. Because of their structural relationships, positions in the field (of individuals and/or institutions) may be mapped. Bourdieu uses the concept of 'capital' (which exists in the forms of cultural, economic and social resources) to do this.

Habitus is Bourdieu's attempt at giving a place to the dynamic of structure, as expressed through human action. Structure remains at the heart of his approach, as a mediator between objectivity (in the field) and subjectivity (of the habitus). Another possible approach is Rational Action Theory (RAT), in which actors' 'information environments' are modelled using cost-benefit analysis. Goldthorpe's (1998) preferred interpretation of RAT is to focus on the effect of situations on individuals' actions, as mediated by the *subjective* rationality of an action, given the situation. Like Bourdieu, Goldthorpe believes that human action operates within individual horizons and through the internalisation of social norms.

Structuralist theories advocate retaining a focus on the structuring contexts of action. Individual scope for affecting outcomes in significant ways is considered to be negligible. The value of social categories, such as class and gender, to social

analysis is thus re-asserted.

Theories of the middle-range

As explained earlier (cf §2.2.2), social changes since 1970 have prompted youth researchers to recognise the role of personal agency, as well as the influence of structural factors, in transition processes (Chisholm, 1990; Jones and Wallace, 1990, 1992). Consequently, a new research agenda has been generated through taking a middle-range perspective (cf Figure 2.1). A position in between the individualist and structuralist perspectives is adopted. Recent social transformations may not indicate as radical a shift into a new phase of modern life requiring new frames of reference to make sense of it as individualist perspectives suggest. Taking this view however, does not preclude a greater focus on the role of individual agency, than in structuralist perspectives. Middle-range approaches aim to analyse the *relative influences* of structural and agentic features and hence further understanding of their *interplay* within the current social context, and in relation to the social theories described in the preceding typology.

The field of youth research re-invented itself in the 1990s by taking up this new challenge, and in the process has strengthened its position as an academic field (Gudmundsson, 2000a, 2000b)¹. Youth research now presents itself as both sharing the aims of contemporary social theories², with respect to developing ‘a

¹ Gudmundsson (2000a, 2000b) refers to the works of Furlong, Evans, Du Bois-Reymond, Chisholm, Wyn and Dwyer as an extended British empire positioned at the centre of the youth research field. Alternative concepts have been applied by Nordic researchers (e.g. Ziehe’s concept of ‘makeability’)

² The contemporary social theories referred to by Gudmundsson (2000a) in this context include the works of Giddens (1991), Beck (1992), Bourdieu (1977) and Habermas (1981).

simultaneous perspective on both cultural change and social and cultural reproduction, especially of social inequality' (Gudmundsson, 2000a, p5), and as being one of the best fields in which to capture these phenomena empirically since these are most visible during periods of change (Roberts, 1997; Gudmundsson, 2000a). Thus, the field draws on social theories to inform contemporary empirical challenges, but also aims to refine these theories. Indeed, refinements to Beck's (1992) individualisation thesis are suggested in the light of the project's findings (cf §11.4). Contemporary social theories have not achieved a solution to the theoretical problem of structure and agency and in Gudmundsson's view will not; however, he describes their importance (from a Bourdieuan perspective) as in helping us:-

...to develop a gaze for seeing how agents reproduce, break down and change structures, not only through externalising actions but also through developing habitus that is a part of social structures.

Gudmundsson, 2000a, p7

A host of new perspectives and concepts have originated through attempts to do this. Examples, considered in §2.3, include the concepts of 'learning careers' (Bloomer and Hodkinson, 2000), 'individualised systems of social capital' (Raffo and Reeves, 2000), 'structural foundations of individualisation' (Evans and Heinz, 1994) and 'bounded agency' (Evans, Rudd, Behrens, Kaluza and Woolley, 2000). The present study adopts a middle-range approach. The approach is discussed in detail next.

2.3 A new research agenda for studying young people

Jones and Wallace (1990, 1992) were among the most influential of theorists in bringing about the wide-spread adoption of middle-range approaches (though similar arguments were made by Chisholm (1990) among others). They argued that neither

social reproduction theories, which take a structuralist position, nor the individualisation thesis could be used to explain young people's situations adequately. Wallace's (1987, 1989) studies demonstrated the inadequacies of structuralist explanations of young people's lives (these inadequacies have already been discussed in §2.2). Jones and Wallace disputed that pathways towards adulthood had come to be constructed individually, rather than socially, as the individualistic theories of Beck (1992) and Giddens (1991) suggest (albeit with reference to social life generally rather than young people specifically). They cited evidence that social class origins, gender and race remained linked with life outcomes; for example, patterns of class mobility mostly involved the middle-classes regaining positions of a similar status to that of their fathers by the age of 23 (Jones, 1986, 1987, 1988). Jones and Wallace (1992)¹ called for the development of a new approach capable of incorporating insight into both the processes of, and structural influences on, transitions. Aspects of self-determination in youth (agentic features), as well as the inequalities of opportunity and choice, resulting from relations of social class, gender, race, geographical location and economic status (structural influences), and their inter-relationships, must all be identified. §2.3.1 explains how this new middle-range agenda has developed, identifying the themes by which it is guided and discussing the concepts it employs².

¹ Jones and Wallace (1992) were influenced by life course perspectives (Hareven, 1982; see Elder (1997) for further discussion of the approach). They suggested taking a longitudinal (biographical) approach and employing the concept of citizenship (Marshall, 1950), to assess structural inequalities in young people's transition processes. This approach has not been widely used in its entirety; however, their ideas provided the foundations for development of new approaches.

² Development of the new agenda for youth research is discussed more fully in Bynner, Chisholm and Furlong (1997). The new agenda took shape at a conference funded by the ESRC, BSA and University of Glasgow and held in Glasgow, 1996.

2.3.1 New Directions

Accounting for the influences of both structural and agentic features in young people's lives required two major shifts in empirical investigation. Firstly, it was necessary to take a more holistic approach; one that gives visibility to structural factors, and their interaction with aspects of individual agency, within an overarching social and economic context which is shaped historically and culturally (Jones and Wallace, 1992; Evans and Furlong, 1997). Furthermore, the full range of young people's positions in the social structure, from the most privileged to the most disadvantaged, should be given consideration, as well as the full range of their experiences in relation to both private and public areas of life (Allat, 1993) (cf §2.2.1 and §3.2.2). This study fulfils these aims through investigation of young people located across a wide range of social situations, and by asking about their lives in relation to their institutional settings and their personal lives.

Secondly, an increased focus on young people's perspectives was required. While this was achieved in other approaches (e.g. sub-cultural theories cf §2.2.1), the rationale for this is now explicit. Individuals' lives are shaped as personal agency interacts with social structures. These factors operate via the individual's subjectivity (Giddens, 1984; Bourdieu, 1977; Goldthorpe, 1998). Thus, investigation of subjectivities and processes of identity construction can increase understanding of the interplay between social structures and the role of personal agency in influencing individual outcomes (Evans, 1998).

2.3.2 Re-conceptualising youth

Re-conceptualising 'youth' involved moving away from viewing it as a stage in the

life course rooted in biological age. This traditional view created a categorical and homogenous conception of young people who share similar experiences on the basis of shared age; this is problematic, since the diversity of young people's experiences is lost sight of (Jones and Wallace, 1992). Developing a useful approach to studying young people required deconstructing 'youth' in a way which acknowledged diversity. The emerging consensus is that youth ought to be studied as a social process (Jones and Wallace, 1992; Wyn and White, 1997). Wyn and White (1997) argue that growing up is a process of forging particular types of inter-dependencies with other people and institutions. This process is given meaning within social, economic and political conditions which shape it. Age-related expectations are acknowledged to be socially constructed in historical and culturally specific ways.

Viewing youth in this way shifts attention away from young people as a group towards consideration of how young people negotiate the processes involved in growing up. Differences in how young people are situated in relation to these processes are then highlighted. Wyn and White (1997) argue that social class and economic position act systematically to produce unequal outcomes as young people engage in the social processes of growing up. The present study compares the experiences of young people located in different institutional settings, who are therefore located differently with respect to economic position.

2.3.3 The concept of transition

The concept of transition has been subject to scrutiny, but its continued relevance can be defended. Criticisms of the concept's use (Cohen and Ainley, 2000; Miles, 2000) may be countered as being based on an outdated understanding of the concept,

no longer prevalent within the field. It is argued that a refined and broadened concept of transition offers a suitable framework to take forward a new and holistic approach to the study of young people's lives (Chisholm, 1990; MacDonald et al, 2001).

The concept of transition was used extensively in youth studies during the 1980s (cf §2.2.1). Influenced by categorical conceptions of youth, which emphasised the shared and linear sequence of events in growing up, the school to work 'transition' was concentrated on, with entry into the labour market signifying the end of a 'pathway' into adulthood. It is now widely agreed that this use of the concept assumed too much about the nature of a young person's transition, thus producing studies which were too narrow in their focus. It is precisely this use of the concept which is attacked by critics of the concept's current use. On the contrary, transition studies over the past decade have been concerned with young people as active agents shaping their own lives and with the mixed, non-linear pathways that they follow. As the meaning of transitions in young people's lives has changed, so too have researchers' uses of the concept. The metaphors of 'pathway' and 'trajectory' for transition processes have been replaced with the metaphor of young people 'navigating' their ways into adult life, as implied by the individualisation thesis (Evans and Furlong, 1997; Evans, 2003). Transitions are viewed as a series of choices, albeit affected by social background, rather than as rites of passage.

MacDonald et al (2001) re-asserted the concept's value as one which, with refinement, allows all the emerging trends in the field to be embraced. He advocates an understanding of 'transition' as a metaphor which does not 'presume a particular sort of content, direction or length at the level of individual experience' (2001, p 13).

Rather, it retains a focus on the fact that young people are engaged in a life stage, in which they first encounter the wider institutions of social and economic reproduction outside of their families and where the directions of their lives begins to crystallise. This use of the transition concept ties in with the concept of youth as a social process (described above). Jones and Wallace (1992) and Coles (1995) proposed that youth be conceived of as a series of transitions towards adulthood, which occur as parallel, longitudinal processes in different areas of life, but which are closely related to each other (e.g. school to work transitions, domestic, housing and other personal transitions). The transition concept can thus operate as a framework capable of guiding a holistic approach and as one which encourages inclusion of both structural and cultural analyses.

2.3.4 Methodological approaches

Two main methodological approaches used in investigation of young people's lives give the concept of transition a central place. These are the comparative and biographical approaches. Uses of comparative and biographical methodologies in studies of young people's transitions have developed because of their potential for gaining purchase on the interplay of structure and agency, to develop middle-range theory. The methods employed are outlined and conceptual advancements and empirical findings are discussed¹. The present study primarily takes a comparative approach using mixed methods of data collection. Biographical approaches are also drawn on however, since some data have been collected by means of individual interviews and used to develop and present case studies of individual lives.

¹ In the case of empirical findings, some further details are given in Chapter 3.

Comparative approaches

Use of the comparative approach in studies of transition processes has been influenced by the sociological methodological theory of Ragin (1987, 1991, 1994). Ragin emphasises the importance of establishing a dialogue between ideas and evidence (or theory and data) in sociological enquiry. The nature of this dialogue is affected by the data-analysis techniques engaged with; qualitative approaches attempt to simplify the complexity of the social world by examining the similarities and differences among a limited number of cases (a case-oriented strategy) whereas quantitative approaches examine relations between variables (a variable-oriented strategy). Ragin (1991) advocates balancing these two strategies in order to achieve the richest possible dialogue between ideas and evidence.

Ashton and Lowe (1991) laid the foundations for drawing on Ragin's (1987, 1991) methods in studies of young people's lives. Their book *'Making their way: education, training and labour markets in Canada and Great Britain'* presents a series of comparative analyses which examine how macro-level social structures impact on the education and work opportunities for these countries' young people. These demonstrated the importance of connections between the education and labour market systems in each country's economic and cultural contexts for understanding young people's transitions. Furthermore, they highlighted the importance of investigating young people's perspectives on education and work. Their explanations were, however, limited by the lack of a unified research design and the absence of a comparable data set. In order to allow the possibility of developing generalisable principles, Ashton and Lowe showed the advantages of moving away from nationally-based studies towards cross-national comparative work able to reveal the similarities and differences in the school-to-work transition across

societies. They concluded that to further advance research in this area it would be necessary to incorporate use of Ragin's suggested methods of analysis across a limited number of cases using comparable data sets.

In recent years, two main bodies of work, which have influenced the present study, have developed comparative research designs for studies of youth transitions. These are, firstly, the ESRC 16-19 initiative studies (Banks, Bates, Breakwell, Bynner, Emler, Jamieson and Roberts, 1992) and secondly, the Anglo-German studies (Bynner and Roberts, 1991; Evans and Heinz, 1994; Evans, Behrens and Kaluza, 2000; Evans, Rudd, Behrens, Kaluza and Woolley, 2000) which made comparative analyses across labour markets in England and Germany. A further study, related to these bodies of work, was conducted by Rudd (1996, 1998). This made comparative analyses across labour markets in the UK. These studies, which form the antecedents of the present research, are introduced briefly next. A table summarising key features of their research designs is included in appendix 2(i).

ESRC 16 to 19 Initiative

The ESRC's *16 to 19 Initiative* research programme made substantial contributions, with its development of an inter-disciplinary conceptual approach, to the study of young people's lives. The interests of sociologists in opportunity structures and social-psychologists in identity formation were brought together by organising the Initiative around two conceptual themes, 'careers' and 'identities'. These themes were used to produce an analytical framework, enabling an exploration of the influences of both the processes and outcomes of socialisation. The research aimed to identify:-

Broad patterns of young people's experiences, to elucidate the form and content of their developing identities, and to relate these to personal circumstances and to local and national economic and social conditions [and thereby] to map out the political and economic socialisation of 16 to 19 year-olds.

Banks et al, 1992, Preface.

The term 'careers' was used widely to include entry into all aspects of adult life, not only the labour market, but also changes in domestic and personal situations, and in relation to leisure time and political orientations. Consideration of inter-relationships across all aspects of young people's lives has become a regular feature of empirical studies.

The term 'identity' refers to an individual's perceptions of themselves generally and in relation to specific areas, for example, occupational identity. An individual's self-concept is dependent on their social attributions and representations, their sense of control, self-esteem and self-efficacy. The concept of 'identity' relates to the notion that a young person has choices to make and hence that they have scope for action. They may actively shape their transitions through the exercise of personal agency. Further study of identity formation has been taken up, particularly in studies using biographical approaches (cf §2.3.4).

The Initiative's research design influenced subsequent studies of young people's transitions. At that time, a wealth of data had been collected which charted objective patterns relating to young people's lives, but there was less understanding of subjective experiences in transitions into adulthood. Young people's perspectives have since been given centre-stage. The Initiative's use of a comparative area-based approach, with data collection by different methods and at different levels, was developed further by the Anglo-German studies and Rudd's doctoral work (1996,

1998).

Anglo-German studies

The Anglo-German studies are a collection of studies which used comparative area-based approaches to investigate young people's transitions in England and Germany. Comparisons of subjective perspectives were made between groups of young people at a number of levels; across national contexts and cultures, contrasting labour market areas, different segments of the labour market and social characteristics such as gender and social class. The approach aims to link the experiences of individuals to their contexts. Mixed methods of data collection were used, including completion of a standardised questionnaire and qualitative data collection. A particularly innovative aspect was the use of matched pairs of individuals, to build comparative biographical case studies (Bynner and Roberts, 1991; Evans and Heinz, 1994).

The first Anglo-German comparative study (Bynner and Roberts, 1991) found that cultural differences exerted a greater influence on young people's expectations and work-related attitudes than local labour markets (selected as economically buoyant or depressed). In Germany, young people's vocational preparation was concentrated on, and transitions were far more structured and lengthier than in England, where 'getting a good job as soon as possible' took priority, and transitions were more fluid, unstructured and took place more quickly. The extent to which young people's experiences are shaped by cultural normative expectations was an important finding.

The experiences of young people from the first study were tracked into their early twenties (the second Anglo-German study, Evans & Heinz, 1994). The 'extended' transitions found in Germany and contrasting 'accelerated' transitions found in

England were considered in relation to the individualisation thesis (Beck, 1992). This provided a new theoretical focus to the research. Relationships between young people's transition experiences and their behaviours, their career outcomes and structural factors were investigated. Four types of transition behaviour were identified from the data; 'taking chances' and 'strategic' are more active approaches to transition; 'step-by-step' and 'wait and see' are more passive. These behaviours were found to relate to career patterns, classified as 'progressive', 'upward drift', 'stagnant', 'downward drift' and 'repaired', in interaction with career trajectory. It was concluded that 'active' and 'passive' modes of individualisation (identified by types of transition behaviour) and the career patterns characteristic of them, have structural foundations in social class, *gender* and region (cf §3.3, Wallace, 1994). Evans and Heinz (1994) argued that these findings supported the notion of 'structured individualisation'; recognising variation in transition experiences as well as the ways in which class and gender link with young people's agentic orientations and their eventual outcomes. This idea received support from a piece of related doctoral work conducted by Rudd (1996, 1998), which compared data on the subjectivities of 16 to 19 year old further education students located in two contrasting labour market areas in England (cf §3.3). This study made the first attempt in the field to operationalise the concept of agency and showed how structural factors are mediated by young people's subjectivities.

The third Anglo-German study conducted a three-way comparative analysis of social contexts in England and Eastern and Western Germany (Evans, Behrens and Kaluza, 1999). These areas were selected on the basis of the contrasting cultures of England and Germany (with a culture shared by the former West and East Germany) and the

historically different economic systems of Eastern and Western Germany (with an economic system shared by England and Western Germany). This analysis provided the impetus for a fourth Anglo-German study conducted in specific localities in the same areas, which was funded by the ESRC and linked to the present project (cf §1.1, Evans, Rudd, Behrens, Kaluza and Woolley, 2000). The contributions made by Rudd (1996, 1998) and Evans et al (2000, 2001) in developing uses of the concepts of agency and control are considered in greater detail next. This work culminated in development of a conceptual schema which is also described later in §2.3.4 (Evans, 2002a).

In summary, area-based comparative studies allow the researcher to contextualise young people's subjectivities within the socio-cultural and economic conditions which shape them. Combining this with layered data collection, across a wide range of young people's experiences, provides a means of studying young people's lives holistically. The mixed-methods approaches taken by previous studies have informed this doctoral project's design and methodological approach. Rudd's (1996, 1998) methods, which combined questionnaire and focus group data, are extended with a further layer of data collected by in-depth individual interviews. The rationale for this is explored in discussion of biographical approaches later in this section.

The concept of agency

The concept of agency can be traced back to the enlightenment period and philosophical debate on the nature of human freedom. Current dictionaries equate the term with 'active operation' or 'action'. Despite no shortage of attempts to theorise about the concept, as recently as 1998 it was convincingly argued that, as

yet, the concept of agency had not been defined clearly.

The term agency has maintained an elusive, albeit resonant, vagueness; it has all too seldom inspired systematic analysis, despite the long list of terms with which it is associated: selfhood, motivation, will, purposiveness, intentionality, choice, initiative, freedom and creativity.

Emirbayer and Misch, 1998, p962

Although recognition of the role played by young people themselves in their transitions to adulthood had been growing within the field for sometime (Willis 1977, Jones and Wallace, 1992), the first attempt to operationalise the concept of agency in empirical work was made by Rudd (1996). His definition of agency was ‘inputs from young people themselves on an individual basis’ (Rudd and Evans, 1998, p39). This was elaborated on as ‘those aspects of the decision-making process in school to work transitions which are predominantly individual, creative, proactive and involve resisting external pressures’ (Rudd and Evans, 1998, p51). This was a first step, enabling the identification of aspects of agency which could be examined empirically; however, this was no clarification of its make-up.

Drawing particularly on Mead (1932), Emirbayer and Misch developed the argument that ‘the agentic dimension of social action can only be captured in its full complexity if it is analytically situated within the flow of time’ (1998, p963). They extended this idea to conceptualise agency as follows:-

A temporally embedded process of social engagement, informed by the past (in its iterational or habitual aspect), but also oriented towards the future (as a ‘projective’ capacity to imagine alternative possibilities) and toward the present (as a ‘practical-evaluative’ capacity to contextualize past habits and future projects within the contingencies of the present moment).

Emirbayer and Misch, 1998, p963

They propose that agency be understood as three components corresponding to differing temporal orientations (the iterational, projective and practical-evaluative aspects of agency), which although interrelated empirically may usefully be separated for analytic purposes. As the influence of the past, future or present takes precedence in shaping action, an actor's agentic orientation alters across time. When the past is the primary orientation shaping the flow of effort, through activation of schemas derived from repetition and habit, this acts as a stabilising influence.

Emirbayer and Misch's main criticism of many other contemporary theorists is that they equate agency with only one of these three possible agentic orientations. For example, Bourdieu's concept of habitus gives precedence to the role of routinised practices and resonates closely with Emirbayer and Misch's description of the iterative aspect of agency.

They suggest that by differentiating between dimensions of agency we can start to account for variation and change in actors' agentic capacities across different structuring contexts of action. Doing so allows us to move away from an understanding of structure and agency either as standing in opposition to one another or as being mutually constitutive. The empirical challenge Emirbayer and Misch lay down is to examine the interplay between structure and agency by 'locating, comparing, and predicting the relationship between different kinds of agentic processes and particular structuring contexts of action' (1998, p1005). This is a challenge taken up in the current project, at least in terms of locating and comparing the variations in young adults' agentic behaviour across contexts. This is similar to the approach advocated by Goldthorpe (1998), of focusing on the patterns of action which emerge from particular situations. If it is assumed that these patterns may be

understood as rational from the actors' points of views as Goldthorpe suggests (cf §2.2.3), then understanding the situations' salient structural and social features indicates the scope for action afforded by them, and hence aids interpretation of the patterns of action manifest in them. To understand young people's perspectives, they must be contextualised. In the present study, significant contextual factors are discussed in Chapter 5.

In further developing the concept of agency for use in the study of young people's transitions, Evans, Rudd, Behrens, Kaluza and Woolley (2000, 2001) drew on this view of agency as 'temporally embedded' as well as on their accumulating set of empirical findings (Evans and Heinz, 1994; Evans et al 2000, 2001). Their findings highlighted particularly how manifestations of agency are 'socially situated' and this point led to suggestion of the new concept of 'bounded agency'. A metaphor of 'social actors' moving in a 'social landscape' was developed in order to elaborate on this notion of bounded agency.

Young people are social actors moving in a social landscape.

How they perceive the horizons depends on where they stand in the landscape. The horizons change slowly as they move, sometimes opening up, sometimes closing down.

Where they go depends on the pathways they see, choose, stumble across or clear for themselves, the terrain and elements they encounter.

Their progress depends on what they feel it is important to spend time on, how well they are equipped, and the help they can call on when they need it, whether they go alone or together and how they engage with others on the way.

Evans et al, 2001, p25

Of particular significance is how approaching the study of young people's lives with this metaphor in mind, aids appreciation of the fusion of agentic and structural

factors at work. Furthermore, it illuminates agency's nature as mutable; with actors' orientations and behaviours changing, in line with changing horizons, which alter according to their progress, or lack of progress, in the landscape. The affect of the landscape, or social 'structure', is there, but not as a deterministic one. Agency is conceived of more broadly than action, by embracing internalised understandings of the outside world (i.e. as dispositions in the sense of Bourdieu's habitus).

The concepts of 'structured individualisation' and 'bounded agency' both address the need to differentiate between a plurality of life contexts, challenging the application of the 'individualisation' concept to explain the processes affecting modern day life. The concept of 'structured individualisation' focuses attention back onto the operation of structures, whereas 'bounded agency' focuses on the perspectives of individuals, encouraging exploration of how agency and structure interrelate, fuse, and transform one another.

The balance between the influence of structural factors and an actor's scope for action is alluded to by an actor's sense of being, or not being, in 'control' of their life (Rudd and Evans, 1998). This is a concept which has been usefully employed, both theoretically and empirically, and it is to this that the review now turns.

A sense of control

Young people making the transition into adulthood attempt to exert some control over the direction their lives are taking. Flammer (1997) hypothesised that the limits of possible control encountered during this stage of life vary greatly, both individually and collectively across social groups. Some aspects of a young person's situation will be difficult to change, whereas others may be overcome through the

exercise of personal agency. Furthermore, the exercise of agency is pervasively influenced by beliefs of personal efficacy (Bandura, 1997). Efficacy beliefs are related to 'control beliefs' which are defined by Flammer (1997) as 'subjective representation of one's capabilities to exercise control' or as a composite of contingency and competence beliefs. Similarly, Bandura describes control beliefs as a combination of expectations: response-outcome expectations and efficacy expectations. These beliefs form part of our internalised understanding of the world, and hence may be understood as contributing to personal agency¹. A host of studies have demonstrated the relationship between desirable and adaptive human functioning, high control beliefs, which are often illusory or over-estimations made by the individual (Flammer, 1997; Taylor and Brown, 1988), and a strong sense of personal efficacy.

Bandura (1997) describes how efficacy beliefs affect human functioning through cognitive, affective and motivational processes, as well as by influencing the types of activities and environments which people select themselves into. A reciprocal relationship is set in motion. Elder (1997) describes this as follows:-

More ambitious goals and endeavors are likely to appeal to efficacious youth and not to those lacking self-confidence. In turn, the progress of working toward goals of this kind tends to enhance a sense of personal agency.

Elder, 1997, p47.

Since people are afforded differential opportunities for working towards mastery goals, structural factors are also implicated in the development of control beliefs.

¹ Indicators of control beliefs were included in the initial checklist for questionnaire development (cf §4.1.4; appendix 4(ii)).

These developing conceptualisations of agency and control have shaped the project's questions and methodological framework (cf Chapter 4). In particular, Emirbayer and Misch's analytical separation of agency into temporal orientations provides a framework for data collection and analyses, based on young people's perspectives of their pasts, presents and futures.

A conceptual schema for structure and agency

Evans (2002a) uses a conceptual schema to locate theoretical perspectives which consider relationships between structure and agency in relation to three dimensions (cf Figure 2.2). Two of these dimensions have already been referred to in the course of this chapter. They are, firstly, social determinism versus individualisation and reflexivity, which was explored in presenting the typology of individualist and structuralist perspectives, and secondly, internal versus external control processes. This second dimension was touched on in the preceding discussion of 'control beliefs' and 'personal efficacy'. Efficacy researchers have emphasised internal processes of the 'acting individual' in relation to the external environment (Evans, 2002a, p250) and shown how these processes contribute to personal agency. The third dimension is based on the extent of social reproduction versus social conversion suggested by theoretical positions. The question is of how much social transformations are attributable to individual and collective action. Beck's and Giddens' theoretical positions allow individuals the possibility of a high degree of social conversion, whereas Bourdieu's (1977) and Furlong and Cartmel's (1997) positions emphasise processes of social reproduction.

The schema illustrates how theorists located in the presented typology (cf Figure 2.1)

as of the same type (equivalent to sharing similar positions on Evans' first dimension) may vary according to their positions on the other dimensions, thus identifying more subtle differences in stances taken. For example, Bourdieu (1977) and Furlong and Cartmel (1997) are both viewed as developing structuralist positions, emphasising processes of social reproduction, but Bourdieu focuses on subjectivities, while Furlong and Cartmel focus on the external limits imposed by social structures on internal processes (Evans, 2002a, p 211).

Evans (2002a) extends these ideas by showing the position of middle-range theories in relation to other stances (cf Figure 2.3). Individualist and structuralist positions are located in the corners of the triangle, while middle-range theories occupy its centre. These conceptual schemas are designed to stimulate and inform a dialogue between ideas and evidence, as advocated by Ragin (1991) and Gudmundsson (2000a).

Figure 2.2: Conceptual Schema for Structure-Agency (Evans, 2002a)

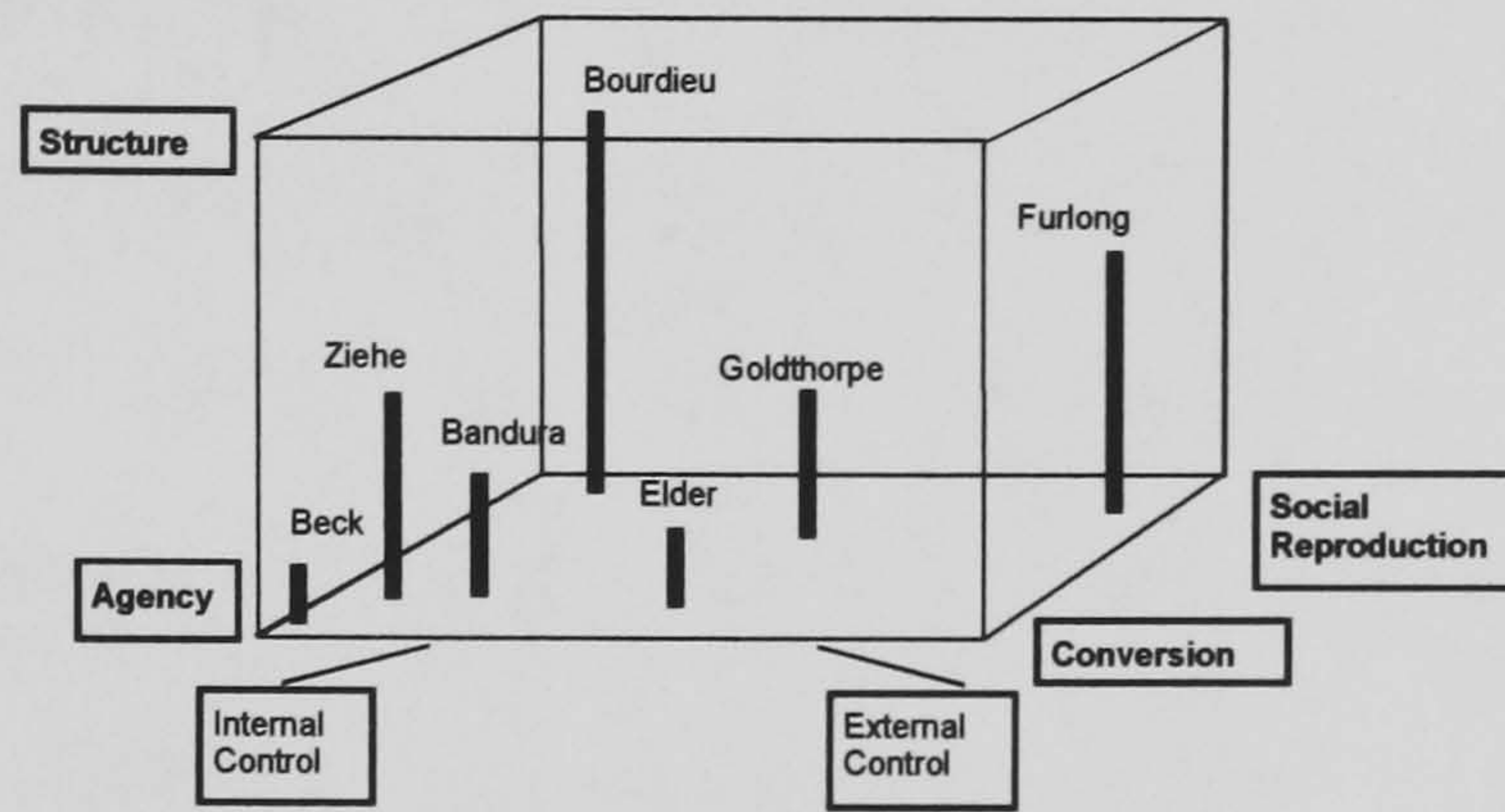
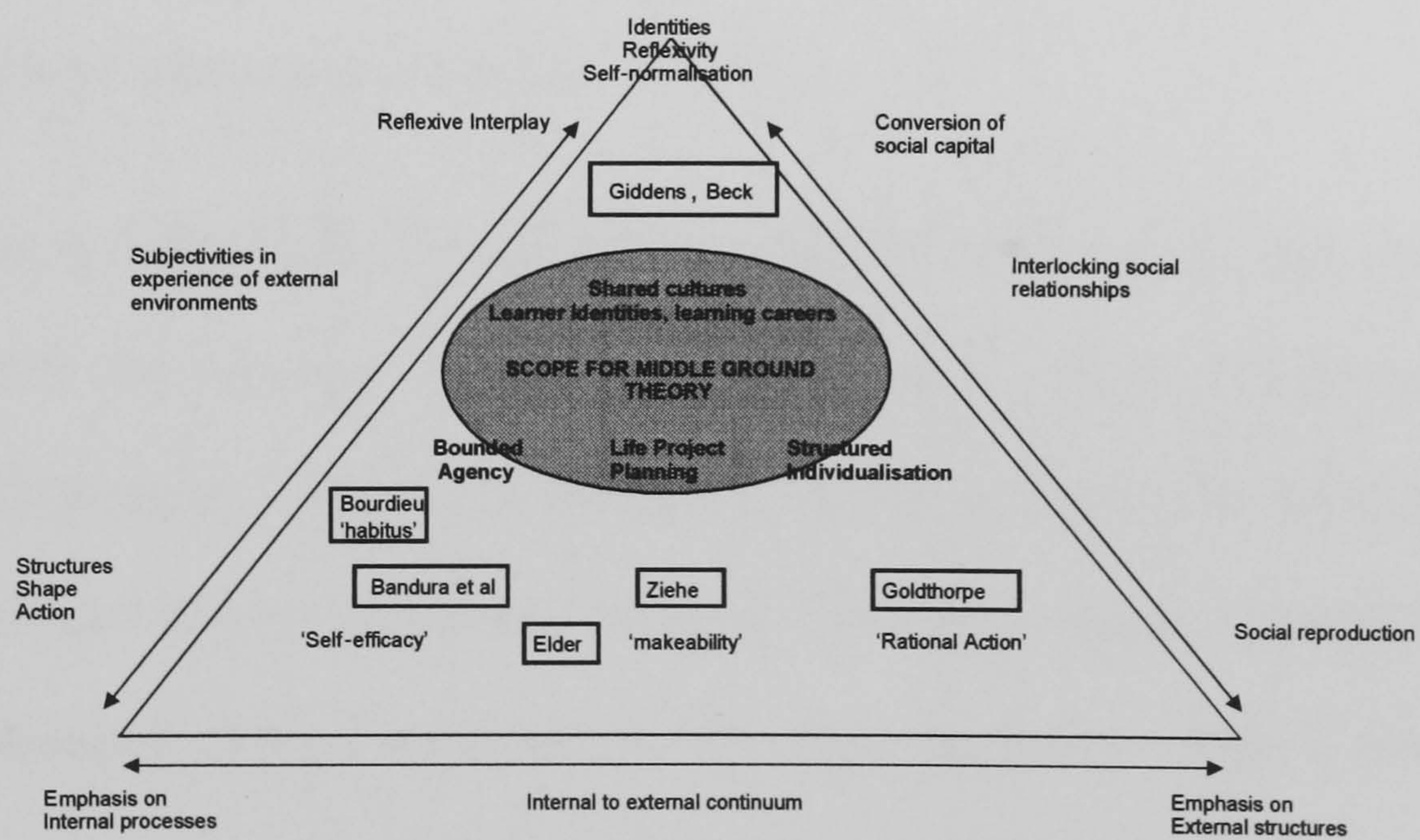


Figure 2.3: Position of middle-ground theories (Evans, 2002a)



Biographical approaches

An interpretive biographical approach has been used in several recent studies of young people's transitions into adulthood (Ball, Maguire and Macrae, 2000; Bloomer and Hodkinson, 1997, 1999, 2000, 2001; Hodkinson and Bloomer, 2002a, 2002b, 2003; Hodkinson, Sparkes and Hodkinson, 1996; Raffo and Hall, 2000; Raffo and Reeves, 2000; Thomson, Bell, Holland, Henderson, McGrellis and Sharpe, 2000; Thomson, Henderson and Holland, 2003). As personal and social meanings, as bases of action, have gained prominence there has been a corresponding 'turn to biographical methods in the social sciences' (Chamberlayne, Bornat and Wengraf, 2000). The approach is rooted in the ethnographic methodological tradition advocated by the Chicago School of Sociology. This tradition gave rise to a host of related approaches, including life history, life stories, interpretative biography and narrative enquiry, which vary in their conceptual frameworks, but which all involve the examination of individual lives over time and the construction of case studies (Hubbard, 2000).

The approach is concerned primarily with subjective experiences and personal meanings; these are, however, located in time and space. Thus, the approach is capable of exploring an individual's exercise of agency as well as the influence of broader social and cultural conditions on how a life takes shape (Chamberlayne, Bornat and Wengraf, 2000). Furthermore, how these aspects are related, and how this is mediated by subjectivities and processes of identity construction, can be explored. These features of the biographical approach make it ideal for developing middle-range theory in studies of young people's transitions. It allows researchers to explore 'how young people may be experiencing and negotiating new social

conditions (Du Bois-Reymond, 1998) and how different strands of transition interact (Jones and Wallace, 1992)' (cited by Thomson et al, 2000, p2).

The following discussion uses the work of Hodkinson and his collaborators to illustrate how the approach has been used for study of young people's transitions. Contributions made by other studies are referred to. First, an example of the approach 'in use' is given. This is followed by discussion of the host of new concepts introduced or re-introduced into debate by the approach. Assembling a conceptual tool-kit for use in enhancing the theoretical understanding of young people's experiences and perspectives is a general aim for researchers in the field who use this approach (Ball, Maguire and MaCrae, 2000).

Building life histories

Studies taking a biographical approach commonly analyse data collected from interviews with individual people (Erben, 1998). Each participating individual provides an account of significant biographical experiences and events. These are interpreted by the researcher, with reference to wider socio-cultural features, in order to create, a 'life history'. A study carried out longitudinally can provide the fullest picture of how structure and agency interact within an individual's life over time. Bloomer and Hodkinson (1997, 1999, 2000), for example, obtained data using semi-structured interviews in their study of young people's experiences of learning. Interviews were carried out initially with young people in their final year of compulsory schooling and repeated on five or so occasions at six to twelve monthly intervals. Thus, individuals were followed over a four year period. The scope of the interviews was broad and interviewees described salient aspects of their 'experiences

and evaluations of knowledge and learning, upon their wider educational, employment, social and other life experiences, and upon relationships with others (Bloomer and Hodkinson, 2000, p2). Analysis of the interview transcripts proceeded by attempting to pinpoint the best ways of describing and conceptualising the data. Bloomer and Hodkinson illustrated their findings by presenting case studies of particular individuals' stories (Amanda Ball in Bloomer and Hodkinson (2000) and Tamsin Rooke and Daniel Johnson in Bloomer and Hodkinson (2001) and Hodkinson and Bloomer (2002b, 2003)). These stories, although selected because they are especially vivid, were used to illustrate aspects of the experience of learning which were shared by many of the young people interviewed. It should be noted that there are possibilities other than Bloomer and Hodkinson's methods for employing a biographical approach and theirs is not the method adopted in the present study (cf §4.1.6).

Assembling a conceptual tool kit

The use of biographical approach has introduced a host of new concepts into discussions. Bourdieu's theoretical framework has been identified as particularly valuable in making sense of data collected on young people's experiences. Hodkinson, Sparkes and Hodkinson's (1996) theoretical model of 'careership' and Bloomer and Hodkinson's (2000) concept of the 'learning career' have both drawn heavily on Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, field and capital (cf §2.2.3).

Careership

Hodkinson, Sparkes and Hodkinson's (1996) findings characterised young people's career decision-making as pragmatically rational; it is context-dependent and can

therefore ‘only be understood in relation to their own life histories’ (Hodkinson, 1998, p96). This finding challenged vocational education and training policies based on a model of young people which depicts them as engaging in a rational process of decision-making, with this resulting in smooth and predictable transitions from school to work. Hodkinson, Sparkes and Hodkinson’s model of ‘careership’ conceptualised young people’s decisions as occurring within *horizons for action*. These were defined as ‘perspectives and possibilities for action given in any field or intersection of fields’ (Hodkinson, 1998, p97). Young people’s horizons for action constrain and enable their actions and are influenced both by subjective aspects (dispositions of ‘habitus’) and objective aspects (the possibilities in the education and training ‘fields’). They also highlighted how careership must be viewed as a progression over time; identities and situations alter and as this occurs a decision to change direction may become appropriate. They proposed that this is best understood using the notions of *turning points* interspersed with periods of *routine*, to help identify significant developments in the process of careership.

Use of the concepts of horizons of action and turning points has been taken up and advocated by others. Ball, Maguire and Macrae (2000) focus on the social, political and economic ‘landscapes’ in which a small group of young people who are growing up in South London in the late 1990s live, and on how these landscapes affect the young people’s choices, plans and identities. Four themes are identified which they propose provide the ‘borderlines’, shaping the young people’s ‘*horizons for action*’ or ‘*landscapes of choice*’. These themes are:

the rise and spread of the culture of individualism and economics of individualization (Beck, 1992); the intensification of social and economic polarization; issues around consumerism, leisure and identity; and the alleged demise of class politics alongside the

ascendancy of new work and labour market identification.

Ball, Maguire and Macrae, 2000, p2.

They also identify three '*arenas for action*' in which young people's lives are based; these are 'family, home and domesticity', 'work, education and training' and 'leisure and social life'. From these starting points, they report on the ways in which different groups of young people make decisions; decisions bounded by the influence of real, but changing, social structures. In essence, they argue that young people's identities are shaped by their choices, which are influenced by the available opportunities and the obstacles encountered (Ball, Maguire and Macrae, 2000; Maguire, Ball and Macrae, 2000b).

Critical moments (Thomson et al, 2000) and fateful moments (Giddens, 1991) are terms used similarly to Hodkinson et al's turning points, to denote events which have particularly profound consequences within individual biographies. Identifying critical moments within a biography reveals both significant events, including significant external influences, and an individual's responses (agency) to such events. On this basis, Thomson, Bell, Holland, Henderson, McGrellis and Sharpe (2000) argue for the theoretical leverage provided by use of this concept as an analytical tool. Use of the concept also provides a means of taking into account contingent events (e.g. unexpected bereavement) which can have a causal influence on young people's transitions.

Learning careers

Bloomer and Hodkinson (2000) grappled with how to link learning and context theoretically. They proposed the concept of '*learning career*' to refer to the 'development of dispositions to learning over time'. All fifty of their sample of

young people exhibited ‘transformations’ in their dispositions to learning over the four year period. These were neither pre-determinable nor uni-directional, but were oriented by ‘habitus’ and connected to the young people’s search for identity within changing social, cultural and economic contexts. The case of Amanda Ball, mentioned earlier (cf ‘Building life histories’), was used to illustrate how dispositions to learning are linked with experiences beyond the learning environment, experiences extending to all aspects of life. Amanda’s dispositions to learning underwent continual revision in response to the situations she found herself in, and as her identity evolved. Amanda’s withdrawal from her A-level courses was influenced by circumstances in her personal life; firstly, living independently of her parents and the financial and psychological strains this entailed, and secondly, the poor health of her boyfriend and her role in caring for him. In these circumstances, her evaluations of educational opportunities became more instrumental, and she took up an Advanced GNVQ course in Business so that she could ‘get a job in an office anywhere’ (Bloomer and Hodkinson, 2000, p3). Bloomer and Hodkinson concluded that, although changes were often profound and unpredictable, though understandable with hindsight, not everything changed in young people’s dispositions and rarely did these break free of the vestiges of class and gender. They argued that learning should be ‘treated as a profoundly social and cultural phenomenon and not simply a cognitive process’ (2000, p5).

Bloomer and Hodkinson (2001) furthered their analyses by employing Bourdieu’s concept of cultural capital in explaining their findings on learning career transformations. An analysis of cultural capital helps to define an individual’s horizons for action, and is also implicated in the scope an individual has for

achievement within their horizons for action. They argue that Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, cultural capital and field operate as powerful heuristic devices, which are capable of countering relapse into structure-agency dualisms.

When combined with habitus and field, cultural capital helps explain aspects of the interface between structure and agency in the development of individual learning careers. It helps us understand the ways in which Daniel, Tamsin and others were influenced by their positions and habituses in an unequally structured society, without being controlled by them. [...] Furthermore, cultural capital can also help avoid a common over-simplification: that structure provides the frame and that we act as agents within it. Cultural capital and habitus influence both the frame (horizons) and the actions, and reflexively change with them.

Bloomer and Hodkinson, 2001, p138.

Furthermore, this approach to data analysis allows agency to have a more or less directed or unintentional quality (which is an aim of Emirbayer and Misch's in proposing variation in temporal orientations cf §2.3.4). Raffo and Reeves (2000) used the concept of social capital in a similar way to develop a theoretical perspective of individualised systems of social capital on structure-agency interplay in young people's transitions. These conceptual advances highlight the need to account for the social, cultural and economic resources implicated in young people's transitions, if social inequalities are to be understood.

A biographical and longitudinal perspective can be valuable to gaining an understanding of the social processes involved, not only in the area of dispositions to learning, but also more generally across all aspects of transitions into adulthood. Alheit's (2002) arguments concur with this view. Alheit makes the point that learning is a ubiquitous and integral part of human experience, which takes place both within and outside formal institutions, but which in all cases is tied to 'the

context of a specific biography' (2002, p15). Biographies develop through processes of reflexive and pre-reflexive learning, which 'do not take place exclusively 'inside' the individual, but depend on communication and interaction with others' (2002, p16). Thus, in their search for identity, young adults making life transitions are engaged in a process of biographical learning, which is often implicit and profoundly influenced by their social environments.

2.3.5 Temporally and socially-embedded transitions

Middle range approaches, whether using comparative or biographical methodologies, have converged in recognition of the need to treat transition processes as, firstly, temporally embedded, and secondly, socially embedded. Beck's (1992, 1998) and Giddens' (1990, 1991) theoretical sketches assert that a key change in contemporary society is that the future is perceived to be more uncertain (cf §2.2.3). They claim that increasing levels of uncertainty (or risk in Beck's nomenclature) make active engagement in planning and construction of biographies requisite in life, as individuals attempt to control the uncertainty. Others, such as Sennett (1998), maintain that risk implies losing control, as present experiences no longer appear to be guided by the past and therefore planning loses its meaning (Nilsen, 1999). The question is about individuals' experiences of time, and how the past and future are related in the present to identity and action.

Biographical time, that manifests itself on an individual level in 'memory' (past), in 'being here and now' (present) and in 'expectations, plans, hopes and fears' (future), constitutes identity, that results from the way the three dimensions of time are connected.

Cavalli cited in Reiter, 2003, p2.

How time is experienced at an individual level has been identified as an important

line of enquiry in studies of young people, through a further set of work. Young people's views of their futures, plans for their futures and how these aspects relate to life course developments have been considered by Anderson, Bechhofer, Jamieson, McCrone, Li and Stewart (2002). It has been argued that young people's identities, their exercise of agency, and therefore, their transitions into adulthood, are all influenced by their orientations towards time (Brannen and Nilsen, 2002; Reiter, 2003; Maguire, Ball and Macrae, 2000a). Empirical findings from some of these studies are referred to in §3.4.1.

Thus, there has been convergence on a view of transition processes as temporally embedded. This was highlighted earlier in the chapter in discussion of the biographical approach, for which a longitudinal perspective is central, and in recent formulations of the concept of agency, which encourage a view of it as relating to three temporal orientations. The present study conceives of agency as shaped by young people's pasts, presents and futures; data is collected and analysed within this framework. Although a longitudinal approach is not taken in this study, in-depth interviews, structured around these timeframes, were carried out with young people. This allows a view of structure and agency as they relate within individual lives over time.

Empirical data collected through both the biographical and comparative approaches has indicated the extent of the influence of social contexts on how agency is manifest. This leap in understanding has subsequently been incorporated into theoretical developments, including the concept of bounded agency and use of the concepts of cultural and social capital, to aid explanation of young people's

transitions.

The present study is designed to take account of the social influences on young people's transition processes. Specifically, the study takes an approach, similar to those advocated by Goldthorpe (1998) and Emirbayer and Misch (1998), in which patterns of action (understood broadly to include dispositions to act) which emerge from particular situations are identified and interpreted. Analysis across six structural contexts (de-lineated by institutional setting and gender) allows a view of how agency and control vary according to social location. Institutional setting is selected as a key variable for comparison as it distinguishes between young people on the basis of their economic status and, therefore, also on the basis of their levels of access to resources. The rationale for selecting gender as the other key variable for comparison is discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 3: Gender and agency in young people's transitions

3.1 Introduction

The present study focuses on personal agency in young peoples' transitions. Variations in agency are identified across structural contexts, which are defined with reference to institutional setting and gender. Gender is a significant variable in the study's design and the literature concerned with gender is a pertinent aspect of the project's context. This is reviewed with reference to how gender has been approached both generally in sociological debate and specifically in studies of young people's transitions. The concept of gender is identified as one which contributes to the understanding and explanation of differences in young people's experiences in life (§3.2). The following section introduces recent debate on the extent to which gender relations are currently changing and discusses the evidence in support of various points of view (§3.3). Next, the findings of several recent and pertinent empirical studies of structure and agency in young people's lives are reported (§3.4). This chapter concludes by identifying the contribution made by this thesis to the current body of knowledge and the research questions developed from this literature to advance the study (§3.5).

3.2 Gender in sociological debate

Since the 'second wave' of the women's movement in the 1970s, gender has been investigated and extensively documented as a significant source of social stratification. There is a substantial body of sociological literature and feminist critique which debates relations between men and women, the inequalities between them and how these are sustained. §3.2.1 reviews theoretical perspectives on gender

differences and inequalities from early conceptions to contemporary perspectives. Theories are distinguished as primarily structuralist or individualist or as attempting to embrace both viewpoints, in their explanation of gender differences and inequalities. §3.2.2 considers historical perspectives on gender in studies of young people's transitions.

3.2.1 Perspectives on gender difference and inequality

Gender is widely acknowledged as a significant source of social stratification, which structures the opportunities available to people and influences the kinds of roles they play within society. Women have traditionally been responsible for domestic work and childcare, while men have provided the family livelihood (Giddens, 2001). This division of labour was (and sometimes still is) understood to be a 'natural' result of differences in males' and females' biological roles in reproduction. The functionalist perspective (Parsons, 1956), maintained that society socialised children into roles most fitting for their sex, given the biological differences. Children internalised the social norms expected of their sex as they grew up. Parson's binary division of men and women into distinct social roles assumed that this is fixed, both socially and historically. Differences in males' and females' life courses were viewed as biologically ordained, culturally inculcated and as unproblematic.

The inequalities which this division of labour results in, with males having greater access to positions of status in society and to wealth, was the focus of the second wave of the feminist movement in the 1960s and 70s. Women's access to paid employment was their main concern, since it is this which can provide the means to economic independence and, through this, liberation from the family and domestic

service to men.

The feminist agenda was taken up by feminist academics. A distinction was made between a person's sex (biological differences) and their gender (psychological, social and cultural differences). They disputed the existence of a biological basis to the sexual division of labour and argued instead that gender differences and hence inequalities are socially constructed. Feminist academics drew attention to the prevailing male-centred bias within sociology and initially sought to address this by examining the situations of women. The concept of sex roles was adopted from functionalist perspectives but re-cast to illustrate how men and women were limited by socially constructed categories (Wyn and White, 1997, p11). In the 1980s, the focus shifted towards a gender-balanced approach, with attempts made to understand the construction of masculinity as well as femininity, and how these relate to each other. More recently, post-modernist and post-structural theses have been influential, resulting in theories emphasising a diversity of gendered identities which are established through social interaction (Connell, 1995). The construction of gendered identities and subjectivities has been investigated empirically (Mac an Ghail, 1994; Kehler, 2000). Mac an Ghail (1994), for example, explored the development of masculinities within the context of schools and argued that young people are active agents in this process, such that masculinities are not constructed in unitary ways. Furthermore, schools shape gendered identities actively through both the formal and hidden curricula. Mac an Ghail argued that dominant forms of masculinity are constructed in relation to both subordinate masculinities and femininities.

A particularly influential feminist explanation of gender inequality is Walby's (1990)

theory of patriarchy. This maintains that gender inequalities are a direct result of social and economic structures. The division of labour and occupational segregation are viewed as the result of deliberate strategies designed to exclude women and to secure men advantaged positions in the public world and the domestic services of women. She identifies these strategies as operating in six main areas: household labour, paid work, the state, male violence, patriarchal relations in sexuality and patriarchal cultural institutions. This is a structural analysis. The theory's polarisation of male and female situations has led to the criticism that it is an oversimplification (Connell, 1987).

Hakim (1995) takes this view, contending that patriarchal explanations present a view of women as a homogeneous group who all want to work full-time. In contrast, she proposes that gendered life patterns are largely a result of differentiated 'preferences' or choices. She identifies two types of women, distinguished by their commitment to work. 'Committed' women work full-time, while the 'uncommitted' work part-time and combine this with domestic responsibilities. Hakim argues that individual tastes and preferences influenced by biology are most important. She claims this provides an explanation of how women who work for low-pay in poor conditions often say they are satisfied (contentiously she characterises them as 'grateful slaves'). This individualist view has rightly been criticised, given the extent of the evidence documenting the structural effects of differential levels of resources, opportunities and constraints on women's behaviours compared with men's (Caven, 1999; Crompton, 1997; Pilcher, 1999); however, that is not to say that women do not have choices. Crompton (1997) is clear about the need to develop explanations which appreciate the multitude of factors accounting for gendered

patterns. Her writing places...

...an emphasis upon the multi-strandedness of any explanation of gender relations, the gender division of labour and women's work. We should therefore anticipate that capitalism and patriarchal processes, structural factors and individual choices, rather than any single theory of 'patriarchy', will contribute to an explanation of the complex totality of women's employment.

Crompton, 1997, p23.

Thus, in a similar spirit to middle-range theorists in youth research, it is argued that a theory of gender must incorporate both structural and agentic influences in order to develop a view of how change occurs over time (Crompton, 1997; Pilcher, 1999). It must also be historically and culturally sensitive and show how gendered identities inter-relate with other sources of inequality (such as class, ethnicity, age and sexuality). Finally, there should be reference made to the human body. This is surely implicated even if not in a deterministic way since it is the physical differences between male and female bodies which provide the starting point for constructions of gender (Pilcher, 1999, p 9).

The theory which has met these aims most successfully to date is Connell's (1987, 1995) theory of how gender inequalities are sustained (Giddens, 2001; Pilcher, 1999). Connell expands on Walby's (1990) theory of patriarchy by outlining an understanding of masculinities and femininities as arranged according to a gendered order at the societal level. The approach portrays masculinities and femininities as constructed in a multitude of ways, and therefore, highlights diversity within each gender. Gender is conceived of as constructed via our interpretations and definitions of the reproductive and sexual capacities of the human body. Pilcher further explains Connell's view as follows:-

Masculinities and femininities can be understood as the effects of these interpretations and definitions: on bodies, on personalities, and on society's culture and institutions. Gender is therefore an ongoing creation of human agency, which at an institutional and structural level also acts to constrain individual agency.

Pilcher, 1999, p 12.

Gender relations are viewed as the product of social interactions and practices. The result is that masculinities dominate femininities; however, since gender relations are viewed as the outcome of on-going processes, the possibility of change in the construction of, and relations between, masculinities and femininities is recognised. Indeed, Connell is optimistic that the hegemonic version of masculinity (being heterosexual, macho, in authority and paid employment) is currently being challenged in a variety of ways. The implications of recent and current social trends for gender relations are considered in §3.3.

3.2.2 Historical perspectives on gender and young people's transitions

The treatment of gender in studies of young people's lives reflects its treatment in sociology generally. In exploring processes of social and cultural reproduction, British youth research initially focused on young white working-class males (e.g. Hall and Jefferson, 1976; Willis, 1977). Traditional assumptions were made about male and female roles in society and social relations were viewed as produced through forms of male labour. Thus, women's experiences were marginalised.

Studies proliferated in the late 1970s and 1980s which sought to address this gender imbalance by investigating the experiences of girls and women. Some of this work illustrated the importance of the domain of reproduction to understanding processes of social and cultural reproduction among female school-leavers (Davies, 1983; McRobbie, 1978; Pollert, 1981; Anyon, 1983; Griffin, 1985, Wallace, 1987).

Working-class girls, in particular, were more likely than young men to be doing domestic work within their families while at school or in training (Wallace, 1987). Griffin (1985) explored the experiences of a group of working-class girls in Birmingham, leaving school and entering the labour market in 1979. Young women's positions in the labour market were expected to be temporary, in line with their future roles as wives and mothers, and they experienced both social and economic pressure to 'get a man' (Griffin, 1985, p186-187). This pressure influenced young women's perceptions of 'a good job for a girl' as constituting office rather than factory based work, partly because this presented greater opportunities for meeting an eligible man (as well as providing a better working environment). The difficulties women faced in resisting male dominance in the work place, and entering traditionally male occupations were also documented (Griffin, 1985; Breakwell, 1986). There are also pressures on boys not to enter 'female' areas of work; however, Attwood and Hatton argued that it was more difficult for women to sustain careers in engineering than it was for males in hairdressing. They found '*boys likely to experience positive discrimination when entering an area of 'woman's work'*' (1984, p17).

Wallace's (1987, 1989) study, carried out as youth unemployment rates rose, illustrated how the domestic sphere is just as important to understanding young men's transitions, in their expectation of becoming a 'breadwinner', as it is to understanding young women's. She proposed that both domains be considered in order to develop a comprehensive picture of youth, accounting for the situations of both males and females:-

Male and female youth may stand in different relations to the private and public sphere, but both should be taken into account in the case of both genders.

Wallace, 1987, p246.

Wallace (1994) took a gender-balanced approach as part of the second Anglo-German study (cf §2.3.4); exploring young men's and women's identities and transitions, both in work and the domestic sphere. Wallace's findings are considered in the next section which introduces recent debate on gender relations in today's world. The present study takes a gender-balanced approach. This approach is consistent with the view taken in the present research, and introduced through discussion of Mac an Ghail (1994) and Connell's (1987, 1995) work in the previous section (cf §3.2.1), that gender should be treated as a relational concept. Incorporating consideration of both male and female perspectives is also necessary to make an assessment of current gender relations.

3.3 Individualisation and the gender revolution: Changing gender relations?

Women's lives have changed fundamentally since the 1970s. Factors such as increasing life expectancy, deskilling of housework, possibilities for family planning, increasing divorce rates and the equalisation of educational opportunities have all contributed to women's increased motivation for, and dependency on, paid work (Beck, 1992). Women's opportunities for paid work have also increased due to a shift from manufacturing to service sector employment and government equal opportunities legislation campaigned for by feminists. Thus, women's life courses now incorporate labour market involvement as a central rather than a peripheral feature of their biographies.

Women across the industrial world are increasingly better educated and their performance has improved most in the countries with most labour market opportunities for women (Frønes, 2001). In the 1980s, a gender gap in favour of UK girls' educational attainment appeared for the first time. This has been attributed to the influence of wider social and economic factors, including women's greater participation in the labour market and changes in values about women's roles in family life (Arnot, David and Weiner, 1999). It appears that as girls' and young women's choices and awareness of their positions increased, expectations of their futures altered and their academic performances rose correspondingly.

Beck (1992) proposes that women's greater involvement in the labour market locks them into processes of individualisation (as described in §2.2.3). The universalism of the market has *'weaken(ed) the ties of women to their industrially produced 'status fate' of compulsory housework and support by a husband'* (Beck, 1992, p104); however, the experience of individualisation differs for men and women. In the search for economic security and a 'life of one's own', women enter new terrain, letting go of their traditional roles of 'living for others' and forming new projects without any model or tradition; whereas for men, making an independent living and the old roles coincide, thus *'individualization (...) strengthens masculine role behavior'* (Beck, 1992, p111).

Beck argues that the labour market's dual effect on the family is undermining the feudal arrangements upon which industrial society was founded. A clash between the feudal organisation of the industrial world and the individualisation of male and female life contexts, which has created awareness of traditional inequalities and requires greater negotiation within families in order to accommodate both spouses'

ambitions, is changing gender relations. Young men and women encounter convergence in decisions to be made in relation to marriage, children and their spouse's career (Beck, 1992). Women encounter realities in the inflexibility of the labour market and male behaviour which are contrary to their new perspectives (Beck, 1992, Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002; cf p82):-

The choosing, deciding, shaping human being who aspires to be the author of his or her own life, the creator of an individual identity, is the central character of our time. It is the fundamental cause behind changes in the family and the global gender revolution in relation to work and politics.

Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002, p23.

...values of autonomy, independence or personal space are emphasised much more strongly than in the past. A job or career has become a part of women's life project, because it promises recognition, money of their own and personal development beyond the family. Expectations of equality and fairness in relations between the sexes develop in the process (...). But in everyday life there is little support for these expectations; in other words, not much has been done to follow up the rhetoric of equality with a reshaping of social practice.

Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002, p102.

As mentioned previously (cf §2.2.3), Beck's thesis is speculative. His ideas concerning the differential effects of individualisation on men and women are unsubstantiated and the subject of debate.

There is empirical evidence of change in young women's perspectives. A study by the British think tank Demos identified a substantial shift in values between older and younger generations. Young women in particular were found to exhibit a desire for autonomy, self-fulfilment in work and family and a valuing of risk, excitement and change. They supported a re-alignment of work in female lives and of male and female dependencies (Wilkinson and Mulgan (1995) cited in Arnot, David and

Weiner, 1999, p106). Studies have confirmed the central position of labour force participation in today's young women's plans and identities (Chisholm and Du Bois-Reymond, 1993; Wallace, 1994); however, there is also evidence that young women define their ambitions with respect to being happy and materially comfortable, while rejecting the notion of having a career in a traditional sense (Du Bois-Reymond, 1998). It has been suggested that women's broader orientation towards life satisfaction is beneficial as it 'provides them with the possibility of developing their own narrative or script in which changes of direction, disappointments and setbacks are placed in the context of wider life-concerns' (Dwyer and Wyn, 2001, p129). Dwyer and Wyn's Australian research found young women to be more likely to consider both the value of transferable skills acquired in their part-time work and changing educational institutions or courses if this potentially offered greater satisfaction and happiness in the longer-term. In contrast, young men relied more heavily on their courses to provide them with a focus and were more likely to assume that success depended on sticking with their initial choice (Dwyer and Wyn, 2001, p129). A similar finding was identified in recent analyses of large scale data sets in Britain which showed that women had travelled diverse paths, combining education, work and family life, while men's career paths were more uniform, falling primarily into full-time employment or education (Schoon, Bynner, Joshi and Wiggins, 2001; cf §3.4.2). Dwyer and Wyn concluded that young women find adopting the flexible approach necessitated by conditions in the labour market easier than young men. In this respect, they may be coping better with the effects of individualisation. Rudd and Evans (1998) reported a gender difference in levels of optimism among students in further education. Females had higher expectations of finding suitable employment (49%) compared with males (28%). They suggested

this could either indicate an awareness of increasing rates of male unemployment or that females started out with lower aspirations.

Analyses of the *Employment in Britain surveys* of the 1990s identified a rise in the frequency of unemployment among young men and a decrease in their job stability (Gallie, White, Cheng and Tomlinson, 1998)¹. This finding, in conjunction with evidence of women's increasing commitment to work and the feminisation of work more generally, has led to the claim that young men's and women's experiences of employment are converging (Gallie et al, 1998; Bradley, 1998). Fenton, Devadason, Bradley, Guy and West (2001) have argued that this is supported by their study which identified similar patterns in men's and women's job stability. It has been suggested that these changes challenge the 'privileged place of paid work in the construction of male identities' (Dwyer and Wyn, 2001, p131).

Arnot (2002) identifies the UK media as having interpreted girls' educational performance as a major challenge to male hegemony. She argues contrarily, however, that gender classifications continue to be transmitted conventionally, although more discreetly, such that scientific and technical spheres of employment remain male reserves, as females do not go on to convert academic capital into academic and economic privilege.

¹The ESRC project linked to this work found that males had more experience of being unemployed on more than one occasion. This was particularly the case for males of working class background in Hanover and Leipzig. In Derby, males across the social spectrum were slightly more likely than females to experience this (Evans, Rudd, Behrens, Kaluza and Woolley, 2000; Evans, 2002). British data sets show there is a larger minority of young men, with lower levels of educational qualifications, than previously who have not been able to make the transition into work, and who are also more likely to remain single, without children and continue to live with their parents (Schoon, Bynner, Joshi and Wiggins, 2001).

In many respects, the subordinate position of women to men within a gender-segregated labour market persists. Women generally earn, and are promoted, less than men (for a review of evidence see Crompton, 1997 and Pilcher, 1999). Arnot maintains that:-

...the persistent and extensive sex segregation of the labour market (integrated into class and race inequalities) casts a long shadow across the school system. This means that male and female curricula and career choices almost inevitably are gendered (and class- and ethnically-) based choices.

Arnot, 2002, p258.

In the 1990s, young British women continued to enter jobs and careers which are consistent with traditional gender-stereotypical roles (Gaskell, 1992; Banks et al, 1992; Chisholm and Du Bois-Reymond, 1993; Wallace, 1994; Hodkinson, Sparkes and Hodkinson, 1996). Seven years later, Gaskell explained this in similar terms to Griffin (1985), as follows:-

This belief that work outside the home will be secondary to work inside the home is critical to an understanding of how these young women plan their lives, and 'voluntarily' choose paths that will tend to reproduce their secondary status at work.

Gaskell, 1992, p79

Chisholm and Du Bois-Reymond (1993) considered patterns of gendered occupational choice through an exploration of the plans of girls and young women in Leiden and London. While these young women wanted both a career and a family, none more so than high achieving working-class girls, they generally aspired and expected to enter female-dominated employment. Collectively, they expressed the view that they would like future male partners to share housework and childcare equally and, while they did not see any reason why the principle breadwinner should

necessarily be male, they also expected that this would be difficult to arrange once children arrived. In Chisholm and Du Bois-Reymond's words:-

...it is the realism of the London girls which shapes their orientations and plans, leading them to tailor their expectations and decisions around the 'inevitable' of gender in adult life. One interpretation of these patterns is that (they are) aware (but not always clearly so) that there are alternatives to gender-specific Normalbiographien, but that most do not see themselves as having access to those alternatives, whether through educational-occupational achievement or otherwise.

Chisholm and Du Bois-Reymond, 1993, p267

Chisholm and Du Bois-Reymond identified three main factors acting against young women's desire to balance paid work and family more equally: 'provision of good quality, accessible and affordable childcare; the inflexibility of the social organisation of paid work; and men's intransigence as far as the domestic division of labour is concerned' (1993, p272). Wallace (1994) reported that women, in each of the three labour market trajectories considered in the second Anglo-German study (extended education, training for a trade and intermittent work/unemployment), and not their male counter-parts, took the implications of family life into account when making decisions concerning their careers. As a result, their transitions operated through a narrower range of occupational choices than young men's and tended more towards passivity (Evans and Furlong, 1997). Thus, while young women are more engaged in the labour market and may feel more independent because of it, they remain highly constrained (Dwyer and Wyn, 2001, p131).

Nevertheless, women in all social groups feel their choices are primarily self-determined (Wallace, 1994; Chisholm and Du Bois-Reymond, 1993). Bates' (1993) study of working-class girls, training to care for the elderly, provides an extreme

illustration of how even work which is the only alternative may be reconstructed as choice. Although the YTS girls initially viewed their placements with abhorrence, among those who didn't drop out, this attitude quickly transformed to enthusiasm and the view of it as 'right for me'. Bates argued that the study made plain the irony inherent within the processes at play; in that it is precisely the trends of individualisation, in respect of increased personal reflexivity and the goal of self-actualisation, which facilitated the reconstruction of 'fate' as 'choice', bringing the 'binding agreement of personal commitment ... to class-gendered destinations' (1993, p 30).

How women resolve the dilemmas they face in work and family life vary depending on their location with respect to the education, training and labour markets (Wallace, 1994; Chisholm and Du Bois-Reymond, 1993). Those with good opportunities in the labour market frequently delay or reject motherhood in contrast to those with the poorest prospects who typically become mothers when much younger. This illustrates the point that effects of individualisation differ by social position, as well as by gender (Arnot, 2002). Issues of gender inequality are entwined with social class.

The closing of the gender gap in educational attainment can largely be attributed to improvements in the performances of middle-class girls. Girls who attended private schools have been most successful in establishing themselves in professional careers and achieving economic independence, while others have been forced to reconnect with conventionally female forms of work given the realities of the labour market and their domestic responsibilities. Similarly, among boys, the elite have not experienced a crisis comparable to their less privileged peers. Thus, Arnot, David

and Weiner (1999, p28) highlight the importance of asking ‘*Which girls and which boys?*’ A similar point is made in the feminist account of Brine (1999) who argues that globalisation processes are gendered, classed and racialised and are strengthening rather than diminishing the marginalisation of under-educated working class women, within a discourse of equality. Walkerdine, Lucey and Melody’s (2001) study of female subjectivities has also led them to reassert the centrality of class in understanding differences in girls’ and women’s experiences of growing up. They stress that class is not simply produced by economics, but is:-

...there in the discourses and practices through which difference is made. It is at once social and profoundly psychic, (...). It demands that we find a new way of working that crosses the boundaries between social science disciplines to find a theory and practice that does not dualistically divide psychology and sociology but goes beyond them to incorporate a social and discursive psyche, a cultural specific and local account.

Walkerdine, Lucey and Melody, 2001, p215

This section has discussed recent changes in women’s objective situations and subjective perspectives, as well as the respects in which tradition continues to influence these. While some have re-emphasised the role of gender in shaping young men’s and women’s perspectives and situations (Wallace, 1994; Chisholm and Du Bois-Reymond, 1993), others make the point that females working in low-skill areas are likely to have more in common with similarly situated young men, than with their female peers preparing for professional careers (Dwyer and Wyn, 2001, p131; Walkerdine, Lucey and Melody, 2001). The next section presents recent evidence of structure-agency interplay in young people’s transitions which supports the latter view. Untangling the social inequalities of class and gender in young people’s transitions requires studies which locate young people within specific

social, political and economic environments (Wyn and Dwyer, 2001, p142). This is an aim of the present study.

3.4 Recent evidence of structure and agency in young people's transitions

This section discusses two particularly promising lines of enquiry identified in recent empirical studies which are of relevance to the present research. §3.4.1 reviews evidence concerning the significance that agency has for young people's transitions today. §3.4.2 considers recent progress which has been made in linking structural factors and agency in order to overcome dualistic treatments. The few gender-related findings are reported in this and the next section.

3.4.1 The significance of agency in today's world

There is now consensus with the view that young people's agency is an important aspect in furthering understanding of transitions into adulthood. Evidence reviewed in §2.2.2 suggests that young people are responding to uncertainty with a pragmatic, resilient and positive approach to their transitions (Dwyer and Wyn, 2001). Additional evidence of young people, themselves, emphasising the significance of personal agency is reported below. There are two issues which are more contentious; firstly, the extent to which this is a new phenomenon, and secondly, the extent to which personal agency influences outcomes in life in significant ways. Beck (1992) and Giddens (1991) argue that, today, people behave with greater reflexivity and must engage in planning their biographies more than in previous times.

Bynner, Ferri and Shepherd (1997) found that over 90% of young people in all groups, other than those without any qualifications at all (where the figure was 82%), agreed that they are in control of their lives. The minority expressing more negative views were the unemployed, long-term sick, least qualified and/or parents. A recent study undertaken by Anderson et al (2002) investigated forethought and planning among Scottish young adults and compared responses across generational and age groups. In 1999, 84% of 20 to 29 year olds, compared with 69% of 20 to 29 year olds in 1987, agreed that 'what happens to me is my own doing', rather than 'I feel that I have little influence over the things that happen to me'. Most young adults were found to exhibit a positive and proactive approach to the present and future, with most having well-articulated ambitions and plans. Consistent with Bynner et al's findings, the significant minority who were exceptions to this were generally young people of working class backgrounds, the unemployed and/or parents (especially lone mothers). These findings suggest that all but the most disadvantaged young people emphasise that they control their lives, perhaps more so than young people previously. There is little cross-generational evidence, other than Anderson et al's, which addresses the newness or otherwise of young people's individualised approaches to life.

A number of studies which considered young people's orientations towards their futures and making plans concluded that how young people behave in these respects has a significant influence on their future lives. Schneider and Stevenson (1999) distinguished between 'aligned' and 'misaligned' ambitions. They reported that the majority of young people lacked 'aligned ambitions' where these are 'characterised by the fit or correspondence between established educational and occupational goals

– ‘students with aligned ambitions know the type of job they want and how much education is needed to get it’ (1999, p6). They highlighted the potential of life-plans and aligned ambitions with regard to attaining successful career outcomes:-

We have found that life plans that are coherent with detail and realism are especially useful for choosing a path that increases the probability of success in adulthood. They provide adolescents with a sense of order, encourage them to engage in strategic effort and to sustain high levels of motivation, and to help them to use familial and organizational resources.

Schneider and Stevenson, 1999, p7

Their findings parallel those of Evans and Heinz (1994), who distinguished between modes of *active* and *passive* individualisation and suggested that the former mode is optimal (cf §2.3.4), and those of Fenton, Devadason, Bradley, Guy and West (2001), who distinguished between ‘young adults who make *strategic* choices in pursuit of a career, and those who make ‘next step’, or *tactical* choices in response to insecure or unsatisfactory unemployment’ (2001, p19). Clausen (1991a) equated agency with ‘planful competence’, which he defined as ‘the capacity of individuals to articulate and pursue life plans’, and which is reflected in an ‘individual’s intellectual investment, self-confidence and dependability’¹. Clausen (1993) showed that adolescent ‘planful competence’ is a powerful predictor of lifetime educational and occupational attainment, surpassing in magnitude the effect of intelligence or a parent’s socioeconomic status. Shanahan and Reitzle (1998) measured Clausen’s concept of ‘planful competence’ and, similarly, found levels of planful competence to be ‘the most powerful predictor of adjustment into a new setting’ (1998, p21). The influence of agency on longer-term outcomes, independent of structural factors,

¹ Clausen’s concept of ‘planful competence’ influenced the initial checklist for questionnaire development (cf §4.1.4; appendix 4(ii) under indicators of agency).

has been demonstrated by Côté (2002). In this study, conducted with middle-class students making the transition from university to work in Canada, the narrow range of structural differentiation in the sample allowed the significance of agentic factors in relation to later outcomes to be tested. Agentic factors were more strongly associated than the structural factors of parental education and income with later adoption of an adult identity, satisfaction with present life and a match between a young person's present life and goals in life.

This body of evidence suggests that agency in the transition process is related to positive later outcomes. There is also evidence that structural factors affect levels of agency in substantive ways (cf §2.3.4). Evans, Rudd, Behrens, Kaluza and Woolley (2000) identified a link between planning orientations and higher social class groups. This finding was found to mask important differences across institutional settings, with young people from 'skilled non-manual' classes scoring highest among students in higher education. This suggests that this group relied more, than young people from professional and managerial/technical families, on 'planning' their way into higher education and supports the notion that features of class experience operate to generally 'keep young people in the socially reproductive 'line of least resistance'' (Evans, 2002). Whether, and how, one engages in planning relates to how one thinks about time (cf §2.3.5) and this is influenced substantially by young peoples' past experiences and their social backgrounds (Brannen and Nilsen, 2002). Reiter provided evidence of a group of young disadvantaged people in Austria 'acting and reacting within a foreshortened time perspective' (2003, p274). It was found that young people's reluctance to engage in hoping and planning resulted in more limited personal expectations and, if pressed to articulate preferences for their future lives,

standardised norms were concentrated on. These reactions imply a loss of a sense of control over what happens to them. The next section considers recent UK research which attempts to link structural factors and agency.

3.4.2 Linking agency and structural factors

Some particularly pertinent recent research has arisen from recent analyses of large scale data-sets collected from two British Birth Cohorts (Bynner, Ferri and Shepherd, 1997; Schoon, Bynner, Joshi and Wiggins, 2001; Bynner, Elias, McKnight, Pan and Pierre, 2002). The 1958 National Child Development Study (NCDS) and the 1970 British Birth Cohort Study (BCS70) have followed the development of over 30,000 individuals from birth, through childhood and into early adulthood.

Comparisons of the transitions of these cohorts of young people, born twelve years apart, have shown social inequalities to be increasing together with opportunities for social mobility to be diminishing. Socio-economic adversity was a stronger predictor of individual adaptation in the BCS70 cohort than the NCDS cohort; those suffering material deprivation were more disadvantaged relative to other children (Schoon, Bynner, Joshi and Wiggins, 2001). Transitions were identified as more risky for particular sub-groups of the BCS70 cohort, with a greater minority at risk of social exclusion. Bynner, Elias, McKnight, Pan and Pierre (2002) reported that, although by age 26 most young men, in both cohorts, were employed, a divergence was identifiable in their transition histories; specifically, of the group not engaged in employment, training or education at age 17, four times as many of the BCS70 cohort were unemployed at age 21. It was suggested that the penalty incurred from

earlier poor labour market experiences had increased. Qualifications had become more important for labour market participation in BCS70 and higher qualifications divided their recipients more from the rest. While high qualifications were found to 'absorb' the effects on later outcomes of all social background and early educational attainment factors, attainment remained greatly influenced by family background, and it was the 'not so bright' middle-class who had benefited most from expanded educational provision (Schoon et al, 2001). Overall, experiences among the younger cohort had become *more polarised* with a growing division emerging between the rich and the poor.

Schoon, Bynner, Joshi and Wiggins (2001) used structural equation modelling to test a proposed model of developmental and contextual factors linking childhood experiences to adult outcomes, and thereby, influencing transitions into adulthood. Socio-economic adversity (which they termed 'social risk') at one age point was found to be a strong predictor of adversity and maladjustment experienced later. This relationship was found to be mediated by the ways in which adversity undermines individual resources. In their words: 'social class operates as a distal system, influencing individual resources via the proximal, more directly experienced context in the family environment, especially through the material condition in the family home' (2001, p3). Adversity experienced early in life (before age 7) had the strongest effect on individual resources, though school entry and school leaving ages were identified as sensitive periods when the impact of external circumstances is pronounced. The experience of cumulative adversity had effects beyond those associated with early or current adversity. Thus, a strong chain of contextual risk factors was identified in a process described as continuous (in that one outcome

leads to another), cumulative (in that it is the combination of multiple social risks which weakens positive adjustment) and cyclical (in that outcomes are mutually reinforcing).

Schoon, Bynner, Joshi and Wiggins (2001) identified specific protective factors which can impede or halt the accumulation of risk during specific periods of development. These factors included individual factors such as academic ability, behavioural adjustment, positive motivation and a belief in one's own abilities. Parental support for education and the development of high aspirations, as well as encouragement from teachers, were factors found to assist young disadvantaged people in developing their individual resources fully and these kinds of support were particularly beneficial at school-leaving age. Although material deprivation in the family home was identified as the most important factor influencing the development of individual resources (indicating the necessity of tackling child poverty) these protective factors provide ideas for developing additional interventions.

The findings from the British Birth Cohorts' data point to the significance of *social and economic resources* as key mediating factors in structure-agency interplay and support recent use of Bourdieu's concepts of capital in studies of young people (cf §2.3.4).

Thomson and Holland's (2002) recent biographical study also identified the mediating role played by access to resources of various kinds. They argue that 'the kinds of identities that young people invest in and the forms of strategies and tactics they engage with are in large part dependent on the resources on which they are able to draw' (2002, p10). In a related piece of work, Thomson, Henderson and Holland

drew on notions of social capital to 'examine the relationship between the resources young people have available to them and their resourcefulness in drawing upon these' (2003, p33). They maintained that gendered identities play a central role and, to illustrate this, presented three case studies of young women from the same (poor) locality, who all initially held professional ambitions, but who ultimately experienced different outcomes in relation to education. Each of the cases showed a different balance between individual and wider resources, and together they illustrated the conflicting demands and values to be negotiated. They suggested that the 'dominant construction of femininity in their community is particularly problematic in relation to the realisation of dreams or plans of social mobility and educational success' (2003, p45). The strategies adopted by the three young women in response to the conflicting demands of 'mobility' and life in their 'locality' were influenced by their relationships with their parents and the family's negotiation of values of success. For example, 'Maureen's determination to pursue her academic dreams meant that she must relinquish any thoughts of the version of femininity available to her in the community' (2003, p45) and 'Maureen's parents made deliberate interventions into her friendships and activities to orient her towards a pathway in which a sense of belonging was deferred until university' (2003, p44). To move out of the community it was necessary to isolate oneself from it. In Lauren's case, her social resources (in large part the influence of her mother) appeared to act to draw her back into the community, resulting in more limited horizons which were understood as offering her the chance of more 'happiness'. Thomson et al's studies (2002, 2003) provide support for Bell's contention that:-

The family is perhaps the most important site of resources for young people, and economic, cultural, social and symbolic capital are transmitted through parenting practices, practical support, social networks, aspirations etc.

Bell 2001a/b cited in Thomson and Holland, 2002, p10.

Overall, the findings discussed in this section suggest that agency has indeed become a more important feature influencing young people's transitions into adulthood. If the development of personal agency depends to a large extent on social and economic resources, the polarising effect observed in young people's transitions can be accounted for by agency having become a more significant factor; in other words, those for whom material disadvantage has undermined the development of their individual resources are now even more disadvantaged relative to others than previously. If it is accepted that agency is important for young adults navigating their ways into adulthood, and probably more now than ever before, the question of how its development can be encouraged and supported is pertinent.

3.5 A focus on gender and agency in young adult transitions

This section outlines the contribution made by this thesis to the current body of knowledge, as reviewed in Chapters 2 and 3, and presents the research questions developed to advance the study. This is preceded by a short re-cap of key aspects of the study's theoretical rationale.

This study is located as a middle-range investigation (cf §2.2.3) that explores the interplay of structural and agentic influences on transition processes in a sample of 18 to 25 year olds in Derby, England. In line with recent directions in the field, transitions into adulthood are treated holistically and as social processes which are temporally and socially embedded. The study is concerned with exploring patterns

in manifestations of young adults' personal agency and, to this end, focuses on subjective perspectives. Emirbayer and Misch's (1998) conceptualisation of agency, as a temporally embedded process in which both past experiences and future perspectives shape orientations within the contingencies of the present moment, is drawn on. The assumption is made that observed patterns in agency may be understood as rational from the actors' points of view, and hence are interpretable in the light of the contexts which gave rise to them (Goldthorpe, 1998).

While there is recognition in the literature that gender affects young people's transitions in significant ways, how gender is related to personal agency specifically is an almost entirely unexplored area. Findings which relate to agency and gender include those from studies by Shanahan and Reitzle (1998), Anderson, Bechhofer, Jamieson, McCrone, Li and Stewart (2002) and Côté (2002). Anderson et al (2002) identified few gender differences in patterns of forethought (just one aspect of agency). Shanahan and Reitzle also reported just one gender difference in levels of planful competence (boys had more during mid-adolescence); and furthermore, they showed these levels to be associated similarly with indicators of adjustment at a later time. Shanahan and Reitzle concluded that 'goals and planning matter equally for the lives of these boys and girls' (1998, p22). In contrast, Clausen (1991b, 1993) reported that, for a sample born half a century earlier, planfulness was more significant in the lives of males than females. Although Shanahan and Reitzle only followed their sample up to ages 18 or 19, it is likely that their findings, compared with Clausen's, reflect a shift in which progress in gender equality afforded planfulness a more important role in women's lives. Côté (2002) identified some interesting but weak interactive effects between gender and parental investment

(within a narrow range of socioeconomic statuses). The finding that females who received high levels of parental financial support and males who received low levels of support had better later outcomes led him to conclude that parental investment can change how males and females approach the university context. Other, primarily biographical, studies which have explored agency, failed to do so through a consideration of the perspectives of *both* young men and women, for example, Thomson and Holland's (2003) study. There is obviously a specific and substantial gap in the literature with regards to the relative effects of *gender* and other structural factors on agency, which this study makes a contribution towards filling.

The study is advanced with data relating to four key aspects of young adults' perspectives, which provide a means of assessing overall patterns of agency across groups of young adults located in six specific social and economic environments. The study considers variations across three institutional settings and both genders in:-

1. perceptions of opportunity and constraint
2. indicators of individual agency
3. indicators of collective agency
4. perspectives on the future

Analyses across this six-cell matrix (defined by setting and gender) draw primarily on questionnaire and focus group data. These are complemented by further analyses of data collected by means of individual interviews with young people in the employed setting. The findings derived from these explorations are discussed further

in Chapter 11, in terms of their implications for pertinent theoretical literature. As described previously, the individualisation thesis is given particular attention. Although Beck (1992) and Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002) discuss how gender may relate to the individualisation thesis, their speculations are without adequate empirical substantiation at present. The project data will make a contribution in this respect also. The next chapter explains the study's research design and methods. These were informed by methodological approaches taken in previous studies in the field, as reviewed in §2.3.4.

Chapter 4: Research design and methods

This thesis is concerned with the interplay of agency and structural factors in young people's transition processes. The focus is on agency, which is conceived of as a temporally-embedded process in which the contingencies of the present moment are considered in relation to past experiences, and the future possibilities envisaged (Emirbayer and Misch, 1998). Agency was, therefore, investigated by exploring and comparing how young people reported on their present lives, past experiences and future possibilities. This chapter sets out the rationale for the overall research design, including the selection of data collection methods and development of instruments (§4.1), and discusses the processes of field work, data collection (§4.2) and data analyses (§4.3) undertaken to address the research questions outlined in §3.5.

4.1 A mixed methods approach for exploring young adults' perspectives

The term 'mixed methods' is used to describe an approach in which both quantitative and qualitative research methods are used in relation to the same object of study or substantive issue (Brannen, 1992). A number of additional terms for this general approach are commonly used in the research methods literature; these include 'multi-methods', 'mixed models' and 'mixed methodologies'. A mixed methods approach was taken in the current study; §4.1.1 discusses the rationale for this decision and §4.1.2 provides a description of the specific research strategy developed.

4.1.1 Rationale for using a mixed methods approach

The approach taken builds on the success of the mixed methods research design

developed by Rudd (1996), which itself drew influence from earlier uses of mixed methods by the ESRC initiative and Anglo-German studies. All these previous studies have investigated young people's transitions through a focus on young people's perspectives. The rationale for this focus is clear, since structural and agentic influences are mediated by subjectivities (cf §2.3.1). On the basis of an extensive review of the literature, Rudd argued that the strength of employing a mixed methods approach with this aim is that it provides a fuller picture of young people's perspectives, allowing both structural and individual influences in young people's transitions to be taken into account (1996, p53). The most salient points justifying use of this approach with this aim are now outlined.

In their texts on mixed methods, Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998, 2003) emphasise the 'pre-eminence of the research question' over allegiance to particular paradigms of social science research. This is a view with which Bryman (1992) and Hammersley (1992) concur, both of whom oppose the paradigmatic divide which still exists among some sectors of the social science community. Bryman acknowledges that the quantitative and qualitative research traditions have been influenced by specific epistemological positions, but argues that it is not the case that they are inseparable from them (1992, p59). Hammersley maintains that these research traditions cannot be separated logically from one another anyway (1992, p51). The view taken in this project is that the research questions addressed ought to drive all methodological choices, including designing the study and the approaches taken to data collection, as well as analysing and reporting the results.

The benefit of using mixed methods to explore young people's perspectives is that quantitative and qualitative approaches can take differing roles within the study;

respectively, providing a way of considering 'structures' and 'processes', establishing relationships between variables and exploring the reasons behind those relationships, and thereby, providing a means of bridging macro-micro levels of social analysis (Bryman, 1988, 1992). Thus, quantitative and qualitative approaches are used to address different aspects of the research problem, in order that a fuller picture might be developed.

In a study that combines research methods properly, each enhances the other and the data-sets should be treated as complementary (Brannen, 1992, p12). This is an important point. There is much confusion in the research methods literature concerning the goals of mixed methods, which has arisen from use of the term 'triangulation' (Gorard and Taylor, 2004). The term triangulation was initially used to describe the process of 'multiple operationism' (using more than one approach to operationalise a concept), which was recommended in quantitative research to reduce measurement errors resulting from use of just one measure. The metaphor of triangulation has since been used in discussion about combining quantitative and qualitative approaches, resulting in the common misconception that mutual validation is the goal. Bryman argues that:-

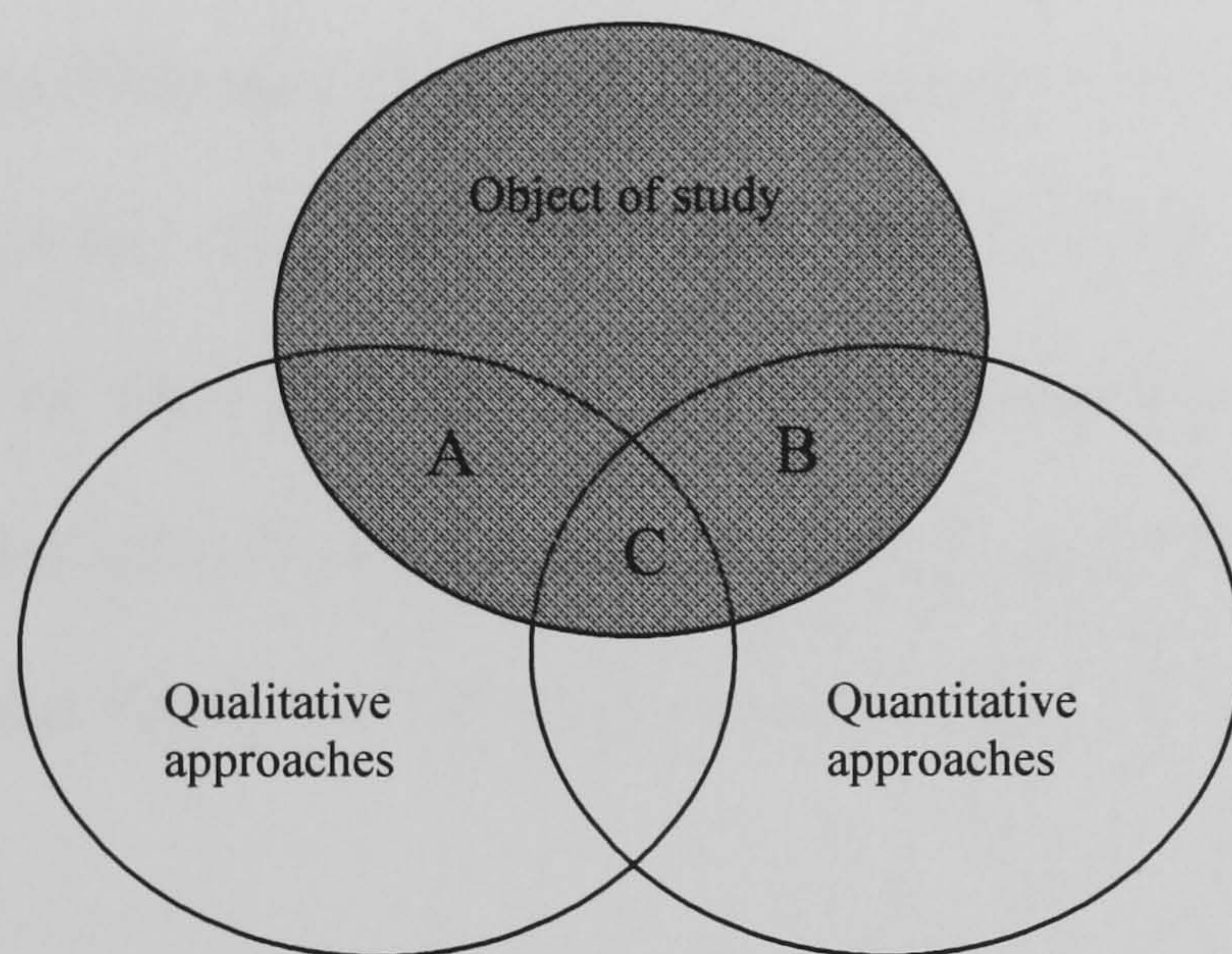
The very fact that the quantitative approach emphasizes causality, variables and a heavily pre-structured approach to research, while the qualitative research is concerned with the elucidation of subjects' perspectives, process, and contextual detail means that the ensuing data may not be as comparable as is sometimes proposed by the advocates of triangulation.

Bryman, 1992, p64.

The quantitative approach is characteristically indirect and reductive; the qualitative approach is characteristically direct and holistic (Gorard and Taylor, 2004). These

are the strengths of each; these are the different levels of enquiry at which they are directed, and this is why the use of both may be viewed as complementary, rather than validatory. Gorard and Taylor (2004) depict the situation as shown in Figure 4.1. Consistent with their views, the present study assumes that in collecting evidence of young people's perspectives neither quantitative nor qualitative approaches will give a complete picture, that both are valuable, and that both can give a differing partial picture. As Gorard and Taylor argue, 'Using the results in A, B and C as *all* valuable increases the amount of evidence available to us. This is the power of combining methods' (2004, p9).

Figure 4.1: A complementary combination of approaches



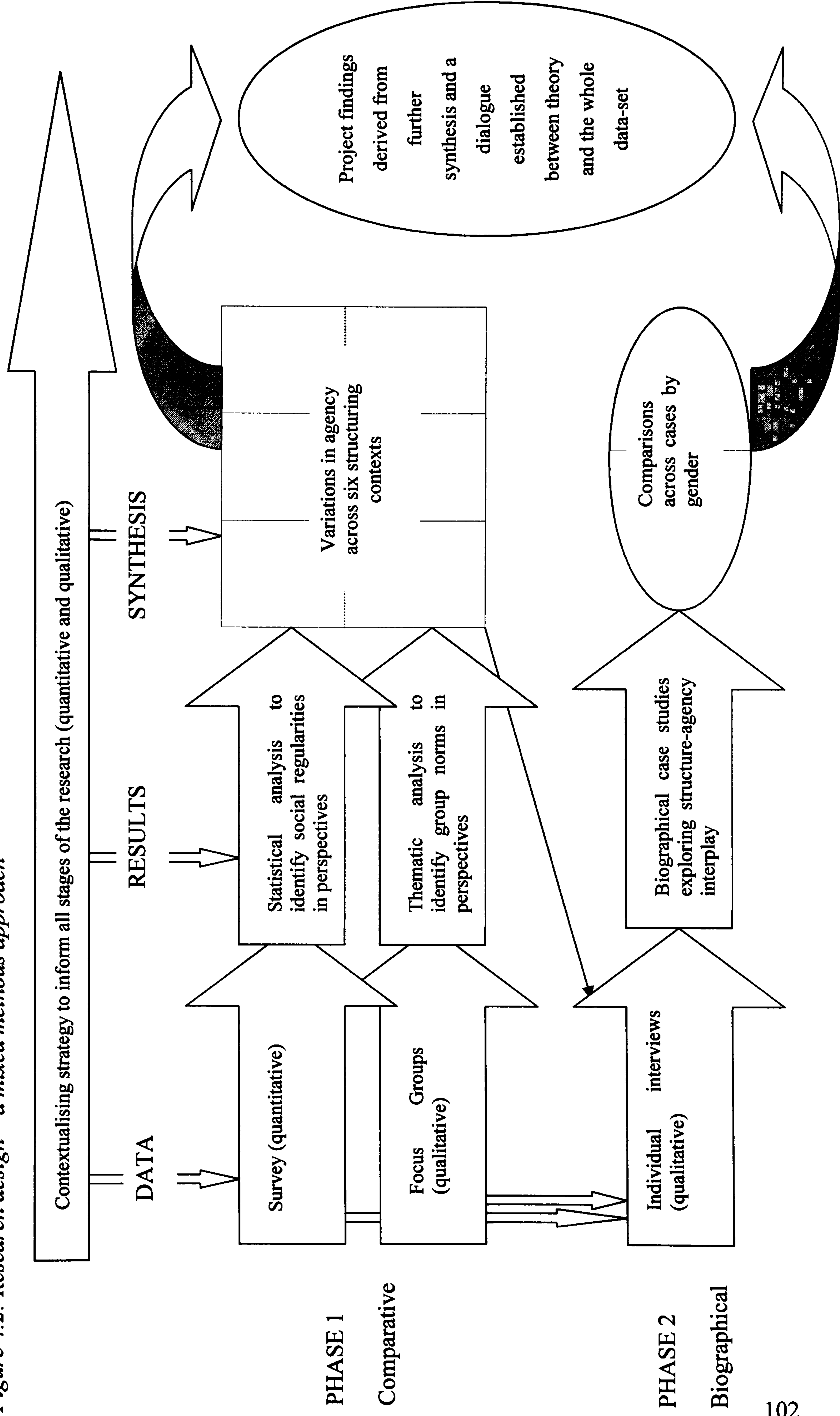
The data sets are not necessarily expected to be consistent. Indeed their differences may be as illuminating as their points of similarity, and any points of tension should be considered (Brannen, 1992). Bryman (1992) suggests that there is a fine line between seeing the data as inconsistent or as one set qualifying the other. Where quantitative and qualitative data-sets diverge, while addressing the same issue, this

should be followed up with further research.

4.1.2 Development of a mixed methods strategy

Designing a strategy for combining methods requires a number of decisions to be made concerning, for example: the relative importance accorded to each approach, whether the approaches are to be implemented sequentially or simultaneously, and the stage at which findings from each approach will be combined (Brannen, 1992; Creswell, 2003). Taxonomies identifying possibilities for mixed methods research strategies have recently been suggested (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998, 2003; Creswell, 2003). There are, however, numerous alternatives beyond those included by Creswell or Tashakkori and Teddlie, and the present study's strategy is not identical to any they describe. The strategy selected builds on Rudd's (1996), which combined the uses of a survey, focus group interviews and key informant interviews (cf §2.3.4). These methods were used in both the ESRC and doctoral projects; however, this doctoral project adds an additional layer to the data set through the inclusion of individual biographical interviews. The study's overall research design, shown in Figure 4.2, is described fully next.

Figure 4.2: Research design – a mixed methods approach



The study was undertaken in two phases and involved the following combination of methods of data collection:-

1) Contextualising strategy (both phases)

- To understand the contexts which gave rise to the young adults' perspectives.

2) Questionnaire survey (n = 300; phase 1)

- To identify the social regularities in perspectives; to identify relationships between indicators of agency and structural variables.

3) Focus group interviews (7 focus groups; 47 participants; phase 1)

- To identify group norms and meanings in perspectives; to explore statistical findings further.

4) Individual interviews (4 men and 4 women; phase 2)

- To explore individual perspectives; to explore social processes, focusing on the interplay of structural factors and agency within individual lives.

Phase 1 of the study took a comparative approach (cf §2.3.4). Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected using a questionnaire survey and a set of focus group interviews. These data were collected close together in time and given equal emphasis. They were combined to explore variations in levels of agency across six structuring contexts defined by setting and gender.

Phase 2 of the study took a biographical and qualitative approach to collect a further layer of data. Individual interviews were conducted to develop biographical case

studies. These were used to explore the processes of structure-agency interplay within individual lives over time, and also allowed further comparisons to be drawn across gender groups.

Phase 1 was linked to Phase 2 in that its data and findings informed development of the individual interview guides and analyses. Data collection with all methods was linked, firstly, by addressing the same substantive issue of young people's feelings of control and exercise of agency, and secondly, by using sub-samples of the survey sample in subsequent qualitative data collection.

As an area-based project, a further aspect of fieldwork was the contextualising strategy which informed both phases, and all stages of the research process (i.e. research design, data collection, analyses, results and syntheses). A variety of sources of both quantitative and qualitative evidence were drawn on (cf §4.2.1).

The research design was driven by the research questions addressed which were developed from the theoretical framework identified in Chapters 2 and 3. Analyses were conducted as data became available, and findings informed any subsequent data collection and analyses. The project findings are the result of a synthesis of evidence provided by the data set in its entirety, explored in relation to the study's theoretical underpinnings. Thus, a dialogue between ideas and evidence was developed by the thesis, as advocated by Ragin (1991) and Gudmundsson (2000a).

The mixed method approach taken, established a layered data-set, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative data, which represented young people's perspectives in different ways. These data sets complemented one another, together providing a more complete picture of young people's perspectives which could be interpreted in

relation to salient features of the context. In this way, the research design aimed to establish a data set capable of ‘bridging the gap between abstract theoretical conceptions and the lived realities of young people’ (Rudd, 1996, p95). §4.1.3 to §4.1.6 provide further details of each aspect of the research design.

4.1.3 The young people and their contexts

The research site of Derby, England, was selected as one which had not been extensively used for study of young people’s lives, and which met salient criteria which provided a rationale for comparison with the German cities of Hanover and Leipzig in the larger international-comparative ESRC project. Of particular relevance to the present project is that Derby is a traditionally industrial city which has experienced recent economic transformations with respect to a shift in its occupational base towards the service sector.

The fieldwork was primarily undertaken with young men and women in Derby, aged 18 to 25, and either in higher education, full-time employment or who had been unemployed for at least six months, and living within 25 minutes commute of the city¹. The aim was not to make generalisations from these groups to wider populations, but to assess patterns of diversity in the agency exhibited by these groups of young adults, with a view to identifying pertinent interactions between structural factors and agency. The sampling strategies as proposed, and as they occurred in practice, are described later in §4.1.4 and §4.2.2 respectively.

¹ 25 minutes commute was considered to represent a travel-to-work area.

The contextualising strategy aimed to locate these groups of young people in relation to salient features of their environments by developing an understanding of the local context, including the features of the labour market, the nature of the University of Derby, the local culture and so on. This knowledge was derived from fieldwork experience as well as from key informants and the collation of documentary evidence concerning Derby generally and the three institutional settings particularly. This process is described in §4.2.2 and its results are reported in Chapter 5.

4.1.4 Questionnaire survey

A structured and standardised questionnaire survey was completed by approximately 50 young men and 50 young women in each of the three settings (see appendix 4(i) for specimen questionnaire). The development of the questionnaire and sampling strategy are discussed next. The questionnaire was designed, firstly, to identify processes underlying young people's personal agency, and secondly, to enable relationships between indicators of agency and structural factors to be explored through a consideration of the social regularities in young people's perspectives, across gender and setting groups.

Item selection

The questionnaire was compiled from question items used successfully in previous research (Bynner and Roberts, 1991; Evans and Heinz, 1994; Rudd, 1996) and from a checklist of variables considered to be pertinent as indicators of agency (Clausen, 1993), control beliefs (Bandura, 1997) and key structural factors (cf appendix 4(ii)). Questions were mainly structured, requiring answers in multiple tick-boxes. The questionnaire was designed to reflect the conceptualisation of agency as a temporally embedded process (Emirbayer and Misch, 1998) allowing comparisons to be made in

levels of agency on the basis of differences in how groups of young people reported on their past, present and future lives. The questionnaire was organised into sections: Part I – Your background; Part II – Your present situation; Part III – Your plans and views; Part IV – About you, and Part V – A few final questions. Respondents were asked about the following factors and aspects of their lives: personal characteristics; employment and educational history; personal experiences of, and more general views on, opportunities and constraints in life; domestic and financial circumstances; influences on, and attributions for, their current situations; work search strategies; work related values; feelings of satisfaction, responsibility, independence, self-efficacy and self-confidence, decision making and being equipped for work; plans for the future; economic locus of control; and attitudes towards, and participation in, politics and group activities.

Piloting of the questionnaire

The draft questionnaire was piloted to maximise its comprehension and comprehensiveness and therefore maximise the quality of its completion. Twenty young adults who were studying or working in Nottingham and eight unemployed young adults at a community centre in Guildford completed the draft questionnaire and gave feedback to identify any problems. Asking young people from Nottingham and Guildford to do this had the advantage of not taking up any of the target population in Derby. Pilot subjects were encouraged to note thoughts and criticisms directly onto the questionnaire and/or to discuss the questionnaire with the researcher. This was a useful exercise and resulted in changes being made to many of the questions.

The piloting indicated that it would be beneficial to state explicitly that respondents

should attempt to answer all questions. Some amendments were made to convey the sense of questions in ways preferred by respondents; for example, in q2 which asks about parents' influences at school-leaving age the wording was changed from '*wanted me to...*' to '*encouraged me to...*'. In some cases, further choices were added to multiple-choice questions; for example, the choice of answers to q16 which asks 'What made you choose your job/career/course/training scheme' was expanded to include 'training offered', 'influence of parents' and 'by chance' in response to comments suggesting that these were often influential factors.

The time taken to complete the questionnaire ranged from 10 to 40 minutes, but in the majority of cases it took between 20 and 25 minutes. It was noted that there might be some young people in the unemployed group who lacked basic skills, and who therefore, might require help to complete the questionnaire.

A quota-sampling strategy

The aim was not to generalise to wider populations, but to draw comparisons across groups. Hence, a random sample was not required, but rather one with appropriate composition for comparisons. For this purpose, a quota-sampling strategy was selected to generate samples of young people who were matched across settings in terms of gender, and distribution of age, and who were representative of wider populations of young people located within their settings in key respects. Although the statistical analyses undertaken in this project are strictly for use with samples drawn randomly, the quotas were compiled from a range of sources within each setting (cf §4.2.2) and there is no reason not to treat the resultant samples as broadly representative of the populations of young adults in Derby in each of the three settings. This being the case it is valid to make comparisons across settings and

interpret any differences as indicative of differences in the corresponding populations. The questionnaire was completed by 100 young people in each setting, giving a total of 300 respondents.

To elaborate, the quotas set aimed for samples split equally between each gender and between people of ages 18 to 21 and 22 to 25 and with representation of people from ethnic minorities in roughly the same proportions as found in the overall population of young adults in Derby in each of the institutional settings. In the higher education setting, the aim was to include young people taking a wide range of subjects, at different levels, and a mix of those studying full-time, part-time and as mature students. In the employment setting, the aim was to include young people in larger and smaller organisations, in the public and private sectors and across a range of occupational areas (administration, health care, manufacturing, the professions, service sector (for example, hotel and catering, sales assistants) and those on Modern Apprenticeships). Table 5.1 (cf p144) was used to guide and check on the sample's distribution across occupational areas. In the unemployment setting, the aim was to include young people in a range of New Deal gateway options (e.g. subsidised employment, further education, and voluntary work) and in community projects.

4.1.5 Focus group interviews

As referred to previously, the focus group method was used successfully by Rudd (1996) to obtain data on young people's feelings of control and exercise of personal agency. This provided a sound basis for using the focus group method in the ESRC and doctoral projects. The reasons for the method's selection are discussed next, before considering the development and piloting of the group interview guide.

Krueger describes a focus group as ‘a carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions in a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment’ (1994, p6). It is group interaction in response to a researcher’s questions which distinguishes this method from others. Morgan and Krueger suggest that this feature of the focus group method makes its use particularly beneficial in a number of situations (1993, p15-19). Some of these apply in the present research. The first of these situations is when there is a power differential. This was especially the case in the unemployed setting. Young people had the security of knowing they were among peers, many of whom they could expect to share their own perspectives; thus, the group situation was expected to provide a reassuring setting within which young people could express their feelings genuinely. The second of these situations is when there is a gap between professionals and their target audience. As described previously, there are dichotomies between how young people view their lives and how their lives are approached by policy-makers, practitioners and academics. The focus group was able to provide a view of how young people think and talk about their lives. The third situation is when complex behaviours and motivations are being investigated, especially ‘when people do not have easily accessible ways of talking about a research topic’ (Morgan and Krueger, 1993, p16). This is clearly the case in this research. The focus group method is also advantageous when working with young people because it can be carried out in a friendly and respectful way.

The focus group method has the potential to produce a rich set of data, captured in a flexible manner and with high face validity, if its socially-oriented nature is capitalised upon (Krueger, 1994, p37). Interactions between participants may spark

detailed discussions as a range of views are passed backwards and forwards and as opinions are explored and challenged. The social context may stimulate the group to articulate normative assumptions which usually remain unarticulated; furthermore, ambiguities may be signalled where this teasing out is partial, while disputations may result where the limits in group perspectives are encountered. In this way, the focus group method provides a means of accessing group meanings, processes and norms (Bloor, Frankland, Thomas and Robson, 2001) and is particularly valuable for exploring and understanding *why* people think as they do (Morgan, 1988).

Thus, in this project, focus groups were used to explore group norms in young people's perspectives on their feelings of control and exercise of agency. The qualitative focus group data were used to complement the quantitative survey data, firstly, by providing an interpretive aid to understanding the statistical patterns which emerged - by allowing the meanings underlying the statistical patterns in young people's feelings of control and exercise of agency to be accessed. Secondly, the qualitative data provided a means of qualifying the statistical findings. The provisional character of personal opinions is apparent in a focus group when group members change or extend their views in the course of the discussion; these are aspects not reflected in the survey. By aiding the interpretation and qualification of survey findings, the focus group method may deepen and enrich the analyses undertaken (Bloor, Frankland, Thomas and Robson, 2001).

The success of the focus group method depends on facilitating a permissive environment in which participants feel able to discuss the topic freely and fully (Krueger, 1994, p13). This can be achieved by planning the process thoroughly; paying particular attention to factors such as the selection of participants, the size of

the groups, the setting, and the nature of the questioning and how the focus group is moderated. Krueger's (1994) text '*Focus groups: A practical guide for applied research*' was referred to in planning the process of conducting the focus group interviews (cf §4.2.2). This process is described next and in §4.2.2.

The aim was to conduct at least two focus group interviews in each of the three settings. This enabled the identification both of idiosyncrasies in individual sessions and group norms across sessions. The number of participants viewed as optimal for focus groups is typically between 6 and 8 participants, although the size may vary from 4 to 12 participants (Krueger, 1994; Bloor, Frankland, Thomas and Robson, 2001). Between 6 and 8 participants was an appropriate size to aim for; this allows a range of views to be collected, while giving all group members the opportunity to participate.

Development of a focus group interview guide

An interview guide was developed with the aim of *focusing* young people's discussions on their feelings of control and exercise of agency. It was based on three themes which were used to develop a set of corresponding and more specific questions to be used to guide the interview. There were few enough questions to expect there to be time for each to be discussed at sufficient length by the group. Care was taken to develop questions which were clear but open-ended. Use of the guide enabled comparison between groups within and across settings; however, it was treated flexibly. Young people were given scope to influence the shape of their discussions and surprising areas of their discussions were allowed to develop. Across the three themes, participants reflected on aspects of their past, present and future lives.

Theme A was designed to assess ‘how much they feel in control of what happens to them’. Examples of questions included: ‘What or who has influenced your choice of course/work/scheme?’; ‘To what extent do you feel independent?’; ‘Do you feel that what you do in your life is up to you?’ Theme B was designed to assess ‘what influences and constrains them in what they can do’. This was achieved by asking about the effects of various factors, in terms of their personal experiences and general views. These factors included gender, ethnicity, finances, family background, local labour market and qualifications. Groups were also asked their opinions on whether or not talent rises to the top. Theme C was designed to assess ‘their belief in the possibilities for instigating change and affecting the quality of their, and others’, lives’. Questions addressed levels of collective agency, in terms of participation and trust in collective forms of action and politics, and feelings of confidence and optimism about the future. A specimen copy of the focus group interview guide is included in appendix 4(iii).

Piloting of the focus group interview

The style and parts of the content of the planned focus group discussion had been used in previous research conducted by a Senior Researcher, Dr Peter Rudd (1996), who was also working on the ESRC project. It was decided that the first couple of focus groups would be conducted jointly by the present researcher and the Senior Researcher, and therefore, extensive piloting would be unnecessary. One pilot focus group session was conducted, however, by recruiting a group of young adult employees in Nottingham. This was a useful exercise which allowed practice in moderating a focus group, as well as giving confidence that the questions would stimulate discussion. The pilot group’s response to the session was positive and it was not necessary to make any changes to the draft guide. It was decided that

additional focus group interviews would be undertaken if any of the initial six proved to be unusable.

4.1.6 Individual interviews

In the second phase of data collection, individual interviews were conducted with young employed men and women. The purpose of collecting this additional layer of data was to enable the analysis and presentation of a number of case studies, and thereby, to use a biographical approach to complement the comparative approach of the first phase. As discussed in §2.3.4, both comparative and biographical approaches have potential for developing understanding of the links between individual agency and wider social structures and processes. It is the biographical data, however, which is best placed for understanding, '*how* individuals experience the objectively structuring, empirically observable features that place them historically where they are' (Erben, 1998, p14). In a similar vein, Rustin maintains that:-

It is because it is through single cases that self-reflection, decision and action in human lives can best be explored and represented that the case study is essential for understanding human lives.

Rustin, 2000, p49

Moreover, the examination of the narrative features of identity and the detailed reconstruction of individual lives allow an exploration of the processes by which individual motivations and social influences are intertwined (Erben, 1998, p1). To achieve these ends, Witzel's (2000) method of Problem-Centred Interviewing (PCI) was selected as appropriate. A problem-centred interview, 'aim(s) to gather objective evidence on human behavior as well as on subjective perceptions and ways of processing social reality' (Witzel, 2000, p1). Use of this particular method in

the present study was inspired by Reiter's (2003)¹ use of it to study disadvantaged young people. The biographical data collected by means of the PCI method, were used to explore structure-agency inter-play within individual lives and identify theoretically salient aspects in the processes at play.

Witzel's (2000) PCI strategy advocates combining elements of inductive and deductive reasoning in qualitative data analyses, which is achieved by a balance between being guided by previous knowledge and being open-minded. Witzel draws a parallel between PCI and Glaser and Strauss's (1967) theory-generating procedure of grounded theory, in which analytic induction is used to draw general conclusions from particular cases. As in grounded theory, that which the interviewee determines as most relevant is privileged. Unlike grounded theory, where the researcher's initial position tends towards one which is 'tabular rasa'², in PCI, theoretical knowledge and previous empirical findings are used explicitly as a 'heuristic-analytical framework' to guide the research procedures.

Theoretical knowledge is generated in the evaluation phase through the application of 'sensitizing concepts' (Blumer, 1954, p7) which are further developed in the continued analysis and reinforced with empirically grounded hypotheses from the data material. This flexible procedure should insure that the interviewer's/scientist's view of the problems being addressed does not simply overlap the respondent's and that the theory is not simply superimposed upon the collected data.

Witzel, 2000, p2

¹ This study was presented as a conference paper at the Nordic Youth Research Symposium, Helsinki, June, 7th-10th June, 2000. Reiter's study is described to in §2.3.5 and §3.4.1.

² Nb. At least some pertinent theoretical ideas are usually employed by researchers using grounded theory.

Analytic induction was not applied in analysing the biographical data (cf §4.3.4), but the flexible approach described above, including the use of sensitising concepts, matched the project's overall approach to developing findings iteratively and by establishing a dialogue between ideas and evidence (Ragin, 1991; Gudmundsson, 2000a).

The PCI method was followed closely in collecting the biographical data. Other, more generally, useful information concerning the planning, conduct and analyses of individual interviews was found, for example, in Kvale's (1996) and Erben's (1998) texts. Witzel outlines three main principles or orientations that guide PCIs, describing them as 'problem-centred', 'object-oriented' and 'process-oriented' (2000, p2-3). In using PCI in the present study, the problem focused on is young people's feelings of control over their transitions into adulthood. Objective aspects of young people's situations and previous experiences were made use of to facilitate understanding of their explanations and to stimulate further questioning in the interview. Methodological flexibility towards the object of study is encouraged (thus, its description as object-oriented). Witzel notes that it may be appropriate to complement the individual interview with use of focus groups 'to obtain a preliminary overview of the range of opinions among the sample studied' and a questionnaire 'to solve the problems arising in connection with samples and to relate the results generated by different procedures' (2000, p3). These features had already been included in the project design. Use of flexible conversational techniques, to stimulate narrative as well as generate understanding, is advocated (cf §4.2.2). All communication is focused on establishing the interviewee's reconstruction of orientations and actions (thus, its description as process-oriented), with the aim of

demonstrating to the interviewee that they are being taken seriously. The hope is that this develops trust, allowing them to disclose their feelings more fully. Co-operation and trust were also encouraged by interviewing young people who had already participated in the survey and focus groups; they would have met the interviewer already and gained some practice in reflecting on, and articulating, their experiences in an interview situation.

As a result of practical limitations on the scope of further data collection, it was not possible to interview young men and women in all three settings. The importance of selecting a sample which corresponded as closely as possible to the research aims (Erben, 1998), was recognised. The decision was made to compile 10 biographical case studies by conducting individual interviews with 5 males and 5 females in the employed setting. This setting was chosen on the basis of its theoretical relevance to assessing Beck's individualisation thesis, which presents the labour market as a new standardising influence on our lives. Given that it was the employed group who had the most labour market experience, this was the setting expected to generate the most useful data for examining the limits of the individualisation thesis. Additionally, those already in employment had, by definition, made this transition and were, therefore, closer to the end-point of 'becoming an adult', as normatively understood. A further aim was for the individual interviewees to represent as diverse a cross-section of young people in the employed setting, in terms of their social and educational backgrounds, as possible. In the event, however, the sample was determined by the availability of young people and eight, rather than the planned ten, case studies were undertaken (cf §4.2.2).

Development of the individual interview guide

With the principles of the PCI method in mind an interview guide was produced (see appendix 4(iv)). A number of aspects to be covered under each of the three timeframes of interest were identified. This ensured some common ground across interviews and provided a framework for conducting the interview. The individual interview was designed to include a more thorough exploration of young people's perspectives on their futures than had been possible in the focus group. The interview finished with a fourth section in which interviewees were asked for their personal views on some general issues which had been discussed in the focus group, for example, their views on equal opportunities for men and women in society presently.

An individual not already taking part in the project was recruited for piloting. This person lived in Nottingham but otherwise matched the employed sample's characteristics, as a young man who worked full-time for the City Council as an IT trainer. He was briefed on the aims of the research and completed the questionnaire. This data was referred to in planning and carrying out an individual interview, which was subsequently transcribed and imported into the *Nvivo software for qualitative data analysis (Version 1.1)* for coding. As well as being useful practice in stimulating an informative interview, this exercise indicated the need to simplify the interview guide. In particular, it became clear that it would be beneficial to rely rather less on pre-formulated questions and rather more on generating appropriate questions as the conversation developed, on the basis of what was said during the interview and prior knowledge from the questionnaire and group interview.

4.2 Mixed methods in use

The preceding section set out the research plan. This section discusses how the research took shape in practice, considering the processes of fieldwork including the negotiation of access and data collection.

4.2.1 Gaining access in the fieldwork site

The research depended on gaining access to young people in a wide range of organisations, to achieve samples as described in §4.1.4 and §4.2.2. Table 4.1 shows the range of organisations which participated in the project. How access was negotiated depended on the institutional setting and organisations targeted.

The University of Derby provided access to young people in higher education. Its involvement in the ESRC and doctoral projects was secured by a letter to the Vice-Chancellor from the ESRC Project Director. This was followed by a visit to the University for meetings with various Heads of Departments, the Student Union and the Academic Registrar. Access to young people in the employment and unemployment settings was secured by contacting people in management roles within a range of key organisations. These people were instrumental in securing the assistance of others working in closer proximity to young adults.

Overall the process of negotiating access went very well. The greatest obstacle encountered was Employment Services withdrawing their support because the scheduled distribution of questionnaires clashed with their New Deal Evaluation programme. They were concerned that participation in the present project would jeopardise the participation of New Deal clientele in their evaluation programme.

The problem was solved by delaying questionnaire distribution to the unemployed group by six months, at which time Employment Services were pleased to help.

Table 4.1: Participating organisations

Higher education	Employment	Unemployment
The University of Derby	Public and private sector organisations of varying sizes in a range of occupational areas.	New Deal providers and community projects.
<i>Schools of:-</i> Engineering Education and Social Science Environmental and Applied Sciences European and International Studies Health and Community Studies Centre for Access to Lifelong Learning	Chamber of Commerce, Business Link Rolls Royce, Adtranz, Derby Specialist Fabrications, Balfour Beatty, Safeway Pharmaceuticals Ltd Aston Court Hotel, Posthouse Forte Hotel, Royal Stuart Hotel Derby County Football Club HSBC plc. City hospital Cooper Parry Accountants, Bakewell's Solicitors, schools	Employment Services Colleges of Further Education Privately run training providers Voluntary organisations City Council (community centres, Youth House, The Space)

4.2.2 Data collection

Contextualising strategy

The researcher already had local knowledge of Derby when the project fieldwork began in January 1999. Initial fieldwork involved identifying and negotiating access to young people, located in the three institutional settings, through key local organisations. A more detailed knowledge of the area was developed over the duration of the project both through the collation of documentary materials relating to Derby and its institutional framework, and through discussions and brief

interviews with key informants. This contextualising strategy was used to develop an understanding of the training and learning situations within which the project's target group of young people were located and to ascertain how professionals viewed young people's scope for taking control of their lives. Key informants included a range of people working in close proximity to young adults in one or more of the three settings; they were youth workers, New Deal advisers and managers, Derbyshire careers services staff, further education colleges' guidance advisers and University careers staff and tutors.

Questionnaire survey

The questionnaire survey was printed by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) in three different colours (one for each setting) in twice the quantity to be collected (200 for each setting). It was administered to young adults between April and October 1999. A freepost address was set up. Questionnaires were carefully distributed (as described below) until properly completed questionnaires had been returned from 100 young people in each setting, and the quotas for age and gender were deemed close enough. The distribution of the sample is shown in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2: Distribution of questionnaire returns

No. of respondents in each setting	Higher Education	Employment	Unemployment
Males aged 18 – 21	26	22	23
Males aged 22 - 25	22	27	26
Females aged 18 - 21	33	18	24
Females aged 22 - 25	19	33	27
Ethnic minority persons	17	8	14
Total	100	100	100

A range of sites and sources were targeted within each setting in order to minimise the possibility of systematic bias in the samples compiled. Methods of distribution also varied between the settings. The University of Derby provided a database of students, aged 18 to 25, with local addresses. This included 4291 names, with details of each person's school, course, age, gender and ethnicity. A total of 146 names was selected from the database to receive a questionnaire. Approximately equal proportions of students in each school, age and gender bracket, received a questionnaire and freepost envelope, delivered by hand to their mail trays. One fifth of these students were from an ethnic minority background and an effort was made to choose a mix of HND, degree and postgraduate cohorts. The information available did not allow selection of part-time and full-time students; however, questionnaires were returned by both. A further 25 mature students were sent a questionnaire to their home address by the Centre for Access to Lifelong Learning. This generated 67 completed questionnaires (14 from younger males, 14 from older males, 22 from younger females and 15 from older females, including 11 from ethnic minorities and a good mix of subject areas). The sample was made up to 100 by employing a mixture of opportunistic strategies. Students were approached in communal areas (e.g. canteen, student union) and asked to take part. When it became clear that older females were not to be found in this way, several course tutors were asked to distribute the questionnaire to female students aged 22 to 25.

Young adults in full-time employment were involved in the project by, initially, approaching managers. A letter introducing the project and asking for assistance was followed by a telephone call to impart further details. If the response was positive, a pack of questionnaires was sent with a further letter which re-iterated the

requirements for questionnaire distribution. Willing managers distributed questionnaires and free-post envelopes to staff aged 18 to 25. A total of 145 questionnaires were distributed in approximately the following proportions: 30% to manufacturing companies, 20% to hotels and retailers, 30% through the Chamber of Commerce, Business Link and to Modern Apprentices, 13% to young professionals and 7% through the hospital. This generated 82 completed questionnaires. An assessment was made of the distribution of respondents before contacting further organisations with specific details of the gender and age of young people required to complete the quota sample.

Young unemployed adults were approached through the variety of organisations shown in Table 4.1. Employment Services distributed 70 questionnaires and were able to return around 35 completed. Approximately 30 questionnaires were completed by groups of young people involved in the Prince's Trust programme (at one of the FE colleges) and the City Council's 'Wheels and Words' course (at Youth House and a community centre). The researcher was present and provided help if required. A further 130 questionnaires were sent to key personnel to distribute to young people and this generated enough returns to complete the quota sample.

The completed questionnaires were sent to NFER for coding and data-entry. The overall response rate to the questionnaire survey, using the variety of strategies described, was approximately 55%.

Focus group interviews

This section provides details of how the focus group interviews were carried out in practice; including the recruitment of participants, the composition of groups, the

setting and issues in moderating the group interviews.

Questionnaire respondents were asked to give their contact details if willing to take part in a group interview (cf appendix 4(i) last page of questionnaire). A total of 84 people agreed to be contacted, including 20 students, 24 employed young people and 40 unemployed young people. This did not give a great deal of room for manoeuvre in assembling two focus groups in each setting all involving between 6 and 8 participants. The volunteers were contacted and asked if they were still prepared to participate. The convenience of possible venues and session times were checked with those contacted initially, and a reimbursement of £15 (to cover time and travel expenses) was mentioned. Young people who agreed to attend a group discussion were sent a letter with the arrangements and a contact telephone number in case of problems. They were also telephoned the day before to check on their intention to attend.

An attempt was made to achieve groups with a balanced distribution of gender and age, and to include representation of ethnic minorities, although this was not entirely possible. It is sensible to over-recruit participants and, therefore, where possible, 9 people were invited to each group interview. On a couple of occasions only 7 people were available for a particular session and it then had to be hoped that everyone would come. The outcome was that two groups had only 5 participants, one of which was composed entirely of females. In the latter case, three males had agreed, but failed, to attend. It was subsequently noted that the session clashed with a high profile football match! This was the most serious deficit in any of the groups' compositions; however, the lack of males in one group was made up for by the three males who attended the other comparable session and contributed to it fully. Three

group interviews, rather than two, were held with unemployed young adults because there were lots of interested people and it seemed simpler to recruit all of these people to three sessions, within one week, rather than starting to ring people again later when interest might have decreased.

Seven group interviews were conducted over a period of 3 weeks in October 1999¹. The group profiles by setting and gender are shown in Table 4.3. The participants' ages and ethnic backgrounds are included in appendix 6(i).

Table 4.3: Composition of focus groups

		Higher Education	Employment	Unemployment
Group a	Males	3	3	3
	Females	5	3	4
	Total	8	6	7
Group b	Males	2	0	6
	Females	3	5	3
	Total	5	5	9
Group c	Males			3
	Females			4
	Total			7

¹ All seven groups were deemed usable. The group of five females was less than ideal in terms of its composition, although it did succeed in collecting rich and informative data. Also, by this stage there were not enough volunteers to expect that organising a third group would achieve a better result (given the fact that some had already not attended the first two sessions and a number of the other original volunteers had moved out of the area etc.).

Venues were selected according to each setting and, where possible, were familiar to the participants. An effort was made to find somewhere quiet. The higher education group interviews were held in a centrally located University seminar room during the day time. Those with young employees were held in the Town Hall and began at 5.30pm. Those with young unemployed people were held in community centres located across the city during the early evenings. Rooms were booked for two hours and each group interview lasted approximately one hour.

The group discussions began with a brief introduction from the researcher which emphasised that the group had been assembled on the basis of the young people's age group and current situations (either as students, full-time employees or unemployed) and with the purpose of finding out about their views and experiences. The participants were assured that their responses would be treated as confidential; pseudonyms are used in reports and in this thesis. They were asked to respect the confidentiality of each others' responses. It was made clear that there were no right or wrong answers, just differing points of view; also, that everyone's opinions were of interest and that it was acceptable to disagree with one another. Since the participants were strangers they were asked to chat for a moment in pairs before introducing each other to the rest of the group. Permission was sought to record the discussion. Two Dictaphone recorders were started and the first question was put to the group.

One of the main issues in using the focus group methods concerns the influence of group dynamics on the material produced. It is possible, for example, that a dominant individual may unduly influence the opinions of the rest of the group. To the extent that the researcher is able to influence the nature of the group dynamics

this must be done skilfully; as a facilitator, rather than a controller, of the group (Bloor, Frankland, Thomas and Robson, 2001). The situation with a dominant individual could be dealt with using eye contact to encourage others to speak up, or else their opinion could be re-stated and offered to the rest of the group for comment. The aim throughout was to behave in an interested but non-judgemental manner, and to use the interview guide and prompting to stimulate and progress the discussion, whilst maintaining its focus. The group dynamics varied quite substantially between sessions, each presenting different challenges, ranging from encouraging quieter people to participate, to cooling down heated discussion. The researcher was of a similar age to participants and this was felt to have been an advantage in developing a comfortable atmosphere and rapport.

Participants were thanked at the end of the discussion and given an opportunity to ask questions. Immediately afterwards, brief notes were taken outlining initial impressions of the groups' discussions. The tapes were sent for transcription. Participants in the group interviews, and all the institutions which supported the project, received feedback in the form of a pamphlet of project findings (cf appendix 4(v)) and were invited to attend a dissemination seminar held in April 2001¹.

Individual interviews

The individual interviews were conducted over the course of two months in autumn 2000, approximately one year on from the focus groups. Young people who had participated in the employed setting's group interviews were asked to take part in an

¹ The researcher organised an international seminar to disseminate the ESRC project findings. This was funded by the Anglo-German Foundation and held in Derby, 20th and 21st April 2001. The seminar report 'In control of their lives? Comparing the views, values and experiences of 18-25 year olds in Derby, Hanover and Leipzig' is available from the AGF (2001) and at <http://www.agf.org.uk/pubs/pdfs/e1282web.pdf>

individual interview. Two of the three young men and four of the eight young women were contactable and agreed. Two more young men were recruited from the list of those who had provided their contact details in volunteering for the group interviews. It was explained that expenses would not be reimbursed, but that the interview could take place at their convenience. In general, interviewees preferred to arrange a quiet room at their place of work, although one interview took place at a young person's home, and another, in a university room.

The interviews were conducted using the conversational strategies outlined by Witzel (2000). Prior to conducting the interview, details of biographical features already known from the survey and focus groups were reviewed and noted. Details such as the young person's age, educational qualifications and parents' occupations could be identified from the survey. Everything which each interviewee said at the focus group was retrievable as a case node in Nvivo and printed as a text report (cf §4.3.2). This knowledge was used in the course of the interview to develop the conversation.

On meeting, an attempt was made to relax the interviewee with some small talk, including references to the earlier focus group. Interviewees were reassured that the interview would be treated confidentially. The purpose of the interview was introduced, along the lines, 'to gain an understanding of your personal experiences, feelings and views as you've become an adult, concentrating on the transitions you've made in leaving school and entering employment and in terms of establishing your own life, independent of your parents'. Thus, the interview's topic of concern was stated explicitly, as recommended by Witzel (2000). Permission was sought to tape-record the conversation. The interviews proceeded using a mixture of the two

main conversational strategies outlined by Witzel, which aim to generate both ‘story-telling’ from the young person and ‘understanding’ of the young person’s subjective view by the researcher. Each section began with a pre-formulated open question, which the interviewee was encouraged to answer as fully as possible. This was followed with a series of more direct questions, some were generated ad-hoc and sought further explanation of aspects already raised by the interviewee, others were pre-formulated questions designed to tap into the young person’s feelings of control and exercise of agency and to be used to keep the conversation flowing (cf appendix 4(iv)). Clarifying questions and prompts for more detailed answers were also used. During the interview, the guide was only looked at to recall useful questions for the forthcoming section and to check that all topics had been covered at the end of each section. Each interview lasted between 45 and 60 minutes. The interviewee was informed that they would be sent an annotated copy of the interview transcript and a thematic summary of how the interview was interpreted, which they agreed they would check. Brief notes were made of how the interview had gone and of any significant aspects, including anything signalled by the interviewee’s non-verbal communications. All eight interview recordings were sent for transcription. A sample portion of a transcript is included in appendix 4(vi).

4.3 Data analyses

Both comparative and biographical analyses were undertaken. Comparative analyses were conducted to identify similarities and differences across six groups of young people (defined by their institutional settings and gender). These analyses were advanced using both survey and focus group data. The statistical analyses of the survey data, qualitative analyses of the focus groups, and how these were combined,

are described in turn (cf §4.3.1 to §4.3.3). Biographical analyses drew primarily on individual interview data which were used to develop and compare case studies of individuals in the employed setting (cf §4.3.4).

4.3.1 Statistical analyses using SPSS

The statistical software package SPSS (Versions 10 and 11) was used to run statistical analyses on the survey data. A series of steps were undertaken, as described next. Firstly, exploratory factor analyses were undertaken using principal axis factoring. The resultant factors formed the basis for comparative analyses across six groups, defined by setting and gender. Significant differences across groups were identified by conducting one-way ANOVAs and T-tests on the estimated factor scores. These findings guided further analyses including the use of cross-tabulations to compare responses across groups on single survey items as well as qualitative analyses of the focus group data.

Factor analyses

The aim was to use the survey data to identify processes underlying young people's personal agency. The survey data had been compiled with this aim in mind (cf §4.1.4), although what these underlying processes might be had not been clearly hypothesised. Thus, the factor analysis technique was used to explore and identify simple structure in the data (Sapsford, 1999; Tabachnick and Fidell, 2000). The factor analysis method identifies patterns of correlations between the observed variables which are used to describe patterns of variance in the data set in a more parsimonious way. A larger number of variables are reduced to a smaller number of factors. The identified factors provided an operational definition for underlying

processes, which were then used to guide further analyses.

Four separate factor analyses were performed on four sets of survey variables grouped as relating to respondents' self-identities (SELF), future expectations (FUTURE), proactive behaviours (AGENCY) and senses of control over their lives (CONTROL). Factor analyses were performed on the total ESRC project data set of 900 observed cases.¹ There are a number of decisions to be taken in running a factor analysis procedure in SPSS; these are described next in terms of firstly, the extraction, and secondly, the interpretation of factors.

As described in appendix 4(vii), the responses to the questionnaire can be reduced to a correlation matrix which may be simplified by principal axis factoring. Missing data was replaced with the variable mean. An initial principal components analysis was combined with a scree test (Cattell, 1966) to guide how many factors might usefully be extracted from the data.

To interpret the factors more easily it is helpful to make a rotation of the implied axes. Orthogonal rotation using the Varimax procedure (Kaiser, 1958) was used to make factors distinct. This method maximises the variance of factor loadings (within factors and across variables), making high loadings higher and low loadings lower. Following Varimax rotation it is possible to identify the items which correlate most highly with each of the factors. These are used to interpret the underlying process which the factor may be describing, and hence to label the factor.

¹ The ESRC data set included samples from Derby (n=300), Hanover (n=300) and Leipzig (n=300). Use of the largest sample size possible was desirable given the effect of sample sizes on the estimation of correlation coefficients, upon which the method is based. Comrey and Lee (1992) rate 1000 as an excellent sample size.

The factor analysis procedure is a valuable tool to the extent that it allows interpretable factors, which make theoretical sense, to be identified. The factors identified are detailed in appendix 10(i). Factor scores were estimated for all respondents using the regression procedure, as outlined in Tabachnick and Fidell (2000, p597)¹.

Testing for differences across setting and gender

Significant differences between groups' mean scores on all factors were tested for by running one-way ANOVAs (across three settings) and t-tests for independent samples (across two genders) in SPSS². Differences were identified between each of the three settings, as well as between young men and young women both within each of the three settings and across the whole sample. Significant differences between social class groups on each of the factors were also tested for³. Differences between groups are identified where a level of significance of at least $p \leq 0.05$ is reached. The results are reported throughout Chapters 6 to 8 and in full in §10.1.

Cross-tabulations

Results of one-way ANOVAs and t-tests guided further exploration of single-items from the survey data set. Cross-tabulations are presented in which the percentages of

¹ Factor score coefficients for estimating factor scores from variable scores are a product of the inverse of the correlation matrix and the factor loading matrix. These are computed in SPSS as part of the factor analysis procedure.

² Factor A4 (Helping/people oriented career) was excluded from analyses after a graphical check of the observed distributions (both overall and in all gender/setting groups) which showed that this factor failed to meet the criteria for the parametric inferential statistical tests being employed. The distribution was asymmetric, deviated substantially from a normal distribution and the variances in gender/setting groups were unequal.

³ Social class was coded on the basis of father's employment using the Registrar General's classification (I Professional, II Managerial/technical, III Skilled non-manual, IV Skilled manual, V Unskilled, VIII never worked). Due to the fact that cell sizes were small in groups III and V social class was recoded into two groups (Higher (groups I and II) and Lower (groups III, IV, V and VIII)) and mean factor scores were compared using t-tests.

groups making specified responses to a questionnaire item are displayed. These cross-tabulations present a more detailed picture of the differences and similarities between gender groups within, and across, the three settings. The cross-tabulations have the advantage of presenting survey data in a more immediate and readily understandable manner. The aim was to use these in combination with the focus group data, guided by the differences in mean factor scores, to draw comparisons across groups to answer the four main project questions (cf §3.5) and reach an overall assessment of variations in agency and control. How the survey and focus group data were combined is discussed in §4.3.3.

4.3.2 Structured analyses of focus group data

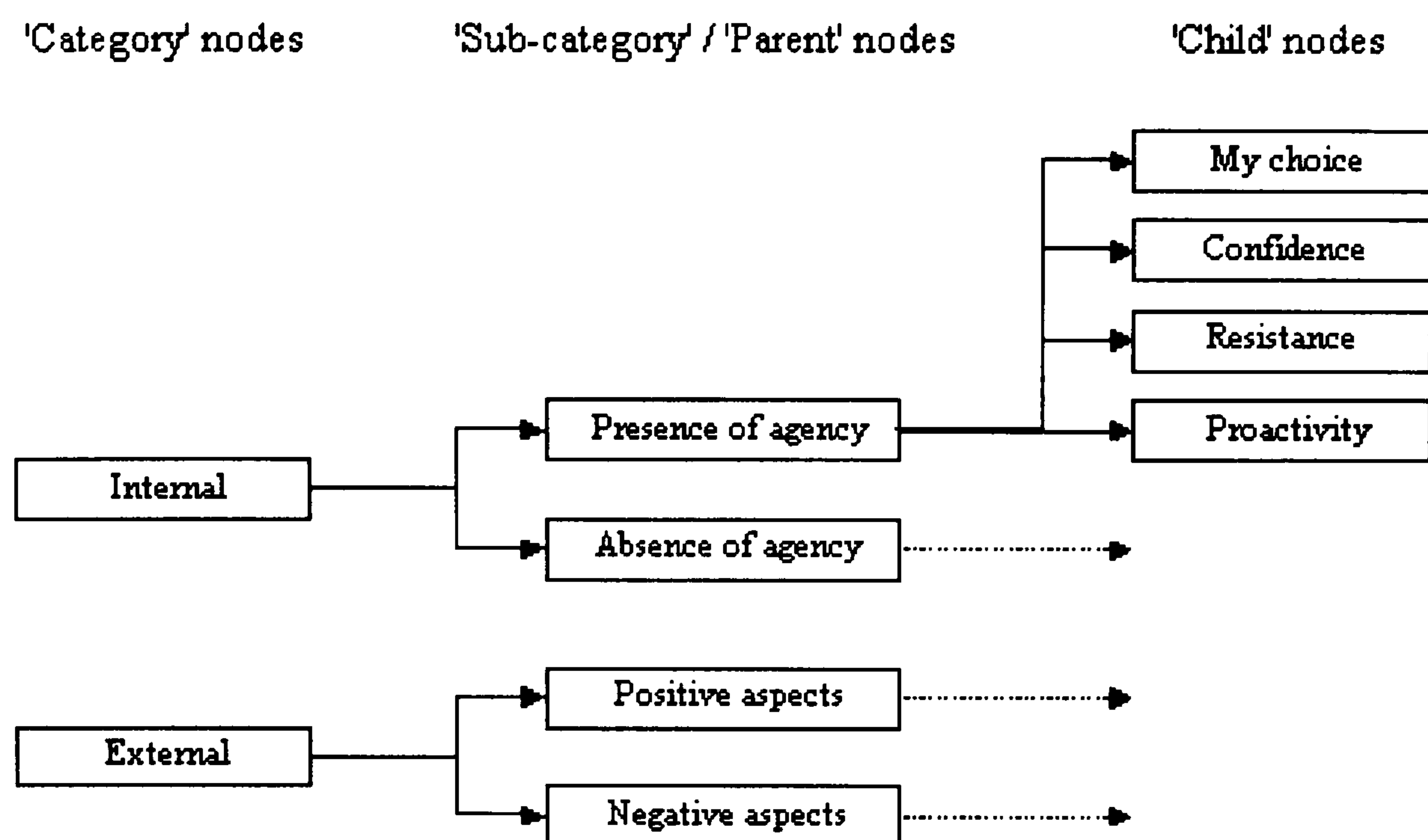
The focus group interviews were transcribed verbatim (a sample portion of a focus group transcription is included in appendix 4(viii))¹. The first stage of the analysis was for the researcher to become familiar with the content of the discussions. The interviews were listened to once or twice, in order to identify speakers in the transcriptions. The fully prepared transcriptions were read through a couple of times and imported into the *Nvivo software for qualitative data analysis (Version 1.1)* as rich text files. Nvivo was used as a tool to manage and organise the analyses. The associated handbook '*The Nvivo qualitative project book*' (Bazeley and Richards, 2000) was referred to. A structured analysis of the data was carried out; comparisons were made of young people's perspectives across groups.

¹ Initial transcription was done by a typist in Guildford. The researcher then listened to the tapes in order to identify speakers in the transcriptions.

The imported documents were assigned attributes to denote the institutional setting in which the group discussion had taken place. The documents were divided into sections corresponding to the interview questions, at one level, and each speaker, at a sub-level. The section coder was used to automatically code all text to its section header. This created nodes which gathered data from all seven interviews relating to each of the main interview themes (these are referred to as ‘thematic’ nodes; cf appendix 4(ix)) - nodes 3 to 21), and ‘case’ nodes which gathered data from each focus group participant. The case nodes were assigned attributes denoting the participants’ gender. The coding at the thematic nodes was explored and summarised; issues and experiences raised by groups in the same setting, as well as any group idiosyncrasies were noted.

A further stage of mainly concept-driven coding was undertaken, which was informed by the project’s theoretical framework (Gibbs, 2002). Data was interpreted as belonging to one of two main categories, each with two sub-categories. These were data concerned with individuals’ perspectives on themselves (‘internal’), with the sub-categories ‘presence of agency’ and ‘absence of agency’, and data concerned with individuals’ perspectives on their social environments (‘external’), with the sub-categories ‘positive aspects’ and ‘negative aspects’. The four sub-category ‘parent’ nodes had child nodes of their own; for example, data was distinguished as representing different aspects of the presence of agency such as ‘my choice’, ‘confidence’, ‘resistance’ and ‘proactivity’. Figure 4.3 illustrates the hierarchical node levels referred to.

Figure 4.3: Node structure



This coding was done by ‘coding-on’ from the thematic codes (it is possible to browse a node and code all the data already collected at it into further nodes). This made the task more manageable as coding at one thematic node at a time narrowed the range of further coding being applied, making it easier to keep relevant ideas in mind and maintain consistency across documents. Child nodes were constructed both by looking out for examples of aspects which were expected to be important (on the basis of previous studies, the literature and so on) and maintaining an open-mind so as to identify any other recurring and significant aspects; in other words, the coding was both concept and data-driven, both top-down and bottom-up. Additional nodes were added to the initial node framework, including the ‘parent’ level nodes, ‘collective agency’, ‘success requires...’ and ‘setbacks’. The final set of nodes was browsed to check that coded extracts were consistent with the node labels. The focus group coding nodes are shown in appendix 4(ix)).

The search tool option ‘matrix intersection’ was used to construct tables of coding applying to sets of nodes across groups (both across settings and across gender

within settings). It is possible to inspect these tables in several ways; for example, the coding in each cell can be browsed and printed, the concentration of coding in each cell can be displayed as a character count or count of coding references and the number of documents coded in each cell can also be displayed. The resulting coding count distributions are presented in appendices 6(ii) to 6(v)¹. This stage in the coding process involved only two of the three unemployed groups (3b and 3c), in order to allow a fair comparison of the density of coding applied at each node, across settings. These coding tables, and the thematic coding, formed the basis for detailed explorations of the focus group data, which were used to establish project findings in combination with the survey data.

4.3.3 Linking data types

This part outlines how the quantitative survey data and the qualitative focus group data were combined in the process of presenting the results of the study. Bryman (1988) notes three main methods by which quantitative and qualitative materials can be combined. Qualitative material may be treated as facilitative and subordinate to the quantitative material, or vice-versa, or alternatively, each of the data types may be given equal weight and viewed as complementing one another. It is largely the latter method which is adopted in the present research; the two types of data are used together to address the same four questions. To guide initial analyses, a table was produced mapping out areas of the survey and focus group data and analyses which relate to each of the four main project questions (see appendix 4(x)). For example, the first project question asks *'To what extent do perceptions of opportunities and*

¹ Nodes with little coding at them were not included in these tables.

constraints vary across genders and settings?’ and appendix 4(x) shows the factors, single-questionnaire items, focus group thematic nodes and concept-driven nodes which could be used to answer this question. The differences or lack of differences between groups, identified by tests of group means on factor scores, were used to guide a closer inspection of single questionnaire items and the focus group data. Although the factor results guided how the focus group data was approached, neither the survey findings nor the focus group findings were regarded as having greater weight than the other. The different types of data are juxtaposed in addressing each question in turn, considering both differences between genders within each setting (Chapters 6 to 8) and differences across settings and gender (Chapter 10). Since the qualitative data was derived from a subset of the survey data it was possible to relate the two data sets together.

4.3.4 Building and comparing case studies

The project did not proceed using Witzel’s (2000) suggested method of analysis for problem-centred interviews, which is geared towards the construction of a typology using a larger number of cases than undertaken in this research. Biographical case studies were compiled of eight young people by drawing on the complete set of data collected on each individual. Questionnaire responses were replicated on a single A4 sheet for ease of reference. The text reports of each of the young persons’ contribution to the focus group interview were also referred to. The interview transcriptions were annotated, identifying key events and feelings in the margins, and then imported into Nvivo for coding. The overall coding structure used (at the ‘parent’ level) was the same as in the focus group coding, although the child nodes applied differed in part. The resultant coding distributions are shown in appendix

9(i). A summary of each case was compiled under the following prominent themes: opportunities and discrimination, career orientation, self, family, perspectives on the future and politics and participation. At this point, interviewees were sent a copy of the annotated transcript and two copies of their case summary for verification. Two young people responded with comments and two more sent an email to the effect that they were happy with the contents. Danielle noted that *'this is a very accurate summary and I can't find any areas that need to be amended'* (see appendix 4(xi)) and Debbie made a few minor points and additions.

The analysis proceeded by identifying the turning points (cf §2.3.4), recurrent themes and distinguishing features of each case. Three cases were selected, on the basis of distinguishing features which made them particularly salient for exploration in relation to the individualisation thesis, for a more detailed analysis and presentation. As Erben notes, 'deciding upon the appropriateness of which features to accent or stress among those composing the nexus of social structure and individual identity is at the methodological heart of biographical analysis' (1998, p8). Imagination is relied on as the vehicle by which the researcher recognises significant moments in the data, relates these to each other and to the life overall. Throughout, this imaginative interpretation must be fixed in empirical sources, producing an imaginative reconstruction of the lives 'in such a way as to illuminate them in relation to the research objective' (Erben, 1998, p12). The results of this process are presented in §9.2. These cases are not presented as explanations or exemplars of findings but should be viewed as explorations of the social processes of transitions into adulthood which have been used to generate and substantiate theoretically important insights.

Further analysis across all eight cases was carried out by drawing systematic comparisons across the main themes and across text at pertinent nodes. For example, the nodes 'long term direction', 'pursuing interest', 'my choice' and 'unsure of direction' have particularly frequent coding and these were helpfully perused in contrasting and drawing conclusions about individuals' planning orientations. Comparisons were drawn on the basis of social background and, particularly, gender. Similarities and differences were identified and are reported in §9.3.

Part II of the thesis presents the project results. Throughout, the focus is on how young people reported on their past, present and future lives. These data are considered in order to develop a picture of how young people's feelings of control and exercise of agency varied according to their social locations, in terms of gender and institutional setting. The identified patterns are interpreted with reference to pertinent structural factors and the main implications for theory and practical interventions are drawn out in the third and final part of the thesis. To do so, an understanding of the contexts of the young people's lives is necessary and it is to this which the thesis now turns.

Chapter 5: Young adults' lives in context

Making sense of data on young adults' perspectives requires an understanding of the contexts of their lives. The young people focused on in this project lived, studied, trained and worked in Derby during 1999 and 2000. Their lives were affected by the agendas of the current 'New Labour' government, especially policies specifically concerned with young people (as expressed for England), as well as by national economic trends and by levels of participation in education and work. More immediately, their lives were affected by how national policies took shape within the local area. Features of the national context have been discussed in Chapter 2 (cf §2.2.2) and Chapter 3. This chapter aims to contextualise the young people's lives at a local level.

Pertinent aspects of Derby's history and economic and social characteristics are described. Since project fieldwork was carried out in 1999/2000 the facts and figures presented here relate to this period or as close to it as possible. One exception is use of the 2001 census data for population statistics because this is likely to be the most accurate source. The institutional structures within which the young people were situated are profiled. Key organisations in each of the three settings (of higher education, employment and unemployment) and the provision of support services for young people in Derby are discussed. The proportions of young people located in particular situations and the take up of services is described.

5.1 Derby's economic and social characteristics

Derby is situated centrally in England. It is the third largest city in the East Midlands region, after Nottingham and Leicester. Its county, Derbyshire, is one of

geographical contrasts, with the Peak District National Park in the north-west, and lowlands, where urban areas including Derby are located, in the south and east. Derby gained city status in 1988. Since gaining unitary status in 1997, Derby City Council has had responsibility for the provision of local authority services. An upbeat image campaign with the slogan “*Derbyes!* The city where you can” was instigated in 1995 by Derby City Partnership to turn Derby into one of the UK’s top ten cities by the year 2020. Their vision was set out as follows:-

By the year 2020, Derby will be one of the Top Ten Cities in the UK. It will combine all the advantages of an established international reputation with a drive for new achievements in economic and social life. It will be a welcoming, creative and compact city of the future, providing a rich quality of life, growth and opportunity for residents, employers and visitors alike.

Derby City Partnership, 2000

Derby City Partnership is an alliance of sixteen organisations from the private, public, voluntary and community sectors in the Derby City region. Many of its member organisations have contributed to this research project, by providing information about, and facilitating access to, the young people involved. These include: the University of Derby, Derby City Council, Southern Derbyshire Chamber of Commerce, Southern Derbyshire Health Authority, Derby Council for Voluntary Services, Rolls-Royce, Adtranz and Cooper Parry.

The population of Derby was 221,716 in the year 2001, which is more than one quarter of the residents of Derbyshire (Office for National Statistics (ONS), 2001). This represented a fall of 0.5 % in the population since 1991 (1200 fewer people). The census recorded 11.2% of the population as members of ethnic minority groups. These populations were heavily concentrated, with nearly 40% of them living in two

inner city wards (Litchurch and Babington). Almost 14% of the population were aged between 15 and 24 (ONS, 2001).

5.1.1 The local economy

Historically, Derby was at the heart of the industrial revolution. The UK's first factory, in the form of a silk mill, opened in 1717. The city has been an important communications hub, at the forefront of developments in the transport and engineering industries. The first railway opened in 1837 and Derby developed into a major rail centre. Derby became an ideal base for manufacturing companies such as Rolls Royce, which established a car plant in 1907, and later introduced aerospace and nuclear divisions. Other large manufacturing companies include Adtranz, International Combustion, Accordis (formerly the Courtaulds Group), Royal Crown Derby Porcelain, S & A Foods and Reckitt and Coleman. Toyota Motor Manufacturers Ltd opened a plant close to Derby in 1988 and invested heavily in this during 1998. As an important centre of manufacturing, opportunities for skilled and unskilled manual work would once have been plentiful in the area.

Contracting markets and the introduction of new technologies resulted in declining levels of employment in manufacturing through the 1980s and into the 1990s. Adverse affects also resulted from the privatisation of British Rail in the mid 1990s. In 1985 the combined railway and aerospace industries employed a total of 25,000 people, 10 years later this had fallen to 13,000; however by 1997 the total had risen back up to 18,000. Economic activity began to increase from around 1994, when the worst of the national recession had passed. Employment opportunities increased markedly during 1997, partly as a result of the boost in public sector employment

following Derby's newly acquired unitary status. Key economic developments in 1998 included the arrival of Prudential Banking plc's call centre which brought three thousand jobs into the area, and the loss of four hundred more jobs from several manufacturing companies (Southern Derbyshire Chamber, 1999). The employment base had certainly shifted into the service sectors by the time of the project fieldwork; nevertheless the area's economy retained a heavy dependence on manufacturing, as Table 5.1 shows. The proportion of employees in each occupational sector was fairly similar in the age range 16 to 24; there were however lower proportions of young people working within public sector services, and greater proportions working in hotels and catering and the retail sectors (BMG Research, 1998).

Overall, the economy was relatively strong during the period leading up to the project fieldwork. Southern Derbyshire Chamber's economic survey (completed by all of their 250 members' businesses and reported as the Derby Economic Review, 1999) found that the economy was perceived to be healthy in the third quarter of 1997. Over half of all businesses reported an increase in turnover during the previous 12 months and only 10 % reported a decrease. Over the coming year, 40% of businesses expected to increase their workforce and only 6% expected it to decrease. Growth continued to be concentrated in retail and distribution and other service sector work such as administration. Recent figures show GDP per head to be rising faster in Derby than elsewhere in the East Midlands (Derby City Council, 2002). In the year 2000, average gross earnings in Derby were higher than in the East Midlands overall, but lower than the national average (see Table 5.2). A large disparity persisted in average rates of pay for men and women, although this was

smaller in Derby than elsewhere.

Table 5.1: Employment by industrial sectors in Southern Derbyshire (BMG Research, 1998)

	All Employees	Employees aged 16 to 24
	N = 1130 (%)	N= 142 (%)
Manufacturing	26.6	26.1
Construction	6.4	7.0
Other services (mainly public sector)	31.8	17.7
Hotels and catering	3.8	9.9
Retail	11.8	19.0
Financial and business	11.5	9.8
Transport and communications	6.2	6.3
Agriculture, hunting and forestry	0.4	0.7
Mining and Utilities	1.5	3.5
Total	100	100

Table 5.2: Average earnings of full-time workers by gender (NOMIS, 2000)

	Derby	East Midlands	Great Britain
Males	£23, 420	£22, 010	£25, 096
Females	£17, 139	£15, 461	£17, 806

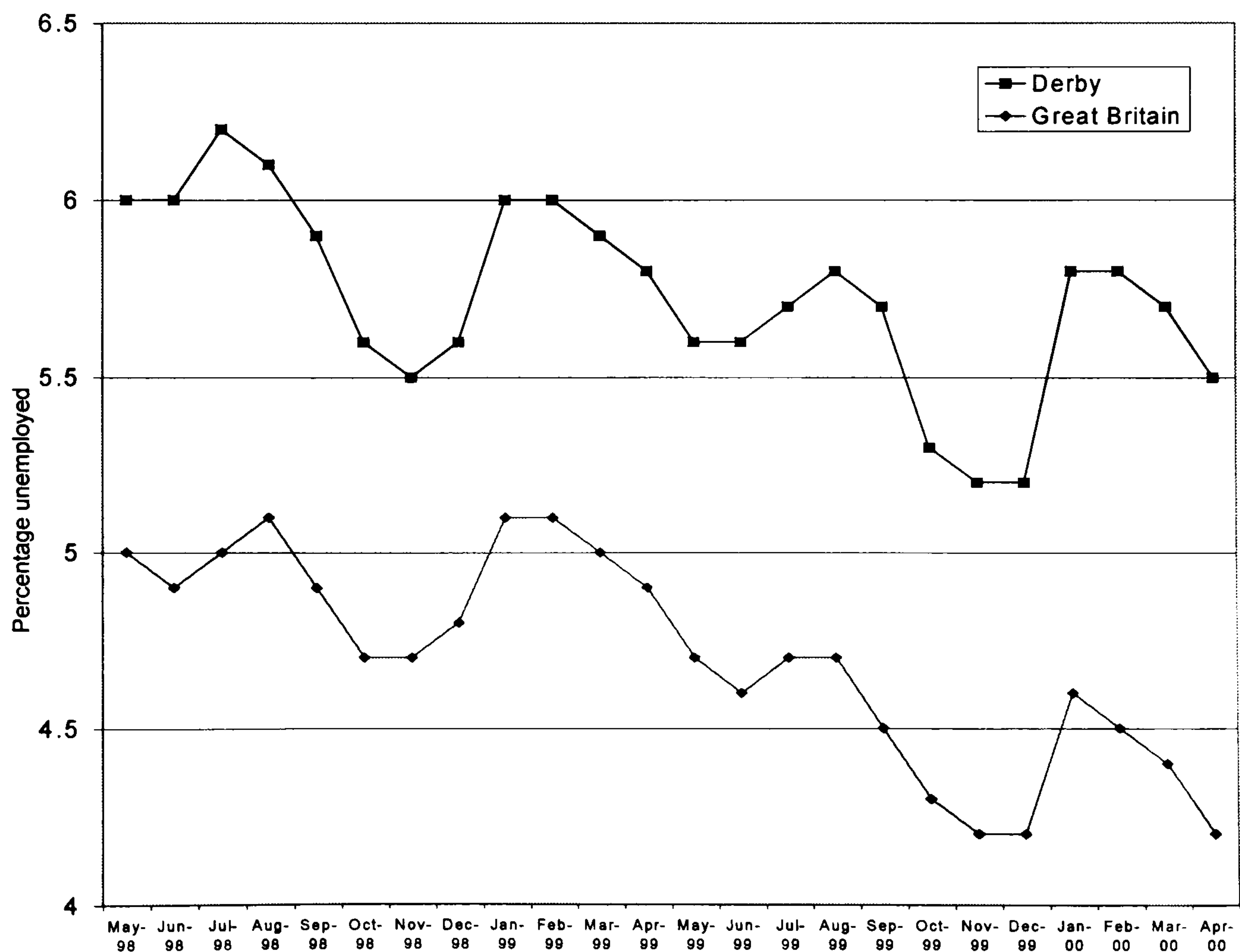
The percentage of people of working age who were employed (in full or part-time employment) in 1999 was 70.4%. This was less than the proportions for the East Midlands and the UK, with 75.9% and 74.0% respectively. There were more men than women of working age in employment (men = 73.4%, women = 66.8%, ONS, 1999). This difference is likely to be accounted for by greater proportions of women

than men engaging in full-time childcare.

5.1.2 Unemployment

In April 2000, there were 5666 people (5.5%) claiming unemployment-related benefits (unless stated otherwise, all figures are from Derbyshire County Council's monthly population-based unemployment statistics for April 2000). This was a higher rate of unemployment than in the East Midlands and Great Britain, where the rates of employment were 3.8% and 4.2% respectively. Figure 5.1 shows the trends in Derby's levels of unemployment reflecting those for the nation as a whole, between May 1998 and April 2000.

Figure 5.1: Monthly population-based unemployment counts from May 1998 to April 2000 (Derbyshire County Council, 2000a)



Unemployment is concentrated in inner city areas, especially in Litchurch and Babington, where ethnic minority populations are concentrated. These areas had an unemployment rate of 16%. Unemployment was firmly entrenched in these areas, with a reduction of only 1 or 2% between April 1999 and April 2000, compared to almost 6% in the city as a whole. Two regeneration programmes, the City Challenge Programme and the Single Regeneration Budget, were implemented to create employment in these areas and other disadvantaged inner city areas. The unemployment rate in the area covered by the City Challenge Programme was found to be roughly 37%, revealing a higher level of unemployment than identified by official statistics. It is twice as hard for people of ethnic minority backgrounds to find employment in Derby (Southern Derbyshire Chamber, 1999).

The occupational structure of unemployment in Derby is broadly similar to the national pattern. Around 37% of unemployed persons were previously employed in semi-skilled and unskilled manual work and about 14% in clerical and secretarial jobs. Less than 9% have formerly been employed in higher level occupations (Derbyshire County Council, 2000b).

The rate of unemployment in the under 25s was 7.2% (1550 people). Seventy percent were male. Between April 1999 and April 2000, there was a drop of unemployment among young people of 3.5%, compared to 5.6% in the Derby population overall. Young unemployed people made up 27% of all those registered unemployed. The greatest numbers of young unemployed persons were found in the areas with the greatest levels of unemployment overall, which were the inner city wards of Litchurch and Babington, as well as Abbey, Normanton, Derwent and Sinfin. In all city wards young unemployed persons made up at least 20% of the

total of unemployed persons. In describing how Derbyshire's young people are affected by unemployment and poverty, Jones, Gilbert, Subhra and Gilbert noted that in the 1990s 'redundancy affecting under 29 year olds is now greater than for 30-49 year olds (previously the group most affected)' (1998, p 31). They quote the following extract:-

The evidence in Derbyshire suggests that the labour market cannot now absorb the shrinking number of school leavers. Not only are a large proportion of 16-17 year olds unable to find work other than youth training schemes but many others are recruited into poorly paid work, increasingly in service and retail trades in which little training is provided. And now we are seeing, for the first time, large numbers of redundancies among young workers. Because of the tightened benefit rules for 16-17 year olds and 18-25 year olds, the poverty that arises is going largely untackled.

Derbyshire County Council Welfare Rights Service, 1994, p19.

Although the situation had improved since 1994, unemployment continued to affect a substantial minority of young people in 1999. The strength and shape of the economy affects the opportunities open to young people as they make transitions into adulthood. Another factor which affects the options open to an individual is their level of education and qualifications. §5.1.3 considers levels of education in Derby, in the context of the government's National Learning targets.

5.1.3 Educational levels

National Learning targets for England, to be met by 2002, were set in 1999 for eleven year olds, sixteen year olds, young people (at ages 19 and 21), economically active adults and organisations (DfEE, 1999). The targets are based on specified proportions of each group achieving qualifications at a specific level. Qualification levels are grouped according to their equivalency with NVQ levels one to five (see Table 5.3). Derby's performance against these targets is lower than national

averages for 16 year olds but similar to national averages for adults (see Tables 5.4 to 5.6). It is possible that Derby's better performance on the targets for adults reflects the investments made by its larger employers in employees' education and training. Rolls Royce, for example, is well known for looking after staff in these respects.

Most young people leave full-time education sometime between age 16 and their early twenties. Young people negotiate a post-compulsory education system which has been described as a complex maze (cf §2.2.2). How this system is structured in Derby is discussed next.

Table 5.3: NVQ Levels 1 to 5 and equivalent courses (DfEE, 1999; DfES, 2003a)

Level 1	NVQ Level 1, GNVQ Foundation level, other courses for students with special needs
Level 2	NVQ Level 2, GNVQ Intermediate, BTEC First Diplomas
Level 3	NVQ Level 3, A Levels, GNVQ Advanced ¹ , BTEC National Diplomas
Level 4	NVQ Level 4, HNDs, Bachelor degrees, higher vocational qualifications
Level 5	NVQ Level 5, Post-graduate qualifications

Table 5.4: National Learning targets for 2002, and performance at age 16 (DfEE, 1999; DfES, 2003a, 2003b)

	NLTs for England (%)	Performance in England (%)		Performance in Derby (%)	
		1999	2000	1999	2000
5+ higher GCSEs	50	47.9	49.2	40.9	41.3
At least 1 GCSE	95	88.5	88.9	88.2	88.0

¹ GNVQ Adv became AVCE or vocational A Levels in September 2000.

Table 5.5: National Learning targets for 2002, and performance of young people¹ (DfEE, 1999; 2000a)

	NLTs for England (%)	Performance in England (%)		Performance in Derby (%)	
		1999	2000	1999	2000
21 year olds with NVQ 3	60	54	54		
19 year olds with NVQ 2	85	75	75	71	72

Table 5.6: National Learning targets for 2002, and performance of adults who are economically active² (DfEE, 1999, 2000a; ONS, 2000)

	NLTs for England (%)	Performance in England (%)		Performance in Derby (%)	
		1999	2000	1999	2000
Adults with NVQ 3	50	45	47		47
Adults with NVQ 4	28	26	27		26

5.2 Derby's institutional structure

Most young people in Derby attend one of Derby's two private schools, 15 secondary schools (some of which are grant maintained) or 5 special schools until they are 16 years old. At this time their routes diverge, some continue in education, some seek employment and some become unemployed. Table 5.7 shows the destinations of school leavers between 1996 and 2000. Many young people work

¹ Data for 19 year olds' performances in Derby are estimates made by the Learning and Skills Council. The sample sizes in the English Local Labour Force Surveys are too small for reliable estimates by age groupings within single Unitary Authorities (information provided by DfES analytical services). No figures or estimates for 21 year olds were available at local level.

² DfES could not provide these figures for Derby in 1999. Figures were provided for Derbyshire (based on the Learning Partnership boundaries). These were 44% for Level 3 and 23% for Level 4.

part-time whilst continuing their studies and many continue with part-time education and training once they have attained full-time employee status. This section describes the frameworks structuring the institutional settings of education, work, training, and unemployment which young people were located in after completing compulsory schooling. Details are given of levels of participation in these settings. Information collected from key informants (people whose work brought them into contact with young people) is used for further contextualisation of young people's lives where appropriate.

Table 5.7: Percentages of school-leavers entering further education, work and unemployment (Derbyshire Careers Service, 2000)

	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
FE	61.7	59.5	60.4	64.3	66.8
Labour market	23.5	24.3	23.1	22.2	19.2
Unemployed	6.9	7.5	7.8	5.3	7.5
Other	7.9	8.7	8.7	8.2	6.5

5.2.1 Further education

During the period 1996 to 2000, the proportion of young people entering further education grew (see Table 5.7). Further education in Derby is provided in two colleges of further education and by schools with sixth forms. More females than males remained in education after compulsory schooling (in the year 2000, 72% of females compared to 62% of males remained in full-time education). A wide range of further education courses were available, mainly at Levels 1 to 3 (see Table 5.3), catering for young people of different abilities. Both colleges provided a support,

guidance and careers advisory service for their students. These services were well used by both full-time students and students on day-release study from work-based training. The support and guidance staff made some useful observations about the problems young people face and the general climate affecting them today. Many, though not all, of the young people they came into contact with would have been 16 or 17, which is younger than the age range focused on in the present study.

Problems relating to academic work, finances and pregnancy were identified as common concerns for young people. Support staff felt that young people's situations were very different from when they, themselves, were young. This was the view of one member of the support staff, who was in her late twenties.

Things have changed a lot since I did A Levels and went to University. There was no support or guidance it was just assumed that I would go to University – my route was pre-set. Now young people have more difficulties to face up to. They are expected to take more responsibility. They often work part-time and have financial worries and worries about how they will cope away from home. There are more demands upon them and more expectations, that university will secure them a high powered job; whereas for us any employment would be fine.

FE college guidance advisor 1, 1999

A clear distinction was made between the younger full-time students and older students, who were often studying part-time, in terms of their capabilities in decision-making and confidence.

The older students need far less help than the younger ones. From about the age of 21 the decisions they make are usually their own, rather than influenced by friends and family, they are more confident and optimistic, having a clearer idea of where they are going. The younger ones vary much more. Some of them have no idea where they are going, although most have some idea of what they will do next.

FE college guidance advisor 1, 1999

Full-time students often have problems with their studies, coping with academic standards, due to pressure from their families. Part-time students are usually older and more focused. They often come to us with financial problems asking where they can get support.

FE college guidance advisor 2, 1999

Young people may decide to enter higher education after completing further education or work-based training at level 3 (see Table 5.3). In 2000, approximately 40% of those young people in full-time further education moved into higher education. After completion of courses at levels 1 and 2 (see Table 5.3), at least 25% of young people remained in further education and at least 40% entered employment (Derbyshire Careers Service, 2000). Many of the young people who entered employment, either at this time or at the end of compulsory schooling, would have started some form of work-based training (cf §5.2.3).

5.2.2. Higher education

The University of Derby is one of the financially poorest institutions in the higher education sector. Student numbers expanded from 5500 full-time and 2500 part-time students in 1992/1993, to 9000 full-time and 4000 part-time in 1999/2000. The Vice-Chancellor viewed growth as necessary in order to meet the University's aim of widening participation.

If you asked certain people at the funding council why Derby is so poorly funded, they would say the university brought it upon itself by expanding so quickly. But we wanted to extend opportunity, which implied growth.

(Vice-Chancellor, quoted in The Times Higher, June 16th, 2000)

Lifelong learning and widening participation have been made priorities by central government. The University of Derby sees itself as well placed to deliver on these aims. It has concentrated on widening participation, developed flexible access and a

strong regional presence, as well as considering equal opportunities, lifelong learning and graduate employability (Tysome, 2000). It is a merged F/HE institution, with established work-based and part-time learning routes at all levels and a track record of collaboration with a wide range of providers. It has developed a range of foundation degrees (The University of Derby, 2002). Many of Derby's young people progress from its further education colleges into the university, and the institution has a high proportion of local students.

Often very able students go off to Derby University because of financial constraints.

FE college guidance advisor 3, 1999

In 1999/2000 the University was successful in meeting HEFCE benchmarks on a range of targets, including the proportion of entrants coming from state schools or colleges (97%, exceeds benchmark of 92%), from skilled and unskilled social class groups (33%, exceeds benchmark of 31%) and from low participation postcode areas (15% meets benchmark) (HEFCE, 2001). In 2000, females accounted for 53% of both full-time and part-time students and 15% of students cited an ethnic classification other than White British.

The city of Derby focused on lifelong learning in its *Derbyes* campaign and the university has succeeded in attracting young people from social groups traditionally under-represented in the higher education sector. By 1999, a much larger proportion of the age group was experiencing higher education than previously. Further and higher education had been taken up by more females than males, and this gender difference is particularly marked among less privileged social groups. One of the results of this expansion is a growing concern about the ratio of graduates to jobs

perceived of as appropriate for graduates. Careers guidance staff fear that a climate has been created which will result in high levels of frustration and disappointment among future graduates.

In the Asian community parental pressure is paramount and there is a great deal of pressure to enter careers of the highest status.

University careers guidance advisor 1, 1999

So many are now encouraged to get degrees and think that this will guarantee them a good job. But in reality a graduate job is now anything which a graduate can get. A degree may help but a lot will be disappointed. I worry that many will become disillusioned because their families expect that a good education will lead to status and to money. This is not always the way it works now. You can't say work hard and you will be fine. So yes, I am worried about their futures and the ratio of graduates to graduate jobs.

University careers guidance advisor 2, 1999

5.2.3 Employment and work-based training

Although the proportion of young people entering the labour market after compulsory schooling decreased between 1996 and 2000, this route continued to be taken by a significant minority of young people (cf Table 5.7). More males than females entered the labour market straight from school (24% of males and 15% of females in 2000). During the period of the project fieldwork, work-based training took the form of Modern Apprenticeships and National Traineeships (these have since been renamed Advanced and Foundation Modern Apprenticeships respectively).

Modern Apprenticeships were launched by the Conservative UK government of 1994 and aimed at 16 to 24 year olds. Young people had full employee status within their firms, whilst continuing their education by working towards 'key skills' and vocational qualifications (up to NVQ Level 3). Modern Apprenticeships were

intended to incorporate the best aspects of traditional apprenticeships combined with a modern approach towards equal opportunities and meeting current workforce requirements. National Traineeships were introduced in 1997 in order to improve the status and image of the existing Youth Training Schemes, and to form a progression route onto the Modern Apprenticeship.

Many manufacturing companies in Derby have a history of apprenticeship provision and until the 1970s would have taken on large numbers of apprentices each year. For example, in 1968, Rolls Royce took on 250 engineering apprenticeships (Fuller and Unwin, 2001). Rolls Royce is used as an example here since it is one of Derby's most important employers, previously employing up to 30% of Derby's workforce and still employing one in ten people in Derby today, and because its younger employees are represented in the project data. Traditional forms of apprenticeship provision had largely disappeared by the beginning of 1990s as a result of the decline in its manufacturing industries. By 1994 when the government introduced Modern Apprenticeships, Rolls Royce had closed its training centre. Provision for training Modern Apprentices was set up and had been fully established by 1999 when the company took on 65 apprentices. In 2000, Rolls Royce received 500 applications, mostly from the local area, for 35 places (Fuller and Unwin, 2001).

In 2000 more than 2000 young trainees started Modern Apprenticeships through the Southern Derbyshire Training and Enterprise Council (figures supplied by Southern Derbyshire TEC). A further 600 took up National Traineeships and 900 were in other forms of training (this was mainly provision for young people with disabilities and those deemed not ready to enter the workforce). Despite the rhetoric around equal opportunities, the occupational areas which apprentices entered remained

highly gendered. The most popular occupational areas within which apprentices were based were business administration (15%), engineering manufacturing (14%), hairdressing (9%), motor industry (8%), hotel and catering (5%), construction (5%) and accountancy (5%). At least half of these apprentices entered employment following completion of their Apprenticeships. For a more detailed statistical picture of Modern Apprenticeships in the Southern Derbyshire TEC area see Fuller and Unwin (2001).

Although the city's economy was growing during 1999 and 2000 and unemployment was falling, including among young people, it was performing less well and there were higher levels of unemployment than in neighbouring areas in the East Midlands. The occupational structure of Derby's economy had shifted away from its roots in manufacturing and industry, in ways likely to affect the experiences of Derby's young people. Jobs which have disappeared in the manufacturing sectors would traditionally have been taken up by young men without qualifications looking for unskilled manual work. The rising numbers of service sector jobs are often for part-time and flexible staff (i.e. temporary and less secure), traditionally filled by women. Combined with the increasing premium placed on qualifications, this created a climate in which males leaving school without qualifications hoping to find unskilled manual work were most likely to suffer. The significant number of young people without employment was not restricted to this group however, but was also experienced by young people from more privileged social backgrounds and by those with higher qualifications. This illustrates a level of risk and uncertainty in young people's transitions which was less evident in previous generations (cf §2.2.2).

5.2.4 Unemployment and provision of support

A portion of young people became unemployed on leaving each of the settings discussed in §5.2.1, §5.2.2 and §5.2.3. In the year 2000, 7.5% of school-leavers and 29% trainees in the Southern Derbyshire area were initially unable to find work (figures supplied by Southern Derbyshire TEC). Provision for young people seeking work included the 'Learning Gateway' for 16 and 17 year olds, and the 'New Deal for young people' (for young people aged 18 to 24 years old), which was launched as one of the national pilots for the programme in April 1998.

The Learning Gateway was delivered by Derbyshire Careers Service. It offered young people intensive support from a personal adviser, on a voluntary basis. The New Deal was delivered by Employment Services and was compulsory for all young people who remained unemployed for a period of six months or more. On entering the 'New Deal' young people received an intensive period of counselling, guidance and advice from a personal adviser. This period was known as the Gateway and lasted for four months. It focused, firstly, on preparing the young person with the necessary skills, abilities and motivation for work, and secondly, on searching for and securing employment. If the young person could not be found unsubsidised work during this Gateway period then they moved into one of four options: subsidised employment, environment task force, voluntary sector or full-time education and training. Southern Derbyshire Employment Services dealt with 960 New Deal clients in 1999, approximately 40% of whom entered jobs (Department for Work and Pensions, 2003). Between 40% and 50% of those who found work retained their jobs for a period of at least 26 weeks (Southern Derbyshire Employment Services, 2000).

The New Deal system focuses on rectifying the perceived deficits in motivation and skills in individuals unable to find work. The New Deal was described by managers as a two-way process; in which an assistant listens to the young person as an individual and the young person ‘takes on their responsibilities’. These views are reflected in the New Deal District Manager’s categorisation of New Deal participants into four groups according to their levels of motivation, as follows:

- Group 1. Motivated, with vision, but needing help and support
- Group 2. Lacking in motivation, need re-energising in order to make them competitive
- Group 3. De-motivated. Happy with their current situation. Refuse to see any advantage of the scheme for them.
- Group 4. Not in the system

(New Deal Southern Derbyshire District Manager, 1999)

Derby City Council’s youth service ran courses targeted particularly at unemployed young people. These were provided at several of the city’s community centres and in Derby Youth House, a designated youth centre for the city. The ‘Wheels and Words’ course, which was funded from European Social Funds, is an example of one course run at the time. This offered young people an opportunity to learn to drive by giving them free lessons as they progressed through a course on basic literacy and numeracy. ‘The Space’ was set up in April 1998 in order to respond to a nationally identified gap in the provision of support for young people. Young people had been involved in all stages of setting the service up; from making choices about the kinds of help they needed most, to deciding on the service’s location and colour scheme. ‘The Space’ opened in the afternoons and provided young people with a drop-in service where they could obtain advice and information on careers, drugs, housing,

sexual health and other social and financial problems. During the period of the project fieldwork 'The Space' was seeing around 80 people each week. The majority of them came from disadvantaged backgrounds, and were described by the project co-ordinator as 'socially excluded and often disaffected'. Staff at 'The Space' viewed the young people they came into contact with as struggling to make decisions themselves and as lacking knowledge of the options open to them and support available for them. The project's co-ordinator felt that many of the young people they saw lacked direction:-

In the last 10 to 15 years there has been a drop in levels of drive, ambition, hope and energy. They all just say they are going to college without any real idea of why or to become what. Formerly, people did what their parents did, and then there was a change where people wanted to break free from their roots, now there is a loss of any direction at all. It may sound negative but I think this is realistic.

Project co-ordinator, 'The Space', 1999

This chapter has presented key contextual features affecting young people living in Derby. Part II of the thesis presents project data on the perspectives of young people located in higher education, employment and unemployment in Derby. Young people were selected from these settings to create samples which were broadly typical of populations located in these settings in the city overall. Information presented in this chapter was used to inform the study's sampling procedure (cf §4.1.4 and §4.2.3) and as an aid in the interpretation of the project's data.

Part II: Results

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The project results are presented in the next five chapters. The initial three chapters are organised in similar formats. They cover findings on the past, present and future lives of young adults engaged in each of three settings: higher education (Chapter 6), full-time employment (Chapter 7) and unemployment (Chapter 8). Thus, data is organised in relation to the three timeframes of interest; creating a framework consistent with the project's conceptualisation of personal agency as a temporally embedded process. The focus in Chapters 6 to 8 is on gender differences, but a further aim is to highlight any findings of particular pertinence within the setting being discussed. In this way, an overall picture of the perspectives of young people located in each of the institutional settings is built up.

Chapters 6 to 8 begin by describing the make-up and characteristics of the sample concerned. The sections on young people's past experiences report, particularly, on their educational, training and work-related histories, and any setbacks encountered. Data on young adults' present perspectives are reported. These sections cover young people's perspectives on 'opportunities and constraints' and their exercise of 'individual agency' and 'collective agency'. Perspectives on 'opportunities and constraints' are explored to identify the extent to which young people feel their lives are influenced by wider social factors. The presence of individual agency is explored, both within institutional settings and personal lives, by drawing on data relating to perspectives on planning and chance, experiences of challenge and responsibility, feelings of independence and levels of proactivity. The presence of 'collective agency' is discussed in relation to the extent of young people's engagement in politics and group activities. Lastly, young people's perspectives on their futures are considered. Each chapter concludes with a summary of key

findings, which are discussed in relation to pertinent features of the young people's contexts. The wider implications of these findings are discussed in part III of the thesis.

Data reported in these initial chapters includes significant differences identified in young men's and women's mean factor scores and their responses to single items in the survey (presented as cross-tabulations), as well as focus group findings, which are illustrated by extracts and the coding count distributions. Full details of how the factors were extracted and labelled (cf §10.1 and appendix 10(i)) and of the focus group coding count distributions (cf appendices 6(ii) to 6(v)) are given elsewhere. Biographical details of young people involved in the focus group interviews are included in appendix 6(i).

Chapter 9 presents biographical data collected through individual interviews with eight young employees. Finally, Chapter 10 uses the data presented in preceding chapters to extend comparisons in young people's perspectives across three settings and both gender groups, in answering the project's four key questions (§10.2 to §10.5). Further details of the organisation of Chapters 9 and 10 are given at the beginning of each.

Chapter 6: Students in higher education: perspectives on their past, present and future lives

The student sample targeted young adults studying at the University of Derby in either a full-time or part-time capacity, in 1999/2000. Individuals were drawn from six schools: School of Education and Social Sciences, School of European and International Studies, School of Health and Community Studies, School of Environmental and Applied Sciences, School of Engineering and the Centre for Access to Lifelong Learning. Thus, the 100 people making up the sample were drawn from a wide range of subject areas. They were also studying at different levels, on a mixture of HNC/Ds, undergraduate degrees and postgraduate courses. Questionnaires were completed¹ by 48 males and 52 females and by a slightly greater proportion of younger students, particularly in the female group (see Table 6.1). The sample included 15 students from ethnic minority backgrounds. Tables 6.2 and 6.3 present data on respondents' parents' occupation. Over 50% of the group had fathers working in professional, managerial or technical roles. A further 29% had fathers in skilled manual and non-manual employment (see Table 6.3). This is marginally less than the proportion of entrants from skilled and unskilled backgrounds in the university as a whole, which is about one third (cf §5.2.2). There may have been more students from these backgrounds, as 17 people did not answer this question.

¹ Not every respondent answered all the questions, and a few items have fewer than n=100 respondents. These cases are noted explicitly in the tables in Chapters 6 to 8.

Table 6.1: Sample by age group (q38, percentages of HE group in each category)¹

	18 to 21 years old	22 to 25 years old
Males	54.2	45.8
Females	63.5	36.5
Total	59.0	41.0

Table 6.2: Mothers in each social class group (q40, percentages of HE group in each category)

	I	II	III _{nm}	III _m	V	Never worked	No answer
Males	14.6	20.8	18.8	10.4	2.1	12.5	20.8
Females	9.6	30.8	23.1	13.5	0.0	11.5	11.5
Total	12.0	26.0	21.0	12.0	1.0	12.0	16.0

Table 6.3: Fathers in each social class group (q40, percentages of HE group in each category)

	I	II	III _{nm}	III _m	V	Never worked	No answer
Males	22.9	25.0	8.3	25.0	0.0	0.0	18.8
Females	30.8	26.9	3.8	21.2	0.0	1.9	15.4
Total	27.0	26.0	6.0	23.0	0.0	1.0	17.0

¹ The table presents data from all categories covered by the questionnaire item and so the rows sum to 100%. This applies to all tables throughout the thesis in which 'in each category' is included in the heading. n=100 unless stated otherwise in Chapters 6 to 8.

6.1 Pasts: educational and employment backgrounds

No gender difference emerged in relation to the young people's parents or guardians' attitudes to what they ought to do after compulsory schooling at age 16. At that time 71% of both male and female respondents' mothers had encouraged them to continue in education, compared with 58% of fathers. Most of the remaining young people said they felt the decision was left up to them by their mothers (23%) and fathers (26%). Only a few people reported having a parent who had not cared or had encouraged them to get a job or to train.

These young people arrived in higher education by a variety of routes. Although a quarter of the sample did not give sufficient information to classify their route into higher education accurately, it is possible to say that at least half of the group had remained in the education system throughout, 10% had a period of work prior to entering higher education and 10% were currently working full-time while studying part-time. More females than males in the sample reported that they had first left full-time education aged 18 or younger (46%, compared to 31%) and that they had ever previously left education (58%, compared to 46%). This indicates that there are more females than males who have returned to education. Around three-quarters of the sample and more females than males had achieved at least one A-level (females 81%, males 63%). More males had NVQ or other vocational qualifications (53% compared to 42%). A total of 45% of the group had held at least one full time job.

Almost one third (31%) reported having experienced at least one period of unemployment. Five people said they had been on the New Deal scheme and five more had attended some other kind of employment scheme. The most frequently reported setback was 'had to repeat examinations' (males 46%, females 54%). Other

setbacks were reported by far fewer students; 19% said they had previously ‘lost a job when the contract ended’; 18% had ‘suffered setbacks for personal reasons’ and 11% had ‘suffered health-related setbacks’, ‘family related setbacks’ or ‘changed courses because of failing to reach the standards’.

6.2 Presents: current views and experiences

6.2.1 Opportunities and constraints

The factor¹ scores for C3 ‘opportunities open to all’ or C6 ‘ability not rewarded’ did not identify gender differences, indicating that male and female students believed to similar degrees in society being meritocratic. Consistent with the factor scores on C3, single items from q24 (see Table 6.4) show that similar proportions, and a minority of males and females rated each social characteristic as having a considerable effect on an individual’s opportunities in life.

Table 6.4: Social characteristics rated as having a ‘considerable’ effect (q24, percentages in HE group)

	Gender (n = 99)	Race (n = 99)	Social class (n = 99)	Family (n = 98)
Males	21.3	25.5	31.9	26.1
Females	19.2	23.1	32.7	30.8
Total	20.2	24.2	32.3	28.6

¹ Full details of how the factors were extracted and labelled are given in appendix 10(i) and §10.1. C3, for example, is the third factor (hence 3) extracted by the factor analysis run with questionnaire items relating to Control (hence C). Its description ‘opportunities open to all’ reflects the questionnaire items most strongly associated with the factor, which are items 24.1 to 24.4 and 31.3 (cf appendix 4(i) for questionnaire).

Students were asked in the group interviews whether they perceived any disadvantages or advantages associated with social characteristics. There was largely agreement with the view that discrimination or constraints associated with gender and ethnicity had not been encountered; however, the effects of social class and family backgrounds were hot topics of debate. Daphne's and Denise's views are shown below, and these represented the extremes of student opinion. Many interview passages were coded as views emphasising that social background limits individuals' opportunities; other social factors were not seen as so important (cf appendix 6(iii)).

I've never really experienced any divisions in social class really especially not at university, you don't really care. Nobody really cares how much your parents earn, whether they're employed or not. You know, it's you they're interested in, not your background.

(Daphne, 19 year old business studies student)

It doesn't matter what you try to do here, they just won't let you cross that barrier. It's like, fair enough, I might be doing a degree and I might be doing better than someone who lives in a really nice area but they'd never let me past the fact that I'm a single parent from a council estate. They just won't let me do it.

(Denise, 24 year old psychology student and single parent)

In one focus group, students connected discussion of social class to the issues of tuition fees, family background and wealth.

I feel the main point here is that, with the government stopping the grants it prevents the sort of lower classes of people going to university, so that you get those people who can go to university are going to be the people who can afford to pay the fees so you're going to eradicate the sort of people who couldn't normally afford to go.

(Darren, 20 year old biology student)

Lack of money emerged as a dominant issue for the student population (cf appendix 6(iii)). Frequent references were made by both genders to the need for strict budgeting and the accumulation of debt. Money was cited in the survey most frequently, by over three-quarters of the group, as something preventing achievement in personal lives (see Table 6.5).

I'm gonna have a big debt and I worry about how I'm going to pay it off when I finish.

(Danny, 20 year old geography student).

I'm stressed with the fees as well now, I mean, I'm already in debt and it's the first time I've ever been in debt in my life....it's like uuugh..I don't want that! I mean I've got no money to go out with and the money's in the bank, but that's got to pay for my fees with my loan. And I mean my parents would contribute but I don't want to ask them to, you know what I mean, I'd rather pay my own way, because I'm independent even though I still live at home really. So I mean I do struggle with money a lot.

(Dorothy, 22 year old psychology student).

No significant gender difference was found on factor scores for S5 'achievement barriers'. Females scored more highly than males on factor C4 'blame own weaknesses'; however, the difference did not quite reach levels of significance. Despite the absence of significant differences on these factors, Tables 6.5 and 6.6 show that more females identified the system and other people as barriers to achievement in their personal lives, and identified money and a lack of skills or qualifications as barriers in their working lives. Overall, between a fifth and a third of the sample blamed each of the aspects listed in q11 for failure to achieve in relation to work (see Table 6.6). Money did not feature as strongly here. It appears that although these students had not been prevented from entering higher education due to a lack of money, they certainly felt it once there.

Table 6.5: Barriers identified in personal lives (q11, percentages in HE group)

	The system	Money	Lack skills	Own weakness	Other people	Lack qual's
Males	2.1	79.2	10.4	41.7	22.9	2.1
Females	17.3	76.9	7.7	46.2	34.6	0.0
Total	10.0	78.0	9.0	44.0	29.0	1.0

Table 6.6: Barriers identified in working lives (q11, percentages in HE group)

	The system	Money	Lack skills	Lack qual's	Own weakness	Other people
Males	33.3	12.5	29.2	22.9	16.7	20.8
Females	32.7	26.9	34.6	34.6	23.1	21.1
Total	33.0	20.0	32.0	29.0	20.0	21.0

6.2.2 Individual agency

Studying and future careers

Females were found to score significantly more than males on factor C5 'planning not chance' (mean scores: males = 0.02, females = 0.44, $p \leq 0.01$)¹. The constellation of items comprising this factor was interpreted as indicating something about what individuals felt to have been the relative contributions of planning, choice and chance on their situations. The data from single questionnaire items showed that more females said interest had influenced their current situation (females 83%, compared to males 65%), and higher proportions disagreed with the statements 'getting a job is just a matter of chance' (females 62%, compared to

¹ cf §10.1 for explanation of p values.

males 36%) and ‘being successful at work is just a matter of luck’ (females 77%, compared to males 53%). There was, however, no difference in the numbers of females and males naming long-term goals as an influence. Table 6.7 shows the proportions of students making attributions for what had mainly led to their current situation.

Table 6.7: Current situation mainly attributed to... (q21, percentages in HE group in each category)

	My plans	Having connections	Chance	Other’s plans	Seemed my only option
Males	67.5	10.0	5.0	2.5	15.0
Females	66.0	17.0	8.5	2.1	6.4
Total	66.7	13.8	6.9	2.3	10.3

Again, similar proportions, and the majority of males and females, cited ‘my plans’ as the main influence on their current situations. However students felt about the role of luck and chance in getting work, the table shows that this did not feature as something many attributed being in higher education to. A greater number of males said higher education had seemed their only option. Overall, it appears that more of the females felt positive about being in higher education. This is consistent with other findings that males more commonly reported being at university to improve their chances of securing a ‘decent’ job, while females expressed interest in their chosen subject as the key motivating factor.

I’ve always wanted to go to uni, but you know straight, sort of like GCSE’s, A Levels and then uni. I thought that was one of the, probably the only way to go, really, to get a decent job.

(Dominic, 19 year old marketing student)

I couldn't sort of see anything else to do apart from.... I mean the job with (just) A levels would have been so sort of low and doing a degree was like the step up where I could get a better job so to speak.

(Danny, 20 year old geography student)

I chose marketing not because it was business orientated, I mean I did do business orientated A Levels; it was just what I was interested in.

(Dalvinder, 19 year old marketing student)

I'm doing psychology, but I don't, I don't know what I'm going to do at the end because it's so broad, I just don't, I just enjoy it, so, it's the main reason I'm doing it really.

(Devon, 20 year old psychology student)

Although a significant difference was not identified by factor C2 'fulfilled at work', the small differences between males and females on this factor's items were consistent with the conclusion that females were more often in higher education through interest and choice. More females reported often feeling a sense of achievement, using their initiative, making decisions and feeling stretched (cf Table 10.14).

Few people reported in the survey that their parents had influenced their current circumstances; however, the group discussions revealed that parental expectation and approval was of underlying importance for many.

I'm in control of what I want to do but I'm dead kind of,... it's what my parents advised me to (do). It's like under their advice I'm here, but I'm doing what I want to do.

(Dave, 22 year old photography student)

But I think the only, the only stress that I'm under with it really is that I wanna do well for my Mum basically, do you know what I mean, not for anyone else, I mean yeah for myself and for my son, but that's like the major stress, you don't wanna let your parents down.

(Denise, 24 year old psychology student and single parent)

A significant factor score difference was found on factor A2 'active career seeking'; females had been more active (mean scores: males = 0.26, females = 0.70, $p \leq 0.001$). In the higher education setting this may indicate that females have made more effort searching for casual work and/or reflect more females having searched for full-time employment previously. The fact that more females than males reported having previously taken a break from full-time education fits with the latter interpretation.

In personal lives

There were few gender differences identified in the data on students' personal lives. Factor scores on S1 'general self-confidence', S2 'social self-confidence' and C1 'fulfilled personal life' revealed no differences, nor were there any differences in the responses to single items which made up these factors. Similar proportions of each gender said that they had not yet left their parental home (see Table 6.8).

Table 6.8: Age left home (q13, percentages in HE group in each category)

	Never left	18 or younger	19 or 20	21 or older	No answer
Males	43.8	31.3	14.6	8.3	2.0
Females	42.3	46.1	5.7	5.7	0.0
Total	43.0	39.0	10.0	7.0	1.0

Fewer females said that they lived with their parents than the percentage shown in Table 6.8 so presumably some live away from home, in student residences etc, but do not judge themselves to have left home. Of those who have left, about half see this as permanent. When asked about how financially dependent they felt on their parents, about 61% of both males and females reported that they were still partly dependent. In terms of other kinds of parental support (emotional and practical) females were more likely to feel dependent than males. In these senses, only 10% of males felt they depended a lot on their parents, compared to 27% of females, and slightly more males than females felt themselves to be independent. Numerous examples of interviewees reporting feelings of social independence were identified (appendix 6(iii)).

I think I've sort of made myself totally independent now, 'cause I haven't actually been at home for a year, I've spent the whole year in Derby so it's like, Dionne, I haven't had any help from anyone at all so that sort of everything's off my own back. I live off my own back if you see what I mean.

(Darren, 20 year old biology student)

I do feel very independent (...), I mean you have to manage your time, you have to, I have to manage my budget, I have to (...) manage a house and things I'm living in this year. I do feel very independent.

(Dionne, 20 year old biology and geography student)

Approximately 15% of both males and females were in stable relationships (married, engaged or living with partners), but if not in any of these kinds of relationships females were twice as likely to be going out with someone compared with their male counterparts (54% compared with 27%).

6.2.3 Collective agency

The factor scores for A3 ‘politically active’ showed females were the more politically active (mean scores: males = -0.80, females = -0.42, $p \leq 0.01$). This was found despite fewer numbers of females expressing an interest in party politics (see Table 6.9). Factor A3 was labelled on the basis of responses to three items, shown in bold in Table 6.10. More females had participated in the other listed activities and more said that they would vote if there were to be an election tomorrow (females 71%, males 65%).

Table 6.9: Interest in politics (q35, percentages in HE group in each category, n=99)

	Interested	Not interested
Males	46.8	53.2
Females	36.5	63.5
Totals	41.4	58.6

Table 6.10: Participation in political activities (at least once) (q33, percentages in HE group)

	Attended Public meeting	Given views to politician	Handed out leaflets	Organised public event (n = 99)	Discussed political issue	Joined trade union
Males	27.1	10.4	18.8	25.1	70.8	6.3
Females	34.6	25.0	27.0	31.4	86.5	21.1
Totals	31.0	18.0	23.0	28.3	79.0	14.0

Discussion around politics and collective action was coded under the headings: ‘collective efficacy’, ‘action doesn’t work’, ‘not interested in politics’ and

‘dislike/withdrawal’. Females offered more opinions on this subject, especially about whether or not collective action can work. This finding fits with the survey finding that they had also taken part more. Mostly, however, they appeared to feel that their efforts were in vain.

Davina: We can rally and we can campaign all we like, like we did for not paying fees and such like, it's not going to work is it?

Dionne: It isn't no.

I: So you did that?

Davina: Yeah. We did it. I'm a subject rep and I took part in the, you know, in rallies and stuff and filled in lots of post cards and posted them off and wrote letters to people and got nowhere.

Daisy: Like beating your head against a brick wall.

The government's position on funding for higher education was raised in both groups as part of the reason for their sceptical attitude towards the formal political process.

But, if you really, if you really, it it's important to you what you think and what you care about, yeah. If it's like, if it's about politics, and I'm not saying I am, if it's really important to you, then if you push it then perhaps you can get yourself heard.

(Dalvinder, 19 year old marketing student)

I think I did take an interest in it, but then, sort of, you vote for things, I don't know, on (the basis of their) promises and stuff and then they don't seem to do it anyway. So I think, well, why bother?

(Dominic, 19 year old marketing student)

It's hard for us to be interested really 'cos I mean Labour got in and one of the first things they did was to cut student grants, wasn't it? So we can't really be happy about that, being a student.

(Danny, 20 year old geography student)

6.3 Futures: prospects and plans

There were no significant differences found on either of factors F1 ‘unlikely to move’ or F2 ‘negative view of future’. The data from single questionnaire items about the future showed strikingly similar patterns of responses from males and females; for example, q29 found that 42% of both males and females had firm plans, 52% had some possibilities in mind and 6% had no plans whatsoever. The group interviews showed that many of the students, although generally hopeful about their futures, were ‘waiting to see’ rather than formulating any clearer plans or aims. They were approaching the future with the hope that their time at university would reap rewards, but with uncertainty about in what way this would be so.

Yeah, I do geography but I don't want to do that particularly. At the minute I'm not sure what I want to do, but ...see how it goes.

(Darren, 20 year old biology student)

You've got to be fairly optimistic really else you'll never achieve anything.

(Danny, 20 year old geography student)

I don't know! I don't know at all. I guess I was (optimistic) at first, I mean I had a big setback this summer (father left mother) when everything was rosy and now it's gone, so I mean I had a big setback, but in certain ways, yes, I'm optimistic that I'm going somewhere. But I'm not sure where.

(Dionne, 20 year old biology and geography student)

6.4 Student perspectives

A gender difference was identified in relation to how young men and women students felt about their current situations in higher education. Females were more likely to feel that they had made a positive choice to be there and were more satisfied by, and interested in, their studies. This is consistent with the fact that more women

were returners to education, and that more had repeated examinations and blamed a lack of qualifications and skills for failures in their working lives. It is also consistent with the finding that as many as 15% of the males felt they had no choice but to be there (cf §6.2.2). Young women at The University of Derby appeared more positive than young men about their situations.

This interpretation of differences in male and female students' perspectives is supported by patterns of participation and educational attainment in Derby generally, with females participating more and reaching higher levels of attainment in post-compulsory education (cf Chapter 5). The University of Derby has been particularly successful in attracting females from poorer socio-economic backgrounds and low participation areas. Overall, these findings suggest that the changing shape of the labour market, and an increased emphasis on academic credentials, suit females better than males.

As well as a higher level of conviction in their current situations, females were found to be less politically *inactive* than males. This was found despite females reported interest levels in politics being slightly lower.

A substantial proportion of the University of Derby's students are from poorer social backgrounds (§5.2.2). This provides part of the explanation for financial pressures emerging as a key theme. It was in this respect that students seemed to feel least in control of their lives. Worries about accumulating debt, as well as the constraints of living on tight budgets, and the pressures resulting from combining study and work, were discussed at length in both groups. Students drew attention to the difficulties they faced in making ends meet, whether they were in receipt of a full, partial or no

student grant. Varying degrees of financial constraint were linked with social class, family background and locality, in students' attempts to explain the effects of social characteristics on individuals' life chances.

The concerns which staff guidance advisers expressed about the ratio of students to job opportunities in the labour market were not voiced by students (cf §5.2.2). Students generally felt that their participation in higher education would be instrumental in improving their labour market chances. As a result, most were generally optimistic about their futures, although uncertain about how these would take shape.

Chapter 7: Young employees: perspectives on their past, present and future lives

The sample of 100 young adults in full-time employment was made up of 48 males and 52 females. A greater proportion of the group fell into the upper age bracket, and this was particularly the case in the female group (see Table 7.1). Information on parents' occupation (see Tables 7.2 and 7.3) indicated that the sample of young employees had grown up in a variety of socio-economic circumstances; although the proportion of young people with fathers in professional and managerial or technical roles, compared with skilled workers, was slightly greater. Eight people in the group described themselves as from an ethnic minority background. Care was taken to collect completed questionnaires from young people working in a range of occupational areas, in proportions roughly equivalent to those in which young adults in Derby are based (cf Table 5.1). Young people in manufacturing, construction and service sectors (including administration, IT, health, education, hotels and catering), as well as young professionals (accountants, lawyers, teachers, trainee graduate managers) and Modern Apprentices, were included in the sample.

Table 7.1: Sample by age group (q38, percentages in employed group in each category)

	18 to 21 years old	22 to 25 years old
Males	45.8	54.2
Females	34.6	65.4
Total	40.0	60.0

Table 7.2: Social class of mothers (q40, percentages in employed group in each category)

	I	II	III _{nm}	III _m	Never worked	No answer
Males	10.4	31.3	8.3	22.9	25.0	2.1
Females	5.8	23.1	26.9	25.0	13.5	5.7
Total	8.0	27.0	18.0	24.0	19.0	4.0

Table 7.3: Social class of fathers (q40, percentages in employed group in each category)

	I	II	III _{nm}	III _m	Never worked	No answer
Males	22.9	27.1	18.8	10.4	10.4	10.4
Females	23.1	23.1	7.7	30.8	3.8	11.5
Total	23.0	25.0	13.0	21.0	7.0	11.0

7.1 Pasts: educational and employment backgrounds

Most young employees reported that their parents had either encouraged them to stay in education or had left the decision whether to stay in education, enter training or get a job up to them. More female respondents said their parents encouraged them to remain in education and more males said the decision had been left up to them (see Tables 7.4 and 7.5). Almost nobody reported that their parents ‘had not cared’ what they did. Fewer people than in the higher education setting had been encouraged to remain in education.

Table 7.4: Mothers' advice at age 16 (q2, percentages in employed group in each category)

	Stay in education	Train	Get job	Did not care	Left it up to me	No answer
Males	45.7	4.2	2.1	2.1	43.8	2.1
Female	61.6	5.8	1.9	0.0	28.8	1.9
Total	54.0	5.0	2.0	1.0	36.0	2.0

Table 7.5: Fathers' advice at age 16 (q2, percentages in employed group in each category)

	Stay in education	Train	Get job	Did not care	Left it up to me	No answer
Males	39.5	4.2	4.2	2.1	39.6	10.4
Females	61.6	1.9	3.8	0.0	23.1	9.6
Total	51.0	3.0	4.0	1.0	31.0	10.0

School-leaving ages were distributed across a wide age range. Sixty people first left education aged between 16 and 19, with the rest having left mainly aged between 20 and 24. Slightly more males than females left education at younger ages. In line with average national and local figures (cf Table 5.4), 46% had achieved at least 5 GCSEs graded A to C. Just over one third had attained qualifications at either NVQ levels 2 or 3 and a similar proportion of the group had other vocational qualifications (City and Guilds, BTEC, HNDs etc). Approximately two fifths of the group had A Levels and a little less than one third of the group were qualified at degree level. The females were the better qualified; 52% reported having 5 GCSEs graded A to C, compared with 40% of males, and 48% had at least one A Level, compared with 38% of males. Similar proportions of males and females had a vocational

qualification.

A total of 31 people had been apprentices, constituting 46% of males and 17% of females. Almost one third of these young people had been apprentices in professional occupations (e.g. trainee accountants) rather than in a skilled trade. Many young people had changed jobs several times. Forty-three people were currently in their first jobs, 17 in their second, 18 in their third and 14 people reported having had four or more full time jobs. There was no gender difference here, substantiating Fenton, Devadason, Bradley, Guy and West's (2001) finding that patterns in men's and women's job stability are similar.

The majority of young adults reached their current situations without encountering many difficulties or setbacks. Only 5 to 10 people reported either, ever having changed their courses before failing, being obliged to leave a training scheme, being made redundant, losing a job when a contract ended, or having setbacks due to health, family or personal problems. Fewer young employees than students had experienced setbacks. More males than females reported setbacks. The most frequently experienced setback was repeating examinations (54% of males, compared to 35% of females). In response to the question 'how many times have you been unemployed for four weeks or more?' only 8 people said they had never been unemployed and 33 people said they had experienced unemployment at least once. Over half of the group chose not to answer this question. This missing data may have resulted because respondents were not sure what to count as unemployment (whether or not to count short periods of time when looking for work but not registered as unemployed as being unemployed). The fact that only a few people reported having attended any kind of scheme for unemployed people

indicates that most of the employed young adults had not experienced unemployment for any great length of time.

7.2 Presents: current views and experiences

7.2.1 Opportunity and constraints

As in the student group, no gender differences were identified by the factor scores for C3 ‘opportunities open to all’ or C6 ‘ability not rewarded’. Consistent with these findings, the single items from q24 showed similar proportions of males and females rated each social characteristic as having a considerable effect on an individual’s opportunities in life (see Table 7.6). Social class and family background were seen more frequently as factors having a considerable effect, but this was a view held by only one fifth of the sample.

Table 7.6: Social characteristics rated as having a ‘considerable’ effect (q24, percentages in employed group)

	Gender	Race (n = 99)	Social class	Family (n = 99)
Males	14.6	21.3	20.8	22.9
Females	11.5	5.8	21.2	21.6
Total	13.0	13.1	21.0	22.2

The initial and predominant responses from interviewees were that these social characteristics had played little part in influencing their lives. Unlike young people in higher education, they did not view social background as a significant factor influencing opportunities (cf appendix 6(iv)). When asked about the effects of gender the two employed groups differed in tone; possibly as a result of their

differing compositions - with one group mixed and the other female only. In the mixed group, both males and females asserted that they had experienced no disadvantages due to their gender; on the contrary, one young woman explained how being female in a male-dominated company worked to her advantage.

No, I've found that being a female in the company that I work for is actually an advantage...in the company I work for there's about 1000 men and about 30 women and you just stand out and so you are more likely to get picked on for certain things I'd say. I got picked on by the managing director because I was on a course and there was only 40 people and I was the only girl, so you sort of get to know people more because they remember you because you were the one girl in the group.

(Dawn, 23 year old graduate trainee)

The feelings of the group were summed up by Della with the comment:-

things are changing and everything's equalling out now, if you know what I mean.

(Della, 19 year old Modern Apprentice)

In the female only group, one of the liveliest and most extended parts of their discussion was about the way in which being female affected them. As in the mixed group, it was acknowledged that being one of few females in a male dominated work place does mean that you stand out, which can incur advantages. Nevertheless, it was their view that in order to gain equal respect as a female it is necessary to prove yourself more.

Well, with me particularly, I mean I'm the only female within probably 200 guys and it's, oh it's, I mean, sort of, the female/male bit to me is not a problem at all. I mean, I'll come out well with whoever, but it probably, in one way it's slightly more difficult for me 'cos I almost have to prove myself, but in another way I get quite a lot of attention because everybody knows who I am and because I'm the only female in that group it's easier, but in the same way, it's probably difficult because you feel like you have to prove yourself to be accepted with them.

(Danielle, 20 year old engineer)

But prove yourself twice as much I think.

(Debbie, 21 year old marketing assistant)

Both Danielle and Debbie said they had experienced one off incidents of overt sexism and prejudice in the work place. In Danielle's case, this had been acted on fully by her company. More generally, stereotypes were seen as operating in the way they were treated by other people; for example, two of the young women referred to incidents when others had assumed, from looking at them, that they were secretaries.

The amount of times I've walked into an office and I've asked to speak to Mark Bower and they're like "Are you the new temp?" and I'm like "No", she says "Oh, what is it about?" and she's sort of saying, "And you are?". "I'm the engineer in charge of the engine or whatever" and she's like "Oh, I, I'm sorry" and she scurries off and comes back and...I mean, I've had it three or four times and they just immediately presume that "Are you the new secretary?", "No!"

(Danielle, 20 year old engineer)

A significant gender difference was identified by the factor S5 'achievement barriers'. This factor was derived from responses on whether or not 'the system', 'lack of skills', 'lack of qualifications', 'my own weaknesses' and 'other people' were given as reasons for failure to achieve in work and personal life. Males named more of these as barriers to achievement than females (mean scores: males = 0.10,

females = -0.28, $p \leq 0.05$). The responses to single items are shown in Tables 7.7 and 7.8. Males were particularly more likely to blame a 'lack of skills' and 'their own weaknesses' for failures in their personal lives, and 'the system' and 'lack of qualifications' for failures in their working lives.

Table 7.7: Barriers identified in personal lives (q11, percentages in employed group)

	The system	Money	Lack skills	Own weakness	Other people	Lack qual's
Males	6.3	77.1	16.7	37.5	14.6	10.4
Females	5.8	57.7	3.8	26.9	11.5	5.8
Total	6.0	67.0	10.0	32.0	13.0	8.0

Table 7.8: Barriers identified in working lives (q11, percentages in employed group)

	The system	Money	Lack skills	Lack qual's	Own weakness	Other people
Males	39.6	20.8	27.1	41.7	20.8	18.8
Females	21.2	23.1	21.2	28.8	25.0	13.5
Total	30.0	22.0	24.0	35.0	23.0	16.0

Although no significant difference was found on factor C6 'ability not rewarded', the data for single items in q31 (reported overleaf), as well as for q23 (see Table 7.9) and q25 (see Table 7.10), suggested that slightly more females than males placed emphasis on individual ability for getting work, rather than on external factors such as luck or the local area. Items in q31 found, for example, that 87% of females, compared to 71% of males, agreed that 'getting a job depends upon ability' and 47% of females, compared to 37% of males, agreed that 'talent always rises to the top'; while 61% of females, compared to 36% of males, disagreed that getting a job 'is

just a matter of chance' and 47% of females, compared to 35% of males, disagreed that it 'depends on where you live'.

Table 7.9: Influence of where you live on getting a job (q23, percentages in employed group in each category, n=99)

	Big	Some	Slight
Males	31.3	47.9	20.8
Females	17.6	54.9	27.5
Total	24.2	51.5	24.3

Table 7.10: Success in finding a job is mainly down to... (q25, percentages in employed group in each category, n=99)

	The individual	Job opportunities in the area	Both equally
Males	39.6	4.2	56.2
Females	49.0	3.9	47.1
Total	44.4	4.0	51.6

The interviews shed little light on these findings and in places appear inconsistent with them. Female interviewees spoke at length about the limited job opportunities in the area and feeling confined to the area or a commutable distance, as a result of commitment to partners, homes and family. It is argued in §11.3 that young women have a broader orientation to life concerns compared with young men. This provides an explanation of how these findings can be reconciled. Young women emphasise the individual in general terms, but while their personal job opportunities may be affected by the local area even more than young men's, this isn't experienced

negatively overall, as they view such constraints in a wider context of life concerns.

7.2.2 Individual agency

Career related

A significant difference between males and females in relation to career-related behaviour was identified by factor A2 'active career seeking'; males had been more active than females in searching for work (mean scores: males = 0.68, females = 0.36, $p \leq 0.05$). This may imply either that males found it more difficult to find work per se, or that they had more difficulty finding work with which they were satisfied.

No gender difference was identified by the factor C5 'planning not chance'. This was consistent with the fact that similar proportions of males and females reported that 'interest' (males 66.7%, females 71.2%) and 'long term goals' (males 56.3%, females 48.1%) were influential factors in their choice of job. Slight differences between males and females emerged in responses to other items in this question. Namely, more males than females reported being influenced by the 'training offered' (males 45.8%, compared to females 30.6%) and their parents (males 22.9%, compared to females 5.8%). When asked to specify 'what led mainly to your current work situation' the responses by gender followed an almost identical pattern (see Table 7.11). The majority stated that 'my plans' were the main determinant, but as many as one quarter saw 'chance' as the key factor leading to their current situation in work.

Table 7.11: Current situation mainly attributed to... (q21, percentages in employed group in each category, n=92)

	My plans	Having connections	Chance	Other's plans	Seemed my only option
Males	54.8	14.2	28.6	0.0	2.4
Females	60.0	10.0	22.0	2.0	6.0
Total	57.6	12.0	25.0	1.1	4.3

Interest and enjoyment, but also chance, training offered, connections, family and the economic climate were all alluded to by interviewees as factors which influenced their current situations. Danielle was adventurous enough to have left home at 16, moving away from her hometown to take up an engineering apprenticeship with Rolls Royce in Derby. In her case the move away was due to the pull of an attractive job, but in others, such as Damian's, poor job opportunities in the area acted as a push.

Basically I wanted a job that helps people, because what I do is I help people get benefits and originally I did want to become a fireman but because of an injury to my leg that was out of the window straight away, so I moved from Wales down here because of a lack of jobs and then I just got onto the New Deal scheme.

(Damian, 19 year old welfare rights assistant)

The young adults generally described their families as supportive and willing to provide them with help when it was needed. Many young people had taken advice from their parents. More males than females reported in the survey that their parents had been an influence, while the group discussions revealed how this influence could be a powerful one for both genders. Feeling pressurised was not commonly reported, although there were exceptions such as Della who had felt pressured into A Levels by her parents and David who felt pressure from his father to join the army.

The coding distribution shows more females made comments indicating ‘resistance’, in the sense either of resistance to direct pressure from parents or showing independence of mind by going against family or social norms in making life choices. Deborah, for example, decided she did not want for herself what her parents had.

I went into my job, mainly due to the fact, that both parents, were just like manual workers so I decided to, you know, go for a more structured profession and work my way up through the profession in Rolls Royce.

(Deborah, 25 year old administration and HR officer)

Only one person said that ‘other’s plans for me’ was the main determinant on their current situation. Thus, it may be concluded that, young people usually felt they made the final decision themselves.

Females felt better equipped at work than males in technical skills and even more so in writing and numerical skills, in which 79% of females and 58% of males felt themselves to be very well equipped. As shown in Table 7.8, males named more barriers to achievement in work, and the greatest gender disparity was in the numbers stating they lacked qualifications. These findings are consistent with the fact that the females were the better qualified.

No gender difference was identified by factor C2 ‘fulfilled at work’. The interviews showed that the main sources of anxiety, stress and feelings of lack of control in these young people’s lives were work-related. Coding for ‘absence of agency’ was concentrated under the heading ‘anxiety/stress’, with comments relating mainly to work matters and the impact of work on personal life. Interviewees were generally of the opinion that more was expected of them than had been expected of previous

generations. They explained how they felt pressure to be at their best constantly and to update their qualifications, in order to face stiff competition in the fight for jobs and gain promotion. There were a number of examples of people combining work with study. Some endured heavy workloads and some felt insecure in their current jobs. Deborah explained how she is often at work until 7pm and doesn't claim any overtime because:

Well they're paying for me to go to college. Like you say, with doing your further education, with the same time as going to work and even though you get day release they still expect the same amount of work done, if not more, to be done in work and if it's not done there's no....I haven't really got a manager that protects me. It's straight, straight on why haven't you done it....so a lot more responsibility in work.

(Deborah, 25 year old administration and HR officer)

It's like they expect more from you and there's a level that you think well I'd better do it because there's plenty of people who haven't got jobs....and I don't know, I think you push yourself harder.

(Dawn, 23 year old graduate trainee)

I sometimes feel a little bit stressed because I feel that I've got to be at my best all the time because they can easily replace me like the way I, you know, I replaced the last person. So, if I made a mistake then the people that fund us, you know, if anything's wrong then they can pull the funding and then my job's gone.

(Damian, 19 year old welfare rights assistant)

While the work load of combining study and work constituted a source of stress, there was evidence that, overall, the opportunity for this was assessed positive. Young people, particularly those employed by larger organisations (including Rolls Royce, Adtranz, Balfour Beatty and the Chamber of Commerce), acknowledged their company's financial support for their further education and training, as well as the influential role played by managers in their development:-

I think that (...) having your employer pay for your studies (...) is an advantage. (...). I wasn't pushed into, but sort of guided say, you know, if that's what you really want to do then you need to be looking at a degree.

(Deepak, 26 year old engineer)

...and you are, not pushed, but actively encouraged to do that. You've always got the opportunity to get to the level higher.

(Danielle, 20 year old engineer)

Good working relationships with managers and being trusted by colleagues to carry out a role competently were valued sufficiently to merit comment on. This settings group interviews produced more passages coded under 'institutional support' than either of the others (cf appendix 6(iii)).

Males' and females' work values were also remarkably similar (cf appendix 10(iii)).

The most frequently named priorities were: good pay (75%), good job security (55%) and good career prospects (51%). There was little differentiation between the genders in prioritising work involving interaction with, and helping, others. In fact, these factors featured as priorities for only a few people.

In personal lives

Female employees were found to be more advanced than their male counterparts in setting up their own homes. They were found to leave home earlier (see Table 7.12) and, if they had left, be more likely to see this as permanent (females 58%, compared to males 35%), be homeowners (females 31%, compared to males 15%) and be in a stable relationship (see Table 7.13; females 46%, compared to males 13%). There may have been some effect on these figures from females making up a slightly greater proportion than males of the upper half of the age range.

Table 7.12: Age left home (q13, percentages in employed group in each category)

	Never left	18 or younger	19 or 20	21 or older	No answer
Males	50.0	25.0	12.5	12.5	0.0
Females	34.6	36.5	17.3	9.6	2.0
Total	42.0	31.0	15.0	11.0	1.0

Table 7.13: Relationships (q41, percentages in employed group)

	Married	Living with partner	Engaged
Males	0.0	8.3	4.2
Females	7.7	21.2	17.3
Total	4.0	15.0	11.0

Despite differences in living arrangements there were negligible differences in proportions of males and females reporting feelings of independence from parents, either financially or in terms of other kinds of support such as practical advice and emotional support. The majority of both males and females stated that they remained partially dependent on their parents for other kinds of support (60%), and that they were now financially independent of their parents (females 69%, compared to males 57%). Slightly more young women were financially independent of their parents; however, they were also more likely to have partners to share financial resources with. The interviews identified only a few examples where financial independence was commented upon. Thus, where this existed, it appeared to be taken for granted. For those who expected to be making the transition to an independent lifestyle, but who continued to rely on parents due to their low income, this lack of financial independence often led to strong feelings of anxiety (as in

Damian's case, see extract below). Although some young people explained that they were enjoying the luxury of continuing to be looked after, or of having more disposable income (which was used for financing cars, socialising and holidays), for many young people living with their parents, this boiled down to financial necessity and unwanted dependence.

Yeah, that's what I'm looking for and the reason I am working so hard, is because I want to get money for a deposit for my own place. Because basically I have to live by my father's rules and you know, I'd just like to come and go when I please, do what I like, so....as soon as I've got enough, then I'd rather get a place of my own.

(Damian, 19 year old welfare rights assistant)

I'm still at home, but I moved out when I went to university and I had to come back home because I was very skint. I was in so much debt when I came home from university that I just had to live at home, there wasn't any choice. I couldn't afford rent, I couldn't afford anything...

(Dawn, 23 year old graduate trainee)

Young people generally agreed that the move out of the parental home was a key factor in achieving a feeling of independence. Several young adults had left home aged 16 or 17 for various reasons, Danielle for her new job, Debbie to live with her partner, Deborah to “*cut out on the arguments*”, and they described their experiences as valuable, and steeply negotiated, learning curves.

I mean, I could not go and live at home. I mean not even if, I left home at 16 and it was, it was literally like 16 straight to, I felt like 26. Because you, you literally you've got, you, you were you and there's no Mum and Dad at the back of you saying 'I don't think you should be doing that' kind of thing. In that step I, I put years on me, mentally.

(Danielle, 20 year old engineer).

Others, like Dean, who left when somewhat older than Danielle, aged 23, were

equally likely to attribute becoming independent to making this move: -

The big step was moving from home to a place of your own.

Parents' home?

Yeah parents' home, that's it, then I can do exactly what I want to when I want to.

(Dean, 25 year old engineer)

No gender differences were found in factor scores measuring either 'general self-confidence' or 'social self-confidence' (S1 and S2). Although there was no significant difference found on C1 'fulfilled personal life', slight gender differences in responses to some of the items making up this factor were found. More females than males reported 'often' using their initiative (75%, compared to 61%), feeling stretched (32%, compared to 22%), setting their own goals (73%, compared to 57%) and feeling that they are given responsibility (74%, compared to 57%) in their lives outside of work. These small differences may have resulted from the greater number of females who were living away from their parents. More males than females named their 'own weaknesses' and 'lack of skills' as preventing them achieving in their personal lives (see Table 7.7). No gender difference was found on factor S6 'frustrating situation'.

7.2.3 Collective agency

Factor A3 'politically active' identified no significant gender difference. Responses to all questions on political and collective behaviour were similar for males and females. On the whole, group discussions showed young employees to have little involvement in community based activities and to express much dislike and mistrust of the political process and politicians (cf appendix 6(iv)).

7.3 Futures: prospects and plans

Comparison of factor scores for male and female employees on F2 'negative view of future' showed females held significantly more positive views of the future (mean scores: males= -0.14, females= -0.43, $p \leq 0.05$). This factor combined questionnaire items on how likely they felt it to be, that they would 'get the kind of job you really want', 'obtain additional qualifications' and 'become unemployed', as well as whether they had 'made plans' for the future. More females than males thought it 'very' or 'quite likely' that they would get the job they wanted (58%, compared to 34%) and more had made 'firm plans' (31%, compared to 23%). Differences on the other items were small, but no females stated they felt it either 'very' or 'quite likely' that they would become unemployed in the future, compared with 9% of males. There was no significant difference identified by the factor scores for F1 'unlikely to move'.

7.4 Young employees' perspectives

Young female employees were more positive than males about their futures. Male employees had put more effort into searching for work and named more barriers to achievement. These results suggest that young men felt less in control of their work situations than young women. It is possible that young men felt they were not progressing as quickly as they expected to. This conclusion was supported by other findings. Males reported more setbacks. Females emphasised individual ability and effort, over chance or the area in which they lived, as the key factors in succeeding in the labour market, even more than their male counterparts. Females had stayed in education longer, were better qualified and felt better equipped in work-related

skills.

These results are consistent with the fact that more males than females in Derby enter the labour market immediately after compulsory schooling (cf §5.2.1). If opportunities in the labour market require higher levels of qualifications, more often, and males are less well qualified, this may partly explain why they are having a more difficult time than females in achieving satisfying results for themselves in the labour market. Another possible contributory factor is the shift in Derby's labour market base away from manufacturing and into the service sector, with a corresponding growth in opportunities of the kind traditionally taken up by women and a decline in those taken up by men, especially for those without qualifications.

Women's stronger senses of control must be taken in context however; a gender disparity in rates of pay persists in Derby and training schemes such as Modern Apprenticeships remain highly gender segregated. The group and individual interviews (cf Chapter 9) suggest that female employees were aware of the effects their gender can have on their lives at work, but they expected to overcome any problems by proving themselves capable and did not feel that their gender limited their opportunities. Young men's and women's career orientations and experiences did not differ in other key respects; reported work values, how much they attributed their situations to planning rather than chance, levels of job stability and their experiences of responsibility and challenge in the work place were all similar.

Females were shown to be more advanced in setting up their own homes and in forming partnerships. Although this difference was not reflected in disparate feelings of reliance on parents, it was found that females were more likely to report

often feeling stretched, using their initiative, setting goals and feeling that they have responsibilities in their personal lives.

It is worth drawing attention once again to aspects of their working lives which these young people felt were out of their control. Pressures to be at their best in the face of stiff competition, to take on heavy workloads and having to update knowledge and qualifications in order to progress were generally seen as being unavoidable and symptomatic of modern times. The sample included people from a range of socio-economic backgrounds and with qualifications at all levels. Regardless of background, what came through consistently was the strong source of support provided by their families. Around one third, despite having their own income, remained at least partially dependent on their parents for financial support. Almost half of the young men and one third of the young women continued to live with their parents. Furthermore, many regularly turned to parents for emotional support and advice. The encouragement they had received throughout their lives from parents was frequently acknowledged as having played a major part in their successes.

Chapter 8: Young and unemployed: perspectives on their past, present and future lives

This sample targeted young people who had been without work for at least six months. Young people were approached through Employment Services, City Council community programmes and Colleges of Further Education. Consequently, the sample consisted of young unemployed adults currently engaged in a variety of schemes (44%) and New Deal pathways (56%). The questionnaire was completed by 50 unemployed males and 50 unemployed females. Proportions of younger males and older females were slightly larger than those of older males and younger females (see Table 8.1). Thirteen people in the sample described themselves as from an ethnic minority background. About half the group did not give any information on their father's occupations. Given that far more did give information on their mother's occupation, and that 17% of the group did not answer the question about what their father's influence had been at age 16 it is likely that a substantial portion of the sample were not in contact with their fathers. Most unemployed young people in the sample had fathers in skilled employment and mothers either in skilled employment or who never worked (see Tables 8.2 and 8.3). As many as a quarter had fathers from social classes I or II.

Table 8.1: Sample by age group (q37, percentages in unemployed group in each category)

	18 to 21 years old	22 to 25 years old
Males	58.0	42.0
Females	46.0	54.0
Total	52.0	48.0

Table 8.2: Social class of mothers (q40, percentages in unemployed group in each category)

	I	II	III _{nm}	III _m	Never worked	No answer
Males	4.0	12.0	18.0	30.0	22.0	14.0
Females	6.0	4.0	26.0	24.0	24.0	16.0
Total	5.0	8.0	22.0	27.0	23.0	15.0

Table 8.3: Social class of fathers (q40, percentages in unemployed group in each category)

	I	II	III _{nm}	III _m	Never worked	No answer
Males	16.0	14.0	6.0	24.0	12.0	28.0
Females	12.0	10.0	2.0	40.0	6.0	30.0
Total	14.0	12.0	4.0	32.0	9.0	29.0

8.1 Pasts: educational and employment backgrounds

Mothers were more likely than fathers to have encouraged their children (45%, compared to 33% of fathers), particularly their daughters (50%, compared to 40% of sons), to stay in education after minimum school-leaving age. This kind of encouragement had been given to fewer young people in the unemployed group than in the other settings. Most of those who had not been encouraged to stay on felt that their parents had left the decision up to them (see Tables 8.4 and 8.5). More young people than in other settings had been encouraged to train or get a job, or felt that their parents had not cared what they did.

Table 8.4: Mothers' advice at age 16 (q2, percentages in unemployed group in each category)

	Stay in education	Train	Get a job	Did not care	Left it up to me	No answer
Males	40.0	8.0	10.0	6.0	28.0	8.0
Female	50.0	2.0	6.0	6.0	36.0	0.0
Totals	45.0	5.0	8.0	6.0	32.0	4.0

Table 8.5: Fathers' advice at age 16 (q2, percentages in unemployed group in each category)

	Stay in education	Train	Get a job	Did not care	Left it up to me	No answer
Males	30.0	10.0	14.0	0.0	32.0	14.0
Female	36.0	0.0	4.0	10.0	30.0	20.0
Totals	33.0	5.0	9.0	5.0	31.0	17.0

More males than females first left full-time education aged 16 or younger (66% compared to 56%). Eighty percent of the group first left education by age 18. The group's qualification levels were very mixed, ranging from none at all to degree level (68% GCSEs, 20% 5 or more GCSEs graded A-C, 26% NVQs, 29% other vocational qualifications, 16% 1 or more A Levels, 7% degrees). Thus, the sample includes a number of people with good educational qualifications, and a minority of roughly 25% from middle-class backgrounds. This is consistent with the recently documented trend which finds unemployment to be no longer experienced solely by those from poorer backgrounds with low educational attainment (Banks et al, 1992).

At least 65% of these young people had experience of full-time work. Almost 70% of the group had been unemployed on a previous occasion. From this it seems likely

that many of these young people had been in and out of work and led fairly unstable lives. These young people reported more setbacks than those in the other settings (see Table 8.6). More males than females had repeated examinations, been obliged to leave a training scheme, been made redundant and lost a job when the contract ended. Females were more likely than males to have had setbacks due to health and family problems.

Table 8.6: Difficulties reported (q10, percentages in unemployed group)

	Repeat exam	Change course as failing	Obligated leave training scheme	Redundancy	Sacked	Contract ended	Health problems	Family problems	Personal problems
Males	38.0	22.0	30.0	22.0	26.0	34.0	20.0	14.0	30.0
Females	22.0	16.0	14.0	10.0	22.0	26.0	32.0	24.0	34.0
Total	30.0	19.0	22.0	16.0	24.0	30.0	26.0	19.0	32.0

8.2 Presents: current views and experiences

8.2.1 Opportunities and constraints

No significant gender differences were identified by the factor scores on C3 ‘opportunities open to all’, C6 ‘ability not rewarded’, S5 ‘achievement barriers’ or C4 ‘blame own weaknesses’. Consistent with these results, the single items from q24 (see Table 8.7) show that similar proportions of males and females rated each social characteristic as having a ‘considerable effect’ on an individual’s opportunities in life. The proportions holding these views were more than in the employed setting.

Table 8.7: Social characteristics rated as having a 'considerable' effect (q24, percentages in unemployed group)

	Gender (n = 98)	Race (n = 96)	Social class (n = 93)	Family (n = 95)
Males	24.5	28.6	34.0	19.1
Females	28.6	31.9	34.8	25.0
Total	26.5	30.2	34.4	22.1

Compared to the other two settings, there were few comments suggesting that this group viewed opportunities as open to all, or that they felt supported, either by their families or by local institutions (cf appendices 6(ii) and 6(v)). Discussion of factors coded as 'negative aspects' of their environments was far more extensive in the unemployed groups than in the other settings (cf appendix 6(ii)). Responses to q24 in the survey do not reflect the extent of the discussion sparked off in the unemployed groups when asked about the effects of social characteristics. These young peoples' discussions produced particularly frequent coding under the headings 'lack of finances', 'the labour market' (being constraining), and 'lack of institutional support' (appendix 6(v)). The following extracts were typical of comments made.

And I said "I didn't really want to do retail" and when I came to the Padley they put me into a warehouse and that was like really no good at all. And I contacted my New Deal Adviser and said "look I don't really want to do this" and she didn't help me with that at all.

(Di, 22 years old, New Deal administration course, formerly in care)

Money nearly stopped me from starting this course.... because of having to go another year of being unemployed after being unemployed a year and still looking for work and now coming on to the course it was sort of like a bit of a concern thinking about it going another year on benefits. But to get anywhere I decided like that you know I'd just have to bear it.

(David, 25 years old, New Deal sound engineering course)

Discussion around gender centred on difficulties encountered gaining entry to areas of work traditionally dominated by the opposite sex (e.g. females in construction, males in caring).

Can I just say, I'm working from a different side of it because I do a construction course at college, I do brick laying, plumbing, joinery, I do it all at college and I get, I get the piss took out of me. All the lads that are there just do not accept us. There's one tutor there, his name's Fred, and he doesn't accept us and he told us what he thought of us, there's 13 of us women, we've been in the paper and that.... So, from my point of view they are sexist in some things because if I went to get a job on a building site, and a man did, and we both had exactly the same papers, they're gonna give that job to a man. I know they are.

(Daniella, 19 years old, mother, New Deal 'wheels and words' course)

Last year I was on, I was doing a course at college, childcare, and I was OK, on the course I was doing the course work OK. But when the placements came up I was sent to a place where I was supposed to do evaluations on the kids and things like that and the teacher there didn't give me enough time to, well didn't give me any time at all to do the course work and the placement. But I had to leave college eventually because I was two months behind on work and I didn't have any time in the placement to do any, to do any of the work.

(Duncan, 22 years old, New Deal volunteer)

The consequences of parenthood were raised in only one group (the group not used in the coding distribution counts), which included several young mothers. These young mothers explained that the cost of childcare prohibited them gaining further education and training. Their collective view was typified by the following comment:-

Because it's, it's I'm gonna say it, it's nearly, it is normally, the norm is that the woman is the one that stays at home with the kids so what I'm saying is to go out and try and get training when you've got kids and you're a woman.

(Donna, 21 years old, mother, New Deal 'wheels and words course')

Single items from q11 are shown below in Tables 8.8 and 8.9. Unemployed males and females identified more barriers to achievement than young people in the other settings.

Table 8.8: Barriers identified in personal lives (q11, percentages in unemployed group)

	The system	Money	Lack skills	Own weakness	Other people	Lack qual's
Males	24.0	70.0	16.0	42.0	24.0	16.0
Females	14.0	62.0	20.0	48.0	26.0	22.0
Total	19.0	66.0	18.0	45.0	25.0	19.0

Table 8.9: Barriers identified in working lives (q11, percentages in unemployed group)

	The system	Money	Lack skills	Lack qual's	Own weakness	Other people
Males	30.0	24.0	44.0	44.0	18.0	22.0
Females	42.0	38.0	38.0	38.0	30.0	24.0
Total	36.0	31.0	41.0	41.0	24.0	23.0

Unemployed young people placed more emphasis than young people in other settings on the influence of locality on finding a job. Tables 8.10 and 8.11 show that 39 % viewed where one lives as a big influence on getting a job, compared to 24 % of the employed group, and 68 % viewed the individual and area as equally important, compared to 52 % of the employed group. It was also found however, that the majority (nearly 80%) of young unemployed people agreed with the statement that 'getting a job depends upon ability' and supported the idea that

education and qualifications are of considerable importance.

Table 8.10: Influence of where you live on getting a job (q23, percentages in unemployed group in each category, n=96)

	Big	Some	Slight
Males	34.7	46.9	18.4
Females	42.5	27.7	29.8
Total	38.5	37.5	24.0

Table 8.11: Success in finding a job is mainly down to... (q25, percentages in unemployed group in each category, n=98)

	The individual	Job opportunities in the area	Both equally
Males	32.7	6.1	61.2
Females	22.4	2.0	75.6
Total	27.6	4.1	68.3

Having experienced multiple spells of unemployment was reported by 59% of males compared with 41% of the females. This pattern, of males experiencing more multiple spells of unemployment than females, was found across all social class backgrounds. This is consistent with the finding that more males have experienced setbacks such as having to leave training courses and jobs.

8.2.2 Individual agency

In schemes and searching for work

There were no significant differences by gender on any of the career related factors; C5 'planning not chance', C2 'fulfilled at work' or A2 'active career seeking'. The

data from Q11 show similar proportions of males and females rated each of the aspects listed as having been influential for their choice of training scheme (see Table 8.12).

Table 8.12: Influences on current situation (q16, percentages in unemployed group in each category)

	Long term goals	Training offered	Friends	Parents	Interest	By chance	Had no choice
Males	50.0	34.0	6.0	10.0	54.0	28.0	10.0
Females	54.0	36.0	10.0	6.0	54.0	14.0	8.0
Total	52.0	35.0	8.0	8.0	54.0	21.0	9.0

The data on respondents' attributions about what had mainly led to their current situation is shown in Table 8.13. As in the other settings, substantial numbers of people attributed their current situation to their own plans; however the proportion was smaller and greater subsections of the group saw the key influence as having been 'chance', 'having no other option' or to a lesser extent 'other people's plans' for them.

Table 8.13: Current situation mainly attributed to... (q21, percentages in unemployed group in each category, n=87)

	My plans	Having connections	Chance	Other's plans	Seemed my only option
Males	41.9	7.0	23.2	7.0	20.9
Females	34.1	4.5	29.5	11.4	20.5
Total	38.0	5.7	26.4	9.2	20.7

These influences were apparent in the interviews where more in this setting

expressed feeling unsure of their direction or described instances where they felt forced down particular avenues. Dot reported that:-

I do find the job centre don't have the time, they just try and force you into something you're clearly not interested in.

(Dot, 22 years old, New Deal sound engineering course)

Young people in the unemployed sample wanted the same kinds of things from work as young people in other samples: namely good pay (79%), good job security (58%), good job prospects (51%). The importance of good pay took precedence among unemployed males, with 90% rating this in their top three priorities, more than in any other setting or gender group. There was evidence of resistance to accepting poor placements and poorly paid jobs without prospects.

Diane *That's what I think right, my Mum was on about Fiona because she got a job in a packing factory and she says why don't you do something like that, because I don't want to, I don't want to do that for the rest of me life standing there packing things*

Dan *I mean, I want a job where I can aim at.....*

Daniel *With prospects!*

Dan *Yeah. I want a job that I can better myself at. I don't want to be in ten years time still on the same production line. I might have wanted to work up to supervising or manager or something I don't want to be sat on the bottom rung all the time. Most of the jobs, a lot of them round 'ere are that sort of job where you're just sat there doing nothing. Or it's like part-time work because they don't have to pay you as much.*

There were, however, many examples of young people who had found placements which they had an interest in, but this had usually required a great deal of perseverance. This helps to explain the fact that so many pointed to 'my plans, goals and interests' as being influences. More examples of 'proactivity' were cited in this

setting's group interviews than in either of the other settings (cf appendix 6(v)).

I kept getting on to them, then I just decided that I wanted to do admin.

(Di, 22 years old, New Deal administration course, formerly in care)

Young people without employment were not giving up, despite negative feelings about their environments. Maintaining and developing a positive and confident attitude was perceived to be the defining factor in overcoming their current situation.

I think it's got to come from inside of you like, you've gotta be happy in yourself you know and confident in yourself and everything, the whole environment changes.

(Daniel, 25 years old, unemployed)

I'm gonna try and get confident and I'm gonna work hard at it.

(Daniel)

The way you've gotta look is though you know I'm gonna focus!

(David, 25 years old, New Deal sound engineering course)

In personal lives.

Few significant gender differences were identified in their personal lives. Factor scores on S1 'general self-confidence', S2 'social self-confidence', S6 'frustrating situation' and C1 'fulfilled personal lives' revealed no differences. Scores on factors measuring self-image/confidence were found to be high in all settings, but were highest among the unemployed. Perhaps this was a form of over-compensation.

More females were in stable relationships (32% compared to 10%), more also had children (30% compared to 10%) and more males than females were not in a partnership (70% compared to 36%). Two thirds of the males and one third of the females had not yet left their parents; however, there were slightly more young males

than young females in the whole sample (see Table 8.14). Of those who had moved out, far more of the females viewed this as permanent (62% compared to 28%) and more females lived in local authority accommodation (40% compared to 6% of males). About 22% of both males and females reported living in private rented accommodation.

Table 8.14: Age left home (q13, percentages in unemployed group in each category)

	Never left	18 or younger	19 or 20	21 or older	No answer
Males	58.0	30.0	4.0	6.0	2.0
Females	30.0	58.0	12.0	0.0	0.0
Total	44.0	44.0	8.0	3.0	1.0

About 50% of males and 60% of females said they were financially independent. Most of the rest said they were ‘partly dependent’ on their parents. In terms of other kinds of support, males and females were equally likely to feel dependent; 18% reported that they depended a lot on their parents, 46% felt partly dependent, 33% felt independent and 3% said that their parents depended upon them. Those expressing feelings of independence often also felt that this was not a ‘choice’, as their parents were either unable or unwilling to help. On the other hand, those accepting help from parents often found this to be a very frustrating situation.

I'd feel more independent if there was a job, a full time job.

So financially?

Yeah, so paying council tax

(Daniel, 25 years old, unemployed)

Hopefully I'll get a job and I'd like to move out then. Because I don't feel that I've got independence living at home. I'd like to get a place of my own.

(Dot, 22 years old, New Deal sound engineering course)

Young people in this setting were quick to describe ways in which they did not feel in control of their lives. These feelings, illustrated in the extracts below, mainly resulted from feeling forced into training schemes, having uncertain prospects, as well as situations of financial hardship and the consequences of this in limiting their personal lives and participation in wider society.

I don't feel in control at all, not at the moment.

Can you say a bit more?

I think it's because I'm at college doing a course and I don't really know, you know, whether I'll get a job at the end of it. And I don't really know where my life's going at the moment.

(Dot, 22 years old, New Deal sound engineering course)

I don't think you can ever be in control, especially if you're unemployed because it's like the money factor. When you only get say thirty or forty quid a week, that's got to last you all week and pay your bills and everything else you don't, you hardly ever get a chance to go out and enjoy yourself. Just simple things like go to a diz a lot of time you can't actually afford to go to a disco or go for a beer somewhere.

(Dan, 23 years old, New Deal Prince's Trust course)

It doesn't give you the choice to relax. If you don't, in these days you need money to actually do something that's relaxing and being sort of on the dole and not getting much money doesn't actually give you the choice to relax, because you can't afford it.

(Deb, 18 years old, unemployed)

8.2.3 Collective agency

Females were shown to be more politically active by the factor scores for A3 'politically active' (mean scores: males = -0.66, females = -0.22, $p \leq 0.01$). This was

found despite a similar proportion of each gender expressing an interest in party politics (see Tables 8.15 and 8.16). More females said that they would vote if there were to be an election tomorrow (females 50%, males 41%).

Table 8.15: Interest in politics (q35, percentages in unemployed group in each category, n=98)

	Interested	Not interested
Males	30.0	70.0
Females	31.3	68.7
Totals	30.7	69.3

Table 8.16: Participation in political activities (at least once) (q33, percentages in unemployed group)

	Attended Public meeting (n = 94)	Given views to politician (n = 95)	Handed out leaflets (n = 94)	Organised public event (n = 94)	Discussed political issue (n = 91)	Joined trade union (n = 93)
Males	23.9	12.5	19.5	29.8	52.3	10.9
Females	48.0	38.3	35.4	38.3	70.2	6.4
Totals	36.2	25.2	27.6	34.0	61.5	8.7

Given such low levels of interest and political activity the gender difference found for factor A3 is better expressed as females being less politically *inactive* than males. Not a single example was found in the group interviews of someone with belief in the efficacy of collective action (appendix 6(v)). As in the higher education group, only females described having taken part in political activities previously; they also felt their efforts had achieved little. Many of the unemployed groups had switched off from politics altogether, finding it irrelevant to them, and regarded politicians

cynically.

Do you think it's possible to influence anything that's done by government or local authorities or anything, either by voting or any other way?

No, straight answer

Not at all?

No. Quite a few times I've been to my local councillor about things and he's been, oh and he's a right withery dithery idiot and he said to me 'I'll get this sorted' and then just oh 'I'll phone you back.' And I wait a week and I phone him back and he says "Donna who?" and I'm like, "I beg your pardon", and I pulled rank on him the other week. I went mad at him, I said "excuse me" I said "you won't be getting any votes if you don't pull your finger out your arse and get something done". And they don't, they really don't. At the end of the day they're getting paid regardless, they're getting paid big hefty amounts of money if they sit on their arse and do nothing or if they go out and go and do something. And it's all the ones that's up in the, you know House of Lords and Commons and all the rest of it. They're all getting paid so they don't give a damn what we want.

(Donna 21 years old, mother, New Deal 'wheels and words course)

I think they're all a bunch of hypocrites.

(Daryl, 20 years old, New Deal BTEC student)

Yeah, they don't do anything for me unfortunately.

(Daniel, 25 years old, unemployed)

I don't think that your vote really can make that much difference. They're still going to do what they are doing. I think the only way that you'd ever, ever even make them start thinking about it is actually make them completely give up their life, for like a whole year, at least, and live like we do completely just live, sort of skanking all the money you can and eating here and there when you can.

(Deb, 18 years old, unemployed)

8.3 Futures: prospects and plans

No significant differences were found on either of the factors F1 'unlikely to move' or F2 'negative view of future'. Responses to single items questions were also

remarkably similar. For example, q29 found that both 29% of males and females had firm plans for the future, 66% had some possibilities in mind and 5% had no plans whatsoever. Although young people in this setting were more negative about their future prospects than young people in other settings, these responses to q29 show that they continued to see possibilities. Young people who valued, and felt supported in, their current training schemes were the most positive about their futures.

I think it is dead good at this centre, because.....Because here they really are positive, do you know what I mean. If you want to do something then they'll like give you a little nudge and point you in the right direction and you know not dog you down about it and just say "oh aren't you doing that in there, no, oh alright then". You know, think what you are going to do next.

(Dinah, 23 years old, mother, New Deal NVQ1 wood occupations)

I've got a goal (...). Since coming here really.

You've got a goal?

Yeah, I've got a goal. I didn't have a goal before. If you'd ask me what I was doing I would say "I dunno".

(Di, 22 years old, New Deal administration course, formerly in care)

These young people believed it was up to them to get themselves out of their predicament. To some extent this was a result of their view that no one else was going to bother to help them. Many young people felt bitter that they had received so little support at an institutional level. There was little evidence of fatalism creeping in however, and Dan's outlook was the exception rather than the rule:-

Dan I'm confident I can do a lot of work, the problem I get is I'm not given a chance to show I can do it which knocks your confidence back and it keeps knocking and it chips away at it so eventually you loose what confidence you actually started with.

Douglas It's a case of you've gotta to rise above, haven't you? If

you don't who else is going to.

Dan But then if you write a hundred letters for instance for jobs and you only get one back for an interview

Douglas Mmm that can be a bit of a bummer.

Dan: The only thing I know about the future is I'm going to die, so.....I mean, I'm not optimistic at all 'cause all that I can see is whichever corner you come to it isn't a corner it's a brick wall and there, and you can't get over it....

8.4 Young unemployed people's perspectives

There were fewer gender differences in the unemployed setting than in either the higher education or employment settings. The only significant difference in factor scores was for A3. This identified females as less politically *inactive*, which was also a finding in the higher education setting. As in the other settings, females were found to form their own homes and partnerships earlier.

In all other respects, young unemployed men and women shared similar perspectives. Group interviews identified powerful discourses concerning how labour market opportunities and social inequalities affect individuals' opportunities. Their awareness of the influences of the local labour market may have been particularly acute given that Derby's economy compared unfavourably with the East Midlands overall and Great Britain. This was particularly visible due to the effects of earlier recession on its manufacturing industries (cf §5.1.2).

Young people felt strongly that they had received insufficient and often inappropriate institutional support. They described feeling forced to participate in schemes. At least half of the group had experienced New Deal (cf §5.2.4), and many suggested there had been a problem with its approach (cf §8.2.2). There was

evidence of reliance on state support coupled with financial hardship which resulted in feelings of anxiety and stress. The Space's co-ordinator thought young people had a lack of awareness of the support available to them, which may have been the case to some extent.

Young unemployed people felt that their situation was their own responsibility and that they must help themselves. Very few were giving up in adverse circumstances; rather, they had a sense of future possibilities and shared the view that it is necessary to maintain a confident and optimistic outlook, combined with proactive behaviours, in order to capitalise on these. At the same time, they emphasised that personal goals must be realistic. The fieldwork was carried out in a period during which unemployment was falling and this may have given them some reason to be hopeful (cf §5.1.2).

Chapter 9: Biographical case studies of young employees

Problem-centred interviewing (Witzel, 2000; cf §4.1.6) was used to gain understanding of eight young employed people and their senses of control and exercise of agency as they made transitions into adulthood. Biographical case profiles were built up using the data collected by these individual interviews, in conjunction with data collected on these same individuals during the survey and focus groups. These eight cases form a central part of the project's analysis and the narrative analyses of three cases in particular are presented in this chapter. These biographical data allowed holistic pictures of lives to be built and were, therefore, uniquely placed to aid consideration of the interrelations between social structures and personal agency in how a young person's life takes shape. Similarities and differences between the three detailed case studies and the other five cases are reported on. These eight cases are located with respect to the overall employed sample, by referring to the survey and focus group findings presented in Chapter 7.

§9.1 introduces the eight young people. §9.2 discusses three cases which proved to be especially salient for analysis in relation to the individualisation thesis. §9.3 considers whether or not features of the three detailed case studies are also present in the other five cases. Since the project considers the social characteristic of gender in particular, contrasts are drawn between young men and women focusing on their experiences of opportunities and constraint, exercise of agency and feelings of control, both inside and outside of work, and in their perspectives on the future. §9.4 provides a summary of the main findings resulting from these analyses.

9.1 Introducing eight young employees

Biographical case studies were compiled of four young women and four young men. Short profiles are presented, with details of each person's social characteristics and their educational and employment histories.

Danielle: meeting the challenge as an engineering apprentice

Danielle was 19 when she completed the survey questionnaire and almost 21 when interviewed. She grew up in Lincolnshire in a middle class family, as the only daughter of a sales manager and housewife. Soon after achieving 9 GCSEs of grade C or above she moved to Derby to take up a Modern Apprenticeship in engineering with Rolls Royce plc. Since then she had progressed to studying at HNC and HND level at The University of Derby. She lived in shared rented accommodation, but was latterly planning to buy a house of her own.

Debbie: more than a female who's only good enough to cook

Debbie was the least advantaged female in the group interviewed individually. She grew up in Derby as one of seven children. Her parents were working class (a security guard and a housewife) and divorced. Debbie left school without any GCSEs of grade C or above, and her parents left what to do next up to her. She had held three full-time jobs, two of which she found unsatisfactory and left. By the time she completed the survey, aged 20, and when interviewed, aged 22, she was employed by a government organisation as a marketing and public relations assistant.

Diana: facing too much choice

Diana was 25 when she completed the survey and 26 when interviewed individually. She was middle-class; her mother worked as a school secretary and her father owned

a small business. She first left full-time education aged 18, having gained 8 GCSEs graded A-C and one A Level. During her first couple of years in the labour market she suffered two redundancies from jobs in the retail sector. These experiences left her feeling bitter and she attempted to change the direction her life was taking by returning to higher education. After completing a social science degree Diana had more positive experiences and had recently moved to a new job, which she considered to be well-paid and of high status.

Della: taking a roundabout route, but getting back on track

Della grew up in Derby with parents who were employed as a brick layer and bank clerk. She was 20 when interviewed and had completed a Modern Apprenticeship in administration with Adtranz plc. Subsequently, she moved into the Finance department and was just beginning a BTEC qualification in Business and Finance. Della felt she had been pushed into taking A Levels by teachers, her parents and a lack of information about alternative options. She left school with two A Levels and decided that she did not want to go to university but would instead seek a job with training. She then embarked on a lengthy process of job applications and turned down several poor offers before eventually accepting a Modern Apprenticeship place at Adtranz. She described her recent move into the Finance department as '*getting back on track*', explaining that she has always hoped for a job working with figures. She has developed a long-term aim to gain chartership with CIMA¹.

¹ CIMA is the acronym of the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants.

Dean: following in his father's footsteps

Dean completed the survey when he was 25 and was interviewed when 26. He was the only interviewee who drew a direct link between family tradition and his career choice. He had grown up in a close knit family, most of whom worked at the local Rolls Royce plant. On leaving school at 16, with average GCSE grades, he took his father's advice to try for an apprenticeship at Rolls Royce. The company encouraged Dean to continue studying and he had done this throughout the 10 years he had spent there, progressing from one qualification to another, so that at the time of the interview he had almost completed a degree in engineering. He had experienced various roles within the company and gained considerable responsibility.

David: taking a well-defined route to professional status

David was the only person who had followed the traditional academic route of applying for university whilst in the sixth form and, in his case, taking four A Levels. He decided at this early stage that he wanted to become a management accountant and tailored his degree choice and subsequent job applications to this goal. At the time of interview he was 24 years old and in a trainee management accountant position at Rolls Royce plc. David viewed his pathway into employment as being wholly his own decision. He said his middle-class parents, who were a nurse tutor and local government employee, had been supportive but in no way influenced his choices.

Deepak: realising the hard-working and ambitious Asian immigrant ethic

Although Deepak originally wanted to become a pilot he had cast this dream aside when he realised how long it would take him to achieve this. He wanted rewards quickly. Deepak left school with good GCSE grades and followed his older

brother's footsteps into an apprenticeship with a large company. He was 25 when he completed the survey and employed by Rolls Royce in one of their engineering departments. He was a British-born Pakistani national of working class background. His parents were a housewife and retired labourer. By the time of the interview he was 26, married, and lived close to his parents and parents-in-law. Deepak helped his parents financially.

Dec: at the mercy of insecure employment in the hotel industry

At the time of the survey Dec was 23 years old. His mother was a sales-assistant. His father had been employed in a variety of jobs, including in the army and as a chef manager. On leaving school, Dec wanted to be an electrician. He was not accepted onto the course and instead was pushed into taking a BTEC course in engineering, which he dropped out of. He then spent a couple of years living at home and working part-time in bars. By the time he was 20 he *'decided there was more to life than just working in bars and clubs and sleeping all day so I set out to get myself a job'*. He used his part-time bar experience to gain full-time work in a hotel bar. When the opportunity for a trainee managership post came up he took it. He found employment in the hotel industry to be insecure and was forced to move around the country to stay in work. He had been employed in three full-time and three part-time jobs previously, and had experienced 2 spells of unemployment lasting four weeks or more. He was hoping to run a hotel of his own one-day.

Locating these cases in the employed sample

It is important to consider how these young people compare with the rest of the employed sample from which they are drawn. A number of differences between the male and female halves of the total employed sample were identified (cf §7.4),

which implied that the females felt more in control of their working lives - females were better qualified, felt better equipped for work, had searched for work in fewer ways, reported fewer setbacks and barriers to achievement and were more positive about their futures. In contrast, it was the males interviewed individually who appeared to be in a stronger position and had made transitions into the labour market more easily. Three of the four male interviewees (Dean, Deepak and David) had acquired degree level qualifications by the time of the interview and had experienced continuous employment, all with Rolls Royce, since they entered the labour market. Of the males, only Dec had a more turbulent story, involving a mixture of jobs, setbacks and regular moves around the country. Of the females, Danielle was the only person whose transition into work was relatively unproblematic. Debbie and Diana had both experienced redundancies and had taken a long time to arrive in their current area of work. Although Della had been employed continuously by one firm since starting work, she had spent considerable time working in areas of the company which she disliked. Diana was the only female with a degree level qualification.

9.2 Danielle's, Debbie's and Dean's stories

Each of the following three case studies includes accounts of the young person's transition into employment, how they achieved independence from their parents, and their assessment of opportunities and constraints in their lives. Discussion of these aspects of their lives precedes an assessment of each individual's story in relation to the significance of personal agency. The individualisation thesis is considered in relation to links between structure and agency identified in the case studies. Danielle's, Debbie's and Dean's cases are explored at length, as their stories were

identified as theoretically salient in key respects and, therefore, offered a high degree of leverage for this task. Danielle provides an example of a young woman entering a traditionally male domain. Debbie provides an example of someone succeeding beyond the odds. Dean provides an example of a young man following in family tradition, in a way which is unusual today.

9.2.1. Danielle

Transition into employment

As a schoolgirl Danielle had entertained aspirations to someday become a vet. Following her GCSE results it became clear that she had not achieved the academic qualifications necessary to pursue this career. She appeared to have anticipated this since she had formulated a back-up plan before receiving her results, and had begun to make applications. She decided she would like an engineering apprenticeship. This was a pragmatic decision, influenced both by her preferences and the opportunities present. Her preference at school was for science subjects. She had arranged her work experience at a power station and found that she enjoyed it very much. It was there that she learnt of a potential opening at Rolls Royce.

When I was younger I always, always wanted to be a vet. Then I did my GCSEs and I didn't get the grades that I wanted, so I had to take the second option which was completely different and is in the role that I am doing now.

So was that second option in the back of your mind?

Yes. I did my work experience at the power station, and the careers people there said to me that Rolls Royce were advertising for apprentices. They gave me the address and I applied.

Did you apply for other jobs?

A couple, but I wanted to work at Rolls Royce.

In making this choice Danielle broke away from the social expectations of female occupations. The reaction she encountered at school and from her friends reflected this.

...they (school) were a little bit funny at first when I said that I wanted to do my work experience where I was (...). I think more than anything, they were just shocked initially.

Danielle received wholly supportive reactions from her parents. She described how she had been the only female on her work experience placement and, based on this, she felt she would get on fine in a working environment which was male-dominated.

Danielle subsequently noticed that her gender affected her at work. She had experienced both overt and subtler forms of sexism, and felt

...it's slightly more difficult for me cos I almost have to prove myself to be accepted with them.

She has frequently been taken for one of the 'new temps' by colleagues who don't know her. With reference to one incident of sexism Danielle said

...on the second day I had to be moved out of that area, because of this one guy. And I give Rolls Royce their credit. They were absolutely fantastic! When I reported it, they acted on everything.

Although it appears that Rolls Royce as a company had behaved in a supportive fashion, these experiences undoubtedly add an element of pressure which not everyone could cope with as readily as Danielle.

Becoming independent

The first steps towards independence from her parents came when Danielle took up her apprenticeship at age 16 since this necessitated moving city and therefore, out of the family home and into her own accommodation in Derby. She described this as “*very, very daunting. Very scary, but at the same time quite exciting...Looking back on it I sort of think what was all the fuss about*”. Danielle found the prospect of moving tough and it seems that her parent’s faith in her and their reassurances were important to her.

At first I said, “I don’t like the place, I won’t get the job”, but they just said “oh, you’ll be fine. We know you’ll be alright, but if you’re not you can always come home and do something else.

As well as acting as a safety net for Danielle, should she have needed it, her parents helped her with financial, emotional and practical support.

When I was sixteen, I first moved up here, my Mum and Dad helped me out no end (financially) (... ..) physically they were there (too), if something went wrong then Mum would maybe pop up one night.

As time went by, and her salary increased, Danielle gradually became more independent.

But now since my money’s gone up I don’t need them, and I don’t want them to help me out in a way, unless things get a bit tight.

So what sort of age were you when the balance swung from them to you?

When I was about eighteen, and I was getting a good amount on the apprenticeship, it was just a mutual thing. It was never expected of Mum and Dad, but it was always sort of them giving and let me know.

Although Danielle clearly felt able to turn to her parents for help if required, she saw this as a last resort and made an effort to do what she could for herself.

For me the biggest stress at home is just like literally money.

It is clear that moving to Derby was a key turning point in Danielle's life. She contrasted it against her negative experiences at school and said this was the point at which she began to grow up and feel more positive about herself and her future.

The biggest decision that I have ever had to make was moving to Derby. That is out and out the biggest thing I have ever had to do in my life really.

It was probably one of the best things I did as well 'cause from between May 96 and September 96 I put years on. When I finished school in May I was a girl, and in September, I was still 16 but I had this house and everything to look after. Definitely I did the right thing.

Why did you enjoy it so much?

Because of gaining my independence, that was what it was.

Opportunities and constraints

In Danielle's view there were ample opportunities open to her in the past, and she expected this to continue into the future also. She expressed her surprise:

I've also been surprised at the amount of chances that I've been given (...). I've had a lot of good chances in my life and have been lucky to take up most of them.

The opportunities she was thinking of here turned out to be work related. She gave examples such as working on particular projects which got her well known, and the opening which enabled her to move out of 'the works' and into the office. This, it transpired, had been of her making.

I worked on the shop floor and everything with all the lads and I'd sort of said already to my manager that I really want to get into the office, even if I ...don't get the opportunity in my training I will always apply and try and get there. And four months ago, he came to me and said "look, you can go in there for secondment if you want to" and all the lads turned round to me "oh, just because you're female, he's given you the opportunity to do all this, and I never get that opportunity." And he (her manager) just turned to them and said "that's because you never bloody asked".

Although, Danielle does acknowledge that becoming successful at work can depend on things beyond individual control, such as luck and connections, in relation to her own progress, she primarily emphasises the effort she puts in and her proactive behaviour in seeking out opportunities, as exemplified in the extract above. She believes that the only thing that may hold her back is a lack of academic ability.

The only thing that has ever stopped me being something, I'll say sort of cleverness, because I did want to go to university, but I couldn't handle the work with it, not the load, more the brain capacity (...). That's the only thing that I think will really limit me.

Agency and its limits in Danielle's life story

Danielle exhibited a strong orientation towards planning for her future. She was able to formulate and clearly articulate a narrative account of her past, current situation and where she viewed herself going in the future. Her account showed that her plans for the future were informed by her past experiences and her decision-making in the present moment was informed by her developing plans.

...how would you say you go about making decisions?

I make decisions, I think about the future, what will it (be like) in five years from now, if I do this now, what will it do in the next ex amount of days, months, years, whatever.

As such, and in line with the individualisation thesis, and Giddens' (1991) account of

the self and self-identity in the modern day, Danielle appeared as someone who put herself at the centre of her life planning. She focused, and acted, on the scope she saw for herself in shaping her own life course. Her plans appeared to be largely internally referential. Her idea to pursue engineering came from herself, it was not suggested to her by anybody else, and it reveals an independence of mind through its challenge to female stereotypes. In this sense, Danielle does seem to have ‘loosened ties with a traditional social category’, that of her gender. Clearly, she believes in taking responsibility for her own life and feels that shaping it is under her control. This is evident in the way she engages in proactive behaviours, ensuring that her manager is aware of her interests and ambitions. She attributes her success to her own hard work and talents.

It is evident that the social ties between Danielle and her parents have been both steadfast and placed her in an advantaged position. Their influence has probably been one of the most critical and profound influences on her transition to adulthood. Not only were they in a strong enough position to be able to provide for her material and emotional needs, thereby smoothing her career and housing transitions, their attitudes also seem to have influenced Danielle in substantial ways. Her mother, who had never worked, used to say to Danielle;

*Never get married, get your career sorted out and everything first,
don't do a song of it, get your life sorted out first.*

Danielle reported in the questionnaire that both of her parents had encouraged her to enter employment with training after leaving school. Thus, Danielle's pathway out of school appears to be tied to her family background. She has taken the view, in

line with her mother's, that the best way forward for her is to get her career sorted out first.

Probably when I'm older I might want to (have a family), but it isn't even in the equation for me at the minute. A good ten years maybe more away yet.

And what would you say was the reason for that?

I want to get my career sorted out first

What does it mean to get your career sorted?

Then I can say 'okay fine'. I've got where I wanted to be; now it's time for personal things.

The fact that Danielle has completed a high quality engineering apprenticeship and has found access to plenty of new opportunities at work, whilst living independently, might indicate that opportunities have opened up for women. This may be so to some extent, but at the same time her situation is a result of opportunities afforded by her family circumstances. It is far less likely that she would have found the confidence and resources to take up an apprenticeship in a new city without her parents' support. She has also discovered that her gender does have an impact on her daily working life in both subtle and more overtly sexist ways. She describes how she copes in such a male-dominated culture.

You have got to be able to take the male flack occasionally.

Do you feel you adapt yourself to that?

Yes definitely, you keep your personal life very personal, put a little shield around it in areas that you don't want them to know about.

But you feel you cope with that?

Oh yes, it is no problem. If I couldn't cope with it then I don't think that I'd be as happy as I am.

Danielle appeared to believe that to achieve her career-related ambitions, they would

have to be her priority, and therefore, she saw having a family as a long way off. Only time will tell whether or not this decision allows Danielle to achieve her work-related ambitions, and what the consequences are for her personal life.

On the one hand, Danielle's job in engineering demonstrates the possibility for a young person today to break away from a traditionally prescribed norm and self-style their biography in line with their own convictions. On the other, her story indicates ways in which her social background and gender have been influential in shaping her life course to date, helping and hindering her in traditional and predictable ways.

9.2.2 Debbie

Transition into employment

Debbie hoped to become a general practitioner throughout her childhood, and maintained this dream until beyond the end of schooling. This was not a realistic aim for her and though careers advisers had pointed out how tough the competition would be, this had not put her off.

As long as I can remember I wanted to be a doctor (...). When I got to taking my options (for GCSEs) everything I did was around going to be a doctor, and that was what my Dad used to tell everybody that I wanted to be. Then when we had careers advice and things like that I got told it was very stiff. (...) but I still wasn't worried about it, still thought I can do that, and then I let myself down in the last year because I was bored.

On leaving school Debbie decided to take what she referred to as 'a year out'. She moved into her sister's house as a nanny for her sister's child. Her intention was to return to college the following year to re-sit examinations, which she did but then dropped out after several months. She explained that she had not been able to find a

job around college hours so was unable to afford to stay on. It wasn't until then, more than a year after leaving school, that she abandoned her unrealistic aspiration of becoming a GP.

At this stage Debbie visited the careers service with a clear idea only of what she didn't want. She didn't want to take work as a labourer or machinist in a factory, which she saw as jobs without prospects. She half-heartedly entered a YTS scheme as a retail trainee and found that:-

But then working for £39 per week, when you are in an environment where other people are working less hours than you and getting three times more than you. It gets very de-motivating, and the factory were having problems with the wages (...) and in the end I just said 'I'm not having it!

Then jobless, Debbie reassessed her future. This was a turning point, in that she finally formulated a realistic plan. She describes how she made the decision to try to get some experience in an office:

Well (I thought) if I'm not going to be a doctor then what am I going to be, and people said 'why aren't you a nurse or something?', but I thought that would be settling for 50% of it.....I wanted to be something totally different so I thought I'd like to be an office manager, so I went starting looking for work and got a job as an office junior.

Debbie, once again, walked out on her office junior post after fifteen months because “I was treated worse than anybody else and badly because of my age, and I just wasn't going to take it”. This led to a short period of unemployment before she found a temporary post in a government organisation as a marketing assistant. She found she enjoyed the work and it offered the challenges she sought. Debbie became

motivated to demonstrate her capability. When her bosses came to fill the post permanently, they were sufficiently impressed with her performance to want to take her on, and so they only advertised the post internally. Debbie got the job.

...and when I got there I really liked it and I got into the marketing and, my husband's a printer so I found that I could go to him and ask him things about printing and (...) that helped me to get the job in marketing.

At the time of interview, organisational changes taking effect in the coming year meant that redundancy was a worrying possibility for Debbie. She was however, successful in keeping her job.

Debbie showed a high degree of resilience in that after she faced up to letting go of her GP dream she remained determined to find herself a career she could value. In achieving this, she was brave enough to reject jobs she viewed as unsatisfactory despite having to help pay a mortgage and being precariously positioned without any qualifications. Her refusal to accept just anything ultimately paid off and she was enjoying taking on more responsibility at work. Debbie had developed a long-term career goal to own and run a printing and marketing business together with her husband.

Becoming independent

In her view, Debbie has been financially independent of her parents since she was 15. At this age, she left school and went to live with her sister as a nanny to her child. Over the next couple of years she moved to and fro between her sisters, fathers and mother's houses for various reasons (helping with her sister's children, to be company for her sister, space, conflict with her father and mother). During this

time she paid her own way either by passing on benefits to her sister, when she was under 16, or her wages as contribution to bills, paying board and buying her own food. By the time Debbie was 17 she had bought a house with her partner, and since then they have moved to a bigger property and got married. She described these developments as being her own choices and as representing the *most important* decisions she has made in her life. Debbie's main source of support was her husband and she had not relied on either of her parents for some time. In these respects, Debbie had assumed responsibilities and a high degree of independence from her parents at a young age.

Opportunities and constraints

Debbie undoubtedly encountered many difficulties in entering the labour market. She left school without any qualifications and was not able to rely on family resources for help in going back to college. She blames not having continued in education after school on a lack of financial resources.

...but I can't do any of the things learning-wise, that I'd like to do, because in fact you have to pay for your own education..(...) and because I'm already paying for my own mortgage and everything else, I can't afford to pay it.

Her parents had split up, and her relationship with her mother was strained. Her father had influenced her positively in many ways, but at the same time, he had colluded with her holding onto unrealistic goals.

She showed awareness of the gendered nature of the labour market.

There is still sort of career sets, or although you, where you get women engineers and women pilots, there's not many, the ratio is so like 3% women and 97% men. And vice versa, nurses, in practice all of them are women and ...I think, there is still a long way to go

really, you know.

Do you think we are getting there?

I think we are, and I think we will eventually, but I don't think it will be in my lifetime.

As the following extract indicates, she also viewed job prospects in the area as being generally poor for young people today.

What do you think about the labour market (...) and your prospects for promotion in a place like Derby compared to other parts of the country?

We haven't got none have we?

I think, it's talking to older people in my family, they've said that past generations it was walk straight out of school into a job (...) now it's a lot harder to get apprenticeships or jobs so there's more stress for young people in the fact that, you know, they can decide what jobs they want, but a lot of times they won't get into that field because there's not that many jobs.

Debbie's account includes most references to lacking support or encountering obstacles in comparison with the other cases; however, she also scored highly on belief that opportunities are open to all. Perhaps the explanation for this lay in the fact that she felt that if she can make it, in her circumstances, without either qualifications or material support from her family, then anyone can. Debbie felt that effort can take you a long way and that it has in her own case. Several extracts support this interpretation:

I think if you've got ambition and the drive, to push yourself then, with a bit of good luck, then you can get practically anywhere

I think it is (why I got the job) that I will start at the bottom and (...) in a lot of places if I just demonstrate that I am willing to try my hand at anything and am willing to learn the things the company wants me to learn.

Agency and its limits in Debbie's life story

Considering what Debbie says about her family during the group and individual interviews sheds light on the course her life has taken so far. The following extracts illustrate the conflicting influences of her father and the other women in her family.

My Dad has always been very positive. But he can be one for trying reverse tactics, like he always said to me "you are not going to get to college". (..) He wanted me to prove him wrong.

Although my Mum's side of the family are all not working women luckily I had my Dad there. Even if my Dad's Roman Catholic and twenty years older than my Mum, he was very much into equal opportunities, he taught me a lot, to strive to get things, and independence and things like that.

It's sort of watching all them. I mean my Mum's got seven kids and yes she's had jobs but she's never had a career and that made me very determined that one day I am going to have my own business and you know, there's no way I'm having a kid before I'm twenty. I think that's the effect it had on me.

I absolutely refuse to fall into the stereotype of being a woman that's only good enough to cook.

Her father encouraged her to be ambitious for herself and she contrasted this with what other women in her family had. Together these influences help to explain Debbie's determination to have a career and be economically independent. In these respects, Debbie's life course is consistent with the individualisation thesis's postulation that people are able to loosen ties with their social class and family backgrounds. What she has achieved is largely a result of her decision to resist, and reject, the lives led by her female relations and other people close to her (her brother was unemployed and most of her friends were single parents living on benefits). She exhibited a desire to build a life of her own, and to be able to stand on her own two feet without the help of a man. In practice, the glimpse she provides of her husband suggests that he has been important in various ways.

...but I have got a three bedroom house, with a massive garden and now that is what I am working for, that is my motivation to have my own space, to have my own things.

I was petrified (while unemployed for two weeks) even though at that stage the mortgage we had then was for a smaller house, and my partner could afford it on his own wages but I am very independent and didn't like not knowing when I was going to be standing on my own two feet again.

It is clear that her background was a significant handicap for Debbie in making her transition into employment. On leaving school without qualifications, taking a 'year out' and helping with her sister's child, Debbie could easily have left her career ambitions behind. The fact that she did not is testimony to her high levels of determination and conviction in the idea that she could make her own way. Her family background meant that Debbie initially lacked the knowledge, experiences and support to develop realistic career aspirations. She clung onto an unrealistic dream to become a GP and this meant that her transition into employment was delayed and then lacked direction. Only once Debbie found herself in a job which she enjoyed was she able to draw on this experience and formulate a realistic, but still ambitious, career plan.

Would you say you have any long-term plans?

I want to have my own company.

What's made you think that?

Well, I got into marketing here and I enjoy it, and I am wanting to get some qualifications and then hopefully one day have my own company. Print to me is marketing, print is a big part of marketing, plus the fact that my husband is a printer and he could do what he loves doing and I could do what I love doing and he is the manual labour side and I would be the marketer and organise the company and all the rest of the office and administrative stuff.

In many respects, ties between Debbie, her background and particularly her gender are evident. She ultimately found a career pathway opening up for her in a traditionally female occupational area. Her domestic transitions, including moving in with a partner, getting married and buying a house, occurred quickly and while she was still very young, which is typical of a working class female. Debbie picked these domestic events out as being the biggest decisions she has ever made. It is also the physical proximity of her sister, and her sister's situation, which Debbie expects to provide her with the means of remaining in full-time employment once she has children.

Do you think it [having children] would make any difference to your working hours, or anything like that?

No, no

You've got in mind that you'd continue to work full time?

Yes, I have spoken to people about it, my sister and things, she's a house Mum and she's agreed that she would have a baby to help, so I could work and pay her, so I think, I definitely wouldn't want to give up work, and I definitely wouldn't want to reduce my hours because I enjoy my independence, and I enjoy being in control of the things I get and the things I want, and so I'd hate to stay at home all day.

Debbie has achieved more than would traditionally have been expected of a female from a poorer social background without any qualifications. Her achievements appear to hinge on her perseverance and refusal to settle for anything, as well as some good luck which allowed her to develop realistic goals upon which she could act. Only once Debbie had taken on the responsibility for formulating realistic goals and succeeded in doing so, was she able to move forward. Her story indicates the importance of engaging in planning, but also the way in which social background

may provide starting points for this process and affect someone's ability to plan effectively.

Although, it is clear from the dialogue that Danielle and Debbie do not, themselves, generally draw connections between their social positions and experiences, in both their stories there are aspects which appear to be predictable results linked to their social class and family background. Their stories are consistent with the view that social background continues to act as an influence on young people's experiences today, as Furlong and Cartmel (1997) would argue. However, it is also the case that both appear to have influenced their lives, in significant ways, through exercising their own agency, Danielle by choosing engineering and Debbie by investing heavily in a job/career at all.

9.2.3 Dean

Transition into employment

Dean's transition into employment was straightforward. He left school at 16 and was successful in gaining an apprenticeship in a large manufacturing firm, which at one time or another had employed most of the rest of his family.

I joined Rolls Royce because most of my family had been there...It was the name which was banged around the house, my Dad worked there, my Mum worked there, my Granddad worked there, my Granny worked there.

So it was very much your family which influenced...?

Yeah, yeah, yeah, I just really have no clue what I want to do and still to this day, don't know what I want to do whether it's with Rolls Royce or not but, I seem to have done quite well for myself and they've sponsored me for going to college

On joining the company it was compulsory to study part time for a BTEC

qualification at technical college in order to complete an apprenticeship. Thereafter, studying became an individual's choice and Dean explained: -

I guess I've always been encouraged by the manager I've had, to just 'don't stop, keep going' and luckily I haven't and done ten times better than I thought I'd do.

When interviewed, Dean had begun a new job in procurement, travelled worldwide and was responsible for a budget of £30M. I asked him whether anything in his life had surprised him. It all had.

Yeah, when I look back and see where I've come from to where I am now I would never ever have dreamed that I would be getting a degree. Looking back in the early days, and also in the job I'm doing now, most of the people who I'm doing my job with are twice my age.

Becoming independent

Dean continued to live with his parents throughout his apprenticeship and first few years in employment. During this time he moved into a well-paid job and had acquired a 'couple of very flashy motors'. By then he was also commuting a fair distance to work and he described this as one of several influences on his decision to move out.

My parents were brilliant, they didn't want me to go, but I thought I'm wasting a lot of money doing this living at home. Well a flat came up near where I worked, I thought yeah, I was about 23, 24, and everything just fell into place. Quite jammy really!

Dean now feels completely in control of, and satisfied with, his own life. He traces beginning to feel more independent to when he moved into his own place.

The big step was moving from home to a place of your own

Parents' home?

Yeah, parent's home, that's it, and then I can do exactly what I want when I want to.

Opportunities and constraints

Dean described how he has found himself '*just floating up*'. He has encountered a wealth of opportunities and been able to take advantage of them. He attributes his good fortune to a mixture of luck, his positive outlook and the strong support he has received from both family and work. He did not think he had encountered any barriers to achievement in the past, and saw only the most drastic of circumstances as potential future barriers.

Can you see anything standing in the way (of you realising your plans)?

No, nothing really, not unless I get the sack and lose my limbs, I suppose there's always something drastic like that.

Agency and its limits in Dean's story

Dean's transition into employment is closely linked with his family background and gender in traditional ways. He described the closeness of his family and the benefit this has been to him, revealing that traditional networks of support are intact in his life.

They come to see me and I come to see them, but no reliance there, only just usual family, we're a really close family, we all live quite close together.

How important are family in a sense?

Oh very important I think, definitely, not for pushing you in a direction but when they've always been there even if it's a simple thing, if you didn't get it or not, it didn't matter... I can't think of a time where, they've sort of pushed me to do anything that I've not wanted to do. They always let me do what I want and then seek to help me out along the way.

Dean does not feel he has been forced into decision-making or planning his biography, in the way that the individualisation thesis suggests occurs today. If it is the case that planning has become a necessity in times when people are more commonly unable to draw upon traditional networks and patterns, then Dean's experiences are as would be expected given the powerful influence of his family on his career route.

Would you say that what you are doing now is a result of your plans?

I've had a lot of mentors along the way that have sort of pulled me, you know, I did the couple of years at Hucknall and then somebody else pulled me over, so I wouldn't say it's my plan, but that I've always been open to everything that's offered to me and I think that the choices that I have made have been the best ones.

Nevertheless, as the above extract shows, Dean's account of his life is coloured with individualistic attitudes. In no way does he imply that his life course to date is a result of fate or what he might consider his destiny. At the same time as acknowledging the influence of his family on his career pathway Dean was quick to dismiss social characteristics as factors which influence someone's life chances. He stressed that, in Rolls Royce, advancement is based on demonstration of talent, and he believed that his talent, attitudes and efforts were what had allowed him to progress. He has put a great deal of effort into gaining qualifications, way beyond the level he initially expected of himself. He believes that you make your own luck by putting yourself forward and maintaining a positive outlook. Perhaps it is the combination of these individualistic attitudes with the advantage afforded him by being able to draw upon his family's experience of Rolls Royce as an organisation, which explains why Dean has risen in the company so far and so quickly. In these

respects, Dean's story supports Beck's suggestion that individualisation processes strengthen masculine role behaviour.

I think a lot of it is down to your attitudes, the way that you think!

The world's your oyster and so you can do anything you want.

I think I pushed myself. I think at school I would've been the quieter one, I wouldn't have spoken up. I've pushed myself to be more outgoing and not sit back and let things carry, trying to make your own future now. I've noticed that at work as well and it is, you can try and think you know sit there and do a good job and think somebody will tap you on the shoulder, but you know it very rarely happens. But if you're willing to go and knock on the managing director's door and say you know 'hi my name's Dean and I'm doing this and I really fancy doing that...' then they are more willing to support you and get you there but you've got to take it off your own back.

Dean's transition was evidently linked to his family background. Despite this, he emphasised individual attributes as key factors in influencing life chances just as much as the other interviewees.

9.3 Contrasting young men's and women's experiences.

This section compares the three detailed case studies with the other five cases. Extracts are used to illustrate and discuss similarities and differences in their orientations and to consider their experiences with reference to their socio-economic backgrounds and gender. Specifically, contrasts between male and female interviewees' perspectives on opportunities and constraint, exercise of agency and feelings of control while establishing their careers, acquiring independence from parents and future plans and prospects are considered. The data is considered in terms of the evidence it provides in corroborating or refuting aspects of the individualisation thesis. A brief review of the findings presented in Chapter 7 is

given in each section prior to consideration of the biographical data.

9.3.1 Perspectives on opportunities and constraint

The survey data for the employed group suggested that in general there were high levels of belief in the idea that opportunities are open to all regardless of social characteristics. Evidence from the focus groups supported this finding to the extent that neither males nor females viewed their social class or family backgrounds as affecting their life chances. More mixed perspectives on the influence of ethnicity and gender were identified; however, none of the young people saw themselves as being limited by their backgrounds. Individual ability and effort were seen as the defining factors in achieving success.

The case studies of Danielle, Debbie and Dean make clear that all three individuals subscribed to the view that what counted was an individual's effort and ability over and above any effect of social characteristics. This was as evident in Debbie's account, from her more disadvantaged position, as in Danielle's or Dean's, and was found to be no less the case in the other interviewees' accounts. Dec expressed the view that the only thing he could imagine preventing him from achieving his long-term goal to own and run a hotel is himself. He elaborated further saying '*from me getting lazy, not doing what I have to do*'. After gaining his degree Deepak had approached his manager in order to make clear his ambitions to move out of blue-collar work quickly and had felt upset not to be given the opportunity at that stage. He did not see the situation as a result of prejudice based on the colour of his skin (as he saw capable white skinned people in the same situation as himself), but of not being one of the manager's personal 'favourites'. His response to this situation was

to look for a position in another department.

Any particular manager, at a particular time could stand in your path, but other than that I don't think there are many things that can hold people back...there are obstacles that can come in the way, in the majority of cases they can be overcome.

(Deepak)

Both Dec and Deepak expressed the view that it is ultimately their own responsibility whether or not they succeed. This was typical of a set of young people who had internalised the rhetoric of individualism.

Although, on the whole, both males and females believed there should be equality of opportunity in the work place for both sexes, views on the extent to which this has been achieved were mixed, and mixed within each gender. Some of the interviewees felt that men and women now have similar levels of opportunity in the work force.

An example was Della:

I think it is definitely evening out, getting more and more equal opportunities. I think that kicks in quite a great deal. I mean, just looking at women who go to work now, and the business women there (are) about. Men are not always the big, top bods anymore; women are getting in there as well. They are getting their foot in the door.

(Della)

Like Debbie, Diana and a couple of males expressed the view that opportunities in the work place are not the same for each sex at present. The men were somewhat more optimistic about the prospects of this improving in the near future. The females raised a wider range of issues relating to gender. For example, only females referred to the gendered nature of the labour market and the potential affects of having children on a career.

What do you think about the differences for males and females in our society today?

There is still one in the workplace I think. There shouldn't be one, and it is getting less and less, I mean if you walk round here now there are as many female managers as male managers and quite rightly so, the balance hasn't yet swung the other way, but I'm sure it will.

(David)

I think it is lesser now, than it was five or ten years ago. Eh, I think the question could perhaps be the same for somebody from an ethnic minority, or not, it is something that is different from standard workplace. You are always in a minority if you are female or you're of an ethnic minority, eh, it is difficult to progress, it is difficult to move on.

(Deepak)

Something I do find difficult to, sort of, rectify in my mind is how it would be, and I don't know this because it hasn't happened, if you had children and if I was a director and I said 'I'm going home at four because I have got to pick my children up from school', how, you know, how would that be and would you be less respected if you had to do that or, you know, and I often wondered whether the reason why women are, a lot of them are in good jobs, the reason why they are not in the top jobs is because they did have that career break, and because they have, they do take on the responsibility of the family and the home, even though men do more, but I think that women ultimately still do that even though statistics say otherwise. And I think they feel that sense of responsibility, I would, certainly, to the home and to my own children. I can imagine I wouldn't sacrifice my job but I would still have a strong sense of responsibility towards my children and my home.

(Diana)

The data on opportunities and constraints shows that these young people emphasised individual ability and effort as the key factors in achieving success. From their point of view social class and family background appear to have lost their former relevance as guides or markers in people's lives. There were higher levels of recognition of the potential effects of being female, particularly amongst some of the females. Nevertheless, the view was often expressed that such barriers could be

overcome by an individual's own efforts. Their stories, however, show that social backgrounds continue to be influential, despite this not always being evident to the individuals themselves.

9.3.2 Exercise of agency and feelings of control while establishing careers

Around three fifths of the survey sample (n=100) reported that long-term planning and their interests were key influences on their current work situations. Another fifth attributed their current situation mainly to chance. Only a very few people said they felt they had not had any other option. The group interviews revealed a mesh of influences affecting young people, including family and economic circumstances, chance events, social connections and their own plans and interests.

The individual interview data offers an understanding of the links between planning (a facet of personal agency) and a young person's economic and social situation, as well as the consequences of these for feeling in control of establishing a career. As described previously, Danielle had a clear idea of the career route she wanted to follow before the end of school. This was also true of two of the others: Deepak wanted to secure an apprenticeship in electrical engineering and David wanted to become a chartered accountant. All three were successful in following these plans through and it certainly appeared that they had taken control of their lives. They had developed their own goals, in line with their abilities and interests, and without being significantly influenced by others. This is illustrated in the following extract from David's interview.

I had a fairly good idea of what I wanted to do as well. I'm CIMA trained, Chartered Institute of Management Accountants, and I had that view in mind from the last year of A levels really, I was looking for courses tailored towards....

And what influences, I mean that was a fairly early decision, compared to a lot of people, how had you come to be so sure at that stage?

I don't know, I think things build up and sort of snowball in your mind and I wanted to be a professional working in industry rather than either than working in (?) or working in the teaching profession or anything like that, and accountancy I was always quite interested in that sort of thing but not the sort of audit, stewardship type of accounting but sort of more forward looking and getting the qualification really that tailored for that and CIMA. But you know, the small seed, you start thinking about it from the age of whenever and then sort of snowballed...

Did your family have any influence on you?

No, no, I mean Mum's a nurse teacher and Dad works for local government, they're not related professions at all. I mean they were very supportive obviously but no, I don't think they had an influence; it was down to me.

(David)

Danielle and David were from middle-class backgrounds, had high levels of parental support and had capitalised upon this. This was not so in Deepak's case. He was from a much poorer ethnic minority background. His parents were very supportive of his education, and he had the benefit of this, a good academic record and the example of his successful older brother.

Dean was the only person whose career choice appeared to have been influenced directly by his family and their tradition of working for Rolls Royce. He did not appear to feel pressurised into taking this option. Danielle, David, Deepak and Dean were the individuals who were clearest about their reasons for entering their areas of work and were also most emphatic in expressing satisfaction with their jobs. As such, they appeared most in control of their working lives and this seemed to be connected either to a strong sense of long-term direction and planning or, in Dean's case, following in his family's footsteps.

In the others' cases (Debbie, Della, Dec and Diana), their transition into employment occurred in more of a trial and error fashion. All four individuals appeared to have reacted to situations as they found themselves in them; and although they had preferences and interests these were often not strong enough or not realistic enough to direct their job search from the beginning. Where longer-term aims and a sense of what suited them in work developed, these were a direct result of their experiences in the labour market.

Both Debbie and Dec struggled to reach their current positions, overcoming multiple obstacles of social disadvantage and poor academic credentials in the process. Debbie's story has been discussed fully above. Dec, after giving up on a BTEC in electrical engineering, spent several years living at home and in part-time bar work before deciding '*there was more to life than this*', and drawing on the experiences he had to get himself a full-time job in the hotel industry. Subsequently he has had to move around the country, largely at the mercy of labour market needs.

So you would really have preferred to stay there (near your hometown)?

Yes, If I had have had job security then yes I would have. But I know there was very little chance of job security so I wasn't going to stay around to end up like the rest of the staff, no way to live, and on the dole.

(Dec)

Della had an enduring interest in working in a finance-related area. Initially she did not manage to find a job in this area. Desirable job opportunities appeared few and far between and after turning down numerous jobs offering '*slave labour pay*' she accepted a place with Adtranz on a Modern Apprenticeship in administration. Since completing this she has managed to move into the finance department, and as she

sees it, via this roundabout route, is now back on track.

This year I got back on track and I am actually doing a BTec now, in Business and Finance which is a year course that I am doing at Mackworth,, which is, going to get me into CIMA.

(Della)

Della initially experienced a great deal of frustration, when she found she was unable to follow her interests. Having found her way into an area consistent with these she had begun to gain a sense of control and develop long-term goals.

Debbie, Della and Dec were of lower social class than either Danielle or David, and took much longer than them, Dean or Deepak to find themselves a clear career path. Their transitions into the labour market had not been guided by family example or by successfully executing a 'career' plan. Nevertheless, now that they had strengthened their labour market positions and gained valuable experiences, all three were beginning to make future plans.

Diana was the only interviewee who had not yet defined any specific career goals. Despite this, she was progressing in her work. Her new job represented a significant jump up from her last job in terms of status and salary and she was pleased and surprised by her achievements, but came across as being unsure of what she wanted over the longer-term. Much of her problem seemed to hinge on her having a host of aspirations for the future, which related to work, family and personal life and which did not sit neatly together. Unlike the other females she had neither prioritised her career over family (Danielle and Della), nor planned how she might successfully balance both (Debbie). She appeared to be ambitious for herself (saying at one stage that her greatest fear was getting to the age of 50 and finding she had not achieved

what she wanted) but had not found a way to reconcile this with her desires for family life and motherhood. Consequently, although Diana was in a strong labour market position, with the highest academic qualifications of any of the females and the benefit of a supportive and middle-class family, she came across as feeling less in control than any of the others. Her case is discussed further in §9.3.4.

The data suggests that ‘planning’ represents a key concept in young adult’s career transitions. A sense of long-term planning and being future-oriented was present in the accounts of those young people who appeared most satisfied and in control of their working lives. Those who started without clear and realistic plans took longer to establish themselves in the labour market. But, on doing so, most had begun to utilise their experiences to make plans for the future and re-gain a sense of control. This issue is discussed further in §9.3.4.

9.3.3 Acquiring independence from parents

The survey found about two thirds of the sample to feel financially independent of their parents, and a similar proportion to feel that they remained partially dependent on their parents for sources of other forms of support. Around forty percent of the survey sample had not yet moved out of home. The group interviews identified that many young people traced their feeling of independence to the time when they moved out. Where financial independence had been achieved this was not commented upon and, thus, appeared to be taken for granted. Whereas those young people earning a wage but still relying on parents for financial support often found this to be a frustrating situation. It appeared that a young person’s economic situation greatly influenced their ability to form their own households and was

associated with differential feelings of control.

It was not possible to look more closely at the frustrations resulting from a delayed transition due to financial constraints. Della was the only individual interviewee still at home when she completed the survey, but she too had moved into a rented house with her boyfriend by the time of the interview. Danielle and David rented their own places, Dec lived inside the hotel he worked in and Debbie, Diana, Dean and Deepak were homeowners. Debbie and Deepak were married and, like Della, Diana was living with a partner. Thus, it appears that those in the employed sample who went on to take part in an individual interview were also some of the more advanced in setting up their own homes and partnerships. On the whole their reports showed they were prepared to take on new responsibilities, and were enjoying their growing sense of self-reliance.

yeah, I'm financially independent and domestically independent as well but having said that like any person my age, I suspect, I still go home for Christmas, so things like that I'm very dependent on them for the emotional side of things.

(David)

Dec described how living inside the hotel meant he did not feel completely independent. However, he also said that this suited him well for the moment, as he did not feel ready for further responsibilities.

I'm independent from my parents but I wouldn't say generally because I'm, because of the jobs that I've done I've never had to pay gas, electricity, things like that that everybody pays, things like that I've never had to pay so I can't really be independent until I am paying for my keep.

(Dec)

The timings of, and catalysts for, these young people's moves out of their parental

homes varied enormously. As described in §9.2, Danielle moved out at the early age of 16 to take up a good job opportunity. Debbie was expected to pay her own way after leaving school and quickly formed her own home with a partner. The other two females, also moved from their parents' home to one shared with a partner, although they were somewhat older than Debbie had been. Dean continued to live at home despite his employed status until the time felt right to move out, by which time he was 23. The other males had moved out in order to have their own place, for work, for university or for a mixture of these reasons, and at a variety of ages.

On the whole, these young people exhibited a keenness to take on responsibility for their own lives, and to acquire their own spaces away from their parents. Mostly, they had the luxury of leaving whenever they felt ready, often for an attractive opportunity.

9.3.4 Future plans and prospects

The survey's factor F2 'negative view of future prospects' revealed a significant difference between the males and females in the sample. Females were found to be more positive about the future. More had made firm plans and more expected to get the job they wanted in the future. The focus groups identified this group as having positive and optimistic outlooks and found young people to stress that this is the only way to be if you want to progress.

All of the interviewees said that they thought about the future to some extent. This section focuses on two particular aspects of the interviewees' perspectives on the future; 'planning for the future' and 'balancing family and career'.

Planning for the future

This part builds further on data presented earlier in §9.3.2 which suggested that planning represents a key construct in career transitions. Discussion about the future demonstrated that all the young people had aims and aspirations which they were able to articulate. These were often concerned with both their work and personal lives. Danielle, David and Deepak, who had entered the labour market with clear plans, all expressed satisfaction with their general area of work and a desire to progress within it. This also applied to Dean. Della, Debbie and Dec had developed specific long-term career goals based on their labour market experiences so far; respectively, to gain CIMA accreditation, run a printing business, and own a hotel. They all envisaged staying within their current area of work rather than undergoing any significant kind of career change. Except for Dec, they all thought it likely that they would gain further qualifications in the future in order to progress in their chosen career. As discussed earlier, Diana's aims and aspirations for the future were found to be much more confused than the others. She sees her lack of ability to formulate clear long-term plans as a potential problem.

There is worry that, I am not very good at having long term goals, because I get, I go off on a tangent so, and I find it hard to focus on a vision of something. And that is one thing that worries me, that I will have this brilliant idea 'oh yes, let's go travelling in a year and a half' but I lose sight of it because something else will happen, like I see a new job and think 'God that sounds brilliant' or Scott will or we'll want the windows doing on the house so then we will have to borrow five grand to get it done. So that is my concern, but ultimately I would like, not next summer, but to go away for six months do the travelling bit, come back, get a job and then I envisage myself settling down more, getting married and after that having kids. But until I have got all these things out of my system, even though I sometimes think it would be wonderful to have a little baby, you know, I think 'oh wouldn't it be nice', I know that I, you owe it to your kids to some extent, you know, to do all these things because if you don't you're going to be a crappy mum who wants to go off and do their own thing.

(Diana)

The process of planning or, at least, thinking about the future, was explicitly recognised as significant by almost all of the interviewees. The exception is Dean. He was able to follow in his family's tradition by joining Rolls Royce and this has served him well. In the following extract, David explains how he sees it as necessary to keep abreast of possibilities for his future, form contingency plans, and in these ways maintain a sense of control over the direction of his life.

Are you someone who thinks about your future?

yeah, I don't know, if you get washed along by the tide then that's when this control thing starts coming in and you start to loose control and then suddenly it will all fall down and you'll think 'oh dear, where am I now?' you know, I think you've got to, well, speaking of myself, you've got to have your sort of contingency plans and 'oh what might I do if that happens?'. 'What might I do if...'

So you see it as a planning process?

I suppose yes. I mean it's not a formalised planning process but there are the things that you consider, yeah, I mean I don't sit up at night drawing charts for the next ten years.

(David)

Balancing family and career

Interviewees were asked in the course of the interview about whether they would like to have a family in the future. Their responses indicated ways in which career and family were perceived to affect one another. It was possible to discern differences between the males' and females' responses to these issues.

It seemed that, at this stage in their lives, the females were as ambitious in their working lives as any of the males. This was seen in Debbie's and Danielle's interviews, as well as in Della's, as illustrated below.

Would you say that you are ambitious?

To a point yes, yes, I have a sort of idea where I want to be in four or five year's time.

(Deepak)

I think yeah I look ahead as far as, like where I am going to be in a few years time, I tend to compare myself to other people. I look someone in the office and I think 'yeah, I want to at that stage in a few years' time, you know, if I hear of someone then get a promotion I feel, 'mm I want to be like that in a few years time'. So in work I do compare myself to other people quite a bit, but yeah, I want to go far, I want to get my CIMA which is a three year course, but it doesn't necessarily mean it will take me three years, it could take me a lot longer, and it is something to aim for. I tend to set myself targets.

(Della)

At the same time, it is clear that the idea of a future 'family' was of far greater relevance to the females than the males. While all of the males said that they expected to have a family in the future, this was rarely brought up as a consideration in making future career plans. None of them indicated that they would consider making changes to their working hours. Dean, for example, acknowledged that this would be a significant change but also said that he would not let it affect his career.

I mean your priorities would change overnight, when you have children so, I wouldn't let it affect my career but it would definitely it would, your focus would be on your family but I don't know really, I've seen friends of mine have managed the two together I can't see why you can't.

(Dean)

Deepak fully expected his wife to take on childcare at least until they reached school age. David referred to family as a consideration in deciding whether or not to move area for a new job.

And if that happened [having a family] do you see it affecting your working life at all?

Well that's where the question of would you be prepared to move at all, whether it's overseas or up the road, that's where that comes in.

(David).

On the other hand, the implications of a future family were mentioned frequently by the female interviewees, often prior to this subject being raised by the interviewer. Whereas the males saw no conflict between wanting a career and a family life, females had already given consideration to which they viewed as the priority or how both might be accommodated. This appeared to be Diana's key problem (cf §9.3). Debbie's solution was to engage her sister as a nanny allowing her to continue to work full-time. This had been agreed well before when she expected to have children, some 3 or 4 years away. Both Danielle and Della had made their careers priorities, and hence saw having children as being years away, if ever. This is an extract from Della's interview.

You've just said that you're ruling out children, might that change, maybe, at a later date?

I don't know, I think, I am not a very patient person, and I want to get my career sorted more than anything.

That is a priority, for the moment? Can you imagine what would happen if you were to have children in relation to your work? As in would you change your working hours or...?

I think I'd have to in a way, I don't see the point of having children if you're going to miss all the good stuff and seeing them growing up. No, I'd have to leave it till later on in life. I'd have to get a part-time job or a Saturday job or something. I hate not working. I think I'd get bored. I don't know.

Does your boyfriend or husband of the future, figure in your thoughts there?

Yeah, because he don't want kids. He doesn't want them. And that is testing, he has always said 'no I'm not' he's brilliant with kids and it surprised me and at the time that he said it, it really, really upset me, that he didn't want kids. I was gutted, it's like 'oh no' but at the same time I think I was gutted because it wasn't what I wanted to

hear I wanted him to say 'yes I do'. So that if I ever do want them then I could but if he always thinks no then if I change my mind then that's it.

(Della)

This extract shows Della's decision to prioritise her career may be partly a result of her partner saying that he does not want children, but it also illustrates her expectation that having children would affect her career.

9.4 Agency and control in young employees' lives

The eight young employees all demonstrated individualised attitudes and views. Acceptance of the view that individuals are responsible for the course of their own lives was pervasive. For the most part they expected to challenge inequalities through their own efforts. In these respects, the young people's subjective states were similar to those described by Beck (1992) and Giddens' (1991) in their accounts of the risk society and self-identity in late modernity.

Although the influence of social background on their lives is invisible to the young people themselves, this is present throughout their accounts. The connection with social background is clearest in Dean's case, but even where individuals have apparently broken free from traditional ties, such as in Danielle's case, links between experiences and social factors are visible, helping and hindering in expected ways. This finding is consistent with Furlong and Cartmel's (1997) position.

Nevertheless, evidence was reported which suggested that personal agency plays a significant role in young people's transitions. In particular, the data suggested that in the absence of perceptible guides and markers, based on social location, engaging in *effective planning* is an important factor which is associated with a young person's

sense of control over their life and positive outcomes. The data also illustrated how young people begin the process of formulating effective plans from different starting points, which are dependant on social factors.

In terms of gender, it was found that young men and women in this age range approached and perceived their lives and careers similarly in all but one respect. The issue of a future family appeared to be of far greater relevance to the females. These findings are discussed further in part III.

Chapter 10: Variations in control and agency across six structuring contexts

This chapter answers four key project questions which together aid assessment of how agency varies across six structuring contexts. Chapters 6 to 8 identified gender differences within each setting in turn. These analyses are extended through comparison across three institutional settings, thereby achieving a six-cell analysis of the data set (based on three settings and two genders). Factor score analyses are tabulated and graphed (§10.1). These are the most robust source of data from the survey and are generally considered first in addressing the project's key questions (§10.2 to 10.5). Responses to single items from the survey are reported and focus group and individual interview findings, reported in previous chapters, are referred to.

§10.2 addresses the '*extent to which perceptions of opportunity and constraint vary across gender and settings.*' The aim is to explore how young people perceived the influences of structural factors depending on their positions. Perceptions of opportunities and constraints are likely to influence the scope which individuals see themselves as having to influence their lives, in turn affecting feelings of control and levels of agentic behaviour engaged in.

§10.3 addresses the '*extent to which levels of individual agency vary across gender and settings.*' This is discussed primarily in relation to young peoples' views on the influences of planning and chance on their current situations, the extent to which they found their work and personal lives satisfying and challenging and how independent and confident they felt. A picture is developed of the extent to which young people felt they were in control of their lives and the levels of agency they

engaged in.

§10.4 asks *'in what ways levels of collective agency vary across gender and setting?'* This is examined by considering data on young people's work-related values, attitudes towards politics, their participation in forms of collective and political action and work-related values. Together these data are considered to give an indication of how young people view the scope for collective solutions to social and personal problems.

§10.5 asks *'how young people's perspectives on their futures vary across gender and settings?'* This is important since orientations towards the future affect the exercise of agentic behaviours in the present. The findings presented in §10.2 to §10.5 are summarised in §10.6. An assessment is made of how agency varies, overall, in relation to gender and institutional setting.

10.1 Differences by gender and setting: Factor analyses' results

Seventeen factors, compiled from survey items, are analysed and reported. The factors and their associated items are shown in appendix 10(i). Each factor has been labelled with a description (e.g. 'unlikely to move') and a code (e.g. F1). The description reflects the questionnaire items loading on to the factor most strongly (cf appendix 10(i)). The code denotes the factor analysis which extracted the factor (i.e. Future (F), Control (C), Agency (A) and Self (S)) and the sequence in which the factors were extracted. F₁ 'unlikely to move' was the first factor extracted in the factor analysis run on the 'Future' items data. The mean factor scores for groups and

the corresponding p values¹ are presented below and indicate significant differences between settings, genders and social class groups (see Tables 10.1, 10.2 and 10.3 respectively). Where factors occur twice (e.g. F2 and A2 are both labelled ‘unlikely to move’), analyses of the factor shown in bold typeface are reported in the text which follows. Only significant gender and social class differences are shown since there are not many. The factors can be divided up as measured in a positive or negative direction; for example, a higher score on factor C1 ‘fulfilled personal life’ is more positive, whereas a higher score on factor S5 ‘achievement barriers’ is more negative. Mean factor scores for these sets of positive and negative factors are plotted separately on graphs² to show differences in profiles across setting groups (see Figures 10.1 and 10.2) and across gender groups (see Figures 10.3 and 10.4). A full set of graphs is included in appendix 10(ii).

It is immediately clear that there are greater differences between settings than genders. The unemployed groups score consistently more highly on the negative factors. Other differences are explored in the following sections.

¹ p values indicate the probability of a significant difference having occurred by chance alone. $p \leq 0.001$ is shown as ***, $p \leq 0.01$ is shown as ** and $p \leq 0.05$ is shown as *.

² The mean factor scores as presented in Tables 10.1 to 10.3 may be negative or positive. To present these graphically they have been transformed into scores around 50 using the function:

$$\text{Ordinate on y-axis} = (\text{group mean} * 10/\text{s.d}) + 50$$

Table 10.1: Significant differences on factor scores by settings

Factor	Means			p value
	Higher Education (n=100)	Employment (n=100)	Unemployment (n=100)	
Fulfilled personal life (C1)	-0.54	-0.26	-0.65	**
Fulfilled at work (C2)	0.15	0.30	-0.22	***
Opportunities open to all (C3)	0.22	0.65	0.43	**
Blame own weaknesses (C4)	0.04	-0.10	0.32	***
Planning not chance (C5)	0.24	-0.07	-0.19	***
Ability not rewarded (C6)	-0.42	-0.13	-0.07	**
Unlikely to move (A1)	-0.34	-0.16	0.18	***
Active career seeking (A2)	0.49	0.51	0.77	*
Politically active (A3)	-0.60	-0.45	-0.44	Not Significant
General self-confidence (S1)	-0.11	-0.39	-0.07	**
Social self-confidence (S2)	-0.03	-0.22	0.26	***
Fulfilled personal life (S3)	-0.54	-0.32	-0.71	**
Fulfilled at work (S4)	0.16	0.27	-0.12	**
Achievement barriers (S5)	0.06	-0.10	0.29	**
Frustrating situation (S6)	-0.20	0.19	0.48	***
Unlikely to move (F1)	-0.28	0.04	0.12	**
Negative view of future (F2)	-0.27	-0.29	0.09	***

Table 10.2: Significant differences on factor scores by gender

	Factor	Males	Females	p value
Whole Group (Males n=146 Females n=154)	Planning not chance (C5)	-0.07	0.14	**
	Politically active (A3)	-0.63	-0.37	***
	Negative view of future (F2)	-0.03	-0.23	*
Higher Education (Males n=48 Females n=52)	Planning not chance (C5)	0.02	0.44	**
	Active career seeking (A2)	0.26	0.70	***
	Politically active (A3)	-0.80	-0.42	**
Employment (Males n=48 Females n=52)	Active career seeking (A2)	0.68	0.36	*
	Achievement barriers (S5)	0.10	-0.28	*
	Negative view of future (F2)	-0.14	-0.43	*
Unemployment (Males n=50 Females n=50)	Politically active (A3)	-0.66	-0.22	**

Table 10.3: Significant differences on factor scores by social class

Factor	Social Classes I and II (n=126)	Social Classes III, IV, V, VIII (n=117)	p value
Blame own weaknesses (C4)	-0.09	0.23	**
Planning not chance (C5)	0.13	-0.07	*
Social self-confidence (S2)	-0.17	0.11	**
Achievement barriers (S5)	-0.06	0.22	**
Frustrating situation (S6)	0.03	0.23	*

Figure 10.1: Scores on positive factors by setting

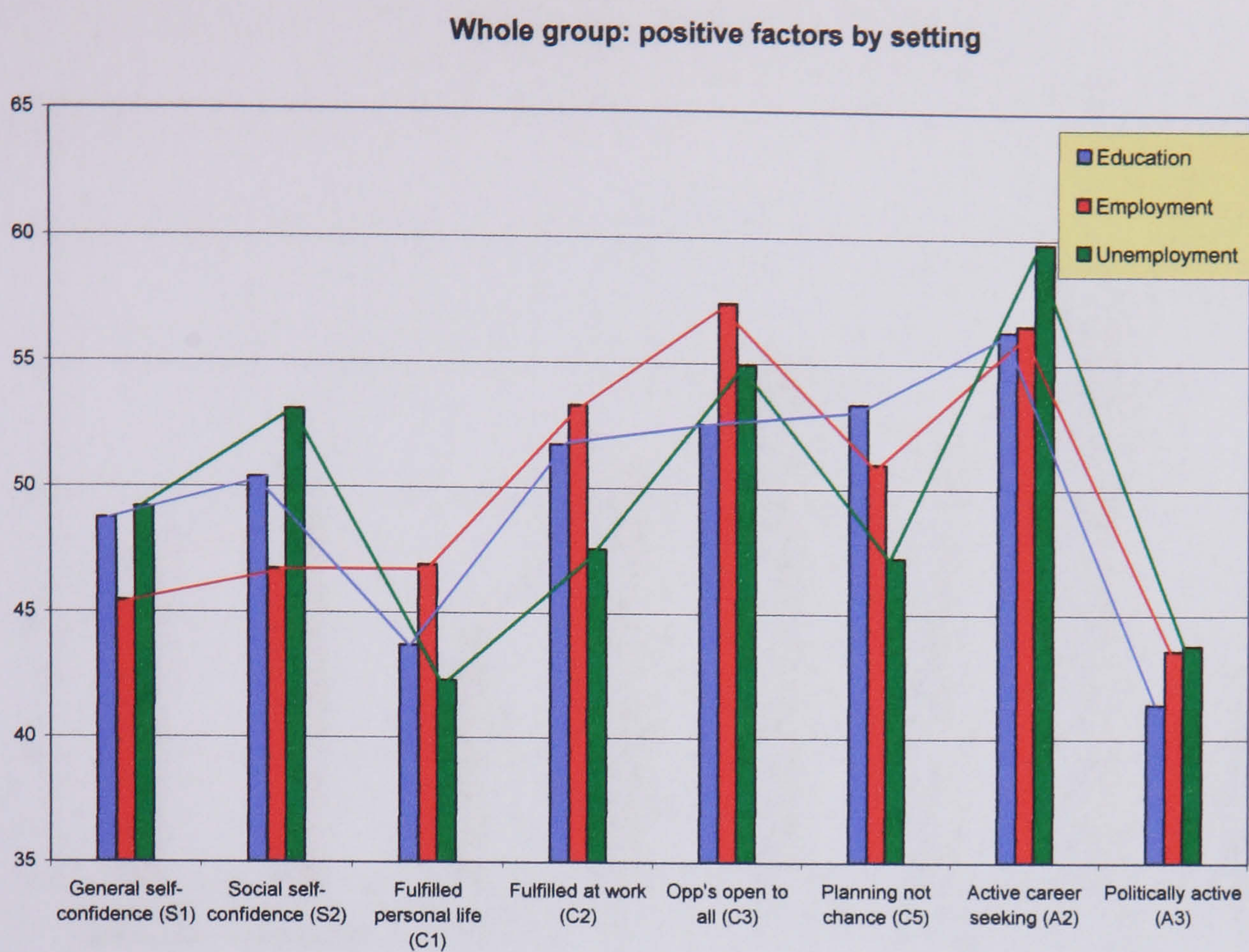


Figure 10.2: Scores on negative factors by setting

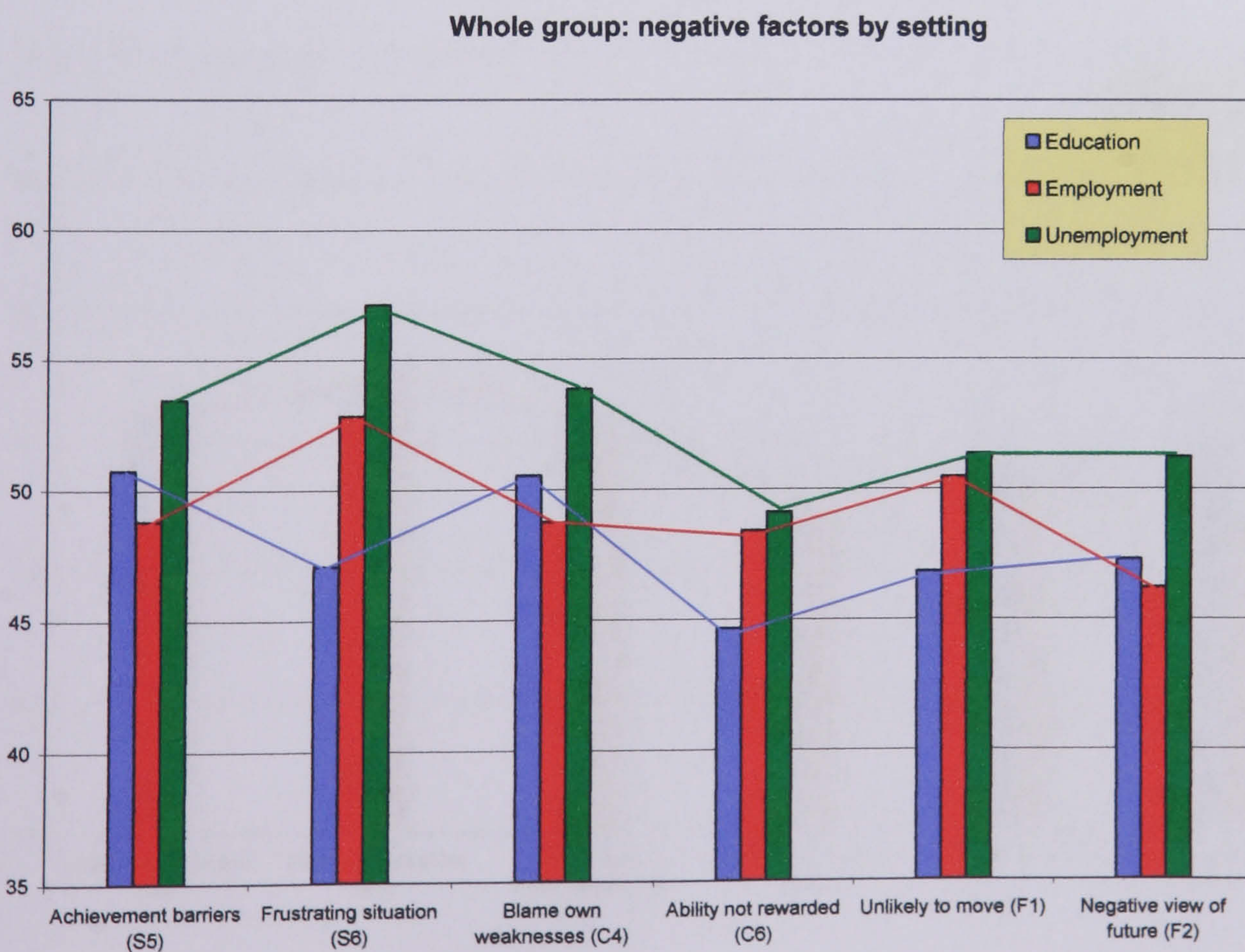


Figure 10.3: Scores on positive factors by gender

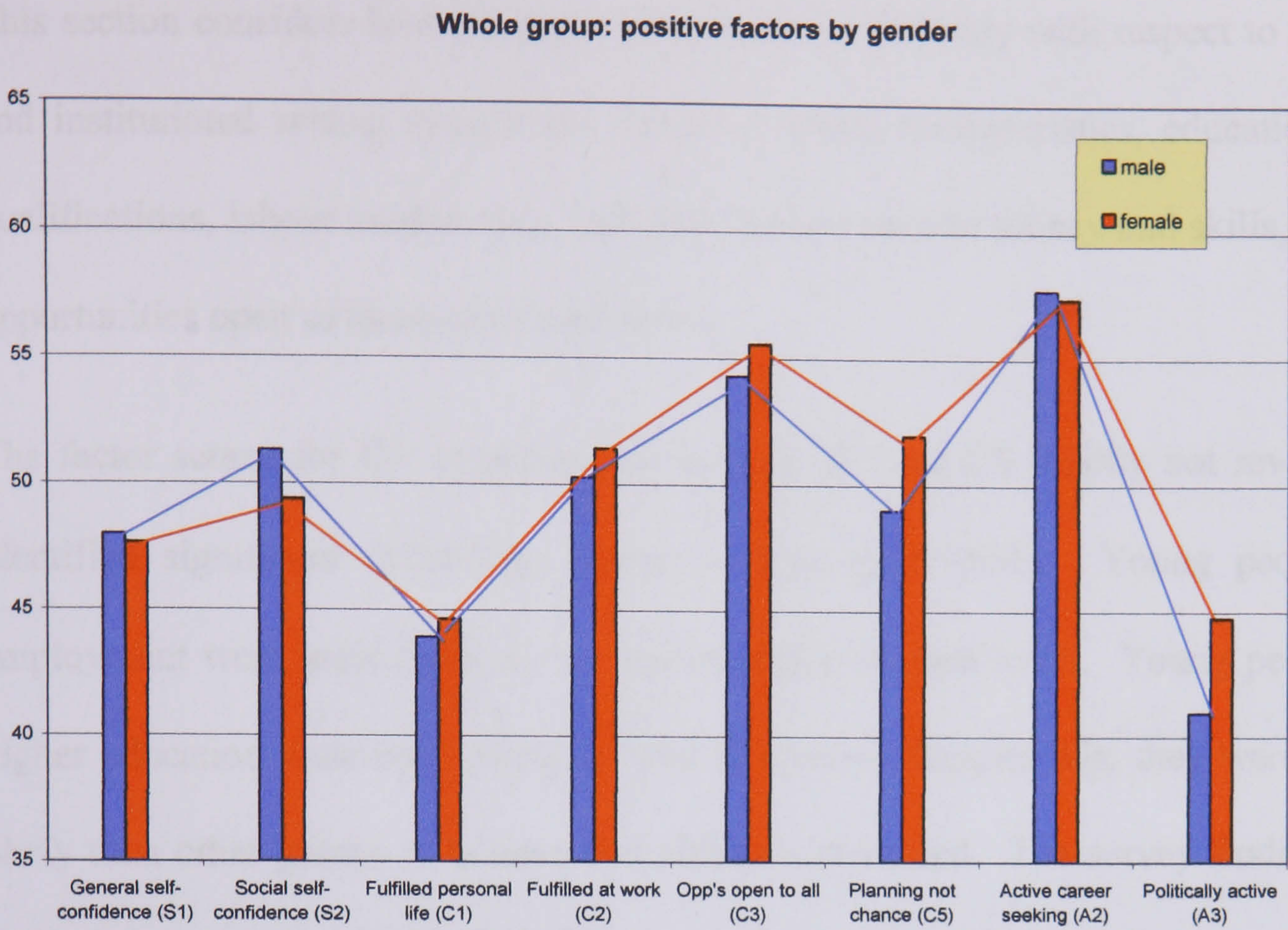
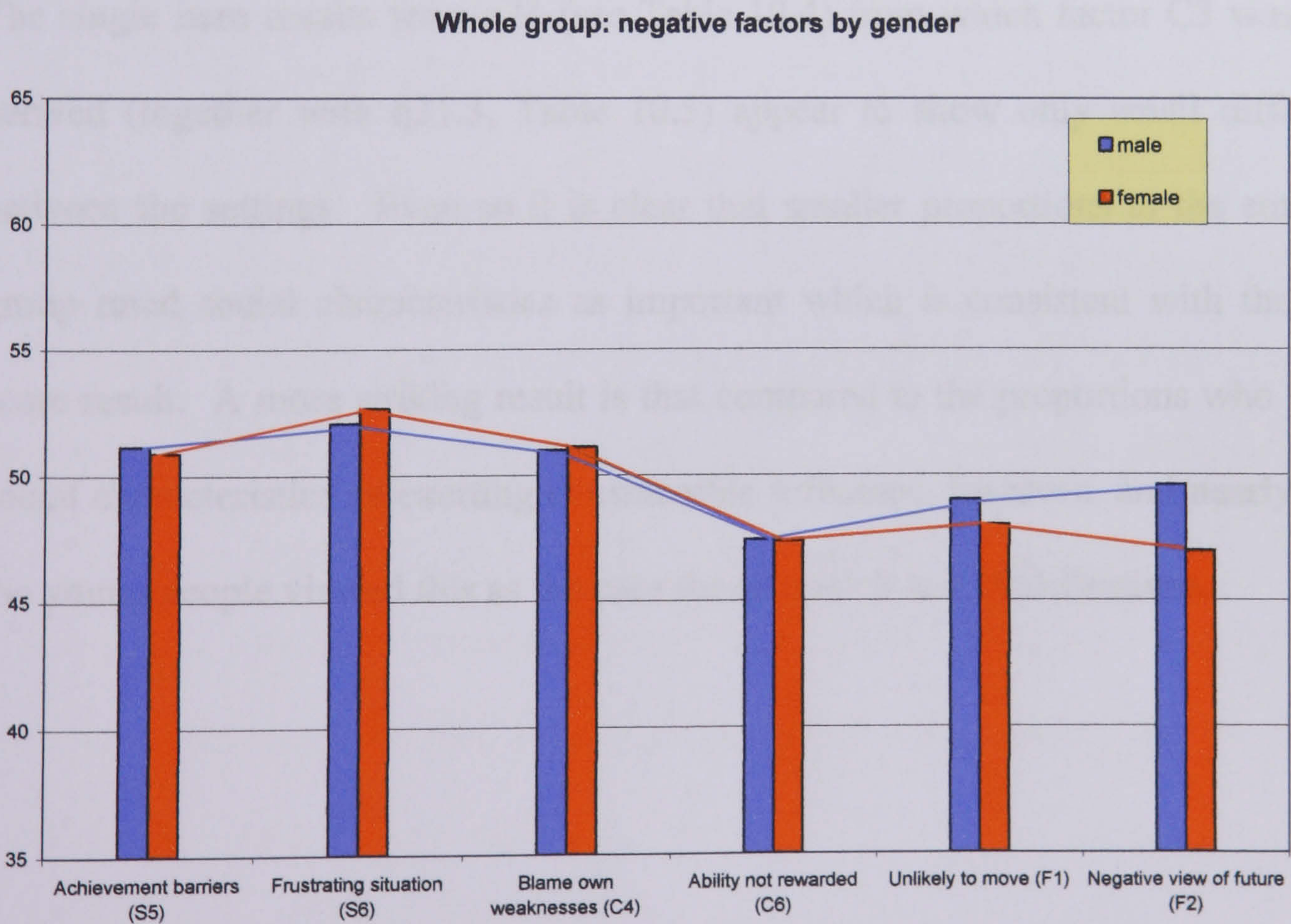


Figure 10.4: Scores on negative factors by gender



10.2 Variation in perceptions of opportunity and constraint

This section considers how young people situated differently with respect to gender and institutional setting viewed the affect of social characteristics, education and qualifications, labour market area, and other factors such as money and skills, on the opportunities open to themselves and others.

The factor scores for C3 'opportunities open to all' and C6 'ability not rewarded' identified significant differences across settings ($p \leq 0.01$). Young people in employment were most likely to see opportunities as open to all. Young people in higher education were least likely to hold this view. Despite this, they were more likely than other groups to believe that ability is rewarded. The survey findings on single items associated with these factors are discussed next.

10.2.1 Perceived influences of social characteristics and education

The single item results from q24 (see Table 10.4) from which factor C3 was partly derived (together with q31.3, Table 10.5) appear to show only small differences between the settings. Even so it is clear that smaller proportions in the employed group rated social characteristics as important which is consistent with the factor score result. A more striking result is that compared to the proportions who viewed social characteristics as exerting considerable influence, far more, and nearly all, of the young people viewed this as the case for education and qualifications.

Table 10.4: Influence of social characteristics and education rated as 'considerable' (q24, percentage of respondents in group)

	Gender	Ethnicity	Social class	Family	Education and qualifications
Higher Education					
Males	21.3	25.5	31.9	26.1	81.3
Females	19.2	23.1	32.7	30.8	92.3
Total	20.2	24.2	32.3	28.6	87.0
Employment					
Males	14.6	21.3	20.8	22.9	77.1
Females	11.5	5.8	21.2	21.6	82.7
Total	13.0	13.1	21.0	22.2	80.0
Unemployed					
Males	24.5	28.6	34.0	19.1	75.5
Females	28.6	31.9	34.8	25.0	81.6
Total	26.5	30.2	34.4	22.1	78.6

10.2.2 Perceived influence of labour market area

Table 10.5 shows results from the other single item (q 31.3) which contributed to the factor C3 'opportunities open to all'. Again, in line with the factor score result, fewest in the employed group subscribed to the view that getting a job depends on where you live. More young people in higher education agreed with this statement than in the unemployed setting, and similarly on q23 (see Table 10.6), they were most likely to ascribe 'at least some influence' to where an individual lives on getting a job. The higher education group were as likely as those in employment to place more emphasis on the individual than on the area (see Table 10.7). The unemployed young people were more likely to view success in getting a job as equally dependent on the individual and job opportunities in the area.

Table 10.5: Getting a job depends on where you live (q31)

	Agree	No opinion	Disagree
Higher Education			
Males	35.4	39.6	25.0
Females	28.8	40.4	30.8
Total	32.0	40.0	28.0
Employment			
Males	25.0	39.6	35.4
Females	13.9	39.0	47.1
Total	19.2	39.5	41.3
Unemployment			
Males	29.2	38.5	31.3
Females	24.0	40.0	36.0
Total	26.5	39.8	33.7

Table 10.6: Influence of where you live on getting a job (q23, percentages by gender and settings)

	Big	Some	Slight
Higher Education			
Males	31.3	58.3	10.4
Females	40.4	50.0	9.6
Total	36.0	54.0	10.0
Employment			
Males	31.3	47.9	20.8
Females	17.6	54.9	27.5
Total	24.2	51.5	24.3
Unemployment			
Males	34.7	46.9	18.4
Females	42.6	27.7	29.8
Total	38.5	37.5	24.0

Table 10.7: Success in finding a job is mainly down to.... (q25, percentages by gender and settings)

	The individual	Job opportunities in the area	Both equally
Higher Education			
Males	39.1	13.1	47.8
Females	47.1	7.8	45.1
Total	43.3	10.3	46.4
Employment			
Males	39.6	4.2	56.2
Females	49.0	3.9	47.1
Total	44.5	4.0	51.5
Unemployment			
Males	32.7	6.1	61.2
Females	22.4	2.0	75.6
Total	27.6	4.0	68.4

10.2.3 Perceived influence of ability:

Single item results, used in labelling factor C6 (q31.1, q31.4 and q31.8), demonstrate that young people in higher education had the greatest belief in ability being rewarded. Most people in all settings agreed that getting a job depends upon your ability (see Table 10.8). Young unemployed people were least likely to feel that talent will always rise or that successful people usually deserve to be so.

Table 10.8: Is ability rewarded? (q31.1, 31.4 and 31.8, percentage of respondents in group)

	Getting a job depends on your ability	Talent always finds its way to the top	People successful in work usually deserve it
Higher Education			
Males	91.5	56.3	61.7
Females	90.4	50.0	67.3
Total	90.9	53.0	64.7
Employment			
Males	70.9	37.5	63.8
Females	86.5	47.1	60.8
Total	79.0	42.4	62.3
Unemployment			
Males	85.7	34.1	55.3
Females	72.9	44.9	56.0
Total	79.4	39.6	55.6

10.2.4 Constraints in work and personal life

Factor scores identified significant differences between settings on S5 'achievement barriers' ($p \leq 0.01$) and C4 'blame own weaknesses' ($p \leq 0.001$). The unemployed group scored most highly on both. Significant differences on these factors were also found by social class, with young people from social class groups I and II less likely to identify barriers to achievement or blame their own weaknesses for past failures ($p \leq 0.01$).

Consistent with the factor score results for S5 and C4, data for single-items show that young people in the unemployed setting named more barriers to achievement in both their working and personal lives. Patterns were broadly similar across settings

and genders (tables 10.9 to 10.12) - the main constraint felt by all groups in their personal lives was a 'lack of money', followed by their 'own weaknesses'. In working life, the constraints most frequently named were 'lack of skills', 'lack of qualifications' and then 'the system'.

Table 10.9: Internal constraints identified in personal life (q11, percentage of respondents in group)

	Lack skills			Lack qualifications			Own weaknesses		
	Males	Fem.	Total	Males	Fem.	Total	Males	Fem.	Total
HE	10.4	7.7	9.0	2.1	0.0	1.0	41.7	46.2	44.0
Employment	16.7	3.8	10.0	10.4	5.8	8.0	37.5	26.9	32.0
Unemployment	16.0	20.0	18.0	16.0	22.0	19.0	42.0	48.0	45.0

Table 10.10: External constraints identified in personal life (q11, percentage of respondents in group)

	Lack money			The system			Other people		
	Males	Fem.	Total	Males	Fem.	Total	Males	Fem.	Total
HE	79.2	76.9	78.0	2.1	17.3	10.0	22.9	34.6	29.0
Employment	77.1	57.7	67.0	6.3	5.8	6.0	14.6	11.5	13.0
Unemployment	70.0	62.0	66.0	24.0	14.0	19.0	24.0	26.0	25.0

Table 10.11: Internal constraints identified in work (q11, percentage of respondents in group)

	Lack skills			Lack qualifications			Own weaknesses		
	Males	Fem.	Total	Males	Fem.	Total	Males	Fem.	Total
HE	29.2	34.6	32.0	22.9	34.6	29.0	16.7	23.1	20.0
Employment	27.1	21.2	24.0	41.7	28.8	35.0	20.8	25.0	23.0
Unemployment	44.0	38.0	41.0	44.0	38.0	41.0	18.0	30.0	24.0

Table 10.12: External constraints identified in work (q11, percentage of respondents in group)

	Lack money			The system			Other people		
	Males	Fem.	Total	Males	Fem.	Total	Males	Fem.	Total
HE	12.5	26.9	20.0	33.3	32.7	33.0	20.8	21.1	21.0
Employment	20.8	23.1	22.0	39.6	21.2	30.0	18.8	13.5	16.0
Unemployment	24.0	38.0	31.0	30.0	42.0	36.0	22.0	24.0	23.0

10.2.5 Summary: Opportunities and constraints

Young adults in all three settings placed primary emphasis on educational qualifications. These were rated as of considerable importance by far greater proportions than were social class, family background, gender or race. Very few people viewed the labour market area as having more effect on finding work than someone's individual effort and ability. These findings suggest that young adults in all situations had accepted individualised views of success and failure.

Despite these common perspectives, there were subtle differences identifiable between settings. Young people in higher education were least likely to view opportunities as open to all but showed most trust that ability will be rewarded. These findings appear somewhat contradictory on first sight but can be explained by young adults in higher education having most belief that education overcomes all else. While this group showed most awareness of the impact of social characteristics and labour market for people generally, the focus group data suggested that few students felt themselves to have been affected personally by social factors (cf Chapter 6). The influence of social class was the most contentious issue. Many students connected social class and family background with the hardship caused to

some by the introduction of tuition fees and changes in the student grant system. Although many students acknowledged that these factors could affect one's university experience, they did not expect background to act as a limiting factor in the future. Derby University's policy towards widening participation had been successful in attracting students from relatively poor backgrounds. It may be that these students saw social factors as especially influential in the absence of academic credentials. These students appeared to feel that, having gained a place at a university, any disadvantage from their background had already been overcome, and this delivered them the key to future success.

Young people who had successfully made the transition into full-time employment demonstrated most belief that opportunities are open to all, but also appeared to have suffered fewer setbacks or constraints in their own lives. This was consistent with findings from the group discussions and individual interviews in which these young people were largely dismissive of the influence of social characteristics. There was recognition of the potential of social connections and chance encounters to have important effects alongside those of qualifications and effort (cf §7.1).

Survey and focus group data showed that the unemployed young people experienced by far the most constraints in their lives. Coding demonstrated that the unemployed groups made 93 references to 'negative aspects' of their environments, compared to 35 and 43 in the higher education and employed groups respectively (cf appendix 6(ii)). Despite their reports of a negative environment, the unemployed sample's survey data (cf §8.1) showed their acceptance of individualistic notions that effort and ability are the key factors in success and that qualifications count, together with a belief that their individual weaknesses and lack of skills and qualifications were to

blame for their situation. This view is likely to have been compounded by the New Deal's emphasis on rectifying individual deficits.

Factor scores on C3, C4, C6 and S5 identified only one gender difference, in any of the settings. Male employees named more barriers to achievement (factor S5) than female employees (cf §7.4). This is discussed further in the summary of §10.3. It is clear that perceptions of opportunities and constraints are more strongly associated with position with respect to the economy, than with gender.

10.3 Variation in levels of individual agency

Data indicative of aspects of individual agency are discussed to gain understanding of how young people's attempts to control their lives vary depending upon their gender and position with respect to the economy. Young people's experiences both inside and outside of their institutional settings are covered. Initially, data are considered under the headings 'planning and chance', 'experiences inside and outside of work' and 'acquiring independence', before further discussion of this data set as a whole.

10.3.1 Planning and chance

Young people in higher education scored most highly on factor C5 'planning not chance', suggesting that they were the most likely to feel their situation had more to do with planning, and less to do with chance, than young people in the other settings ($p \leq 0.001$). Employed young people were more likely to feel this to be the case than the unemployed. A significant difference on factor C5 was identified by social class; with social class groups I and II scoring highest ($p \leq 0.05$).

The differences found between settings are consistent with the results for question 16 in which respondents were asked to state the main influence on their current situation (see Table 10.13). More people in the higher education group named ‘my plans’ than in the other groups.

Table 10.13: Current situation mainly attributed to (q21, percentages by gender and settings)

	My plans	Connections	Chance	Other's plans	Seemed my only option
Higher Education					
Males	67.5	10.0	5.0	2.5	15.0
Females	66.0	17.0	8.5	2.1	6.4
Total	66.7	13.8	6.9	2.3	10.3
Employment					
Males	54.7	14.3	28.6	0.0	2.4
Females	60.0	10.0	22.0	2.0	6.0
Total	57.6	12.0	25.0	1.1	4.3
Unemployment					
Males	41.9	7.0	23.2	7.0	20.9
Females	34.1	4.5	29.5	11.4	20.5
Total	37.9	5.7	26.5	9.2	20.7

Chance appears to play a greater role once young people become economically active. Only a few young people in the employed setting felt their current situation to have been their only option and, therefore, most appeared to feel they exerted some control over their situations. Although around one fifth of the unemployed group felt they had no other option, around two fifths of the group felt that their situation was mainly the result of their own plans and over half stated that their long-term goals were an influence on their current situations (cf §8.2). The group

interviews helped to explain this by showing that young people had commonly fought hard to secure a training place they viewed as worthwhile.

Across the whole sample, females scored more highly on factor C5 than males ($p \leq 0.01$). A significant gender difference was also identified by factor C5 within the higher education sample specifically (cf §6.2.2). Across all three settings, single items showed that although there was in fact no difference in the proportions of males and females who named 'my plans' as influential, a slightly higher proportion of females saw interest as a key factor in determining their current situation (males 61.6%, females 69.5%). Females were also much more likely to dismiss luck as a factor in finding and succeeding at work. This is apparent in the proportions disagreeing with the statements 'getting a job depends upon luck' (males 36.4%, females 57.6%) and 'success at work is a matter of luck' (males 64.8%, females 73.8%).

10.3.2 Experiences inside and outside of work

Factors C1 'Fulfilled personal life' and C2 'Fulfilled at work' were labelled from items indicating how much young people's experiences in their personal lives and work are satisfying and challenging. Those in employment scored most on both factors, followed by those in education and then those who were unemployed ($p \leq 0.001$). There were no gender differences identified by factors C1 or C2.

The education group scored closer to the employed group on factor C2 'Fulfilled work life'. Table 10.14 shows few differences between the education and employed settings on experiences at work, except that more in the employed sample reported often 'using own initiative' and 'feeling a sense of achievement'. Smaller

proportions of the unemployed group reported often having these experiences.

The education group scored closer to the unemployed group on factor C1 ‘fulfilled personal life’. Table 10.15 shows that similar proportions of these groups, and fewer than in the employed group, claimed to often ‘set goals’, ‘make decisions’ and ‘use their initiative’ in their lives outside of work. The group interviews revealed that lack of money was a dominant issue for both students and the unemployed and such financial constraints may explain them having more limited experiences of challenge and satisfaction in their personal lives than young people in full-time employment (appendix 6(ii)).

Table 10.14: ‘Often’ experience different kinds of responsibility and challenge at work (q17, percentage of respondents in group).

	Given responsibilities	Set own goals	Feel stretched	Make decisions	Use own initiative	Feel sense of achievement
Higher Education						
Males	56.3	50.0	40.4	60.4	47.9	25.0
Females	57.7	46.2	57.7	75.0	55.8	33.3
Total	57.0	48.0	49.5	68.0	52.0	29.3
Employment						
Males	55.3	52.2	38.3	70.2	66.7	43.8
Females	63.5	52.0	50.0	66.7	61.5	41.2
Total	59.6	52.1	44.4	68.4	64.0	42.4
Unemployment						
Males	36.2	28.3	21.7	44.7	31.3	25.0
Females	40.0	44.4	29.5	53.3	29.5	15.6
Total	38.0	36.3	25.6	48.9	30.4	20.4

Table 10.15: 'Often' experience different kinds of responsibility and challenge in personal lives (q17, percentage of respondents in group)

	Given responsibilities	Set own goals	Feel stretched	Make decisions	Use own initiative	Feel sense of achievement
Higher Education						
Males	64.6	45.8	22.9	79.2	56.3	29.2
Females	64.7	51.0	31.4	78.4	49.0	33.3
Total	64.6	48.5	27.3	78.8	52.5	31.3
Employment						
Males	56.5	56.5	21.7	91.5	60.9	34.8
Females	74.0	72.5	32.0	96.2	74.5	30.0
Total	65.6	64.9	27.1	93.9	68.0	32.3
Unemployment						
Males	44.4	48.9	19.6	74.5	51.1	31.9
Females	66.0	42.6	39.1	74.5	51.1	14.9
Total	55.4	45.7	29.3	74.5	51.1	23.4

Factor S6 was labelled 'frustrating situation' on the basis of a combination of items showing a high degree of financial dependency, not being in a desired situation but feeling well equipped in basic skills. Although this is one of the weaker factors, it is an interesting one, given how this constellation of items may be interpreted as indicating something about a level of frustration or lack of control over one's situation. Factor S6 'frustrating situation' differentiated most between the higher education and the unemployed samples ($p \leq 0.001$). A significant difference was also found on this factor by social class, with those from skilled and unskilled backgrounds scoring more highly than young people from social class groups I and

II ($p \leq 0.05$).

10.3.3 Acquiring independence from parents

Just over two-fifths of each group had not yet left home. Of those who had left home, this was done earlier by those in the unemployed group, and later by those in the employed group (see Table 10.16). This may reflect differences in levels of family support alluded to in the group interviews by young people in each setting (cf §6.2, §7.2 and §8.2). The group interviews indicated that family support was frequently absent in the lives of those in the unemployed setting. Over half were financially independent of their parents.

Only a few students and young employees already had children (less than 6%). In the unemployed group, 10 percent of the males and 30 percent of the females had children.

Regardless of current circumstances (in education, employment or unemployment) females had generally left their parental homes earlier (see Table 10.16). Additionally, of those living away from their parents a greater percentage of females thought this would be permanent (76% compared to 58%). More females had moved into local authority accommodation if unemployed (40% compared to 6%), become homeowners if employed (31% compared to 15%) and moved into student residences or private rented accommodation if students (65% compared to 54%). Despite these differences in living arrangements there was no major division in how dependent young men and women felt themselves to be on their parents (see Table 10.17), although more young women in employment or unemployed situations, were in stable relationships and therefore likely to have been cohabiting and sharing

resources (39%, compared to 11%). Young men in higher education were the most likely to report feeling totally financially dependent on their parents, but these young men made up only 13% of the group and young women were generally more likely to report depending a lot on parents for other kinds of support (22%, compared to 12%).

Table 10.16: Age left home (q13, percentages by gender and settings)

	Not yet left	18 or less	19-20	21 or older	No answer
HE					
Males	43.8	31.3	14.6	8.3	2.0
Females	42.3	46.1	5.8	5.8	0.0
Total	43.0	39.0	10.0	7.0	1.0
Employment					
Males	50.0	25.0	12.5	12.5	0.0
Females	34.6	36.6	17.3	9.6	1.9
Total	42.0	31.0	15.0	11.0	1.0
Unemployment					
Males	58.0	30.0	4.0	6.0	2.0
Females	30.0	58.0	12.0	0.0	0.0
Total	44.0	44.0	8.0	3.0	1.0
Total group					
Males	50.7	28.7	10.3	8.9	1.4
Females	35.7	46.8	11.7	5.2	0.6
Total	43.0	38.0	11.0	7.0	1.0

Table 10.17: Dependence on parents (q14, percentage of respondents in group)

	Financial		Other kinds of support	
	Independent	Partly dependent	Independent	Partly dependent
HE				
Males	25.0	60.4	22.9	66.7
Females	23.5	62.7	17.3	48.1
Total	24.2	61.6	20.0	57.0
Employment				
Males	57.4	31.9	28.9	60.0
Females	68.6	23.5	22.0	60.0
Total	63.3	27.6	25.3	60.0
Unemployment				
Males	50.0	38.6	34.0	48.9
Females	59.2	30.6	32.7	42.9
Total	51.0	34.4	33.3	45.8

10.3.4 Summary: Individual agency

The data shows that the young unemployed people generally felt less in control of their lives than those situated in higher education or employment. Greater numbers saw their current situation as a result of chance rather than their own plans, and fewer had frequent experiences of challenge and satisfaction within their personal lives or in their institutional settings. Independence was often desired but not felt to be achievable, or experienced as the only alternative.

Nevertheless, there was little evidence of fatalism in their attitudes. They emphasised the necessity of maintaining a positive attitude in order to get themselves out of their current predicament. High levels of agency in terms of investing effort in finding suitable training places and searching for work were exhibited. The

unemployed group scored highest on factor A2 'active career seeking'. This group also had the highest scores on factors S1 'general self-confidence' and S2 'social self-confidence' which suggests they may have been over-compensating in order to maintain a positive outlook. A social class difference was also found, with those from lower social classes scoring more highly on factor S2.

Those in higher education scored more highly than those in employment on factor C5 'planning not chance'. This is understandable in the light of The University of Derby's high intake from social groups not previously represented in the higher education sector. It is likely that many of these young people would have made a decision to aim for university in order to go on and gain a university place.

In all other respects, the employed group appeared most in control. This supports the idea that control beliefs are higher in situations where immediate change is experienced such as is the case for those in employment, where having a foothold in the labour market allows the young person to acquire independence in line with their increasing financial resources. Where young employees were not earning enough to support themselves this represented a significant source of frustration. Lack of money was a problem for more of the students and unemployed groups however. The effect this has on limiting activities in personal life probably accounts for these groups scoring much lower than the employed group on C1 'fulfilled personal life'. It was the unemployed group who most often experienced their situation as frustrating (factor S6), with financial dependency on parents combining with an undesirable situation, whilst feeling well-equipped in terms of basic skills.

Males and females in similar situations generally reported similar experiences;

however, a few differences are identifiable (cf §6.4, §7.4, §8.4). Although young women generally left home earlier, they did not report feeling any more independent from their parents than young men. Females in higher education appeared more engaged than males and had been more active in searching for work (cf §6.2.2). Male employees had made more effort searching for work. The combination of this result with others, that male employees named more barriers to achievement and were less well-qualified, suggests that males felt less in control of their labour market situations than their female peers (cf §7.2.2). These gender differences, identified within the higher education and employed groups, imply that women are keener than men to invest in education and qualifications and take advantage of growing opportunities, for people with these, in the labour market.

10.4 Variation in levels of collective agency

Variations in levels of collective agency are now discussed in relation to young people's engagement in political and group activities and their work-related values.

10.4.1 Participation in politics and collective action

Factor A3 'politically active' was labelled on the basis of responses to three survey items: having attended a public meeting more than once, having organised a public meeting more than once and having discussed a political issue more than once. This was the only factor which did not reveal a significant difference across settings.

Similarly low levels of participation of all groups were found in a variety of activities (see Table 10.18). Four fifths of the total group of young people reported previously having joined a sports club, and one fifth reported a religious affiliation.

While three quarters of the group had discussed a political issue at least *once*, less than a third had engaged in any of the other activities listed. Less than half of young people in any of the settings were quite or very interested in politics, although slightly more than two thirds of students and employed young people said that they would vote in an election. The unemployed group were less likely than others to express an interest in politics (see Table 10.19) or to say they would vote (see Table 10.20). These findings are supported by the group interviews in which young people from all settings expressed a lack of trust in party politics and the efficacy of collective forms of action.

Table 10.18: Participation in activities (q33, percentage of respondents in group)

	Attend public meeting	Given views to politician	Handed out leaflets	Organised public meet	Discussed political issue	Joined trade union	Joined political party	Joined religious org.	Joined sports club
Higher Education									
Males	27.1	10.4	18.8	25.1	70.6	6.3	0.0	23.0	75.0
Females	34.6	25.0	27.0	31.4	86.5	21.1	1.9	21.6	82.7
Total	31.0	18.0	23.0	28.3	79.0	14.0	1.0	22.3	79.0
Employment									
Males	31.9	19.2	20.9	43.8	85.4	29.8	2.1	18.8	93.6
Females	32.7	23.1	34.0	29.4	86.6	23.0	0.0	27.4	86.6
Total	31.3	21.3	27.5	36.4	86.0	26.3	1.0	23.3	89.9
Unemployment									
Males	23.9	12.5	19.5	29.8	52.3	10.9	2.2	22.7	72.3
Females	48.0	38.3	35.4	38.3	70.2	6.4	0.0	25.5	63.8
Total	36.2	26.2	27.6	34.0	61.5	8.7	1.1	24.2	68.1
Total group									
Males	27.7	14.0	19.7	32.9	70.0	15.6	2.1	21.5	80.3
Females	38.0	28.5	32.0	32.9	81.5	17.2	0.7	24.8	78.1
Total	33.1	21.4	26.0	32.9	76.0	16.4	1.3	23.2	79.2

Although males were more likely to express an interest in politics (see Table 10.19) females were found to be more politically active by factor A3. Given the generally low levels of political activity within the samples this is better expressed as females being less politically *inactive* than males. This result was found across the whole group ($p \leq 0.001$), as well as within the higher education ($p \leq 0.01$) and unemployed groups ($p \leq 0.01$). A greater proportion of females had taken part in nearly all of the activities asked about in the questionnaire (see Table 10.18). This gender difference appears to have emerged particularly in the settings where there is most call for action. More females than males, in both the higher education and unemployed samples, said they would vote (see Table 10.20). It was the female students and unemployed mothers who said, respectively, that they had taken part in student rallies or contacted their MPs.

Table 10.19: Quite or very interested in politics (q35, percentage of respondents in group)

	Higher Education	Employment	Unemployment
Males	46.8	52.1	30.0
Females	36.5	40.4	31.3
Total	41.4	46.0	30.7

Table 10.20: Would vote in an election tomorrow (q34, percentage of respondents in group)

	Education	Employment	Unemployment
Males	64.6	76.6	40.8
Females	70.6	72.0	50.0
Total	67.7	74.2	45.3

10.4.2 Work-related values

Young people's priorities in work were identified as 'good pay' (77%), 'job security' (55%) and 'good prospects' (51%); followed by 'a friendly atmosphere' (41%), 'challenges' (36%), 'responsibility' (22%) and 'gaining qualifications' (23%). Smaller proportions saw work 'not intruding on leisure time' (18%), developing 'a wide circle of relationships' (15%), 'combining work with child-rearing' (13%), 'helping society through one's own efforts' (14%) and 'helping society through group effort' (12%), as priorities. This order of priorities remained approximately the same across each of the three settings and among males and females (cf appendix 10(iii)).

Females in higher education were more likely to place emphasis on combining work with child-rearing (23% compared to 8%) and helping society either individually (20% compared to 13%) or in a group (17% compared to 8%) than their male counterparts, but these gender differences did not appear in the other settings. Very few males or females saw combining work with child rearing to be a priority, and this was particularly so in the employed group, with only 6% of males and females including this in their top three. It was selected as a priority by only 16% of the unemployed women, which is the group with the most parents (30%).

Both males and females prioritised personal goals in work, and this was particularly the case among the employed group. Although 'helping society individually' or 'helping society as a group' were the goals prioritised least often, if the proportions selecting these as goals are combined then the proportion wanting to make a contribution to society is almost as great as the proportion that selected 'challenges'.

10.4.3 Summary: Collective agency

There was little variation in levels of collective agency across institutional settings. Levels of participation in collective forms of action were generally low, as was trust in the political system. The unemployed were even less engaged in politics than the other groups. Young people in all groups prioritised individual goals in work.

Young women in higher education and unemployment exhibited higher levels of collective agency than their male counterparts. A possible explanation for this is that females display greater resiliency, becoming apathetic less easily than males.

10.5 Variation in future perspectives

Variations across settings and genders in young people's perspectives on the future are discussed. The unemployed sample scored higher on factor F2 'negative view of future' than either of the other samples ($p \leq 0.001$). This finding is reflected in the single-item results presented in Tables 10.21 and 10.22 which show greater proportions of the unemployed expected unemployment to remain a possibility in the future and not expecting to get the job they want. Nevertheless, the overall impression was that even the unemployed young people remained hopeful for the future and were attempting to formulate plans to pursue. Unemployment rates were improving at the time which may have given some reason to be hopeful. The factor F1 'unlikely to move' identified the higher education group as more likely to expect to move than the other two groups ($p \leq 0.01$).

There were significant gender differences identified in perspectives on the future. Factor F2 identified females both across the whole group ($p \leq 0.05$), and in employment ($p \leq 0.05$), as significantly more optimistic and as having made more

plans for their futures, than their male counterparts. More females in all settings expected to get the job they want (table 10.22) and more females overall expected to gain more qualifications, train for a new occupation and not become unemployed (table 10.21).

Table 10.21: Plans and expectations for the future (q30, percentage of respondents in group)

	Higher Education		Employment		Unemployment		Total	
	Males	Fem.	Males	Fem.	Males	Fem.	Males	Fem.
Very likely gain more qualifications.	17.0	30.8	44.7	49.0	29.8	44.0	30.5	41.2
Unlikely/no chance gain further qualifications.	17.1	1.9	6.4	2.0	6.4	6.0	9.9	3.3
Very/quite likely train for different occupation	6.4	25.5	19.2	25.4	24.5	24.0	16.5	25.0
Unlikely/no chance train for different occupation	55.3	37.2	48.9	27.5	37.8	42.0	47.5	35.5
Very/quite likely become unemployed	6.5	5.9	8.7	0.0	27.7	17.4	14.4	7.4
Unlikely/no chance become unemployed	58.7	56.8	80.4	82.4	29.8	54.4	56.1	64.9
Very/quite likely live elsewhere in country	41.7	45.1	33.4	28.8	20.9	26.0	32.0	33.4
Unlikely/no chance live elsewhere in country	14.6	26.4	25.0	32.7	40.6	46.0	26.4	34.7

Table 10.22: Expectation of getting desired job (q27, percentages by gender and settings)

	Very/quite likely	Possibly	No chance
Higher Education			
Males	37.8	57.8	4.4
Females	44.2	55.8	0.0
Total	41.2	56.7	2.1
Employment			
Males	34.2	63.4	2.4
Females	58.1	39.5	2.4
Total	46.4	51.2	2.4
Unemployment			
Males	25.5	59.6	14.9
Females	32.0	56.0	12.0
Total	28.9	57.7	13.4
Total group			
Males	32.3	60.2	7.5
Females	44.1	51.0	4.9
Total	38.5	55.4	6.1

10.5.1 Summary: orientations towards the future

Although the unemployed group were less positive than the other two groups, overall they remained hopeful about the future and only a few people did not have some possibilities in mind. Young people exhibited generally positive and optimistic outlooks; at the same time, unemployment was viewed as a possibility by some young people in all settings. They viewed their futures as their responsibilities and were behaving accordingly.

Females were significantly more positive than their male counterparts, and this was particularly the case for females in employment. This is consistent with the finding

that female employees appeared to feel more in control of their current lives (cf §7.2 §10.3) and corroborates the conclusion that existing labour market opportunities were viewed more favourably by young women.

10.6 Variation in overall perspectives

This chapter has reported data allowing a comparison of the perspectives of young men and women located in three institutional settings. The Venn diagrams shown overleaf provide a crude illustration of the extent to which perspectives are shared or diverge between different groups (see Figures 10.1, 10.2, 10.3, 10.4, 10.5).

Part III concludes the thesis. Chapter 11 presents a synthesis of the results chapters, with a distillation of key theoretical factors, both with regard to approaching young people's lives and social theories more generally. The discussion focuses on the patterns of agency manifest in the various structuring contexts investigated (of gender and setting) and considers how these observations fit with the broader social theories and empirical studies discussed in Chapters 2 and 3. Broader conclusions concerning the interplay of structure and agency are developed. Finally, the implications of these theoretical conclusions for policy and practice of consequence for young people's lives are considered.

→ Greater agency and control

Figure 10.5: Overlap in perspectives: young men and women in higher education

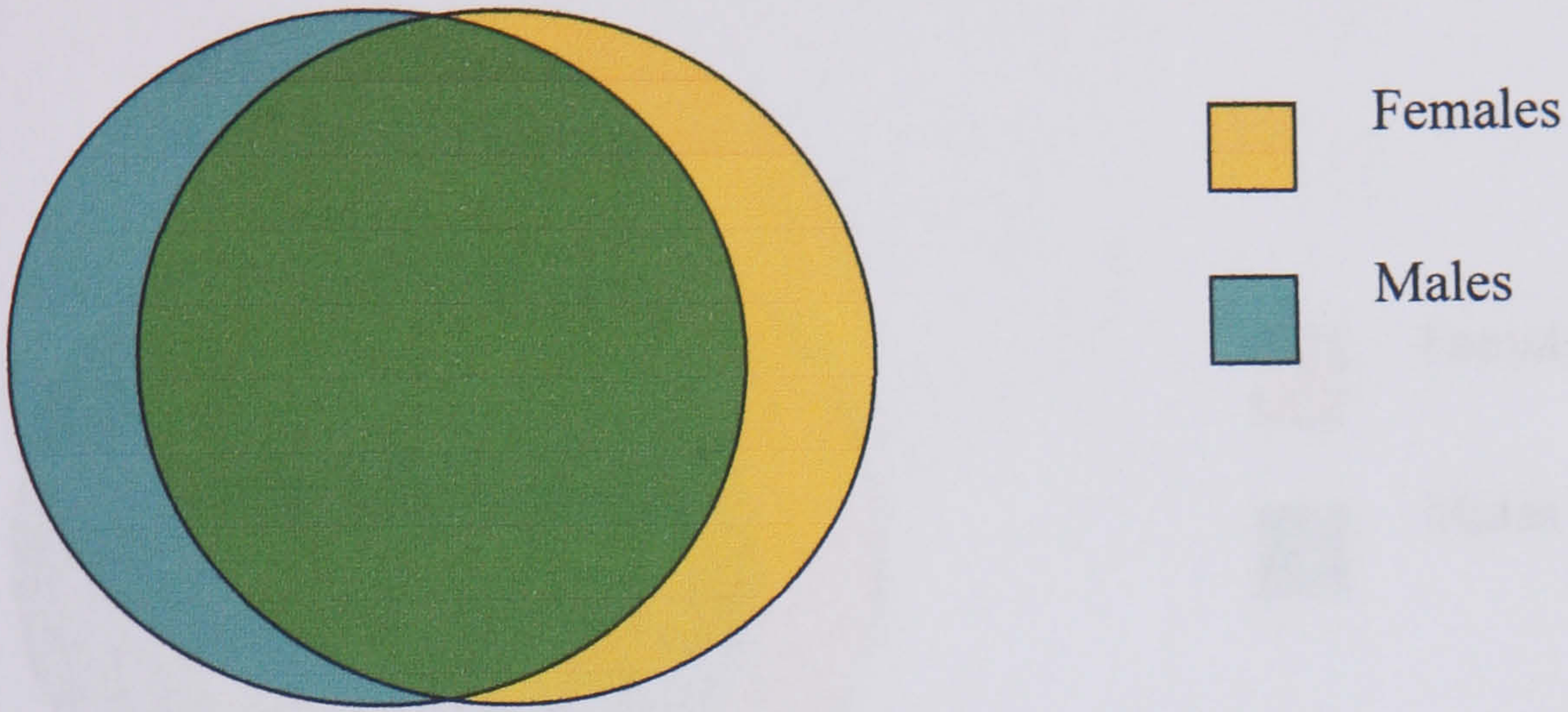


Figure 10.6: Overlap in perspectives: young men and women in employment

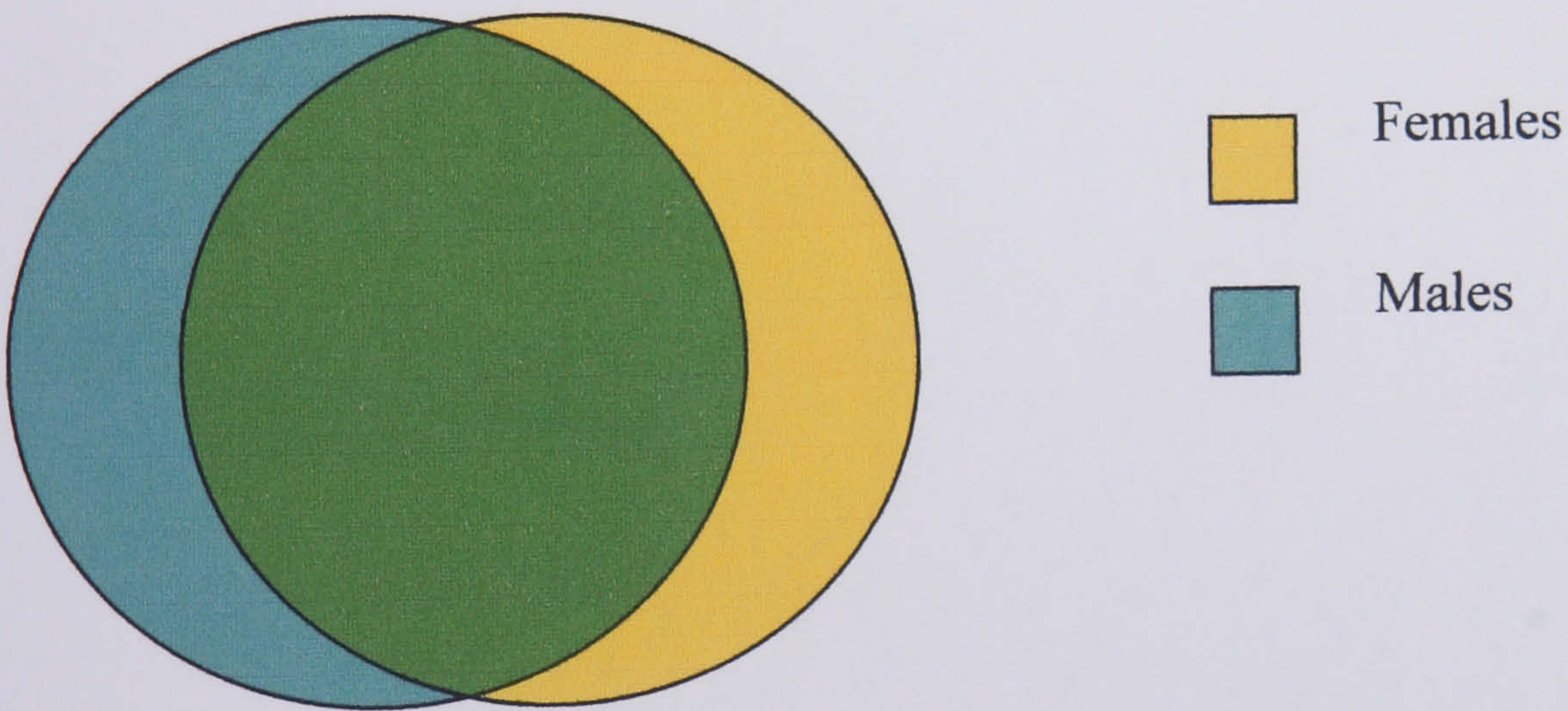


Figure 10.7: Overlap in perspectives: young men and women in unemployment

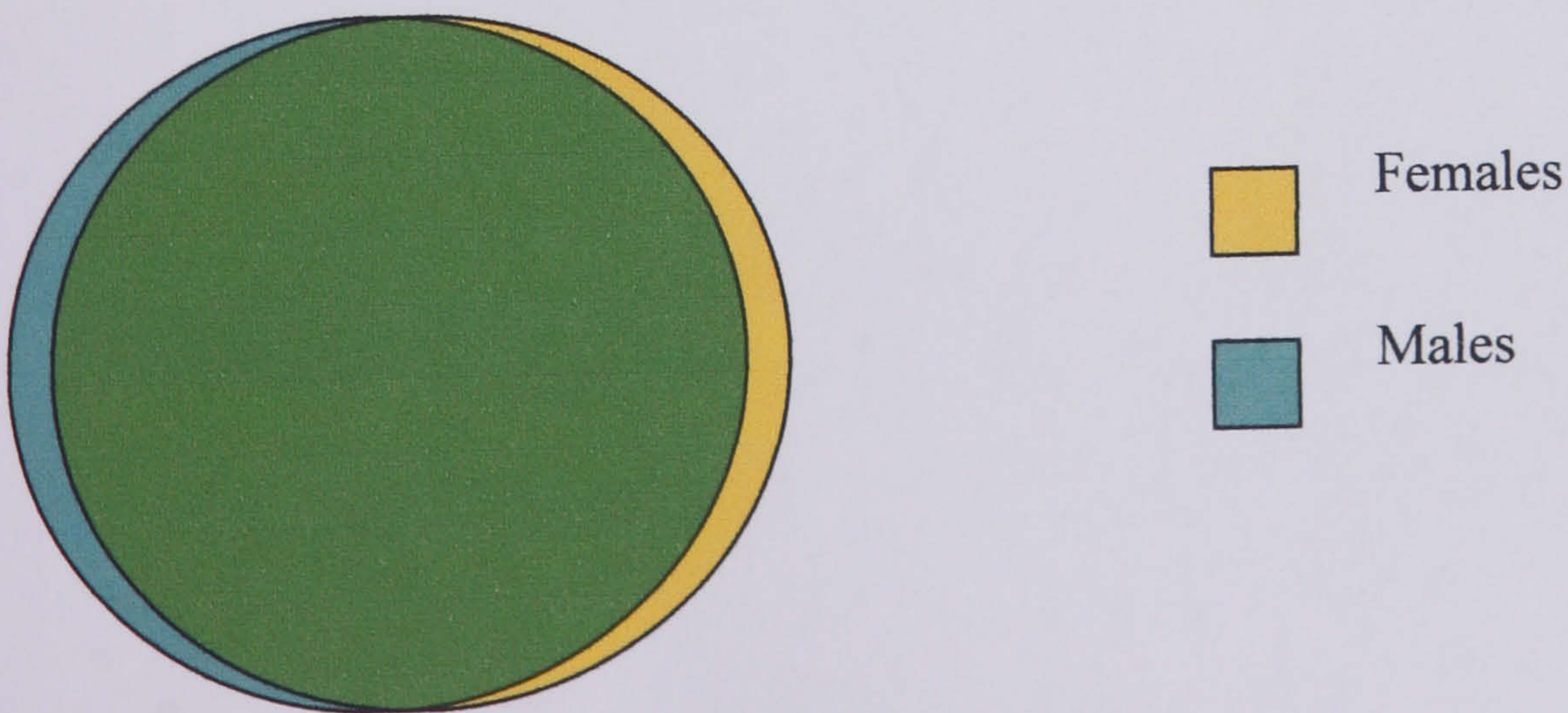


Figure 10.9: Degree of overlap in perspectives: young men and women



Figure 10.8: Overlap in perspectives: young men and women

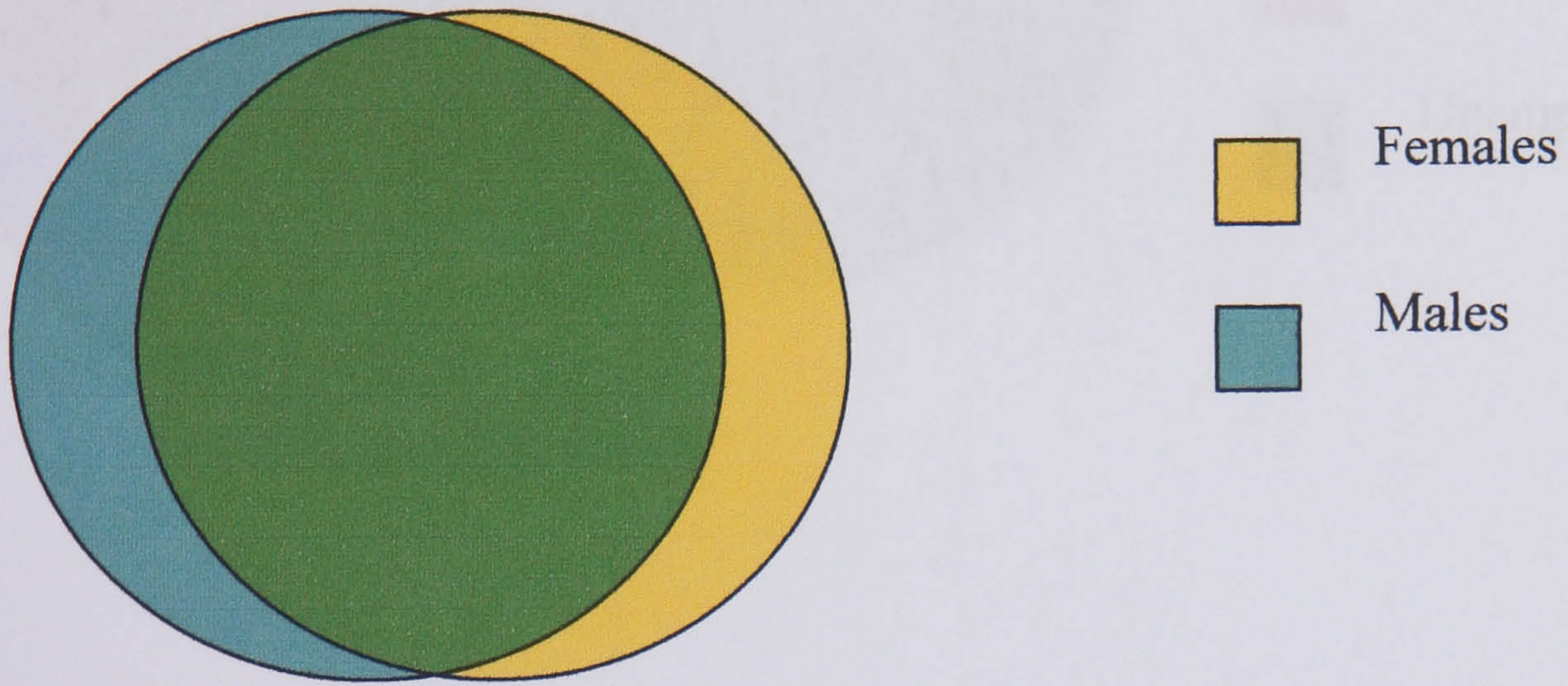
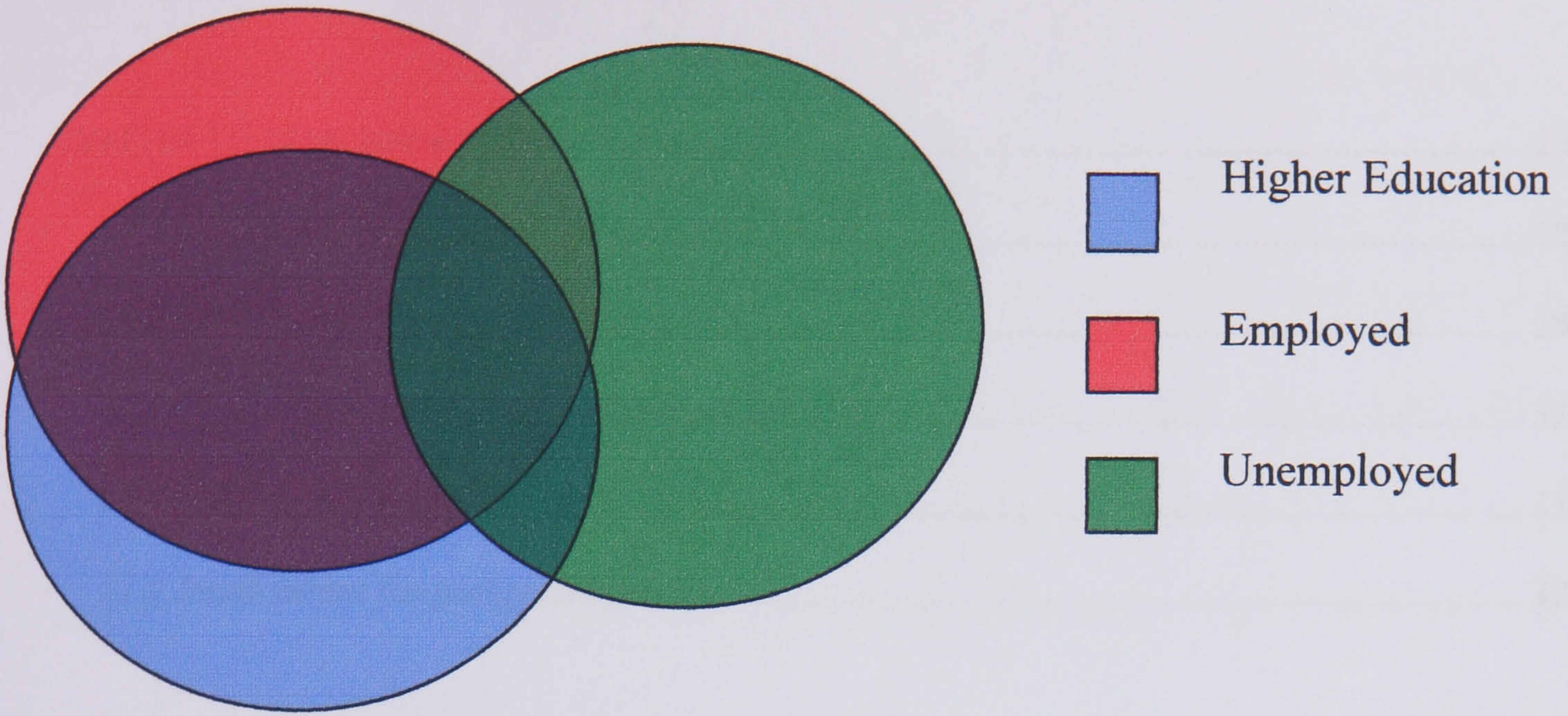


Figure 10.9: Degrees of overlap in perspectives: across institutional settings



Part III: Discussion and conclusions

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Chapter 11: Main findings and conclusions

The study set out to investigate how young adults making life transitions experience feelings of control and exercise personal agency. The primary aim is to examine the extent and ways in which structural factors, particularly gender and institutional setting, are associated with young people's feelings of control and exercise of agency, with a view to advancing understanding of these factors' inter-relationships. A secondary aim is to elaborate on Beck's individualisation thesis (Beck, 1992), in the light of the project's findings, with regard to the significance of both agency and gender in shaping young people's lives. This chapter provides a synthetic overview and interpretation of the project data, which was presented in part II, to elucidate the key findings.

§11.1 is a prelude to the thesis's main concerns. Attempts to ground the concept of agency empirically are in their infancy. The progress made by this project in this respect is discussed and how the study supports the notion that agency plays a significant role in young people's transitions is briefly commented upon.

§11.2 and §11.3 present the thesis's main findings. The relationship between structural factors and agency is subtle and complex, but the empirical evidence documented by this study offers some important clues.

§11.2 considers the evidence that institutional setting is more strongly associated with agency than gender or social class. How the three structuring contexts of higher education, full-time employment and unemployment were related to young people's feelings of control is discussed. It is argued that social resources are key mechanisms linking structural factors and young people's agency. §11.3 discusses

how young people's feelings of control and agency are related to their gender. The data shows that young men's and women's experiences are close and the implications of this for understanding their perspectives is considered.

§11.4 considers the theoretical implications of these findings. Some refinements to Beck's (1992) individualisation thesis and Beck and Beck-Gernsheim's (2002) speculations concerning gender-relations are offered. The study's implications with respect to understanding young people's transitions theoretically are drawn out.

§11.5 considers how young people's transitions may benefit most from policy and practice.

11.1 Investigating agency in young people's lives

Beck's (1992, 1998) and Giddens' (1990, 1991) theoretical sketches, firstly, assert that subjective states have become increasingly individualised, and secondly, attribute a significant role to personal agency in influencing life outcomes. They paint a picture of an atomised society, of citizens embarked on individualised life projects (cf §2.2.3). There is widespread consensus among social theorists that subjective states are highly individualised in Western societies, including among those sceptical of the significance of these trends for affecting patterns of life outcomes to any significant degree (e.g. Furlong and Cartmel, 1997), and this is further supported by this research.

Across all settings and both genders belief in making your own choices and having responsibility for your life was pervasive. Young people's belief in the importance of qualifications was paramount; even four-fifths of the unemployed group rated these as having considerable influence on someone's chances in life (cf §10.1.2).

This particular finding has been reported widely in the UK (Bynner, Ferri and Shepherd, 1997) and in Germany (Evans, Rudd, Behrens, Kaluza and Woolley, 2000) and probably reflects a general trend emerging across developed societies. Education and qualifications, effort and ability were viewed as the primary determinants of success (cf §10.2), obscuring the effects of ascribed social characteristics to some degree. While the unemployed felt less in control than other young people, they too emphasised the importance of maintaining a positive outlook and responding proactively to the opportunities they sought out and the obstacles they encountered. These findings are consistent with recent empirical evidence documenting young people's high levels of agency, across a range of situations (Wyn and Dwyer, 1999), together with somewhat reduced feelings of control among the most disadvantaged sectors (Bynner, Ferri and Shepherd, 1997; Anderson, Bechhofer, Jamieson, McCrone, Li and Stewart, 2002; cf §3.4.1)¹. The New Labour government of the time emphasised individual's responsibilities to help themselves (Blair, 2002) and the city's local initiative operated under the slogan "*Derbyes! The city where you can*". Young people appeared to have subscribed to this rhetoric and were attempting to take control of their lives. In a climate in which young people are often no longer able to follow family history and tradition while making their way into adulthood and in which the effects of social characteristics are played down, it is not surprising that young people stress their own capacities to shape their lives. Beck's and Giddens' accounts have prompted attempts to investigate agency

¹ The ESRC study showed that young people in Derby were more likely to rate the effects of qualifications highly, and less likely to rate the effects of ascribed social characteristics highly, compared to their counterparts in Hanover and Leipzig in Germany, indicating that individualised approaches are stronger in the UK. This is understandable given the more flexible, insecure and market-oriented UK labour market, which promotes a view of opportunities as being open to all.

empirically, and study of young people making transitions into adulthood offers a particularly powerful means of capturing its role in shaping lives.

The project data do not test the absolute effects of personal agency on individual outcomes, which is a task requiring longitudinal data; they do illustrate, however, that positive outcomes correspond with agentic behaviour, as reported in the wider literature (cf §3.4.1), and moreover, show that levels of agency vary substantially across the social landscape. The extent to which Derby was experienced as ‘The city where you can’ was dependent on social position within it (cf §11.2).

This study approached agency as a temporally-embedded process (Emirbayer and Misch, 1998; cf §2.3.4), which pertained to the scope young people, themselves, feel they have to shape their lives. A contribution was made by this study through its use of the factor analysis technique with the questionnaire data to identify particularly salient processes in young people’s experiences of control and agency. Factor analysis is valuable to the extent that the results can be made sense of theoretically and provide operational measures, robust enough for further exploratory analyses of group differences. Only one factor (A4) was excluded from further analyses (cf §4.3.1). The emergent factors made sense theoretically for it was possible to assign theoretically salient labels to factors which reflected their composite items well. The identified factors are also consistent with prominent ideas in the literature; for example, the factors ‘opportunities open to all’ (C3) and ‘achievement barriers’ (S5), correspond to Ball, Maguire and Macrae’s (2000) view of opportunities and obstacles as important factors shaping young people’s identities and transitions. The factor analyses provided useful clues for approaching the qualitative analyses, but the pictures of young people’s perspectives, compared across six structuring

contexts, benefited from the integration of these data sets. These comparative analyses, developed from snap shots of group experience were complemented by biographical analyses of individual lives, used to explore pertinent social processes. The case studies provided various strands of evidence; they brought to life the effect of developing a realistic, positive and future-oriented approach (cf §9.3.2); showed how this is particularly beneficial in the absence of well-defined pathways and the guiding markers of family tradition, and supported Clausen's (1991a/b) proposal that 'planful competence' is a key indicator of agency. A process was identified in which having clear and realistic personal goals or plans when younger, was connected with well-defined strategies for executing those plans, in turn generating feelings of control and satisfaction as these became a reality, leading to further progression – setting a virtuous circle in motion. The presence of agency facilitated a much smoother transition. Clausen's description of his concept of 'planful competence':-

Knowing something about one's intellectual abilities, social skills, and emotional responses to others. (...) recognizing weaknesses that need to be overcome as well as knowing one's interests and strengths and developing them.

Clausen, 1991a, p8

describes very well Danielle's approach to breaking free of gender stereotypes and entering an engineering apprenticeship.

Danielle's case showed how personal agency is a critical factor in moving young people out of structurally predicted patterns. It was also evident that, on the whole, and in line with well-documented macro-level patterns (Furlong and Cartmel, 1997; Schoon, Bynner, Joshi, and Wiggins, 2001; Bynner, Elias, McKnight, Pan and Pierre, 2002) structural factors remained profoundly influential in shaping young

people's lives. Given the part played by agency however, increasing the understanding of its operation provides valuable clues of relevance to developing effective policy and practice concerning young people's lives (cf §11.5). To this end, the next two sections provide a summary and interpretation of the thesis's main findings concerning the links identified between structural factors and agency.

11.2 Linking structure and agency

This research has shown that young people's feelings of control and exercise of agency vary substantially according to their economic status, and to a far greater degree than by gender or social class. All but one of seventeen factors identified significant differences across institutional settings; whereas, such differences were only identified by 3 and 5 factors across gender and social class groups respectively. The clear differentiation in agency identified across settings indicates that this is a good starting point for exploring how agency links to structural factors, so it will be useful to review the perspectives of young people in each of the three settings in exploring how these findings may be accounted for.

The employed group's perspectives can be summarised as broadly positive and optimistic. With their greater feelings of fulfilment in their personal and working lives, stronger beliefs that opportunities are open to all and less experience of encountering obstacles to achievement, they were the group who appeared to feel most in control of their lives (cf §10.3.2, §10.2.5). Overall, Derby's economy was relatively strong at the time of the project fieldwork; numbers of jobs rose in 1998 and unemployment followed a downward trend during 1999 (cf §5.1). Thus, these perspectives are understandable in terms of young people having a foothold in the

labour market, which allowed them to gain independence commensurate with their salary. Control beliefs are stronger in situations where change can be immediately and directly experienced. This was illustrated by the case studies which suggested that, particularly for those who left school without clear plans (e.g. Debbie), feelings of control grew as their experience of the labour market resulted in the opportunities within it becoming more apparent to them and their efforts translated into positive outcomes (cf §9.3.2). Young people who experienced support from colleagues and a mentoring relationship with their managers acknowledged the benefits of this both in facilitating their take-up of opportunities and for their more general personal development and satisfaction (cf §7.2).

The unemployed group's perspectives indicate their struggle to take control of their lives. Overall, feelings of control were much lower than in either of the other two groups, as demonstrated consistently by their interview responses and higher scores on all of the factors measured in a negative direction (cf Figure 10.2). They saw their situations as more attributable to chance and experienced less fulfilment in their lives (cf §10.3.2). Although they reported on numerous obstacles which had impeded their progress (cf §10.2.5), they appeared to have accepted an individualised view of success and failure (as described in §11.1) which had particularly negative consequences for themselves, given their current situation. There was little evidence of fatalism in their group interview responses (cf §8.4); on the contrary, they continued to exhibit proactive behaviours with respect to their search for work (cf §10.3.4) and emphasised the need to remain confident and optimistic (cf §10.5.1). The unemployed group's views reflect the approach taken by the New Deal programme towards them, which urged young people to take on

their responsibilities and which sought ways to address their individual 'deficits' (cf §5.2). While the New Deal programme was also supposed to provide help and support, this was frequently found to be inadequate (cf §8.2.2). The focus groups indicated that how young unemployed people assessed their current situations and future prospects was associated with how supported they felt in their training placements.

I think it is dead good at this centre, because... ..Because here they really are positive, do you know what I mean. If you want to do something then they'll like give you a little nudge and point you in the right direction and you know not dog you down about it and just say "oh aren't you doing that in there, no, oh alright then". You know, think, what you are going to do next?

(Dinah, 23 years old, mother, New Deal NVQ1 wood occupations)

I've got a goal and that now actually, I have. Since coming here really.

You've got a goal?

Yeah, I've got a goal. I didn't have a goal before. If you'd ask me what I was doing I would say "I dunno".

(Di, 22 years old, New Deal administration course, formerly in care)

Like the employed group, students were broadly positive about their current situations and optimistic about the future. Students' perspectives were differentiated from the other groups by having least trust that opportunities are open to all, in combination with most trust placed in the leverage provided by educational qualifications. These results are understandable in the light of the University of Derby's profile with regard to widening participation. A substantial number of students are non-traditional entrants to higher education. This group had encountered considerably more setbacks than the employed group and were more aware of the ways in which ascribed social characteristics can act as limiting factors. There was tension among students regarding the degree to which where you

come from (in terms of family circumstances and where you live) affects how you are perceived by others, and peer group difference was thrown into sharp relief by many students' financial struggles, in contrast to others receipt of ample support from parents. Generally, however, reaching university was regarded as a significant step in overcoming disadvantage and prejudice associated with social background.

By virtue of their situations in higher education, employment, unemployment and training, young people are connected into formal social networks. The preceding accounts of young people's perspectives draws attention to the importance of the support, or lack of support, derived from these networks. In response to Emirbayer and Misch's (1998) call to examine and locate changes in actor's agentic capacities across structuring contexts, this thesis argues that social resources of various kinds are critical factors implicated in limiting and strengthening young people's agency. This view is further developed by contrasts in young people's perspectives, outlined next, which point towards the important role played by parents as social resources. Overall stronger feelings of control among the students and employed contrasted with lower levels among the unemployed. A marked and corresponding contrast is evident in young people's reflections on the influence of their parents in their present lives and past experiences, both in influencing their horizons and as valuable sources of support.

Although the students were keen to attribute their situations in higher education to their own plans, the group interviews showed how parental expectations and approval were of underlying importance to many (cf §6.2.2). This group had received more encouragement than the other groups to remain in education after compulsory schooling (cf §6.1, §7.1, §8.1), and these findings, together, point

towards the socialising influence of parents shaping their children's educational aspirations and facilitating their progress. The following vignette from a group interview illustrates these parental effects:

They're always there if I need them, not just for money or anything, but for anything.

So they're very supportive?

Yeah, very. They totally support what I am doing.

(Daphne, 19 year old business studies student)

Is that a general feeling that your, your families have supported you in being a student. Does anyone....

It's quite a proud moment for your parents for your child to go off to university, so it's quite, that's the only thing that puts pressure on us, but quite a nice feeling.

My mum's a bit like that, she, she didn't think I'd go and she kept asking me to go and I went 'no' because of the money and you know I've got Jacob to look after and everything else. And then when I told her I'd got in she was like, she was surprised and everything, bless her I haven't done anything yet. So...But erm, she's my role model in a way because she was a single parent with two kids and she's like working, managing as a mid - wife (...) now, so if she can do it then I can also I suppose. So she's been like really supportive the whole way through. Like 'cos I got accepted, she's now thinking of doing a degree as well now, 'cos they didn't have to do it when she trained, so it's like we're both pushing each other to go really, so...

(Denise, 24 year old psychology student and single parent)

Parental support and approval were likely to have been of particular significance for those students who were the first members of their family to enter higher education, who therefore, also had to overcome a lack of role models and a dearth of tacit knowledge and experience of the university system (Evans, 2002). This extract from Darren illustrates how this lack of family experience meant he felt his situation was entirely down to him:

Because I'm going in a completely different path to both my parents, I'm sort of forging new links so to speak. I'm the first person out of

the family that'll get a degree. So their advice is not really valid. And they can only sort of say 'this is what I feel', 'cause they haven't had the experience of going to university and doing a degree, their advice isn't really relevant to me. I feel that I am going through life in what I think more than what my parents think.

(Darren, 20 year old biology student)

The employed group gave equally positive acknowledgments of the supportive role played by their parents (cf §7.2.2). Only one or two people reported having a parent who had not cared what they did (cf §7.1). Despite having an income of their own, approximately a third continued to rely in part on their parents financially and over two fifths had not yet left home. Approximately two-thirds of both the higher education and employed groups reported feeling at least partly dependent on their parents for support of kinds other than financial (cf §10.3.3). Dean's view was typical:

How important is family background in a sense?

Oh, very important, definitely, not for pushing you in a direction but you know when they've always been there even with a simple thing if you didn't get it or not, you know, it didn't matter. (...). I can't think of a time where, whatever they've sort of pushed me to do anything that I've not wanted to do they've always let me do what I want to do and then sort of seek to help me out along the way. (...). I always asked them for sort of guidance.

(Dean, 25 year old engineer)

Degrees of reliance on parents among unemployed young people did not deviate greatly from levels in the other groups, although there were more who felt they depended heavily on their parents. A sharper distinction across settings was apparent in the process by which independence had been attained, when this was reported. The focus groups and case studies from the employed group showed that young people in this setting had generally left home when the time was right and had received support to do so (cf §7.2.2, §9.3.3); whereas, a more frequent experience of

the unemployed was the absence of support and becoming independent simply because there was no one to help (cf §8.2.2). The data illustrated the woeful lack of state support, which is needed when families are unable or unwilling to provide this for their young people.

I've like my, my Dad's got a big massive house and everything, but me I've never lived with him I've always lived in foster care. But everyone used to think it was the same situation with me, but I was nothing like my Dad, I never had no money. He never bought me anything..... I never even used to see him.

(Daniella, 19 years old, mother, New Deal 'wheels and words' course)

My Dad's got loads of money as well. I don't see him.

(Dora, 20 years old, mother, New Deal 'wheels and words' course)

Erm I had a few problems at home so, I didn't live on my own, when I was 14 I was in a foster home, and then I left my foster home and went into my own accommodation but I never felt that I had any support then either. So I had to learn everything, I didn't have like the first clue about what to do or anything. And err you know...

So do you feel that you're independent?

Erm, not through choice. Not through choice I don't think, I think that the Job Centre always say, just going back to the Job Centre thing, they expect you to be, I don't know, 100% erm you know punctual and they really get on to you about all this. But like, I think, I don't think they understand sometimes about you know about what, how the money is and stuff like that.

(Di, 22 years old, New Deal administration course, formerly in care)

Overall, the data indicate that young people, whether employed, in training or studying, frequently receive support from their parents well into their twenties, and without such support, their transitions into adult life become acutely risky and perilous.

The comparative data suggests that the family plays a key role, which must be investigated further if the links between structural patterns and young people's

capacities to shape their own lives are to be understood. This is consistent with Bell's view of the family 'as the most important site of resources for young people' (Bell 2001a/b cited in Thomson and Holland, 2002, p10). Confirmatory evidence of this, as well as further clues as to how the processes take shape, was provided by the biographical case studies of young employed people.

Dean was the only example from the case studies of a young person who had followed in his family's tradition of working for Rolls Royce. He was also the only person who rejected thinking too deeply about the future. Dean's case is consistent with Beck's thesis that life project planning takes on importance as the visibility of traditional markers and pathways into adult life diminishes. For the others, who stressed the importance of having goals, being future-orientated and making plans were identifiable as particularly salient processes, or markers, of agency, which allowed efforts to be directed and facilitated smoother and more adaptive transitions into adulthood (cf §9.3.2). It was apparent, however, that differential social resources placed young people in different starting points in relation to the process of forming realistic plans and executing these effectively, and their families appeared to play a primary role. Connections were identified between young people's progress in forming realistic personal goals and their family's social and economic situations. Danielle's well-defined plans, while her own, depended greatly for their successful execution on the support of her parents. In contrast, Debbie's progress in settling on a realistic goal was impeded by her father's unrealistic aspirations for her, although his attitudes seemed to instil in her a determination to aim high which helped her to achieve a significant amount without formal qualifications. The glimpse provided of her husband indicates how beneficial a role he has played as a social resource in

Debbie's life - his experience of design and printing contributing to her success in her marketing role. Other case studies of young people who, like Debbie, drew on their experiences within the labour market to direct their efforts, are indicative of the secondary role played by social networks outside the family. As a set, the case studies support the view that young people derive competencies and other forms of socio-cultural capital from their social networks, and that these features render them more or less effective in navigating their ways into adult life (Evans and Furlong, cited in Roberts, 1997, p59).

Evans, Rudd, Behrens, Kaluza and Woolley's (2000) concept of bounded agency and metaphor of actors moving in a social landscape were derived from these data, in conjunction with the perspectives of young people located in six further German contexts (cf §2.3.4). It is apparent that *all* groups are attempting to take control of their lives, but that their scope for doing so is 'bounded' in significant ways. Young people's agency is influenced by their personal horizons, which are influenced by the social terrain surrounding them. Tangible and less tangible forms of social resources are associated with young people's abilities to meet the demands made of them, and thereby, to take control of their lives. As Della explains:

As far as my life goes I'd say, yeah, I pretty much do what I want. It's in my hands...(...). I think I've got a lot of support in my life and I think that's the main thing. My Mum and Dad are always there to support me and work are brilliant at supporting me, most definitely, so I think that's what gives me my independence more than anything, the support I'm getting.

(Della, 19 year old Modern Apprentice)

The British Birth Cohorts' data, reported in §3.4.2, indicates that social and economic resources are key factors mediating structure-agency interplay, as a result

of their effects on individual resources. The present research provides corresponding evidence, from a different angle and using different methods, showing that personal agency is associated with differential levels of social and economic resources. These findings deepen our understanding of how it is that young people's transitions are shaped by their access to resources, as previously documented (Jones and Wallace, 1992, Furlong and Cartmel, 1997; Heinz, 1999). They also help to explain the polarising effect observed in young people's transitions recently. If young people today must call on their own resources to navigate their ways into adulthood and the development of personal agency depends to a large extent on one's social and economic resources, then those in the most disadvantaged circumstances are now even more disadvantaged relative to others than previously, hence outcomes become more polarised. The implications of these findings for the individualisation thesis and studying young people are considered in §11.4.

11.3 Gender and agency in transition processes

The earlier chapters have documented a substantial degree of overlap in young men's and women's perspectives on their past, present and future lives. No more than three of seventeen factors identified a significant gender difference, either across the whole group or within any of the settings. The close correspondence between male and female profiles on factor measures is illustrated in figures presented in §10.1 and appendix 10(ii). Few gender differences are identified in Chapters 6, 7 and 8, in which the full set of quantitative and qualitative data is combined to explore

variations in levels of control and agency within each setting, although the effects of focus groups in which young men and women interacted is recognised¹.

These findings are in accordance with those from other recent empirical studies which documented few, or weak, associations between gender and aspects of agency (cf §3.5; Anderson et al, 2002; Shanahan and Reitzle, 1998; Côté, 2002). Gallie, White, Cheng and Tomlinson (1998) and Bradley (1998) speculated on the basis of trends in British employment patterns that young men's and women's experiences of employment are converging². This study's data is consistent with these trends but more significantly confirms with empirical evidence their prediction that young men and women in a UK city do, indeed, share broadly similar perspectives.

In contrast with earlier data (Clausen, 1991a/b, 1993), young women were found to be attempting to exert control over, and to shape, their lives to a degree comparable to young men. Neither did the data support the assertion of Evans and Furlong (1997) that young women approached their jobs or careers more passively than young men. In fact, across the whole sample, young women scored more highly than young men on factor C5 'planning not chance' (§10.3). The qualitative data provided evidence of young women making considerable investments in their jobs; Debbie, from the focus groups, often worked until 7pm to cope with responsibilities at work while pursuing further qualifications (cf §7.2) and the case studies provided

¹It is quite possible that gender differences were altered as group norms across young men and women emerged in the group interviews. This was illustrated by the fact that the female only group emphasised the effects of gender-related prejudices on their lives more than the comparable mixed gender group. Notwithstanding these effects, the quantitative results and case studies in combination with the group interview data indicate that gender differences are not pronounced.

²These trends were young women's increased commitment to work and young men's more frequent experiences of unemployment and insecure employment (cf §3.3).

illustrations of several young women who held well-defined work-related ambitions (cf §9.2). The quantitative data showed that, across all settings, young women were more likely than young men to emphasise the effect of qualifications on one's opportunities in life (cf §10.2.1). A considerable portion of students were 'returners' to education - presumably wanting to improve their job prospects - more of whom were women (cf §6.4). Young women experienced unemployment as negatively as their male counter-parts (cf §8.4)¹. Thus, young women's commitment to labour market participation was evident.

To the extent that there were differences however, these indicated heightened feelings of control and levels of agency among the women. Young men's and women's experiences appear not only to have converged, but also to have crossed-over. Before considering how this finding can be accounted for, and how it relates to the persistence of gendered patterns of occupational choice, it is helpful to review the overall picture of gender differences in subjective perspectives.

Young women's perspectives were distinguished from young men's by their more positive views of, and approaches to, gaining educational qualifications, as well as by their more positive assessments of their future possibilities, and current situations, in the labour market. Young women at the University of Derby were more positive than young men about their situations in higher education (cf §6.4). Young women in employment felt generally more in control than young men (cf §7.4). Young women in all settings, but particularly within employment, held generally more

¹ Although more young women than young men are economically inactive (having taken up the roles of housewife and/or mother), and such young people fell outside the population targeted by the study's unemployed sample, it is the case that a third of young women in the unemployed sample were mothers who, by definition, wanted to find work.

optimistic views of the future, especially regarding their chances of finding desirable employment and avoiding unemployment (cf §10.5). It is concluded that young women were less negatively affected by the insecurities of the labour market and were more satisfied with the opportunities it presented them with.

The flip side of this picture is that young men assessed their situations and prospects more negatively than young women. Across the social spectrum, young men had experienced unemployment slightly more frequently than young women (cf §3.3; Evans, Rudd, Behrens, Kaluza and Woolley, 2000). Young employed men had searched for work more actively than their female counterparts and also reported having encountered more barriers to achievement. Across the whole group, young men assessed their future prospects more negatively, they had lower expectations of gaining further qualifications or finding desirable employment, higher expectations of unemployment and made fewer plans. They appeared not to be progressing as easily as they had hoped and were less keen than young women to gain educational qualifications in order to improve their prospects.

The patterns of gender differences identified in this research are consistent with Rudd and Evans's (1998) reports of higher levels of optimism, with respect to labour market prospects, among female FE students (based in London and the M4 corridor), indicating that these trends may be widespread in the UK. Rudd and Evans (1998) suggested that the observed gender difference in levels of optimism could be explained either by young men's awareness of high levels of male unemployment, or by young women's lower aspirations. This study's more detailed data set allows these suggestions to be considered further. Indeed, a more thorough interpretation is facilitated by considering differences in young men's and women's perspectives on

their lives as a whole, as advocated by Wallace (1994).

Young men's more negative appraisals are consistent with, and may be at least partly accounted for by, changes in the shape of Derby's economy (cf §5.1). The shift of the employment base away from manufacturing, towards the service sector, has opened up opportunities for the kinds of work traditionally taken up by women, while those traditionally taken up by men have declined. These labour market trends, though particularly acute, are not unique to Derby, but have been experienced throughout the UK, as have more insecure employment conditions and competition from women for jobs. These all represent changes from previous times. It is plausible that young men continued to imagine their futures as being comparable to their male ancestors', and that their expectations were not met because of the changed reality. Such a discrepancy between expectations and reality could have arisen from Derby's reduced manufacturing base, alongside the effects this has had on the apprenticeship system of old which formerly provided a bridge into employment for less well-qualified males. It would be interesting to investigate this further in an area with a contrasting industrial history and current profile. The manufacturing base remains stronger in Derby than elsewhere, which may either have allowed young men's unrealistic expectations to persist more or mean that the effects of this reality are less severe.

Dwyer and Wyn suggested that the changes described above challenge the 'privileged place of paid work in the construction of male identities' (2001, p131); however, this study's data suggests that this has not occurred. There was little evidence of the 'new man' who paid close attention to family considerations. Only 9% of the total sample of young men, and 4% in the employed group, named child

care as a priority. The case studies indicated that neither did they expect this to become a priority. Young men focused primarily on work, with references to personal life made far less frequently than by young women. While three of the young men interviewed individually appeared particularly career-oriented, this observation applied no less to the fourth individual (Dec).

From young women's perspectives, although objectively it may be true that they have lower aspirations for their employment (Rudd and Evans, 1998), taken at face value this interpretation also suggests that women are 'settling for less'. This study's data indicates that women do not feel this to be the case and allows a more meaningful interpretation to be proposed - that young women have *different* employment-related aspirations from men. They have different criteria upon which they judge their success and orient their plans. It certainly appeared to be the case, as proposed by Dwyer and Wyn (2001), that women exhibited a broader orientation to life concerns.

While young women are keen to develop a work-related identity and earn their own income, personal life and the implications of a future family also assumed a prominent place in their thoughts and plans. In fact, personal and family considerations formed a more prominent part in the narratives given by all four of the young employed women, compared to their male counterparts. Debbie had struggled hard to establish herself in a job she valued, but described the decisions she had made concerning her domestic situation as the biggest ones in her life. Although Della was currently focusing on her career, she described feeling disappointed that her partner didn't want children, implying she would have liked the choice. Young women perceived that having children would affect their situations at work and

result in compromises being made (cf §9.3.4). Young women in all settings established independent living arrangements away from their families of origin (cf §10.3.3), and formed partnerships (cf §6.2.2, §7.2.2, §8.2.2), earlier than young men. These findings, and evidence from the group interviews, in which some young employed women expressed feeling confined to job opportunities in their local area due to commitment to partners, homes and families (cf §7.2.1), suggest that young women were already more likely than young men to be balancing their working lives with their personal lives. Moreover, the data suggests that balancing work and personal/family life is not experienced negatively, at this stage in their lives. Even Danielle, who had entered a traditionally male occupational area, explained that she was postponing a family for ten years or more, until she had got her career sorted out, at which point she felt she would be able to say *“okay fine, I’ve got where I want to be, now it’s time for personal things”*.

While gendered patterns of occupational choice persist, it does not appear to be the case that this is a result of young women’s concerns to ‘fit’ their jobs/careers around their future family lives, as previously suggested (Gaskell, 1992; Chisholm and Du-Bois-Reymond, 1993; Wallace, 1994). Although the labour market continues to ‘cast(s) a long shadow across the school system, (which) means that male and female curricula and career choices are almost inevitably gendered’ (Arnot, 2002, p258), this study’s data suggests that the process by which this is now occurring requires another explanation. Despite the fact that the implications of ‘having a family’ featured much more prominently in young women’s thoughts, there was little evidence that a majority of young women entered particular occupational areas with this in mind. The possibility of combining work with child-rearing was selected as a

priority by no more than one quarter of young women in any of the settings. In fact, young women prioritised the same things as young men; namely, good pay, job security and prospects (cf §10.4.2). This finding was qualified somewhat by the case studies and group interviews which suggested that women were primarily concerned to find interesting and enjoyable work, while young men more frequently emphasised career advancement. As Du Bois-Reymond (1998) proposed, young women seemed more inclined to define their ambitions in terms of being happy and materially comfortable, rather than according to a traditional career model, with success judged by status and income.

It may be that a broader orientation is beneficial to young women as it allows them to place setbacks and frustrations within a context of wider concerns, and thereby, adopt the flexible approach necessitated by the labour market, (Dwyer and Wyn, 2001). Their greater expectations of re-training supports the view that women are more flexible (cf §10.5). Alternatively, or additionally, it may be that women retain a degree of reliance on male partners which buffers them somewhat from the vagaries of the labour market. Indeed, almost four times as many employed young women were living with partners (46%, compared to 12%). This means that reaching a particular level of employment is of less consequence for young women's lives in the present, but the reverse is the case for young men. It remains to be seen whether women's feelings of control remain comparable to young men's once the implications of having children becomes a reality. A similar study, carried out on an older sample, perhaps aged 25 to 35, would usefully address this issue.

The findings presented in §11.2 and §11.3, taken together, show that young men's and young women's relationship to the economy differentiates their experiences to a

far greater degree than their gender; confirming the views of Dwyer and Wyn (2001) and Walkerdine, Lucey and Melody (2001) that young women working in low-skill sectors have more in common with their male counterparts than with young women in more advantaged labour market positions.

Patterns identified in Derby overall, and in this study's data set, are consistent with more widely documented trends; including the findings that young women were more positively disposed towards gaining educational qualifications, participating more and reaching higher levels of attainment in post-compulsory education (Frønes, 2001) and that young women were more advanced in making personal transitions away from the family or origin. It is therefore possible that this assessment of Derby's young men's and women's perspectives has a wider applicability.

11.4 Implications for theory

Young people in the study accord with Beck's (1992) individualisation thesis in recognising a need to take control of their lives. While it can be said that personal agency facilitates good outcomes, focusing on this does not amount to a sufficient account of how lives are shaped. Beck glosses over the ways in which individual's scope for action is itself dependent, to a high degree, on social location. Although Beck acknowledges the existence of social inequalities, the way he explains these, as the results of self-normalising processes (cf §2.2.3), is a weakness.

Life project planning is beneficial in the absence of previously depended on guides, such as family history, and Beck is right to stress this, but it is specifically this behaviour which has been shown to have structural foundations in social class (Evans, Rudd, Behrens, Kaluza and Woolley, 2000). This empirical observation

casts doubt on Beck's claim that the concept of social class has become obsolete. Social class, as a marker of economic position, remains important for understanding social processes; however, this project's data shows that the differential levels of social resources which young people experience in their families and through their wider participation are also linked with varying scope for action. Social capital, as conceptualised by Bourdieu (1977), provides a means of approaching the differential access to resources, incurred by one's social networks, which contribute to the production and reproduction of social inequalities (cf §2.2.3, §2.3.4). It is suggested that Beck's individualisation thesis would be strengthened by using Bourdieu's concepts of social capital and habitus to account for the social influences on people's decision-making, construed non-deterministically.

Study of young people's lives can benefit from using the concepts of cultural and social capital as primary integrative concepts in analyses and the development of middle-range theory. The advantages of this will be found in helping to avoid a reliance on essentialist conceptions of social class, gender and ethnicity and moving towards identification of the factors most critical in influencing young people's capacities to shape their own lives. These concepts, in combination with Bourdieu's concept of habitus, provide a means of overcoming dualistic treatments of structure and agency. Social structures are represented through individual's understandings of their social worlds, derived from their experiences. Planning orientations were identified in this study as particularly salient markers of young people's agency and it is suggested that a potentially fruitful line for future enquiry would be to consider how these are related to young people's social capital.

In spite of the need to move away from essentialist conceptions, it is clear that

gender continues to play an important role in orienting young people's habituses, in such ways as to reproduce a largely gender-segregated labour market. Accounting for this is beyond the scope of the present research; however, the overall empirical picture presented warns against making unsubstantiated assumptions about what lies in young women's, or men's, better interests.

As far as young men are concerned, Beck proposes that making an independent living and the old roles coincide. Whether or not this actually strengthens masculine role behaviour, as he claims, is a moot point, but there certainly doesn't seem to be any evidence to suggest a weakening. §11.3 discussed evidence suggesting that paid work continues to occupy a central position in young men's identities. The study has shown that young women are also approaching a job or career as a key feature of their life projects, and certainly seem to value the greater chance for autonomy and independence which paid work affords. To this extent, Beck's ideas are consistent with this study's empirical observations, nevertheless, his view that today's individuals desire a 'life of one's own', and that this is re-shaping gender relations, is perhaps too strong a proposal (cf §3.3). Admittedly, the tensions which Beck suggests result from women's new perspectives on work will be brought most sharply into focus if they become members of a family unit with children. But during early adulthood, there appears to be a willingness among young women to balance the part work plays in 'creating an individual identity' with their situations in their personal lives and relationships with significant others and, contrary to Beck's suggestions, this does not seem to be experienced negatively.

11.5 Implications for policy and practice

The concluding section of this thesis begins with a brief commentary on the current state of governmental provision for young people, drawing attention to key features and pitfalls. The general implications of this research for policy and practice concerning young people's lives reinforce points emerging from across the field of youth research over the last 5 years. These are discussed and some specific recommendations are made, both for the UK generally and Derby in particular.

Current policy concerns include expanding access to further and higher education, improving vocational pathways and reducing youth unemployment. These were the key issues at the beginning of the project in 1999/2000 and are still (cf Chapter 5). The New Deal programme (New Deal, 2004) remains the main approach to dealing with youth unemployment. Widening educational participation nominally remains a key issue, although how this squares with the introduction of personally funded tuition fees is unclear. A major change since the project fieldwork was carried out is the introduction, in 2003, of 'Connexions', billed as an integrated advice, guidance and support service for all young people aged 13 to 19 in England (DfEE, 2000b; Connexions, 2004). The Connexions service is the most visible result of recent progress within government towards taking the more 'joined-up' approach to policy and provision for young people recommended by academics (Coles, 2000; Jones, 2002). The Connexions service is part of the overall Connexions strategy which aims to co-ordinate policy across a number of partner agencies and to knit their services 'into a more coherent network of provision, linked to more holistic assessment of need' (Coles, 2004, p97). Its origins can be traced to the work of the Social Exclusion Unit (SEU, 2004) and in particular the Unit's fifth report '*Bridging*

the gap' (SEU, 1999). The recently published Final Report of the Working Group on 14-19 Reform (Tomlinson, 2004; DfES, 2004) emphasises the urgent need to address the secondary status of vocational and occupational learning in the current system. The issues raised by the Tomlinson Report should direct policy-makers' gazes towards areas such as Derby, in which an employer-led apprenticeship framework has an historical presence, potentially providing the basis for developing a contemporary equivalent.

The government's provision for young people is based on two fundamental assumptions which stand out as problematic in the light of recent advances in the understanding of young people's lives. The first of these is the truncated nature of youth policy. This research provides clear illustration of the lengthening of young people's transitions described in §2.2.2. Dependence on parents among this study's 18 to 25 year olds was common regardless of their situations in education, training, employment or unemployment (cf §10.3.3). While shifts in youth policies have resulted in parents being expected to exercise some responsibility for the first twenty-five years of their children's lives, providing economic support where necessary, this has not been spelt out clearly by the government, leaving many young people at risk (Jones and Bell, 2000). As such, it appears that this age group's needs are being neglected in current policy thinking as they sit nestled between policy frameworks geared towards youth, truncated at age 19, or the broader adult population. Rectifying this blind spot is a first requirement for policy-makers' attention. An effort to consider the effects of youth policy on family poverty and cohesion and to design complementary family policies is called for (Jones and Bell, 2000; Scott and Bergman, 2002).

The second problematic aspect is that the policies outlined above are narrowly focused upon preparation for transitions into the labour market, whilst a wealth of recent evidence has documented and illustrated how experiences in other areas of life have a fundamental impact on success in education, training and work (MacDonald and Marsh, 2002; Thomson and Holland, 2002; Hodkinson and Bloomer, 2002a). As Catan notes, the success of the government's policies 'will depend on the capacity of young people to make use of the opportunities they offer' (2004, p59). It is in respect of precisely this issue that the current study, with its focus on personal agency, provides valuable clues of relevance to the development of policies concerning young people, both in their teens and early adulthood.

The policies described above have taken shape within a 'can-do' culture, in which individuals' responsibilities to help themselves are emphasised. This research has shown that young people located across a range of circumstances, including in unemployment, attempt to take control of their lives. This in itself is a lesson for policy-makers or practitioners who assume that young people's motivation is lacking and can be rectified on an individual basis (Furlong and Cartmel, 2004). Without addressing, or acknowledging, problematic aspects of young people's wider social contexts such an approach is likely to be experienced as disempowering. Without recognition of the fact that, as argued in §11.2, young people's agency is limited or strengthened according to their access to social resources of various kinds, current policy formulations place the greatest burden upon those already situated in the most socially disadvantaged positions. This contributes to a widening, rather than a reduction, of existing social inequalities.

The key message derived from this study's evidence is that increasing access to and

improving existing social resources has the potential to raise social capital among disadvantaged groups and provide them with better chances to forge their own pathways. This point receives wider support from the evidence of the Birth Cohort Studies (Bynner et al, 2002; Schoon et al, 2001) and the work of Thomson and her collaborators (Thomson and Holland, 2002; Thomson, Henderson and Holland, 2003) (cf §3.4.2). Efforts ought to be concentrated on helping those in the most disadvantaged circumstances. In particular, given a reality in which a greater onus is placed on families to support their young into their third decades, those young people whose families are unable or unwilling to provide support will be in need of most support from the state (Bynner et al, 2002; Coles, 2004). Despite this need, caution should be exercised not to develop and implement overly targeted interventions if gaps in provision are to be avoided (Catan, 2004). Research has shown that disadvantaged young people move in and out of extreme situations (Johnston et al, 2000; Jones, 2002) and it is apparent that there is potential to facilitate the transitions of a much wider range of young people than those ‘at the bottom’.

The second suggested means of raising capital is to increase young people’s awareness and understanding. To direct their efforts in efficacious ways young people must understand what realistic possibilities there are and be aware of the obstacles to realising their goals (Unwin and Wellington, 2001). A basic requirement is that routes into the labour market are made as transparent as possible so that careers advisers can give sound advice on the alternatives, and so that this advice can be made sense of by young people and their families. Greater clarity and coherence in the qualification framework would improve the situation and it is

possible that the Tomlinson report (2004) may contribute here.

As well as highlighting the role of support and guidance and of improving the system's transparency, this research suggests another potential means by which young people's social capital might benefit. The study's data showed young people across all three settings to have low levels of involvement in community activities and low levels of political engagement (cf §10.4.1). Some consideration should be given to how young people's participation in wider society can be encouraged. By contrast to young people in Derby, the ESRC project showed young people in Germany derived greater fulfilment from their personal lives (Evans, Rudd, Behrens, Kaluza and Woolley, 2000). It is possible that narrow conceptualisations of learning and skills preparation in the UK have led to an over-emphasis on qualifications which are cutting young people off from valuable opportunities and sources of positive experience outside of the education and training environments (Evans et al, 2003). Unwin and Wellington (2001) report that young people question the idea that such a high proportion of them should remain in full-time class-room based education and desire alternatives. For many young people, the rhetoric of the learning society – of gaining qualifications and acquiring skills – is not connected to meaningful experience or to the realities of their local labour markets (Ball, Macrae and Maguire, 1999). The Tomlinson report makes a contribution here, by accepting recent suggestions that there are benefits to be gained from a broader system of provision for 14 to 19 year olds' education and training. Unwin and Wellington (2001) go further, arguing for a state-supported work based learning programme which provides a wide range of opportunities for learning and which is not limited by employers' needs. Derby is well-placed to play a leading role in the development

of Modern Apprenticeships. Given its industrial past (cf §5.1), there are lessons to be taken from historical times when apprenticeships were part of the fabric of community life (Fuller and Unwin, 2001). With these points in mind, further specific suggestions for policy are made.

The Connexions service provides a starting point in the development of an integrated and comprehensive support service for young people; however, it should be available over a longer period, beginning earlier and extending to young people aged up to 25 (Johnston et al, 2000). Continuing to enhance links between Connexions and other organisations working with young people, such as schools and colleges, as well as with the New Deal programme would also strengthen the provision offered (Coles, 2004).

One of the most tangible means by which young people's transitions into adulthood may be supported and through which their socio-cultural capital can be raised is in approaches to careers guidance (Hodkinson and Bloomer, 2003; Hodkinson, 2004). This is also an area which, as a key part of Connexions and the New Deal advisers' roles, has recognition within existing frameworks and which it is, thus, realistic to suggest improvements to.

This study provided support for the idea that planning for the future is important (cf §11.1). While optimally adaptive transitions are connected with having realistic plans oriented by personal goals and interests, many young people's experience involves trial and error and frequent changes of direction. Encouraging young people to think about their futures early, while delaying the need to make choices which reduce later options, would support young people in this, often protracted,

process of establishing realistic personal plans and goals. It is important for personal advisers working with young unemployed people to accept this message that it is likely only to be counter-productive to force young people into narrow vocational courses in which they have no interest. Giving priority to individual interests and goals has been strongly emphasised in relation to careers guidance specifically (Hodkinson, 2004); but this is a point with more general salience. Policies and interventions concerning citizenship (Lister et al, 2002), lifelong learning (Fryer, 1997) and vocational educational and training (Unwin and Wellington, 2001) must all draw on young people's own perspectives and understanding if their personal agency is to be enhanced.

Returning to the issue of guidance, skilled guidance can help young people to exert influence over their own lives. As Hodkinson and Bloomer suggest:-

good guidance should be optimistically realistic, non-judgemental and geared towards helping young people think slightly more clearly about, and possibly do slightly better, those things which they, not greater society, value. This entails realistic and honest recognition of wider social inequalities, rather than peddling an Anglicised version of the all-American dream.

Hodkinson and Bloomer, 2003, p6.

Attempts to support individual interests and goals will be most difficult in more depressed labour markets. This highlights a further theme running through recent evidence-based recommendations for policy, which is a need for sensitivity to locality (Thomson and Holland, 2002; MacDonald and Marsh, 2002). How the New Deal programme and the Connexions service work in practice must be appropriate given local cultural and structural conditions. It is imperative that difficult circumstances in the labour market are admitted. Some consideration might be given

to ways in which young adults might be encouraged to think about moving areas in the search for more rewarding employment and, more importantly, should they want to, assisting them in this process (Evans et al, 2003).

There is a need for teachers and personal advisers to prepare young people and their families better through more open discussions of wider social inequalities and the changed nature of the labour market. The data discussed in §11.3 suggests that young men's expectations might not have kept pace with a changed reality in which qualifications have an increased premium in the work force, and those without qualifications face a marginalised future. This interpretation is consistent with findings from the recent JRF funded programme of research, which reported that many families and communities hold beliefs based on perceptions of the social world as it once was, rather than as it is now (Jones, 2002). It is important to consider how young men, aspiring to traditional patterns of working-class life, are to be advised of new realities and engaged in education. The University of Derby, as a new university with a remit for widening access (cf §5.2.2), has a valuable role to play in this process through reaching out to all sectors of the community and raising achievement levels among the parents of young people, as well as of young people themselves. It is essential that links with the local economic infrastructure continue to be fostered. Given the important role played by families (cf §11.2), some effort should be made towards improving their understanding of the options for their young people. Whether families with young people would find it useful to receive a pamphlet outlining routes into the labour market and detailing sources of advice and support could be explored.

This thesis argues that increasing the social and cultural capital among

disadvantaged populations of young people should be a principal aim of policy. Such an aim directs attention towards change in structural factors through provision of resources and support, as well as towards enhancing young people's capacities to act, both by developing their understanding of the system and its opportunities and by increasing their participation and engagement in it and in the activities of wider society. Young people in even the most disadvantaged of circumstances attempt to take control of their lives; however, like all young people, they need help and support to do so.

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Appendix 2(i): Research designs of previous comparative studies

Study	Unit of comparison	Sample selection	Mixed - methods employed	Theoretical contributions
Anglo-German study I Bynner and Roberts (1991)	National and labour market areas	Aged 16-17 and 18-19 Career trajectories	Survey and matched individual interviews	Importance of cultural differences
ESRC 16-19 initiative Banks et al (1992)	Labour market areas in the UK	Aged 15-16 and 17-18	Core survey and ethnographic case studies Longitudinal design	Inter-disciplinary approach Importance of subjectivities and formation of identity
Anglo-German study II Evans and Heinz (1994)	National and labour market areas	Aged early 20s Career trajectories	Survey and matched individual case biographies	Use of individualisation thesis for analyses. Individualisation has structural foundations
Rudd (1996, 1998)	Labour market areas in England	Aged 16-19 FE students	Survey and matched focus group interviews	High levels of optimism & exercise of agency
Anglo-German study III Evans et al (2001)	National and labour market areas	Aged 18-25 Institutional settings	Survey and matched focus group interviews	Concept of 'bounded agency'

18 to 25s IN ENGLAND AND THE NEW GERMANY

*Your views, values and
experiences*

A Questionnaire for Young Adults

Some information about this questionnaire:

- ◆ It is being completed by young adults in a variety of situations (employment/study/training schemes/unemployment) in England and Germany
- ◆ It is being completed by young adults in three different localities: Derby (England), Hannover and Leipzig (Germany)
- ◆ It is part of the Economic and Social Research Council's *Youth, Citizenship and Social Change* research programme
- ◆ The questions should take no more than half an hour to complete. **Please try to answer all the questions**
- ◆ The information gathered will help to inform policy-makers and employers about key issues to do with the transition to adulthood - your views are crucial to this process
- ◆ Your answers will be treated in the strictest confidence and no-one outside the research team will have access to them.

[for office use only]

□ □ □ □ □ □

Card 1
1-5 DPP
6-9 ID
10
11

PART I - Your Background

1. How old were you when you first left full-time education?

Age

12-13

2. When you reached school-leaving age did your parents (step-parents, guardians) encourage you to stay in full-time education, or did they think it best for you to leave? *Please tick one box in each column.*

	Mother	Father
Encouraged me to stay in education	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
Encouraged me to leave and enter training	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 2
Encouraged me to leave and enter employment	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
Did not care	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Left it up to me	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 5

14,15

3. Have you ever been an apprentice?

Yes No

16

If yes, what occupation were/are you being trained for?

17-18

4. Have you been on one of the following schemes? *Please tick all that apply*

Youth Training Scheme	<input type="checkbox"/>
Community Programme	<input type="checkbox"/>
Job Training Scheme	<input type="checkbox"/>
Employment Scheme	<input type="checkbox"/>
New Deal	<input type="checkbox"/>

19

20

21

22

23

24,25

(leave blank)

5. Which of these qualifications have you got? *Please tick and give details*

Degree	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	(subject)	26,27-28
A Levels	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	(number of A Levels)	29,30
GCSEs	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	(how many)	31,32-33
	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	(how many at grades A*-C)	34-35
NVQ	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	(level)	36,37
Other Vocational	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	(please specify)	38,39-40

41,42

(leave blank)

6. How many full-time jobs have you held (not counting work/training in which you did not have employee status or holiday jobs)?

43-44

7. How many part-time jobs have you held (not counting work/training in which you did not have employee status or holiday jobs)?

45-46

8. What is/was your present/most recent full-time job (not counting work/training in which you did not have employee status or holiday jobs)?

Job Title

47-48

Is this job in an occupational area you have been trained for?

Yes

No

49

9. How many times have you been unemployed for four weeks or more?

50

10. Have you experienced any of the following difficulties?

	never	once	more often	
Had to repeat an examination	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	51
Had to change a course because you couldn't meet the standards	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	52
Been obliged to leave a training scheme or apprenticeship before completing the training	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	53
Been made redundant	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	54
Been sacked from a job	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	55
Lost job when contract ended	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	56
Had setbacks because of health problems	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	57
Had setbacks because of family problems	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	58
Had setbacks because of personal problems	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	59

11. When I can't achieve what I want in life, it is usually because of:
Please tick all that apply

	Personal life	Work/Career	
Lack of money	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	60,61
The 'system'	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	62,63
Lack of skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	64,65
Lack of qualifications	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	66,67
My own weaknesses	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	68,69
Other people stopping me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	70,71

12. Would you say that, generally speaking, you are financially better off, worse off, or about the same as a year ago? Please tick one box

Better off	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	Same	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	72
Worse off	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	Don't know	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	

13. At what age did you first leave your parents' home?

Left at age Have not yet left

Have you now permanently left your parents' home?

Yes No Not sure

73-74

75

14. How far do you feel you are still dependent on your parents?

Financially

Totally dependent	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	76
Partly dependent	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	
Independent	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	
They depend on me, in part	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	

How far do you feel you are still dependent on your parent(s) for other forms of help and support, e.g. advice, emotional support, practical help?

For other forms of help and support

Depend a lot	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	77
Depend partly	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	
Independent	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	
They depend on me, in part	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	

15. Please tick one box for each year to let us know roughly what you were doing at each time. For each period pick the thing you were doing for **ALL** or **MOST** of the year

Card 2
1-5 DPP
6-11 ID

	Now 1999	Last Year 1998	Two Years Ago 1997	Three Years Ago 1996	Four Years Ago 1995
Out of work, unemployed	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
On Youth Training Scheme	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
On Community Programme, Job Training Scheme, or Employment Scheme	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
On Community Service/ National Service	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
At Sixth Form College or at school	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Full-time at college of further education, or at tertiary college	<input type="checkbox"/> 6	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
At university, polytechnic or college of higher education	<input type="checkbox"/> 7	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
In a full-time job (over 30 hours a week)	<input type="checkbox"/> 8	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
In a part-time job	<input type="checkbox"/> 9	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Something else - <i>please say what</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> 10	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

12-13
14-15
16-17
18-19
20-21

22-23

24-25

PART II - Your Present Situation

16. What made you choose your job/career/course/training scheme?
Please tick all that apply

- Long term goals
- Training offered
- Influence of friends
- Influence of parents
- Interest
- By chance
- Didn't choose it - had no choice

26
27
28
29
30
31
32

17. How often do you?

	At College/Work/Training			In your personal life (outside work)			
	never	sometimes	often	never	sometimes	often	
Feel a sense of achievement	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	33,34
Have a chance to use your initiative	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	35,36
Make decisions for yourself	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	37,38
Feel stretched and challenged	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	39,40
Set your own goals and targets	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	41,42
Feel that you are being given responsibility	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	43,44

18. Do you have any kind of casual or part-time work at the moment (or during the holidays)?

Yes No 45

If yes, please answer the following questions:

Is this a holiday job? Yes No 46

How many hours per week do you work? 47-48

Why did you want to work part-time (e.g. needed the money to survive, additional income, useful experience, to help parents, health reasons, domestic reasons, had no choice)? 49-50

19. In what ways have you looked for work in the past?
Please tick all that apply

	yes		no		if was useful		not useful		
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Been to the careers office	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	51,52
Visited Jobcentre	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	53,54
Looked through newspaper adverts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	55,56
'Phoned or visited employers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	57,58
Asked family	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	59,60
Asked friends	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	61,62
Asked people at work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	63,64
Contacted labour agency	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	65,66
Any other way? Please say what	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	67,68
<input type="text"/>									69,70

20. Have you been looking for full-time work in the last 6 months?
 Yes No 71
 If yes, how many jobs have you applied for? 72-73

21. What do you think led **MAINLY** to your present work/career situation?
 Please tick one box 74

My plans	<input type="checkbox"/>	1	Other's plans for me	<input type="checkbox"/>	4
Having connections	<input type="checkbox"/>	2	Seemed my only option	<input type="checkbox"/>	5
Chance	<input type="checkbox"/>	3			

22. Since completing school, have you changed your expectations about the job or career that you would like to follow?
 Yes No Had no definite expectations 12
 If yes, originally I wanted to become a 13-14
 Now, I expect to be or plan to become a 15-16
 If you changed your mind, what made you change it? (e.g. bored with previous job, obtained better qualifications, needed a better salary)
 17-18

23. To what extent do you think where an individual lives affects his or her chances of getting a job? Please tick one box 19

Where someone lives ...

... has a big influence on employment prospects	<input type="checkbox"/>
... has some influence on employment prospects	<input type="checkbox"/>
... has only a slight influence on employment prospects	<input type="checkbox"/>

PART III - Your Plans and Views

24. To what extent do you think that the following affect a person's opportunities in life? Please tick one box in each row

	Has a considerable effect	Has a limited effect	Has no effect at all	
A person's sex/gender	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	20
Racial characteristics	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	21
Social class	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	22
Family background	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	23
Education/qualifications	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	24

25. When it comes to finding a job, to what extent does success depend upon the individual? *Please tick the most appropriate statement*

- It is mainly down to the individual
- It is mainly down to job opportunities in the area
- It depends on both

25

26. How well equipped do you feel in terms of the following types of skills? *Please tick all that apply*

- | | Very well equipped | reasonably well equipped | not very well equipped |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Technical skills, e.g. computing | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Basic writing and number skills | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Social skills/relating to others | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Confidence/decision-making skills | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

26

27

28

29

27. How likely do you think it is that you will get the kind of job you really want? *Please tick one box*

- | | | | |
|--|---|--|---|
| Very/quite likely <input type="checkbox"/> | 1 | Unlikely/no chance <input type="checkbox"/> | 3 |
| Possibly <input type="checkbox"/> | 2 | Have already found it <input type="checkbox"/> | 4 |

30

28. What do you expect to be doing in a year's time? *Please tick the one you are most likely to be doing*
I expect to be:

- | | | | |
|---|---|---|----|
| At college <input type="checkbox"/> | 1 | Unemployed <input type="checkbox"/> | 6 |
| At university <input type="checkbox"/> | 2 | On a training scheme <input type="checkbox"/> | 7 |
| At sixth-form college <input type="checkbox"/> | 3 | In an apprenticeship <input type="checkbox"/> | 8 |
| In a full-time job (over 30 hours) <input type="checkbox"/> | 4 | In voluntary work <input type="checkbox"/> | 9 |
| In a part-time job <input type="checkbox"/> | 5 | Something else - please say what <input type="checkbox"/> | 10 |

31-32

33

29. Do you have plans for what you want to do in the future? *Please tick one box*

- Firm plans
- Some possibilities in mind
- No plans

34

30. In the future, how likely are you to do each of the following? Please tick one of the boxes for each activity

	very likely 1	quite likely 2	possibly 3	unlikely 4	no chance 5	
Become self-employed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	35
Obtain additional qualifications	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	36
Train to work in a different occupation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	37
Go to live in a different part of the country	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	38
Go to live in a different country	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	39
Learn a new language	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	40
Become unemployed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	41

31. How far do you agree with each of the following statements?

	strongly agree 1	agree 2	neither agree nor disagree 3	disagree 4	strongly disagree 5	
Getting a job depends on your ability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	42
Getting a job is just a matter of chance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	43
Getting a job depends on where you live	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	44
Talent always finds its way to the top	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	45
People who are poor usually have themselves to blame	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	46
It is bad luck that causes people to be poor	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	47
Poor people have the system to blame for their poverty	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	48
People who are successful in their work usually deserve it	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	49
The social status/class of your parents doesn't affect your chances in life, these days	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	50
Being successful at work is just a matter of luck	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	51
Getting on at work really depends on other people	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	52

32. What three things do you most want from work? Please tick three items from the list below:

- | | | |
|--|--------------------------|----|
| Good job security | <input type="checkbox"/> | 53 |
| Good pay | <input type="checkbox"/> | 54 |
| Challenges and opportunity to use initiative | <input type="checkbox"/> | 55 |
| Responsibility | <input type="checkbox"/> | 56 |
| Good career prospects | <input type="checkbox"/> | 57 |
| Possibility of becoming better qualified | <input type="checkbox"/> | 58 |
| Friendly atmosphere at work | <input type="checkbox"/> | 59 |
| Relationships with a wider circle of people | <input type="checkbox"/> | 60 |
| Possibility to combine a satisfactory career with child-rearing | <input type="checkbox"/> | 61 |
| Work which does not interfere with family and leisure activities | <input type="checkbox"/> | 62 |
| Opportunity to contribute to society through my own efforts | <input type="checkbox"/> | 63 |
| Opportunity to contribute to society through group effort | <input type="checkbox"/> | 64 |

PART IV - About You

33. Have you ever ...?

- | | not at all | once | more than once | |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|----|
| Attended a public meeting or rally/gone on a march or demonstration | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 65 |
| Given your views to an MP or local government | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 66 |
| Handed out leaflets, e.g. political or charity leaflets | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 67 |
| Helped to organise any public meeting or event | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 68 |
| Discussed a particular political issue with family and/or friends | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 69 |
| Joined a trade union | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 70 |
| Joined a political party | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 71 |
| Joined a church or religious organisation | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 72 |
| Joined a sports club or any other organisations | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 73 |

34. If there was a general election tomorrow would you vote?

Yes No

If yes, which party would you vote for?

35. How interested are you in politics? Please tick one box.

- Very interested 1
- Quite interested 2
- Not very interested 3
- Not at all interested 4

76

36. How would you describe yourself?

Card 4
1-5 DPP
6-11 ID

	strongly agree	agree	neither agree nor disagree	disagree	strongly disagree	
	1	2	3	4	5	
If I can't do something the first time I keep trying until I can	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	12
I avoid trying to learn new things when they look too difficult for me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	13
I give up easily	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	14
I seem to be capable of dealing with most problems that come up in life	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	15
I find it difficult to make new friends	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	16
I take moderate and calculated risks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	17
I do not know how to handle social gatherings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	18
I often find it difficult to finish tasks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	19
I can attain the things I plan to do	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	20
I set my own standards of success	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	21
My friends value my opinion	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	22
I know a very close person I could rely on in any situation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	23
My work will be the most important thing in my life	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	24
I know how to get the help I need to solve problems and make decisions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	25
I can hold my viewpoint against most others	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	26
I often avoid taking on responsibilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	27
I have lots of drive and energy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	28

PART V - A Few Final Questions

37. Are you male or female? Please tick one box. Male Female 29

38. How old are you? 30-31

39. Where do you currently live? 32

Parental home	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	Hostel	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Private rented accommodation	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	Student residence	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Council/Local authority accommodation	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	Home owner	<input type="checkbox"/> 6

40. Please give details of (if retired, or not currently employed, please give the most recent occupation) 33-34

Your mother's occupation 33-34

Previous occupation 35-36

Your father's occupation 37-38

Previous occupation 39-40

41. Are you: 41

Married	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	Going out with someone	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Living with a partner	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	None of these	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Engaged	<input type="checkbox"/> 3		

42. Do you have children? Yes No 42

43. Are you from an ethnic minority? Yes No 43

Your nationality 44-45

44. For how many years have you been living in Britain/Germany? 46-47

years

Thank you very much for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. Your views are very important to us and we will pass on our findings to policy-makers and practitioners who work with young adults.

We also hope to be able to carry out informal small group interviews with a number of young adults in your area - if you would be willing to take part in one of these discussions (expenses will be reimbursed) please write your contact details on the enclosed form. 48

Appendix 4(ii): Initial checklist for development of questionnaire

1. Structural variables

Ascribed

Gender
Age
Ethnicity
Labour market
Neighbourhood
Social class

Acquired

Education and training
Qualifications

2. Indicators of agency

• Reflexivity

- Self-reflexivity; ability to recognise strengths and weaknesses, e.g. courses/jobs; flexibility; valuing independence; facing uncertainty with relative ease.

• Dependability and effectiveness

- Self-regulatory ability in social settings
- Perseverance
- Initiative
- Responsibility

• Self-confidence

- Levels of self-trust/self-doubt
- Feelings of insecurity, especially in social settings
- Feelings of capability to deal with circumstances as they arise
- Social settings and others seen as resources

• Collective efficacy

- Political participation
- Belief in ability of groups to effect social change
- Group orientation

3. Control beliefs

- Internal and external constraints: perceptions of ability, effort, luck
- Decisions: who makes and influences these in different domains
- Control over options and choices
- Dependence and independence

Appendix 4(iii): Focus group interview guide

Theme A: How much do they feel in control of what happens to them?

1. How did you come to be in.....?
2. What or who has had influence on your choice of.....?
3. Do you live at your parental home.....when did you leave...was it your decision?
4. Are there aspects of your life in which you feel under pressure?
5. Are you satisfied with the balance between your work/study time and your own time?
6. To what extent do you feel independent?
7. Do you feel that what you do in your life is up to you?

Theme B: What influences/constrains them in what they can do?

Ask directly if these factors have affected them in the past, or are they expected to in the future...

1. Gender
2. Ethnicity
3. Finances (own money or family's)
4. Family background (social class or family composition)
5. Locality (job opportunities in the area)
6. Qualifications
7. Talent rises to the top.....what do you think of this statement?

Theme C: What influence do they think they can have on opportunities and quality of life for themselves and others?

1. How important do you think it is to know about politics?
2. Do you think you are able to affect the way things are run by government or the council.....by voting or in any other way?
3. Do you feel that any political parties or groups represent your views?
4. Are you a member of any community/student groups etc
5. What kind of things do you do in your free time?
6. How confident do you feel in yourselves?
7. Can you say something about how optimistic or otherwise you currently feel about your futures?

Appendix 4(iv): Individual interview guide

The interview is divided into three parts: I'd like to ask about your past experiences, your present life and your hopes and plans for the future. We'll focus on each in turn.

PAST

Introductory question: Can we start by my asking you about your life since you were (e.g. a teenager). Can you tell me about your experiences and how things have unfolded in your life over that time?

Section to cover:

School-age aspirations:

Influences on, and reasons for, decisions relating to education, training and employment;

...and on any significant decisions and events in personal life.

Job search effort and strategies

Further questions:

Can you think of any instances in which you were prevented from doing something you wanted to do?

Can you pick out any experiences you've had which you found to be particularly testing....how did you cope?

Have there been any significant changes in your life since last autumn?

Have you experienced any significant surprises?

Have you experienced any disappointments?

PRESENT

Concentrating on how you feel at the moment (now and over the last month say) I'd like you to tell me all about your current job, especially how you feel about it.

To cover:

Good and bad aspects

Feeling pressured, challenged, interested etc

Further questions:

How do you cope when things are tough (like that)?

What do you want out of your work?

Do you have confidence in your abilities to carry out your role?

What do you attribute getting the job to?

What about your life outside work at the moment, how do you feel about it?

To cover:

Independence and satisfaction with personal life

Support from significant others

Further questions:

How did you go about making that decision?

Do you feel that you get enough support?

How do you feel about what's happened in your life so far...any disappointments or surprises?

FUTURE

Are you the sort of person who thinks about the future?

Do you have plans for the future, in relation to work, or your personal life?

To cover:

Possibilities considered and plans made

Optimism

Further questions?

Are you optimistic about that?

What would prevent you if anything?

Do you feel in control of where you are going?

Would you consider e.g moving away from Derby; moving abroad; re-training; gaining further qualifications; becoming self-employed?

Do you have thoughts about whether you would like a family in the future? And how does that relate to your work-plans?

Are there any aspects which worry you?

FINAL SECTION

Standardised questions

Do you believe that if you work hard then you will be rewarded?

How do you see differences between males/females in our society today?

Are you interested in politics? Do you think that it is possible to change what goes on through any kind of political or collective actions....voting, campaigning?

TAKING CONTROL OF YOUR LIVES?

18s to 25s in England and the new Germany

Your views, values and experiences

Initial project findings

Over 900 young adults living in Derby, Hanover and Leipzig have taken part in the 'taking control' project between April and December 1999. Following the questionnaire survey 350 people volunteered to attend small informal group interviews. Twenty group interviews were held and involved about 150 people. This leaflet presents some of the findings which have emerged in the first stage of the analysis.

Project Background

The project has been funded by the Economic and Social Research Council's 'Youth, Citizenship and Social Change' Programme. A key concern of this programme is with whether or not recent social changes have led to today's young people experiencing longer periods of dependency while moving into adulthood than in the past.

Both the United Kingdom and Germany have new centre-left governments that claim to support the redistribution of wealth. They aim to achieve this through new opportunities for individuals to work and learn. This will involve reform of welfare systems combined with a substantial increase in employment. England is expanding further and higher education and has introduced the New Deal for unemployed persons, while Germany has revived the alliance of federal governments, industrial associations and trade unions. At the same time these governments call for more individual engagement in society and talk of helping people to help themselves. If these new policies and interventions are to be effective there is need for an improved understanding of the ways in which individuals attempt to control their lives.

The project contributes to this process by exploring how young adults in three cities undergoing economic transformations (Derby, Hanover and Leipzig) experience and act upon the choices and uncertainties in their lives.

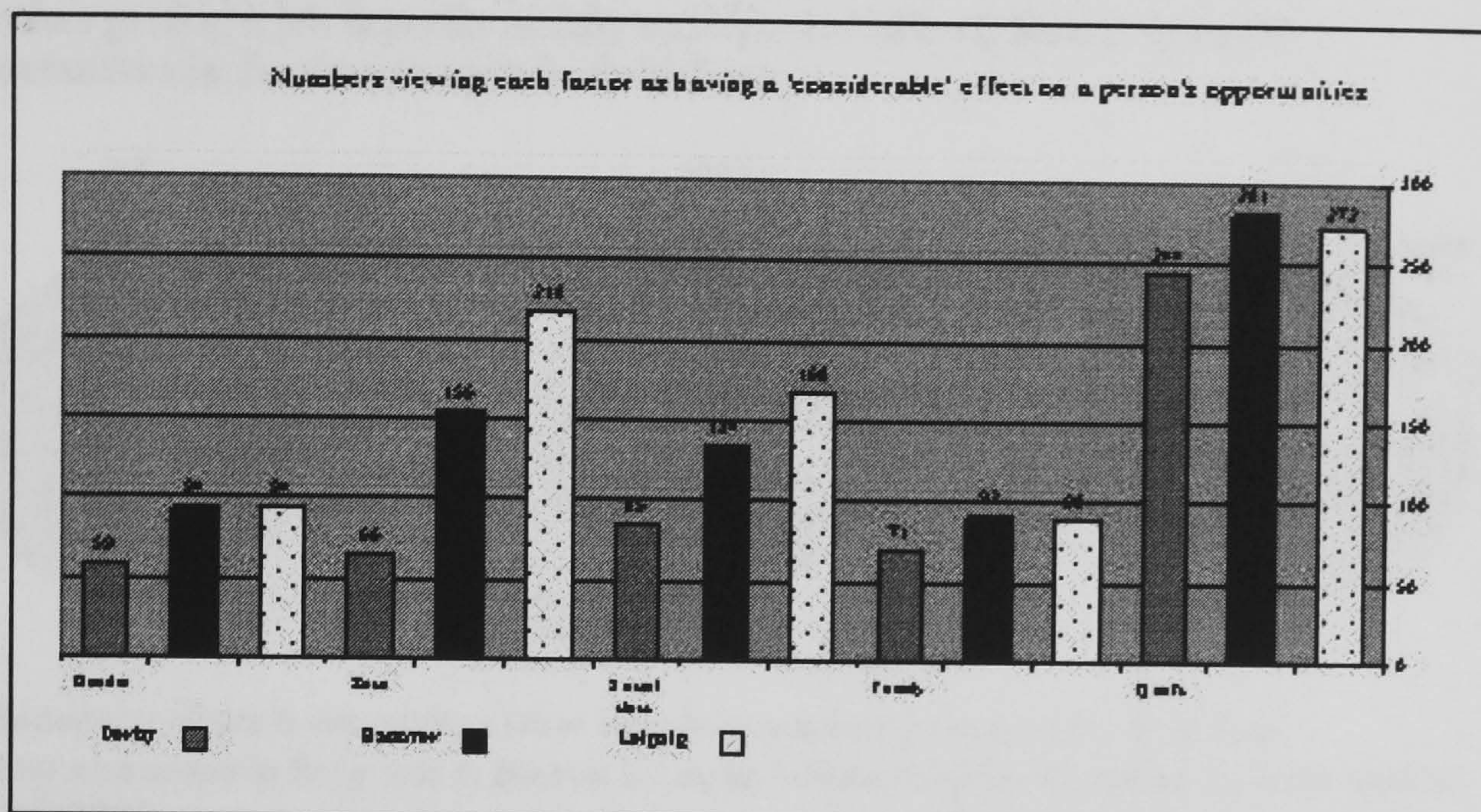
Main Project Questions?

- Do young adults in Germany (which is generally thought of as having a more structured framework for young people) feel less 'in control' than young adults in England?
- Are there common experiences across the three areas of gender, ethnicity and social class?
- What are the differences in experiences of young people in education, employment and unemployment and training?
- Does confidence and optimism increase or decrease with age?

The focus is on your views, feelings and experiences.....

We asked you about :-

1. The effect of different characteristics on opportunities



- The young people in Derby had the strongest belief in the idea that opportunities in life are open to all.
- More Germans (particularly in Leipzig) stressed the importance of gender, ethnicity and social class
- In all three areas the view that education and qualifications have a considerable effect was highlighted.

2. Where you live

In all three cities, independent of training or work situations, the decision on where to live is closely related to questions of finance, relationships with parents, the wish to become independent and requirements for finding training or work.

Typical of a number of interviewees, Darren from Derby explained that he 'wanted to go, to in a way sort of spread your own wings'. In several other cases young people had moved out due to conflict with their parents. Karsten from Hannover left home when he was 'so much in love and she had a flat of her own and I moved to her place'. Finances were crucial for the group who had already moved out as well as for the group still living at home. The first group described financial difficulties with keeping their own place as well as financing food, clothes and leisure activities, the latter described situations in which they could not afford to finance a place of their own to begin with, or that they preferred to stay with their families for social reasons. One example is Helga from Leipzig who said, '... I do not wish to move out simply because at home I find people who listen to my problems, who are there for me.'

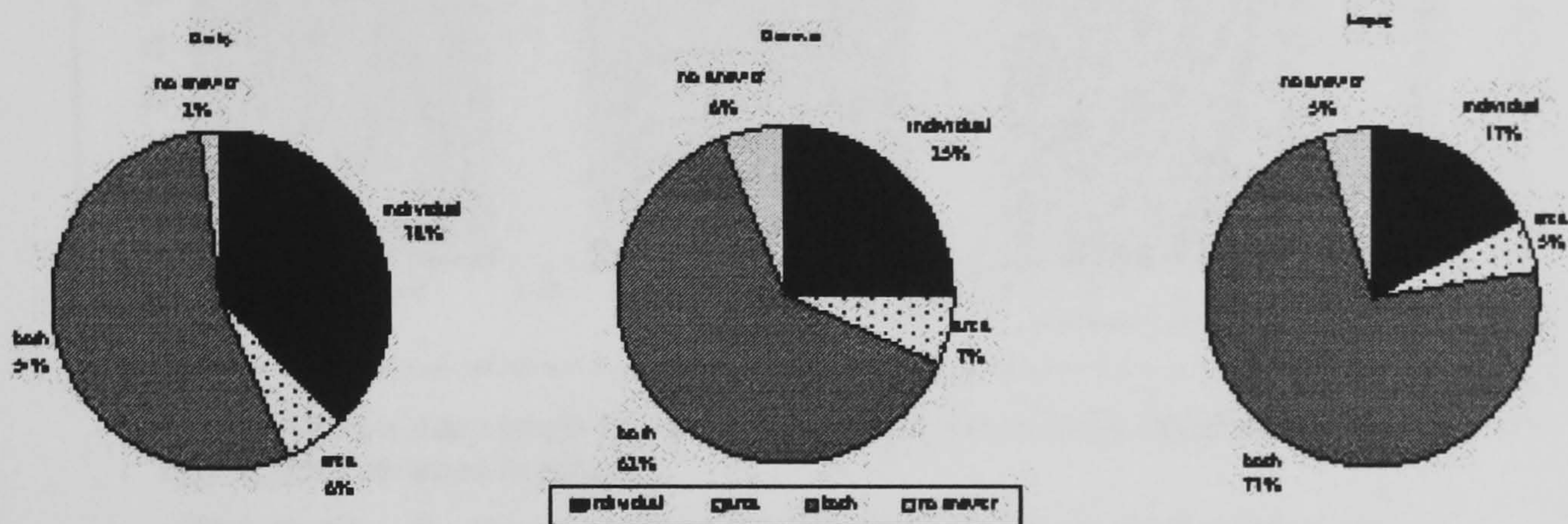
Looking at the statistics we found that about half of the respondents live at their parental home (Derby 44%, Hannover 46%, Leipzig 44%) and the other half have their own places.

3. Finding a job

The extent to which where you live affects your chances of getting a job

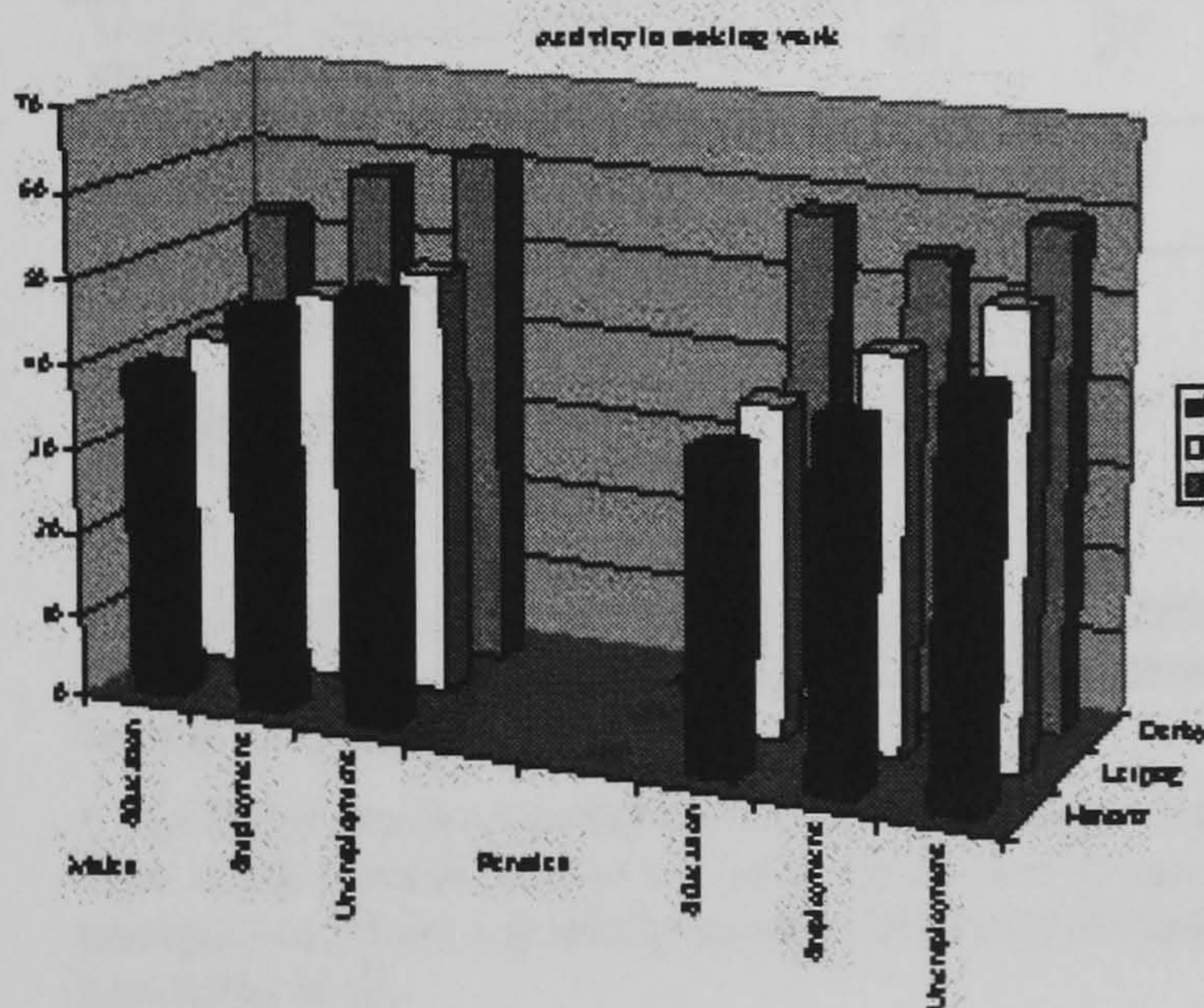
Only about one third of the whole group saw the area an individual lives in as having a 'big' influence on employment prospects. However, over 40 % of young adults in Leipzig chose this option in comparison with just over 30% in Hanover and Derby. This may reflect a continuing awareness in the Leipzig group of the dramatically changed labour market situation they are in, ten years after the transition to post-communism.

Whether getting a job depends mainly upon the individual, mainly upon job opportunities in the area or upon both of these.



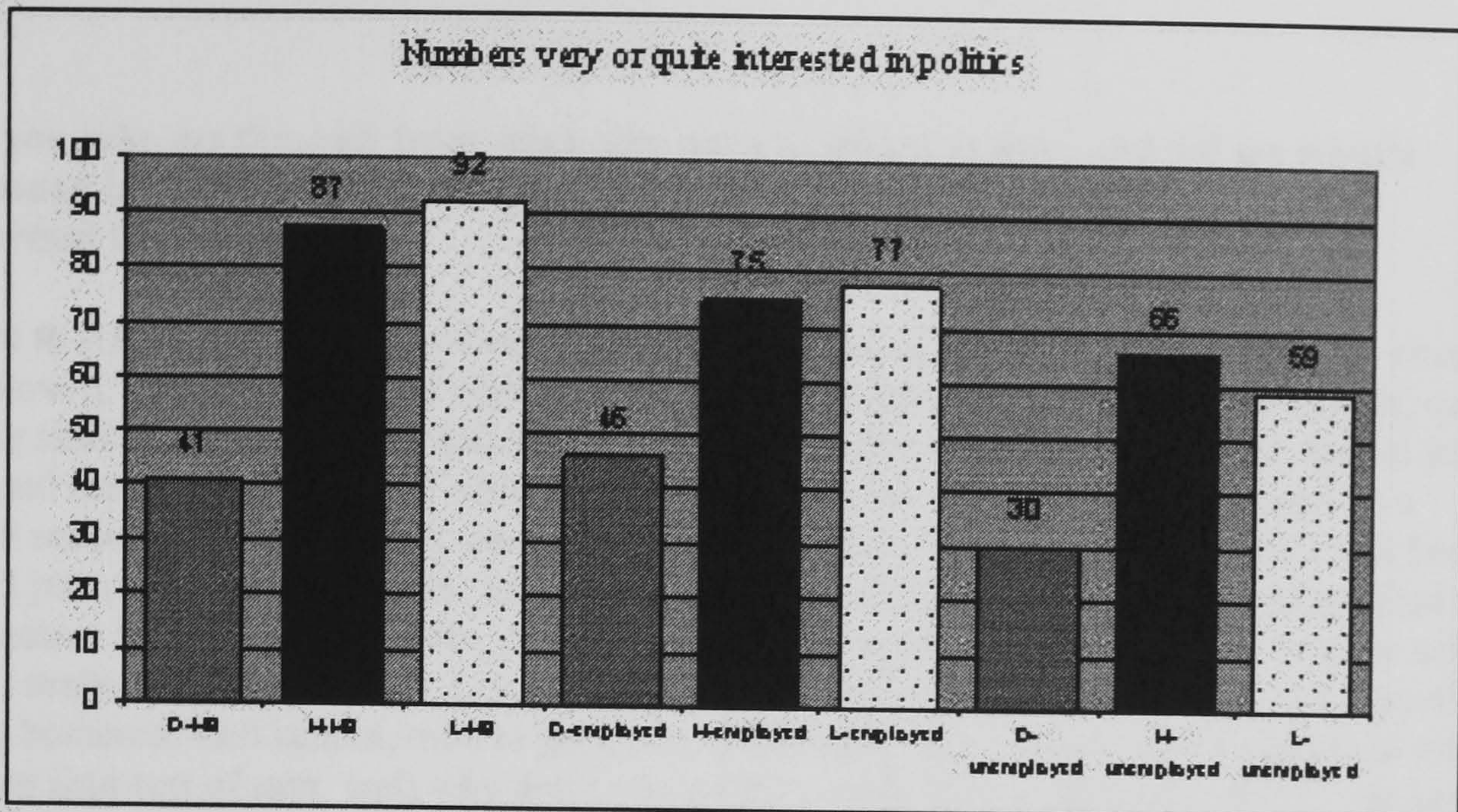
- The majority of people saw getting a job as dependent upon both the area and the individual.
- Many more people in Derby than in Hanover or Leipzig indicated that they felt getting a job was down to the individual.
- Further breakdown of the data revealed that it was the Derby young adults in higher education and employment, rather than unemployment and training, who were more likely to attribute success in finding a job mainly to the individual than the Germans.

Number of strategies used in the search for work



• Young adults in Derby (in all situations) have used more ways in searching for work than young adults in either Hanover or Leipzig.

4. Your interest in politics



- About twice as many people in Hanover and Leipzig than in Derby said that they were very or quite interested in politics.
- More people in the Hanover and Leipzig groups have attended political meetings and spent time discussing politics with others.

5. Your plans for and thoughts on the future

Table shows percentage of males and females in each city with expectations of different situations occurring.

	Derby		Hanover		Leipzig	
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
Very/likely to obtain additional qualifications	29	42	37	39	31	35
Unlikely/no chance of becoming unemployed	52	64	52	75	44	41
Very/quite likely to train for a different occupation	15	25	8	11	12	14
Unlikely/no chance of training for a different occupation	44	36	57	69	60	61

- More females than males in Derby expected to gain additional qualifications, thought it likely that they would train for another occupation and thought it unlikely that they would become unemployed in the future.
- The Derby females expectations of these things happening were at a higher level than those of the German females and males in all cases except expectation of becoming unemployed, where a greater proportion of females in Hanover saw this as unlikely or not a possibility at all.

Appendix 4(vi): Portion of an individual interview transcription

Dean

I Can you take me through from when you were at school to now, and tell me what's happened in your life and what kind of things you've done, as you see it, the most important things to you?

D I went to school in (...) and my Dad worked at Rolls Royce which was just around the corner. We moved, I think I was about eight, we moved to Loughborough, started a new school, quite boring stuff really....a normal family life with no tragedies or break ups. Went to school in (...) and then moved onto (...) which used to be an all girls school, but that changed to a mixed school into a community college. I didn't really get on at school very well. I was bored of it. I just preferred to get home and get on my bike and all sorts of stuff. Me and me Dad are very active in sports, most sports, jet sports, water sports, jet skiing that type of thing so school didn't really interest me much. Left school at 16, after my GCSEs, I did alright, but I wasn't really bothered. Left school, time to get a job, and I really didn't know what I wanted to do, and me Dad sort of said 'well why don't you go for a Rolls Royce apprenticeship?' you know 'I did it, most of the family's done it'. So I thought 'yeah, OK' and I only applied for one job, that one, and got that one, and started my apprenticeship then, and thought 'it's great now', you know, finished school, no more academic, start earning money, and they send you back to college. I'm still in part-time education and I've been in Rolls Royce for eleven years. I did me BTEC first certificate, BTEC ONC, BTEC HNC in mechanical and production engineering, a year's supervisory management, I've just done four years of me module degree and this year's my dissertation, and that will be all finished then. So I worked at (...) as an apprentice, as a machinist, then got the opportunity to turn technical and go in the drawing office. So I went into the drawing office there, in between that, I did a three week exchange with an American student, through college, I went out there and stopped in New Jersey for three weeks and he came over to me for three weeks. That was an experience, it really was good, I was living with an American family and they were Jehova's Witnesses which was scary but it didn't alter things at all they weren't the slightest bit like they are over here. They never mentioned it, they weren't pushy, they went off where ever they went and they said 'if you want to come, come' so I didn't. Just after I got back off that three weeks they declared that they were closing the site at (...). And I'd just come out of my apprenticeship and my Manager at the time said 'I know somebody in Derby who's after a draughtsman so go over and see what you think'. I went over that day and stayed there. I was a draughtsman for quite a number of years and then went onto computer aided design, moved into logistics, then procurements, and then went into business improvement for a couple of years and that was good, trying to change the way that Rolls Royce works and then that was in Alfreton Road in Derby and again they have just declared that they are going to close that next year so I left there three years ago, people are beginning to think that I've got inside information or something cos every site I've moved from they've closed down afterwards. I've now been at (...) for just over two years, I did a year in business improvement and now I'm a commercial buyer, for a year, well no not a year, I joined in May, May this year.

I So that's a change since the last time I saw you?

D yes I'm now in procurement, I'm responsible for six buyers all over the world: Korea, one in Sweden, two in America, one in England and one in Italy. I've been to America for a week about four weeks ago. I should have been in Korea this week but that fell through. Basically hectic, absolutely hectic.

I it sounds it. So, I've now got a pretty good idea of what you've done so far. You've been in the same job since school, same firm rather, but moved quite a lot into different areas. OK. So thinking back to before you'd actually left school, did you really not have any idea of what you wanted to do, did you have any aspirations.....?

- D I still don't know now. I'm just floating up. I suppose the ultimate would be some kind of professional sports person. I love cars and I'm building a kit car with my Dad, that'll be two years in February that we've been building that and it's just about ready now. That's taken up a lot of spare time as well.
- I **when you came to leave school, was the main influence on you applying for the apprenticeship with Rolls Royce that talk that you had with your father.**
- D yeah, yeah, there's something else I've missed out. Between leaving school and starting at Rolls Royce that was a period of about three months, my Dad sort of said "you're not staying at home doing nothing for three months" and took me down to see a mate of his who was a builder, and I did part-time labouring for a builder and I got on with that very well and the guy who owned that firm said "if you don't get on at Rolls Royce you can stay on and work for me" so if I didn't get into Rolls Royce then I probably would have gone into building.
- I **were there any other influences on your choice in the end?**
- D not really, probably just the fact that my whole family have been at Rolls Royce at one point and they are a very very good firm to work for.
- I **so an attractive, local firm?**
- D yeah, yeah
- I **and you only applied for that one job?**
- D yeah, that was stupid as well
- I **so you haven't had a lot of experience of applying for different jobs**
- D errr, all the one's I've applied to internally I've had to go for formal interviews and assessments and so you are treated just like an outsider. So, and every one I've gone for I've got so I'm pretty lucky really.
- I **yeah you seem to be doing pretty well. What about with now going back to studying how did that come about?**
- D as soon as you join they say you've got to go to tec college and do a certain type of qualification
- I **so it's compulsory at the beginning**
- D yeah, you have no choice. It depends how on the grades you got at school. If you didn't do very well then you do City and Guilds and if you did reasonably well then you did BTEC first and if you did very well then you did BTEC ONC straight away, so you leapt onto that, and then basically just progressed through, cos I've changed from going on the shop floor and I think the maximum qualification any one on the shop floor got was HNC, so I did ONC, then went into the offices and did HNC, and then they offered to keep sponsoring you for as long as you want to stay on really so they paid for everything.
- I **when did it become your choice?**
- D my degree was really. It always has been really, they say you've passed and you can move on. You can either say 'no, I've had enough' after you've finished your apprenticeship and you're fully trained up, it's down to yourself, I guess I've always been encouraged by the manager I've had just to 'don't stop, keep going' and luckily I haven't and done ten times better than I thought I'd do. I'm getting on well with my dissertation, it's a project I've got on at work so double interest, got to get it done for work, gotta get it done for university so.

I so you've never been unemployed

D no

I Has there been anything you've been stopped from doing either through, either in work or in your personal life.....

D I've always wanted to travel the world and it's one of those things where I'll do it at some point, I suppose works stopped me doing that really. If I'd have gone into A Levels, and then university I'd probably have taken the year out and done the travelling, whereas I've now bitted and bobbed through my holidays from work and taking trips out. That's about the only thing really, nothing else.

I is that a disappointment?

D no because as I said., I'll still do it but in a different way. I'll retire early or...

I so you feel you'll find a way, has anything in your life so far been disappointing to you?

D no not really, I've been very lucky, very lucky!

I has anything surprised you?

D yeah, when I look back and see where I've come from to where I am now I would never ever have dreamed that I would be getting a degree. Looking back in the early days, and also the job I'm doing now, most of the people who I'm doing my job with are twice my age, they're a lot older, I'm probably the youngest one in the whole of the procurement, especially at Hucknall.

I So you've exceeded the expectations you had of yourself, from when you were younger. Yeah, yeah, and what do you put that down to?

D getting on with it, yeah not letting things get you down, I'm not a worrier, I don't let things bother me, I'm not a stresser, I don't get stressed. I just get on with it.

Appendix 4(vii): Further details of factor analytic procedures

Four factor analyses were performed to identify simple structure within four sets of questionnaire items. This procedure is explained using the example of the factor analysis performed on the items grouped as relating to respondents' expectations of their futures.

Nine questionnaire items, forming questions 27, 29 and 30 in the survey, were identified for the FUTURE factor analysis. These items are the labelled variables:

1. How likely you will get the job you want
2. Plans for the future
3. Become self-employed
4. Obtain additional qualifications
5. Train for a different occupation
6. Live elsewhere in the country
7. Live in different country
8. Learn new language
9. Become unemployed

Let the number of questionnaire items or variables be p and the number of respondents be n . In this case, $p = 9$ and $n = 900$ ¹. Each of 900 respondents has answered each of the 9 questionnaire items. These responses have been coded as numbers and entered into the SPSS data file, which are, therefore, formalised as a set of 9 row vectors ($\mathbf{x}^i : i = 1, \dots, p$ and each has 900 components). The statistics of the

¹ The whole ESRC data set was used. This included samples from Derby (n=300), Hanover (n=300) and Leipzig (n=300). Use of the largest sample size possible was desirable given the effect of sample sizes on the estimation of correlation coefficients, upon which the method is based. Comrey and Lee (1992) rate 1000 as an excellent sample size.

components of these vectors may be described using their mean values (μ^i) and standard deviations (σ^i).

Table A: Descriptive statistics

x	μ	σ	Analysis n^a	No. missing n
1	1.84	0.596	900	67
2	1.81	0.524	900	6
3	3.59	1.074	900	25
4	2.06	0.979	900	22
5	3.56	1.070	900	31
6	2.95	1.183	900	18
7	3.58	1.165	900	25
8	3.07	1.221	900	18
9	3.74	0.997	900	31

a. For each p , missing values are replaced with the variable mean.

The next step is to represent this data in a standardised correlation matrix. Each vector can be represented in a standardised form, which is achieved by subtracting the mean from every item response and dividing the result by the standard deviation.

The standardised vectors are defined as follows:

$$\mathbf{g}_i = \frac{\mathbf{x}^i - \mu^i}{\sigma^i}$$

This produces a set of new vectors (the original data set in a standardised form) which can be used to define a standardised correlation matrix (**C**) made up of the relative correlations between each of the standardised observed variables given by the following equation:

$$C_{ij} = \frac{1}{n} \sum_k \frac{(x_k^i - \mu^i)(x_k^j - \mu^j)}{\sigma^i \sigma^j}$$

The standardised correlation matrix (shown in table B) has 1's on its diagonal and numbers between ± 1 as its off-diagonals. The sum of the diagonal elements is p .

Table B: Correlation matrix

	g1	g2	g3	g4	g5	g6	g7	g8	g9
g1	1.00								
g2	0.286	1.00							
g3	0.170	0.166	1.00						
g4	0.217	0.243	0.119	1.00					
g5	-0.013	0.021	0.002	0.088	1.00				
g6	0.105	0.067	0.085	0.139	0.064	1.00			
g7	0.123	0.062	0.181	0.150	0.003	0.554	1.00		
g8	0.090	0.087	0.154	0.270	-0.009	0.351	0.543	1.00	
g9	-0.279	-0.178	-0.040	-0.072	0.119	-0.020	-0.033	0.010	1.00

This matrix is brought to its diagonalised form in which the diagonal is composed of the eigenvalues of the correlation matrix and the off-diagonals are zero². A fundamental property of square matrices is that the sum of the diagonal elements is an invariant i.e. it is unchanged by the diagonalisation calculation, so $\sum_{i=1}^p \lambda_i = p$.

A large eigenvalue indicates a substantial correlation, that is, the bigger eigenvalues are more important for explaining the variance in the original data set. These may be ordered, as shown for this case in table C.

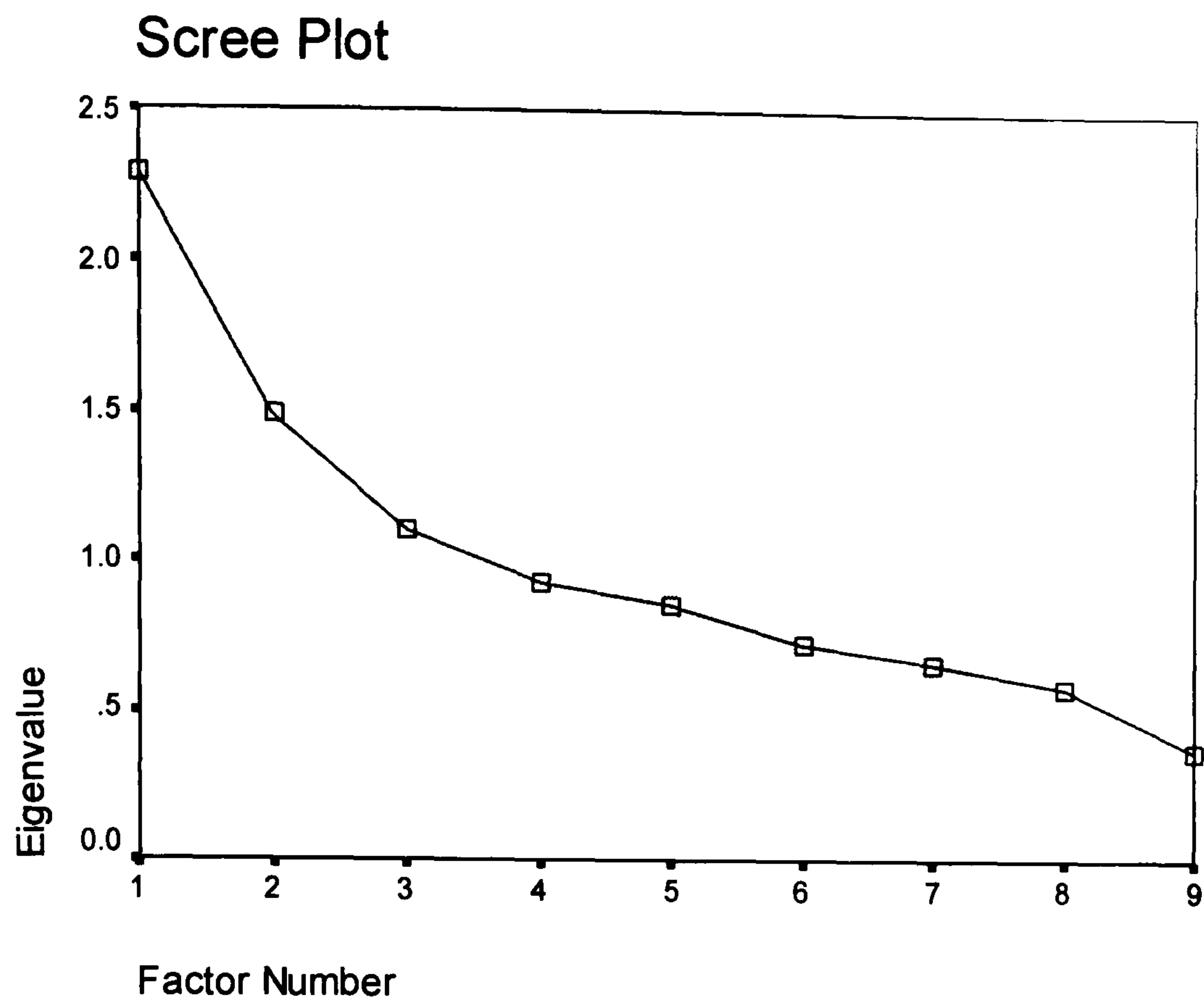
² Diagonalisation is defined by the eigenvalue equation:- $\mathbf{C}\mathbf{a}_i = \lambda_i \mathbf{a}_i$ where \mathbf{C} is the correlation matrix, \mathbf{a}_i is an eigenvector, and λ_i is the corresponding eigenvalue.

Table C: Total variance explained

Initial eigenvalues		
Total	% of variance	Cumulative %
2.293	25.475	25.475
1.491	16.570	42.045
1.100	12.226	54.272
0.927	10.295	64.567
0.851	9.456	74.023
0.722	8.021	82.043
0.665	7.393	89.437
0.583	6.476	95.913
0.368	4.087	100.000

It is necessary to choose how many factors are to be extracted. This was achieved by combining a principal components analysis with a scree plot (Cattell, 1966) in which the eigenvalues of each factor are plotted. A rule of thumb is to extract the number of factors up to the point where the gradient of the scree plot changes sharply and in this case, the decision to extract two factors was made (see Fig A).

Figure A: Scree plot



Corresponding to each eigenvalue is an eigenvector. Eigenvectors are independent of each other and can be chosen to be orthogonal. The factors (\mathbf{f}_i) are obtained by scaling the eigenvectors of the correlation matrix³, using the equation:

$$\mathbf{f}_i = (\lambda_i)^{1/2} \mathbf{a}_i$$

At this point it is not obvious what distinguishes one from the other, although items 6 to 8 occur with opposite signs (see table D).

³ In Principal Axis factoring unique and error variances of the observed variables are excluded. The covariance is estimated by communalities, thus, values between 0 and 1 are inserted in the positive diagonal of the correlation matrix (rather than 1's as in Principal Components analysis).

Table D: Factor matrix

	Factor	
	1	2
1	0.322	0.520
2	0.259	0.448
3	0.262	0.152
4	0.344	0.232
5	0.030	0.036
6	0.573	-0.187
7	0.820	-0.304
8	0.613	-0.146
9	-0.124	-0.351

To interpret the factors more easily it is useful to make a rotation of the implied axes using the Varimax principle. This is the default option in the SPSS software. The Varimax method maximises the variance of factor loadings (within factors and across variables), making high loadings higher and low loadings lower. The original factor matrix is multiplied by a transformation matrix , $\Lambda(\theta)$,

$$\Lambda = \begin{pmatrix} \cos(\theta) & \sin(\theta) \\ -\sin(\theta) & \cos(\theta) \end{pmatrix}$$

which has the geometrical interpretation of rotating orthogonal axes in a plane by the angle θ . The orthogonal rotation matrix found for this case by the software is shown in table E, and corresponds to $\theta = 29^\circ$.

Table E: Factor transformation matrix

Factor	1	2
1	0.873	0.487
2	-0.487	0.873

This rotation results in the rotated factor matrix, shown in table F

Table F: Rotated factor matrix

	Factor	
	1	2
1	0.028	0.611
2	0.008	0.517
3	0.155	0.261
4	0.187	0.371
5	0.043	-0.017
6	0.592	0.116
7	0.864	0.134
8	0.607	0.171
9	0.063	-0.367

As a rule of thumb, components with loadings of magnitude ± 0.32 are used to assist in labelling the factor (these are marked in bold in Table F). In practice, this criteria was combined with a check on α reliability coefficients for possible combinations of items. In this case, the items used to label the FUTURE factor 1 as ‘unlikely to move’ are item 6 (live elsewhere in the country), item 7 (live in different country) and item 8 (learn a new language).

Appendix 4(viii): Portion of focus group interview transcription

GROUP 2a

Theme A

- I Right OK. Who's starting then? Dawn?
- Dawn D'you want me to start. This is Damian. He's a Welfare Officer and he's 19.
- Damian I. I think, no sorry. I've forgotten, Dawn urrg, yeah, she's a Commercial Officer and she's just changed jobs, this week, and she's 23.
- I OK
- Dean This is Deepak and he's 25
- Deepak 26 actually
- Dean 26, He started the year after me at Rolls Royce so we both work at the same company
- I Did you know one another?
- Dean No
- I Oh, right
- Deepak Dean works at Roll's Royce, in combustion systems and started off as an apprentice and is working his way up.
- Deborah Della's 19 and works at Adtranz in an engineering department and she's an administrator.
- Della Uummm. This is Deborah. She's 25 and she works at Rolls Royce and she's a training organiser.
- I **Right. Ok. First of all, to begin with a very open question, can anyone say how they came to be in their current job?**
- Damian um yeah. I was unemployed for 18 months, after finishing college then I got onto the New Deal scheme...
- I Oh right
- Damian um with the voluntary sector, and then 3 months into my er programme I was offered a job so I became a welfare Rights Adviser.
- Pause
- I That's interesting. What about anybody else?
- Dean I joined Rolls Royce, really, because most of my family had been there. I started at Mount Sorrell and we used to live in Mount Sorrel so it was very much a family orientated business and all of my family worked there and it was just I wanted to go there cause I'd had enough of school and I thought yeah ok and it was the only job I applied for and luckily I got it and moved my way around, ended up in Derby and now well... pause
- Deepak I wanted to work in Aero Space and I started off at Rolls Royce as an electrical apprentice mainly because my brother had done electrical apprenticeship elsewhere so it has developed into an engineer's role now. Pause

I We've had all the lads, come on girls

Deborah I'll go, I went into my job, mainly due to the fact, that both parents, were just like manual workers, so I decided to, you know, go for more structured profession and work my way up through the profession in Rolls Royce.

Della I got pushed originally to do A Levels, in a way, so I went and did my A Levels for 2 years and then realised, you know, that I wanted hands on work and training at the same time. So I went to the careers office in Derby they helped me find my job, I'm just finishing off my Modern Apprenticeship now.

I Right, so you're on that scheme

Della Yeah

Dawn I joined Balfour Beatty as a Graduate Trainee, went through the Graduate Scheme through university, so just went through careers at uni

I **So what would you say were the most influential things in guiding your choice of career, was it a particular institution or people in your life or something which you'd seen when you were younger or or what was the thing which made you decide on a particular route...to work at Balfour Beatty...doing what you are doing?**

Dawn That's a tough one. I didn't really choose to be where I am. I sort of, didn't know what to do when I left school, went and did A Levels, didn't know what to do then, went to University, went to the careers department in the final year, thought 'got to get a job, find a scheme' and that was it really. I've always kept things quite open.

I Right, OK, What about other people?

Dean It was just Rolls Royce was the name which was banged around the house, my Dad worked there, my Mum worked there, my Grandad worked there my Granny worked there..

I So it was very much your family which influenced

Dean yeah, yeah, yeah, I just really have no clue what I want to do and I still to this day don't really know what I want to do whether it's with Rolls Royce or not but errr, I seem to have done quite well for myself and they've sponsored me for going to college and university and I sort of seem to have done quite well really.

I You're nodding Deborah?

Deborah Yeah, the same, I started off I actually started off as a secretary at Combustion and it was pretty much a dead end job and then Rolls Royce took over, and, they don't seem to have really put up any barriers with further education, they pay for it, day release, I'm putting myself through college university at the moment. So..

I The company struck you as a very, very supportive one

Deborah yeah

Dawn yeah mine are the same. I've just almost finished my chartership in marketing so, they pay for whatever I want in further training

Deepak I think it depends on where you are in the company as well, I found it difficult to do my degree, err, doing it part-time, obviously and was working three shifts at the time as well, but the management, because I was a works employee, they didn't understand

why somebody on the works would want, would want a degree.

Dean I had a friend who found the same thing, because we all started off on the shop floor and obviously if you've been on the shop floor and you want to do a degree and they look at you as if to say, you know, you don't need a degree to do that job. So a friend of mine who you actually tried the same thing actually paid for it to do it himself and after they saw that he'd done it successfully they actually gave him the money back. So it's, yeah it's a funny thing now.

Deepak Luckily I was an apprentice when I started the degree programme err so the management in the area I was working in weren't actually paying for the training, training centre paid for the degree so, I was progressing through it, so they allowed me to carry on. But they did try and stop me end of last year and at that time I moved into a different area where they were more supportive.

I Um either you two or Damian what were the things which influenced your choice of job?

Damian Basically I wanted err a job that helps people, because what I do is I help people get benefits and originally I did want to become a fireman but because of an injury to my leg that was out of the window straight away, so I moved from Wales down here because of a lack of jobs and then I just got onto the new deal scheme.

I Right

Damian I didn't really know what I wanted to do until I started this training programme and I found that I enjoyed it so

I Right.

Damian so that's something I do want to do in the future.

I So the new deal scheme was crucial in forming your

Damian Yeah

I **OK. Err if you think about your life on balance, the balance between works and personal life, social life whatever you want to do in your free time, how satisfied are you with that? Are there any problems? Do you feel you are over-worked, under-worked, you don't know what, any problems there at all that come to mind, or are you fine, are you satisfied.**

Deepak At the moment I think that I am over-worked it's because, it's because we're on a tight programme at the moment for the next eighteen months or so of doing 60-80 hours of, sorry a month's overtime.

I Oh crikey.

Deepak But that's because we're on a tight programme.

I That's a short term thing?

Deepak Yeah it's short term

I Needed

Deepak But it's it's sort of crucial to the survival of the company this programme is so, and hopefully it will help me get to where I want to be within the next couple of years. At the moment I'm a technologist and I would become an 'advanced?' and then 'principal'? and then move into project support. So, being on this, this project is, the

profile of the project is going to help that.

I You think it will be useful?

Deepak Yeah.

I What about everyone else?

Dean I don't think I have really. I don't, if the whatsit hits the fan then obviously the hours, you know, we're not expected to do the hours but it depends on, I've got a very good relationship my managing director and they are all very supportive on, you know, you have a life as well as err work. And they appreciate that you know that work isn't the be all and end all of everything so.

I You want to add anything?

Deepak Unlike people in some other companies that I know, we sort of, management is very understanding, my supervisor is anyway, sort of have a problem at home or something and come in the next day and say I'd need a holiday and because, maybe because, they trust me

I Right

Deepak They sort of accept that.

Knock on the door

I Come in

Male Just to let you know, no more shows.

I OK that's fine.

Male OK

I Yeah, thanks a lot. Thanks. OK, where were we?

Damian I mean um, I work in the voluntary sector and I feel that I am over-worked because, when I finish work at say 5.30, I'm still doing work when I get home but I think that's because I want to progress, you know I want to impress my boss basically so that um I can just climb up the ladder.

I Yeah. So you don't mind sacrificing your own time.

Damian Err, not at the moment no. Because if it gets me to where I want, want to go

I Uh ha

Damian then I don't mind, because um with with my line manager there is a little project which should be happening after Christmas err where we are setting up a citizens advice bureau so therefore I'd be a deputy manager so that's because of the work that I've already done.

Dawn I find that my social life is non-existent during the week, I spend perhaps three days a week in London, I'm always moving around, I'm always in hotels so I'm sort of like I've been given a letter today telling that as from the 6 December I will be working in London permanently. I've got to basically move myself, find somewhere to live and move in two weeks.

I Just like that?

Dawn Mmm.

Dean That's nice.

I **Erm, well yeah, leading on to the next question it's often said that young adults today experience more stress than in the past, would you say that any aspects in your life which you feel yourself to be under pressure**

Dawn I think they are helping me out, like obviously the financial costs will be covered erm but I think my degree, my final year degree was the most stressful part of my life, easily. By far, I find my job quite relaxing really.

I Oh right. Because of the work load in doing finals?

Dawn Yeah. Doing a dissertation was the worst experience of my life and I would never go through it again.

Dean Thanks, I'm just starting mine.

I Is anyone else stressed?

Deborah Yeah, I mean like, like you say with doing your further education, with the same time as going to work and even though you get day release they still expect the same amount of work, if not more, to be done in work and if it's not done there's no, I haven't really got a manager that protects me it's straight, straight on why haven't done it.

I Oh right.

Deborah So a lot more responsibility in the work.

I Yeah. How, how do you deal with it when you feel, when you have stressful situations like that what, what ways do you use to deal with it or do you not know what you do you just get through it?

Deborah Just get on with it and get through it

I Just get on with it.

Deborah Yeah.

Dean I don't spend time worrying about things, if they're going to get done they're going to get done and if not then, that's it. I can only do the best I can do, so I don't tend to let things worry me at all.

I Uh ha.

Deepak Usually if people put pressure on me are under pressure themselves err.

I Are what?

Deepak Under pressure themselves.

I Oh right, yeah.

Deepak So try and talk it through with them, work out what stage I'm at and what the delays are. Usually not, sometime it's my own fault, but usually the case is that there's other delays along the line in definition of programmes that are delaying the project.

I Right.

Deepak The job I'm in, it actually delays engines getting to test and if development engines are delayed and Airbus and Boeing find out and they put a lot of pressure on the company.

I Uh ha.

Dawn I find high expectations on me being young, they say it's not fair you can't get stressed you're young you shouldn't be stressed.

Della I get that.

Dawn you can

I Who from?

Della Work colleagues mainly, I mean it comes across as a bit of a joke I suppose when they say oh you shouldn't be stressed, but you know you walk out and you think oh a break brilliant you know and it is relieving sometimes just to walk out of the office, get some fresh air really, because it can get so stressful. And it's just, but I think it's like you said it's the pressure of other people, it's the other people that are stressed that are pushing on you, more than anything. You've just got to sit back and look at it and think, there's no point in getting stressed just get on with it.

I Right.

Deepak I got married about three and a half months ago, and for my holidays I had to try and work around the programme and.....

Laughter

Deepak Luckily my wife is very understanding

Laughter

Deepak As I thought I'd spoil her by coming home early sometimes, by working through my lunch hours and so on, but I'm very lucky that she's very understanding about the workload and she understands that it's short term. Err but I wouldn't have thought when I was 16 or 17 that I would be booking my holidays around a programme.

I Right.

Deepak Sometimes I think its sad but err hopefully it will benefit me in the long run.

Dawn I found with holidays that if, if I didn't book to go away they can sort of persuade me to cancel them at the last minute if something comes up. You have to be definitely going somewhere to get a holiday.

I You can't stay at home?

Dawn No, because they'll say do you need to have tomorrow off?

Male ~~~~~

laughter.

Dawn Ok, I'll change it again. It's like they expect more from you and there's a level that you think well I'd better do it because there's plenty of people who haven't got jobs. Sort of thing.

I Mmm

Dawn And I don't know you just push yourself harder I think.

Deepak The sort of thing that impacts my social life is being on standby 24 hours a day for 7 days a week. OK, I get paid for it and it's quite well paid being on standby, but you can be called anytime day or night so you have to stay within, I actually live 12 miles away from Derby so you have to stay within a reasonable distance of home in case you have to come into work.

Della See as soon as I walk out of work that's it, it's out of my mind complete, I don't even have to think about it all week-end I don't have to think about it all. When I'm at work, the hours I'm at work I think about work but as soon as I walk out of that door it's gone. But I think it, the place I work it is pretty relaxing it's not, like I say it can be a bit stressful, but obviously most people they walk out of the door and that's it. Suppose its only like saddo's who think about it.

I You like that?

Della Yeah.

I Yeah.

Della It means that I've got a social life, I walk out of them doors at ten past four and that's it.

I Uh ha.

Della I do what I want from then on until the next day. So.

Deborah I find one thing that's changed is like when I was, when I was 19 like you say, you finish at ten past four and as soon as it gets to ten past four and that finger goes on the clock you're out the door. Where as like now I'm there until seven o'clock at night and

Della Don't say that.

Laughter

Deborah Yeah and I don't claim overtime because I think well they're paying for me to go to college and I get day release so you know the works got to be done so I stay to seven and I work through dinners and things like that, but four years ago I'd never have thought about doing that. Dinner time was to meet my mates in the pub and then I'd finish at ten past four and go back to the pub but, its nothing like that now I get home and half past seven and just flop in front of the TV.

Damian I sometimes feel a little bit stressed because um I feel that I've got to be at my best all the time because they can easily replace me like the way I you know I replaced the last person, so and if I made a mistake then err then the people that fund us you know if anything's wrong then they can pull the funding and then my jobs gone.

I Uh ha.

Damian It's just a bit sad that I have to work after work.

I Yeah.

Damian And it's like my girlfriend, you know she's always complaining because I haven't, I don't have much time for her.

I **Right. What does being independent mean to you all, and do you feel like you are independent or what would you need to do to become independent if you are not?**

Dean The big step was moving from home to a place of your own.

I Parents home?

Dean Yeah parents home, that's it, then I can do exactly what I want to when I want to.

Della My big step was getting my car. Definitely. Cause as soon as I got my car I could go where I want when I want. You know I got a job and then I was able to afford to get a car and I do struggle with my parents but obviously, I can go out whenever I want, do what I want, go where I want you know I don't have to rely on anybody anymore, you know. And its, I feel like I've got loads, loads of independence. Definitely.

I Who else lives at home still? Anyone? You do.

Damian Yeah that's what I'm looking for and the reason I am working so hard, is because I want to get money for a deposit for my own place. Because basically I have to live by my father's rules and you know, I'd just like to come and go when I please, do what I like, so

I Uh hm

Damian As soon as I've got enough, then I'd rather get a place of my own.

I Right.

Della My Mum and Dad are dead easy on me though, they are, treat the place like a hotel.

Laughter.

Della I do, it's terrible. I know I do it, but you know it's just how I am .

Dean My parents were exactly the same as that, I mean I didn't feel in anyway pushed out, I mean when I said I was looking for a place then Mum's was like wait until you've finished your degree she really didn't want me to go erm but it was time for me to go, you know I still lived in Loughborough and I was coming to Derby everyday you know it got too much and I moved out when I was about 23, 24.

I So you moved out when you were 23?

Male Yeah.

I How old were you other three who?

Deborah 17. I lived on my own to start off with and then at 22 when I actually bought the house that I'm in now with a partner, so.

I Uh ha. And was the decision to leave your own decision?

Deborah Yes, it was mutual.

Laughter

Deborah Erm. You know just, like you say different rules. I wanted to do things that mum and dad didn't always agree with so I moved out. But no, you know, it wasn't you're banished from this house. I just moved out to cut out on the arguments.

I Right. Anybody else?

Dawn I'm still at home, but I moved out when I went to university and I had to back home because I was very skint. I was in so much debt when I came home from university that

I just had to live at home, there just wasn't any choice. I couldn't afford rent, I couldn't afford anything... and I'm moving out in 2 weeks, looks like anyway, so I'm still at home at the moment.

I It isn't up to you it's up to your company!

Dawn I did ask them to move me though.

I Oh right.

Dawn To move me somewhere because otherwise I wouldn't have been able to get away from home again. My mum would have dug her claws in too much so, she doesn't want me to go, but I'm using work to get away.

Male She doesn't know you actually put in for a transfer.

Dawn No.

Laughter

Male So she thinks they're doing a really bad job on you.

Dawn Yeah.

Male And ring your boss up.

Dawn She has.

Laughter.

Deepak I actually bought my own property when I was 21 but I didn't move into it. I still lived with my parents until about 6 months ago and I moved into the new house with my wife. I bought a property back then because I knew I could afford it and I didn't want a mortgage around my neck for longer than than

I Than need be.

Deepak Yeah. I wanted to get it out the way. I knew at some stage I'd got to do it and at that time I had the extra, extra cash around me so I thought it was the ideal time to go and do it.

I **OK, so, overall would you say that what you do in your life is determined by you or some other people or influences? Do you feel like you have control over what you are doing at the moment? In terms of work and in terms of other things. You do?**

Female Yeah.

Male Definitely.

I Definitely.

Male Yeah.

I Anybody not in any, in any areas?

Della I do, but I do. I do I suppose, but obviously with me still living with my parents I do consider them every now and again.

Laughter.

Della Yeah I do. I do take it into consideration. You've got to you know you've got to have respect for people but as far as my life goes I'd say yeah I pretty much do what I want. It's in my hands and in my work you know I decide if I want to go on a training course, I just say can I go on that and they usually say yeah you know they're very supportive. I think I've got a lot of support in my life and I think that's the main thing. My mum and dad are always there to support me and work are brilliant at supporting me, most definitely so I think that's what gives me my independence more than anything, the support I'm getting.

I Yeah. Anyone else?

Dawn I think I'm more independent than my mum knows, I'm sort of, I do my own thing, I go away a lot without her knowing. But I just don't want to hurt her because I know that she's on her own or whatever so I've tried to do it a nicer way rather than leaving her and living in Derby because I think she would have taken that the wrong way.

I Mmm yeah.

Dawn So, I've tried to think about her.

Theme B – omitted here

Theme C – omitted here

Appendix 4(ix): Coding nodes in NVivo

NVivo revision 1.1.127

Licensee: Claire Woolley

Project: PhD analysis User: Claire

Date: 16/07/2004 - 10:39:31

NODE LISTING

Nodes in Set: All Focus Group Nodes

Created: 04/06/2001 - 10:32:03

Modified: 04/06/2001 - 10:32:03

Number of Nodes:

- 1 (6) /Focus group coding
- 2 **(6 1) /Focus group coding/Section coding**
- 3 (6 1 1) /Focus group coding/Section coding/Opener~how did you come to be in~ 2
- 4 (6 1 8) /Focus group coding/Section coding/Influences
- 5 (6 1 9) /Focus group coding/Section coding/Work~freetime balance
- 6 (6 1 10) /Focus group coding/Section coding/Pressures
- 7 (6 1 11) /Focus group coding/Section coding/Independence
- 8 (6 1 12) /Focus group coding/Section coding/Live with parents
- 9 (6 1 13) /Focus group coding/Section coding/Gender
- 10 (6 1 15) /Focus group coding/Section coding/Ethnicity
- 11 (6 1 16) /Focus group coding/Section coding/Money
- 12 (6 1 17) /Focus group coding/Section coding/Family
- 13 (6 1 18) /Focus group coding/Section coding/Qualifications
- 14 (6 1 19) /Focus group coding/Section coding/Social class
- 15 (6 1 21) /Focus group coding/Section coding/Politics
- 16 (6 1 22) /Focus group coding/Section coding/Community involvement
- 17 (6 1 23) /Focus group coding/Section coding/Freetime activities
- 18 (6 1 24) /Focus group coding/Section coding/Confidence
- 19 (6 1 25) /Focus group coding/Section coding/Optimism
- 20 (6 1 26) /Focus group coding/Section coding/Talent to top
- 21 (6 1 32) /Focus group coding/Section coding/Control
- 22 (6 1 33) /Focus group coding/Section coding/Area
- 23 **(6 2) /Focus group coding/Internal factors**
- 24 **(6 2 1) /Focus group coding/Internal factors/Absence of agency**
- 25 (6 2 1 1) /Focus group coding/Internal factors/Absence of agency/directionless
- 26 (6 2 1 2) /Focus group coding/Internal factors/Absence of agency/not my choice
- 27 (6 2 1 4) /Focus group coding/Internal factors/Absence of agency/pessimistic
- 28 (6 2 1 5) /Focus group coding/Internal factors/Absence of agency/self-doubt
- 29 (6 2 1 6) /Focus group coding/Internal factors/Absence of agency/anxiety or stress
- 30 (6 2 1 7) /Focus group coding/Internal factors/Absence of agency/not in control
- 31 (6 2 1 8) /Focus group coding/Internal factors/Absence of agency/follow in family tradition
- 32 (6 2 1 9) /Focus group coding/Internal factors/Absence of agency/social dependency
- 33 (6 2 1 10) /Focus group coding/Internal factors/Absence of agency/financial dependency
- 34 **(6 2 3) /Focus group coding/Internal factors/Presence of agency**
- 35 (6 2 3 1) /Focus group coding/Internal factors/Presence of agency/my choice
- 36 (6 2 3 2) /Focus group coding/Internal factors/Presence of agency/have control
- 37 (6 2 3 4) /Focus group coding/Internal factors/Presence of agency/optimism
- 38 (6 2 3 5) /Focus group coding/Internal factors/Presence of agency/confidence
- 39 (6 2 3 6) /Focus group coding/Internal factors/Presence of agency/proactivity
- 40 (6 2 3 7) /Focus group coding/Internal factors/Presence of agency/diligence
- 41 (6 2 3 8) /Focus group coding/Internal factors/Presence of agency/long-term planning
- 42 (6 2 3 9) /Focus group coding/Internal factors/Presence of agency/resistance
- 43 (6 2 3 10) /Focus group coding/Internal factors/Presence of agency/resilience
- 44 (6 2 3 11) /Focus group coding/Internal factors/Presence of agency/take on responsibility
- 45 (6 2 3 12) /Focus group coding/Internal factors/Presence of agency/take opps risks
- 46 (6 2 3 13) /Focus group coding/Internal factors/Presence of agency/financial independence
- 47 (6 2 3 14) /Focus group coding/Internal factors/Presence of agency/social independence
- 48 **(6 3) /Focus group coding/External factors**
- 49 **(6 3 1) /Focus group coding/External factors/positive aspects**
- 50 (6 3 1 1) /Focus group coding/External factors/positive aspects/family support
- 51 (6 3 1 2) /Focus group coding/External factors/positive aspects/institutional support
- 52 (6 3 1 3) /Focus group coding/External factors/positive aspects/opps open
- 53 **(6 3 2) /Focus group coding/External factors/negative aspects**
- 54 **(6 3 2 1) /Focus group coding/External factors/negative aspects/social factors are constraining**
- 55 (6 3 2 1 1) /Focus group coding/External factors/negative aspects/social factors are constraining/labour market
- 56 (6 3 2 1 2) /Focus group coding/External factors/negative aspects/social factors are constraining/gender
- 57 (6 3 2 1 3) /Focus group coding/External factors/negative aspects/social factors are constraining/ethnicity
- 58 (6 3 2 1 4) /Focus group coding/External factors/negative aspects/social factors are constraining/having children
- 59 (6 3 2 1 5) /Focus group coding/External factors/negative aspects/social factors are constraining/social background

60 (6 3 2 1 6) /Focus group coding/External factors/negative aspects/social factors are constraining/Disability
61 **(6 3 2 2) /Focus group coding/External factors/negative aspects/experienced a lack of**
62 (6 3 2 2 1) /Focus group coding/External factors/negative aspects/experienced a lack of/finances
63 (6 3 2 2 2) /Focus group coding/External factors/negative aspects/experienced a lack of/familysupport
64 (6 3 2 2 3) /Focus group coding/External factors/negative aspects/experienced a lack of/institutional support
65 (6 3 2 2 4) /Focus group coding/External factors/negative aspects/experienced a lack of/ability or quals
66 (6 3 2 2 5) /Focus group coding/External factors/negative aspects/experienced a lack of/health
67 **(6 4) /Focus group coding/set backs**
68 **(6 5) /Focus group coding/success requires**
69 (6 5 4) /Focus group coding/success requires/connections, other people
70 (6 5 5) /Focus group coding/success requires/effort and confidence
71 (6 5 6) /Focus group coding/success requires/qual's & experience
72 **(6 6) /Focus group coding/Collective Agency**
73 (6 6 1) /Focus group coding/Collective Agency/not interested in politics
74 (6 6 2) /Focus group coding/Collective Agency/collective efficacy
75 (6 6 3) /Focus group coding/Collective Agency/Action doesn't work
76 (6 6 4) /Focus group coding/Collective Agency/dislike, withdrawal

Appendix 4(x): Table for combining quantitative and qualitative data

Data type	Young people's perspectives				Views on their future prospects
	Perceptions of opportunities and constraints	Individual agency		Collective agency	
		Work-related	Personal life		
Factors	Opportunities open to all (C3) Ability not rewarded (C6) Achievement barriers (S5) Blame own weaknesses (C4)	Fulfilled at work (C2, S4) Active career-seeking (A2) Planning not chance (C5)	Fulfilled personal life (C1, S3) General self-confidence (S1) Social self-confidence (S2)	Political activity (A3)	Unlikely to move (F1, A1) Negative view of future (F2)
Questions	Q11 Barriers to achievement Q23 Influence of where you live on getting a job Q24 Influences on	Q16 Influence on present situation Q17 Experiences at work Q19 Career search methods	Q13 Leaving home Q14 Independence Q17 Experiences in personal life	Q32 Work-related values Q33 Participation in group activities Q34 Voting behaviour	Q27 Get the job you want? Q29 Have plans? Q30 Expectations

Questions continued	opportunities Q25 Getting a job depends on...? Q31 Economic locus of control	Q21 Main attribution for present situation Q22 Changed expectations since school	Q26 Equipped? Q36 Self-image scale	Q35 Interest in politics	
Focus group thematic coding	Gender Ethnicity Money Family background Social class Qualifications Area Talent to the top	Opener – how did you come to be in? Influences	Live with parents Independence	Politics Community involvement Freetime activities	Optimism
Focus group concept-driven coding	Positive aspects Negative aspects Success depends on...	Pressures Work/free-time balance Confidence Control	Presence and absence of agency	Collective agency	Optimism

Appendix 4(xi): Verification by individual interviewee (example)

Source

This is a very accurate summary and can't find any errors that need to be corrected. Please keep me informed on the progress on your thesis and if you need any help in the future, then please don't hesitate to contact me.

Interview summary: Danielle

Good luck!

1. Opportunities and discrimination

- 1.1 Danielle has been pleasantly surprised by the number of doors that have opened for her in her working life. She believes that rewards from work result from a combination of connections, luck, effort and putting yourself forward.
- 1.2 Her choice of an engineering career was met by her school, and by her friends, with some degree of surprise, shock and consternation initially. Probably through stereotyping male and female work roles. However, they were supportive once they realised how serious she was.
- 1.3 Her experience in the job is that she copes well with the male environment, but that doing so means taking a bit of 'male flack' occasionally and keeping her personal life personal. She wouldn't remain there if this were a problem.
- 1.4 Thinks equal opportunity drives are having an affect – yet there will always remain some fundamental differences between men and women which can't be overcome in this way.

2. Career orientation

- 2.1 Danielle's long-term goal during her school days was to become a vet, but she was unable to pursue this goal through not gaining the relevant qualifications. This led her to settle/opt for her second choice goal and she applied for an engineering apprenticeship. Her career choices were well considered and based on her subject interests and work experience at a power station.
- 2.2 Moving to Derby to take up the apprenticeship at Rolls Royce at the age of 16 represents a major turning point in Danielle's life. She has no doubt that she made the right decision and says it was very much of her own choice and planning. Sets it against the negative experience of school where she did not have a very good time.
- 2.3 She has high expectations of work, wanting career progression, money, and challenge and variety in the content of the work. Describes herself as ambitious – which she measures in her own terms.
- 2.4 She feels she gets a lot of support from work.

3. Self

- 3.1 Danielle viewed moving to Derby, a completely new area, as both exciting and scary. She describes how from this point onwards she grew in self-confidence and self-reliance. Enjoys her job and feels confident in it and growing in competence – which she sees as being related to experience.
- 3.2 She recognised that there was a danger that she may not get on in a predominantly male environment but saw this as a risk, which had to be taken.
- 3.3 The only thing that Danielle can see as holding her back is her intellectual capabilities, which she doubts somewhat. However, despite suffering setbacks on recent modular HNC modules she shows a high degree of resilience in maintaining her goal to succeed in gaining a degree course place.
- 3.4 The main pressure in her life outside of work has been in relation to budgeting and money.

4. Family

- 4.1 Her parents have a great deal of faith in her, and this helped her meet the challenges of moving away. They are still available for support, and have been able and willing to help her out financially when necessary. They have never put any pressure on her, just allowed her to choose her own way in life.

5. Politics and participation

- 5.1 Is interested in politics and likes to keep up to date with current affairs and news. Believes in the efficacy of collective action and would take part in political action if she felt strongly enough about an issue.

Future plans

Expectation	Move away	Change career	More qual's	Self-employment	Become unemployed	Work full-time	Work part-time	Have a family	Other plans
Probable	Pretty much flexible and anticipates moving in the future, including abroad.								Buy house* Travel
Possible			Hoping to get onto a degree course in the end.			Not sure about balance of work and family life		When a lot older, after sorting career	Dream house.
Unlikely		Hopes to * move into the business side of engineering.		Not given this much thought.					

* For info:

- I've now bought a house & am due to move in end April!
- I've now got a new job in the business side of RR, but am retaining a lot of engineering aspects!!

Appendix 6(i): Biographical details of focus group participants

Higher Education Group A

Pseudonym	Age	Course	Entrant qualifications	Other details
Denise	24	Psychology	A Levels	Single mother
Dalvinder	19	Marketing	A Levels	Ethnic minority
Daphne	19	Business studies	A Levels	
Dorothy	22	Psychology	Foundation course	
Devon	23	Psychology	GNVQ	
Danny	20	Geography	A Levels	
Dominic	19	Marketing	A Levels	
Dale	22	Engineering	GNVQ	

Higher Education Group B

Pseudonym	Age	Course	Entrant qualifications	Other details
Dionne	20	Biology and geography	A Levels	
Davina	20	Geography	A Levels	Dyslexic
Daisy	19	Geography	A Levels	
Dave	22	Photography	A Levels	
Darren	20	Biology	A Levels	

Employed Group A

- Della: 19 Modern Apprentice in Administration at Adtranz; A levels – but would have preferred to have combined work and training straight from school.
- Dawn: 23 Balfour Beatty Graduate Trainee; degree; applied for a graduate scheme after visit to university careers centre; didn't know what she wanted to do, kept things open, didn't really chose this; from single parent family; just completed chartership in Marketing.
- Deborah: 25 Rolls Royce; training organiser; began as a secretary at Combustion; when Rolls Royce took over they invested in her further education.
- Damian: 19 Welfare officer; previously unemployed for 18 months, New Deal Gateway Voluntary option; offered job; working really hard to keep job.
- Dean: 25 Rolls Royce; joined company straight from school through influence of family; didn't know what to do.....but satisfied with progress; studying part-time for a degree.
- Deepak: 26 Rolls Royce engineer; began as an electrical apprentice; followed in brother's footsteps; studying part-time for a degree; ethnic minority background.

Employed Group B

- Daljeet: 18 Rolls Royce; YTS trainee in finance department; retained work at end of scheme; ethnic minority background.
- Danielle: 20 Rolls Royce; Test Projects engineer; work experience at a Power Station; entered Modern Apprenticeship with Rolls Royce
- Debbie: 21 Chamber of Commerce, Marketing assistant; got job as a temp through an agency and was then taken on permanently.
- Diana: 25 Chamber of Commerce, Education adviser; degree; got job through a contact at the Chamber.
- Dominique 25 Rolls Royce graduate trainee in engineering; motivated by interest

Unemployed Group A

- Dee: 18 Worked since she was 16 years old, enrolled in college, got pregnant, now on New Deal 'wheels and words course', her time is up but she doesn't want to leave, very unhappy (bored) with pregnancy.
- Daniella: 19 Several courses now on New Deal 'wheels and words course' 1 child, ESF funding important for child care, served 18 months hairdressing training, then baby, needs another year to finish hairdressing but then no child care would be available.
- Dora: 20 New Deal 'wheels and words course', worked in retail shop until she had her first son, wants to go back into retail, plans to do child care course.
- Donna: 21 One child (and partner), New Deal 'wheels and words course', given forms by street worker, good advice by careers service, ESF funding important because of child care which opens up opportunities during the day, before night school only, works to become a midwife, has training place already needs to find a place for her child when doing the training.
- Don: 18
- Damon: 19 Found out about the 'unwaged scheme' through youth club.
- Dylon: 21

Unemployed Group B

- Deb: 18 Finished her A' Levels and attended a private school
- Drew: 18 Prince's Trust course
- Diane: 23 Prince's Trust course, 1 child (5years old), health problems, was directed by college.
- Daryl: 20 BTEC National Diploma Sport Science, in prison for three years
- Derek: 21 Attending college
- Dan: 23 Finished college, unemployed, lost job through ill health, was bored (rather than wanted to do something), New Deal, 'I did it me self'
- Daniel: 25 Unemployed, interested in voluntary work.

- David: 25 Sound engineering course (New Deal), worked in construction since school on temporary contracts, unemployed
- Douglas: 26 Working in Virgin Mega Store (support into work place), doing NVQ in Customer Service, is happy with being on course, very passive

Unemployed Group C

- Dot: 22 Sound engineering course, something she always wanted to do but thought it not possible because of being female, went to the college, 'took the chance' spoke to course tutor.
- Di: 22 Works at centre in admin. and currently on admin. course (New Deal), was unemployed and did not know what to do, job centre said to choose an option, was OK but regrets that she was more or less forced to.
- Dinah: 23 Worked short time in furniture restoration, NVQ1 in wood occupation, currently doing City and Guilds (New Deal) in furniture restoration and voluntary work in furniture project. very active.
- Dasmesh: 24 Masters in IT, private tutor in biology, looking for work, New Deal could not offer me something. Ethnic minority background
- Dalvir: 21 New Deal for six months, currently voluntary work, looking for work in the social area, changing his mind constantly before hit New Deal. Ethnic minority background.
- Duncan: 22 Works in Sinfín, does IT, New Deal gateway 4 months, started computer training course which he had to leave because of New Deal option coming up, takes part in voluntary placement 'to shut them up really', continues the computer course in his spare time, own financing, feels forced into New Deal 'you either get a placement or off the benefit'.
- Duane: 23 NVQ in wood occupations.

Appendix 6(ii): Focus groups coding distribution – Across settings

Main categories

	Positive aspects	Negative aspects	Presence of agency	Absence of agency
HE	21	35	57	30
Employed	29	43	53	24
Unemployed	16	93	47	21

Positive aspects (of social environment)

	Opportunities perceived as open	Received family support	Received institutional support
HE	12	7	2
Employed	10	6	13
Unemployed	6	1	4

Negative aspects (of social environment)

	Experienced a lack of...			
	Family support	Institutional support	Finances	Abilities or qualifications
HE	3	3	13	1
Employed	3	6	6	3
Unemployed	2	23	12	3

	Social factors are constraining				
	Labour market	Gender	Ethnicity	Children	Social background
HE	3	5	1	1	10
Employed	9	10	4	0	0
Unemployed	16	5	9	2	9

Presence of agency

	My choice	Have control	Financial independence	Social independence	Long-term planning
HE	19	3	3	15	7
Employed	10	5	1	11	5
Unemployed	4	4	1	8	3

	Confidence	Diligence	Resistance	Optimism	Proactivity
HE	5	3	2	5	3
Employed	2	2	4	3	9
Unemployed	6	2	4	6	13

Absence of agency

	Directionless	Not my choice	Financial dependency	Social dependency	Not in control	Anxiety	Self-doubt	Pessimism
HE	9	4	2	1	1	6	4	4
Employed	3	1	4	3	5	10	0	0
Unemployed	7	6	4	3	4	1	3	5

Collective agency

	Collective efficacy	Action doesn't work	Not interested in politics	Dislike, withdrawal
HE	6	12	3	6
Employed	5	5	4	1
Unemployed	0	6	5	6

Success depends upon....

	Effort and confidence	Connections and others	Qualifications and experience
HE	7	3	0
Employed	6	2	8
Unemployed	12	1	5

Appendix 6(iii): Focus groups coding distribution – Higher Education groups

Main categories

	Positive aspects	Negative aspects	Presence of agency	Absence of agency
Males	9	18	21	7
Females	16	34	35	22
Total	25	52	56	29

Positive aspects (of social environment)

	Opportunities perceived as open	Received family support	Received institutional support
Males	4	2	3
Females	8	5	3
Total	12	7	6

Negative aspects (of social environment)

	Experienced a lack of...			
	Family support	Institutional support	Finances	Abilities or qualifications
Males	0	0	4	0
Females	3	3	8	1
Total	3	3	12	1

	Social factors are constraining				
	Labour market	Gender	Ethnicity	Children	Social background
Males	1	1	0	0	3
Females	2	4	1	1	7
Total	3	5	1	1	10

Presence of agency

	My choice	Have control	Financial independence	Social independence	Long-term planning
Males	6	1	0	6	5
Females	13	2	3	9	2
Total	19	3	3	15	7

	Confidence	Diligence	Resistance	Optimism	Proactivity
Males	3	3	0	2	1
Females	1	0	2	2	2
Total	4	3	2	4	3

Absence of agency

	Directionless	Not my choice	Financial dependency	Social dependency	Not in control	Anxiety	Self-doubt	Pessimism
Males	2	0	2	0	0	1	0	0
Females	6	4	0	1	1	5	4	3
Total	8	4	2	1	1	6	4	3

Collective agency

	Collective efficacy	Action doesn't work	Not interested in politics	Dislike, withdrawal
Males	1	3	1	5
Females	5	9	2	2
Total	6	12	3	7

Success depends upon....

	Effort and confidence	Connections and others	Qualifications and experience
Males	5	1	0
Females	2	2	0
Total	7	3	0

Appendix 6(iv): Focus groups coding distribution – Employed groups

Main categories

	Positive aspects	Negative aspects	Presence of agency	Absence of agency
Males	13	10	15	10
Females	15	33	34	14
Total	28	43	49	24

Positive aspects (of social environment)

	Opportunities perceived as open	Family support	Institutional support
Males	4	3	5
Females	6	2	7
Total	10	5	12

Negative aspects (of social environment)

	Experienced a lack of....			
	Family support	Institutional support	Finances	Ability or qualification
Males	2	2	1	1
Females	1	4	5	2
Total	3	6	6	3

	Social factors are constraining				
	Labour market	Gender	Ethnicity	Children	Social background
Males	2	0	1	0	0
Females	7	10	3	0	0
Total	9	10	4	0	0

Presence of agency

	My choice	Have control	Financial independence	Social independence	Long-term planning
Males	3	0	1	2	4
Females	7	3	0	7	1
Total	10	3	1	9	5

	Confidence	Diligence	Resistance	Optimism	Proactivity
Males	1	2	0	2	2
Females	1	0	4	1	7
Total	2	2	4	3	9

Absence of agency

	Directionless	Not my choice	Financial dependency	Social dependency	Not in control	Anxiety	Self-doubt	Pessimism
Males	2	0	2	1	2	3	0	0
Females	1	1	2	2	3	7	0	0
Total	3	1	4	3	5	10	0	0

Collective agency

	Collective efficacy	Action doesn't work	Not interested in politics	Dislike, withdrawal
Males	3	2	1	0
Females	2	3	3	1
Total	5	5	4	1

Success depends upon....

	Effort and confidence	Connections and others	Qualifications and experience
Males	1	0	4
Females	5	2	4
Total	6	2	8

Appendix 6(v): Focus groups coding distribution – Unemployed groups

Main categories

	Positive aspects	Negative aspects	Presence of agency	Absence of agency
Males	6	52	25	21
Females	10	55	23	14
Total	16	107	48	35

Positive aspects (of social environment)

	Opportunities perceived as open	Family support	Institutional support
Males	3	0	0
Females	3	1	4
Total	6	1	4

Negative aspects (of social environment)

	Experienced a lack of...			
	Family support	Institutional support	Finances	Ability or qualification
Males	1	13	7	1
Females	1	13	6	2
Total	2	26	13	3

	Social factors are constraining				
	Labour market	Gender	Ethnicity	Children	Social background
Males	7	3	7	0	5
Females	10	2	2	2	3
Total	17	5	9	2	8

Presence of agency

	My choice	Have control	Financial independence	Social independence	Long-term planning
Males	1	2	0	5	0
Females	3	2	1	3	3
Total	4	4	1	8	3

	Confidence	Diligence	Resistance	Optimism	Proactivity
Males	4	0	3	3	7
Females	2	2	2	3	6
Total	6	2	5	6	13

Absence of agency

	Directionless	Not my choice	Financial dependency	Social dependency	Not in control	Anxiety/stress	Self-doubt	Pessimism
Males	4	5	3	1	3	0	4	2
Females	3	1	1	2	1	1	3	3
Total	7	6	4	3	4	1	7	5

Collective agency

	Collective efficacy	Action doesn't work	Not interested in politics	Dislike, withdrawal
Males	0	2	3	6
Females	0	4	3	3
Total	0	6	6	9

Success depends upon

	Effort and confidence	Connections and others	Qualifications and experience
Males	7	1	2
Females	5	0	3
Total	12	1	5

Appendix 9(i): Individual interviews coding distribution

Positive aspects (of social environment)

	Total coding: Positive aspects	Opportunities perceived as open	Support received from family	Support received from work
Della	9	1	4	5
Diana	5	0	2	1
Debbie	4	3	3	0
Danielle	12	4	8	1
Females	30	8	17	7
Dean	9	3	4	4
Deepak	7	5	2	1
David	5	3	1	1
Dec	6	4	1	0
Males	27	15	8	6

Negative aspects (of social environment)

	Total coding: Negative aspects	Lack money	Lack family support	Lack ability	Gender	Labour market	Setbacks
Della	14	3	0	0	0	3	6
Diana	11	1	0	0	3	3	2
Debbie	20	7	4	1	3	1	5
Danielle	15	1	0	3	5	0	3
Females	60	12	4	4	11	7	16
Dean	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
Deepak	5	0	1	0	1	0	0
David	6	0	0	0	1	0	0
Dec	10	0	1	1	0	4	2
Males	23	0	2	1	2	4	2

Presence of agency

	Total coding: Presence of agency	Long term direction	Pursuing interests	Taking opp's and risks	Proactivity	Resistance
Della	23	6	2	3	1	1
Diana	15	0	1	1	0	0
Debbie	30	6	2	0	4	6
Danielle	30	12	3	5	4	1
Females	98	24	8	9	9	8
Dean	20	1	1	5	1	0
Deepak	20	6	6	0	4	1
David	22	5	5	1	5	0
Dec	17	3	3	4	4	1
Males	79	15	15	10	14	2

	My choice	Take on responsibility	confidence	Independence	Diligence	Resilience
Della	6	2	2	3	1	2
Diana	0	2	2	2	0	1
Debbie	1	3	2	4	4	2
Danielle	3	1	4	4	3	0
Females	10	8	10	13	8	5
Dean	1	3	1	1	1	3
Deepak	1	2	3	1	3	1
David	3	1	2	3	1	0
Dec	0	1	2	2	1	0
Males	5	7	9	7	6	4

Absence of agency

	Total coding: absence of agency	Poor fit with self	Unsure of direction	Dependency	Anxieties	Self-doubt	Follow in family tradition
Della	5	0	0	2	1	1	1
Diana	15	2	10	4	1	1	0
Debbie	5	1	2	0	2	0	0
Danielle	0	2	0	0	0	0	0
Females	20	3	12	6	4	2	1
Dean	2	0	2	0	0	0	2
Deepak	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
David	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Dec	8	3	4	2	0	2	0
Males	11	3	6	2	0	3	3

Appendix 10(i): Factor measures

Control Factors (from questions 11, 16, 17, 21, 23, 24, 31)

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Label	Fulfilled personal life	Fulfilled at work	Opportunities open to all	Blame own weaknesses	Planning not chance	Ability not rewarded
Eigenvalues	4.16	3.18	2.26	2.04	1.81	1.67
% variance explained	8.48	6.49	4.60	4.17	3.69	3.41
α reliability coefficient	0.75	0.76	0.64	0.55	0.52	0.47
Questionnaire items used to label factors (criteria is loadings close to or greater than ± 0.32 in combination with α reliability coefficients	17.2 (all)	17.1 (all)	24.1 24.2 24.3 24.4 31.3	11.1.3 11.2.3 11.2.4 11.1.5	16.1 16.5 16.7 (-) 31.2 31.10	31.1 31.4 31.8

Rotated Factor Matrix: Control factors(a)

	Factor					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Lack of money - personal	.053	-.067	-.080	.209	-.019	.059
Lack of money - work	-.100	.047	.005	.129	-.059	-.019
The 'system' - personal	.012	.043	-.050	.309	-.132	.030
The 'system' - work	-.039	-.059	-.106	.340	-.122	.002
Lack of skills - personal	-.112	-.006	-.051	.400	-.008	.026
Lack of skills - work	-.046	-.018	.039	.545	.009	.024
Lack of qualifications - p	-.143	.025	.015	.284	-.061	-.059
Lack of qualifications - w	.042	-.080	.023	.471	-.017	.043
My own weaknesses - p	-.091	.043	-.122	.441	.111	-.029
My own weaknesses - w	.062	-.045	-.037	.307	.062	.004
Other people - personal	-.006	-.034	-.054	.385	-.089	-.096
Other people - work	.019	-.066	-.058	.320	-.122	.043
Long term goals	.016	.184	-.077	.023	.402	-.103
Training offered	-.006	-.007	.120	.041	-.215	.039
Influence of friends	-.001	.046	-.115	.039	-.036	-.133
Influence of parents	.029	-.023	-.025	.080	.027	-.129
Interest	.043	.144	-.097	-.022	.395	.012
By chance	-.024	.003	-.026	.106	-.226	.064
Had no choice	-.020	-.107	-.012	.100	-.389	.060
At Work - Feel sense of achievement	.248	.414	-.157	-.124	.195	.142
Outside work - Feel sense of achievement	.629	.055	-.138	-.050	.057	.097
At Work - Have chance to use initiative	.130	.582	.067	-.015	.046	-.008
Outside work - Have chance to use initiative	.571	.085	-.009	.008	-.006	-.064
At Work - Make a decision	-.013	.534	.059	-.110	.161	-.029
Outside work - Make a decision	.494	.075	.026	-.151	.109	.008
At Work - Feel stretched	.196	.516	-.104	.009	.181	-.057
Outside work - Feel stretched	.547	.117	-.173	.114	-.013	-.111
At Work - Set own goals	.075	.648	-.006	-.059	.130	-.053
Outside work - Set own goals	.593	.109	-.065	-.046	.128	-.046
At Work - Feel given responsibility	.115	.633	.041	-.037	.038	.018

Outside work - Feel given responsibility	.487	.187	.010	-.054	-.051	-.152
Present situation due to...	-.007	-.204	.114	.095	-.459	.085
Influence of where you live?	-.005	.018	.317	-.073	-.025	.057
A person's gender	-.165	.009	.467	-.069	-.009	-.087
Racial characteristics	-.177	.063	.555	-.049	-.039	-.132
Social class	-.041	.063	.589	-.072	-.039	-.141
Family background	-.007	-.088	.425	-.114	-.097	.013
Education qualifications	-.135	.033	.200	.040	-.184	.036
Getting a job depends on ability	.038	-.096	-.015	.037	-.176	.383
Getting a job depends on luck	.109	.029	.246	.031	.413	.151
Getting a job depends on where you live	.013	-.041	.441	-.053	.101	.062
Talent always finds its way to the top	-.070	-.011	-.054	.056	-.016	.436
Poverty is usually the fault of the individual	-.036	.071	.003	.048	.042	.277
Poverty is due to bad luck	-.044	.000	.149	.036	.221	.188
Poverty is due to the 'system'	-.133	.013	.216	-.160	.290	-.057
People usually deserve their success	-.018	-.111	-.173	.014	-.157	.415
Parent's social status does not affect your chances	.059	.003	-.322	.003	.080	.219
Success at work is a matter of luck	.193	.047	.062	.013	.427	.140
Advancement depends on other people	.101	.003	.294	-.060	.082	.134

Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.
a. Rotation converged in 7 iterations.

Agency Factors (from questions 19.1s, 30.1-30.6, 32, 33, 34.1)

	1	2	3	4
Label	Unlikely to move	Active career seeking	Politically active	Helping/people-oriented career
Eigenvalues	3.01	2.68	1.93	1.74
% variance explained	8.37	7.44	5.37	4.84
α reliability coefficient	0.74	0.65	0.48	0.51
Questionnaire items used to label factors (criteria is loadings close to or greater than ± 0.32 in combination with α reliability coefficients	30.4 30.5 30.6	19.1.2 to 19.1.8	33.1 33.4 33.5	32.8 32.11 32.12

Rotated Factor Matrix: Agency factors(a)

	Factor			
	1	2	3	4
Been to careers office	.123	.224	.173	-.097
Visited job centre	.123	.433	-.002	-.005
Reviewed newspaper ads	.112	.584	-.133	-.057
Phoned/visited employers	-.009	.366	.067	.044
Asked family	.051	.479	.102	.012
Asked friends	-.044	.441	.132	.010
Asked workmates	-.153	.469	.017	.009
Contacted labour agency	-.092	.357	-.128	.057
Become self-employed	.255	-.060	-.025	-.026
Obtain additional qualifications	.279	-.039	-.202	.086
Train for different occupation	.030	-.275	.088	.003
Live elsewhere in country	.586	.055	-.013	.021
Live in different country	.776	-.002	.018	-.001
Learn a new language	.627	.059	-.221	.028
Good job security	.291	.009	-.084	-.194
Good pay	.107	.189	-.248	-.189
Challenges	-.287	.042	.095	.269
Responsibility	-.119	-.048	-.060	.253
Prospects	-.024	.166	-.130	-.027
Chance of qualifications	.011	.024	.091	.150
Friendly atmosphere	.043	-.039	.023	.065
Relationships	-.021	.035	-.139	.549
Combine career with child rearing	.011	-.089	.070	.223
Not intrude on leisure	.081	-.012	-.043	.219
Chance to help society	-.096	.132	-.014	.480
Chance to help society through group efforts	-.064	.108	.038	.419
Attended public meeting/rally	-.057	-.124	.630	.058
Given views to politician	-.091	.156	.294	.064
Handed out leaflets	-.171	.182	.159	.066
Helped organise public meeting	-.149	.044	.349	.054
Discussed political issue with family/friends	-.148	-.039	.467	-.043

Joined trade union	.029	.086	.153	-.039
Joined political party	.033	-.007	.188	.013
Joined religious organisation	-.125	-.145	.262	.044
Joined sports club	-.110	.312	-.274	.015
Would you vote?	.158	.056	-.334	.042

Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.
a. Rotation converged in 6 iterations.

Future Factors (from questions 27, 29, 30)

	1	2
Label	Unlikely to move	Negative view of future
Eigenvalues	2.29	1.49
% variance explained	25.5	16.6
α reliability coefficient	0.74	0.48
Questionnaire items used to label factors (criteria is loadings close to or greater than ± 0.32 in combination with α reliability coefficients)	30.4 30.5 30.6	27 29 30.2 30.7 (-)

Rotated Factor Matrix: Future factors(a)

	Factor	
	1	2
How likely you will get job you want?	.028	.611
Plans for the future?	.008	.517
Become self-employed	.155	.261
Obtain additional qualifications	.187	.371
Train for different occupation	.043	-.017
Live elsewhere in country	.592	.116
Live in different country	.864	.134
Learn a new language	.607	.171
Become unemployed	.063	-.367

Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.
 a. Rotation converged in 3 iterations.

Self Factors (from questions 11, 14, 16, 17, 26, 27, 35, 36)

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Label	General self-confidence	Social self-confidence	Fulfilled personal life	Fulfilled at work	Achievement barriers	Frustrating situation
Eigenvalues	6.84	2.61	2.44	2.21	1.83	1.59
% variance explained	12.2	4.65	4.36	3.93	3.27	2.85
α reliability coefficient	0.85	0.85	0.75	0.76	0.63	0.42
Questionnaire items used to label factors (criteria is loadings close to or greater than ± 0.32 in combination with a reliability coefficients	26.4 36.1, 36.2 (-), 36.3 (-), 36.4, 36.8(-), 36.9 36.10, 36.15, 36.16 (-), 36.17	26.3, 26.4 36.5 (-), 36.7 (-) 36.11, 36.12 36.14, 36.15 36.16 (-)	17.2 (all)	17.1 (all)	11.1.2, 11.2.2 11.1.3, 11.2.3 11.1.4, 11.2.4 11.1.5 11.1.6, 11.2.6	14.1 16.1 (-) 16.5 (-) 16.7 26.2

Rotated Factor Matrix: Self factors(a)

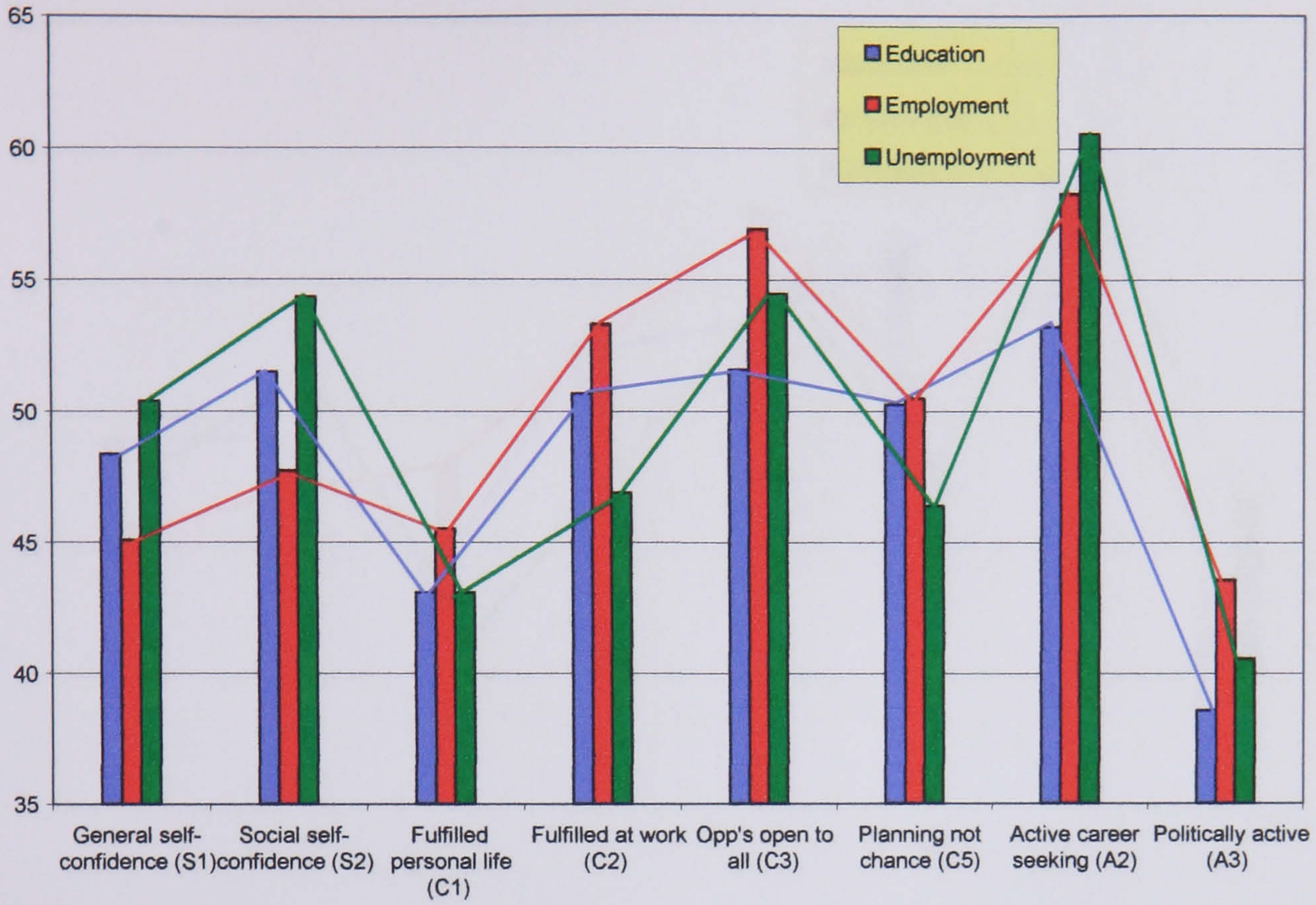
	Factor					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Lack of money - personal	.019	-.091	.052	-.125	.235	-.012
Lack of money - work	-.032	-.050	-.108	.036	.145	.142
The 'system' - personal	-.054	.039	.012	.020	.325	.148
The 'system' - work	-.108	-.059	-.021	-.151	.430	.054
Lack of skills - personal	.078	.067	-.085	.008	.415	-.028
Lack of skills - work	.195	.131	-.023	.050	.471	.023
Lack of qualifications - p	-.002	.059	-.139	.049	.302	.103
Lack of qualifications - w	.114	.072	.050	-.033	.408	.072
My own weaknesses - p	.158	.065	-.058	.085	.410	-.164
My own weaknesses - w	.279	.108	.107	.026	.254	-.118
Other people - p	.036	-.016	-.002	-.054	.405	.059
Other people - w	-.038	.000	.020	-.110	.341	.073
Financial relationship with parents	-.187	.006	-.015	.086	-.011	.311
Dependence on parents	-.144	.104	.086	.029	-.001	.105
Long term goals	-.186	-.039	.008	.177	.066	-.441
Training offered	-.008	-.017	-.029	-.002	.032	.282
Influence of friends	.051	-.067	.013	.039	.071	-.030
Influence of parents	.109	-.071	.027	-.017	.085	-.071
Interest	-.006	-.079	.016	.173	-.025	-.376
By chance	.001	.022	.014	-.034	.103	.186
Had no choice	.075	.105	.019	-.144	.103	.314
At Work - Feel sense of achievement	-.096	-.073	.264	.369	-.096	-.274
Outside work - Feel sense of achievement	-.015	-.144	.642	.014	-.033	-.138
At Work - Have chance to use initiative	-.121	-.100	.120	.541	-.018	.006
Outside work - Have chance to use initiative	-.131	-.085	.553	.059	.021	.006
At Work - Make a decision	-.152	-.067	-.022	.528	-.105	-.103
Outside work - Make a decision	-.114	-.122	.466	.062	-.166	-.064
At Work - Feel stretched	.002	-.075	.226	.508	.040	-.209
Outside work - Feel stretched	-.024	-.067	.571	.114	.127	.001
At Work - Set own goals	-.174	-.078	.071	.638	-.042	-.072
Outside work - Set own goals	-.084	-.109	.577	.098	-.056	-.111

At Work - Feel given responsibility	-.073	-.106	.101	.632	-.046	.037
Outside work - Feel given responsibility	-.025	-.203	.446	.183	-.070	.089
Technical skills	.167	.081	-.101	.003	.051	.166
Writing/Number skills	.082	.262	-.148	.014	.049	.316
Social skills	.083	.493	-.168	-.088	.067	.128
Decision making skills	.317	.427	-.167	-.092	.093	.055
How likely you will get job you want?	.314	.083	-.019	-.239	.106	.183
How interested are you in politics?	.121	.074	-.184	.011	.009	.292
I keep trying	.506	.023	.014	-.093	-.020	-.050
I avoid having to learn difficult new things	-.415	-.236	.080	.040	-.085	-.072
I give up easily	-.620	-.187	.084	.013	-.025	-.070
I can deal with most of my problems	.444	.244	-.018	-.129	.088	.127
I find it difficult to make new friends	-.190	-.570	.050	.053	.003	.040
I take calculated risks	.150	.116	-.186	-.014	-.043	.095
I can't handle social gatherings	-.210	-.607	.095	.048	-.050	.023
I find it difficult to complete tasks	-.482	-.202	.070	.049	-.159	-.023
I can attain the things I plan to do	.441	.131	-.088	-.083	.093	.078
I set my own standards of success	.431	.076	-.249	.001	-.057	.053
My friends value my opinion	.268	.338	-.121	-.061	.002	.102
I have a friend I can rely on	.090	.481	-.108	-.070	.046	.081
My work will be most important in my life	.163	-.031	.076	-.103	-.001	-.077
I can get help with problems	.082	.442	-.082	-.083	.031	.076
I can defend my viewpoint	.342	.399	-.125	-.008	-.047	.081
I often avoid responsibility	-.403	-.306	.138	.205	-.020	-.019
I have lots of energy	.467	.252	-.143	-.152	.021	.014

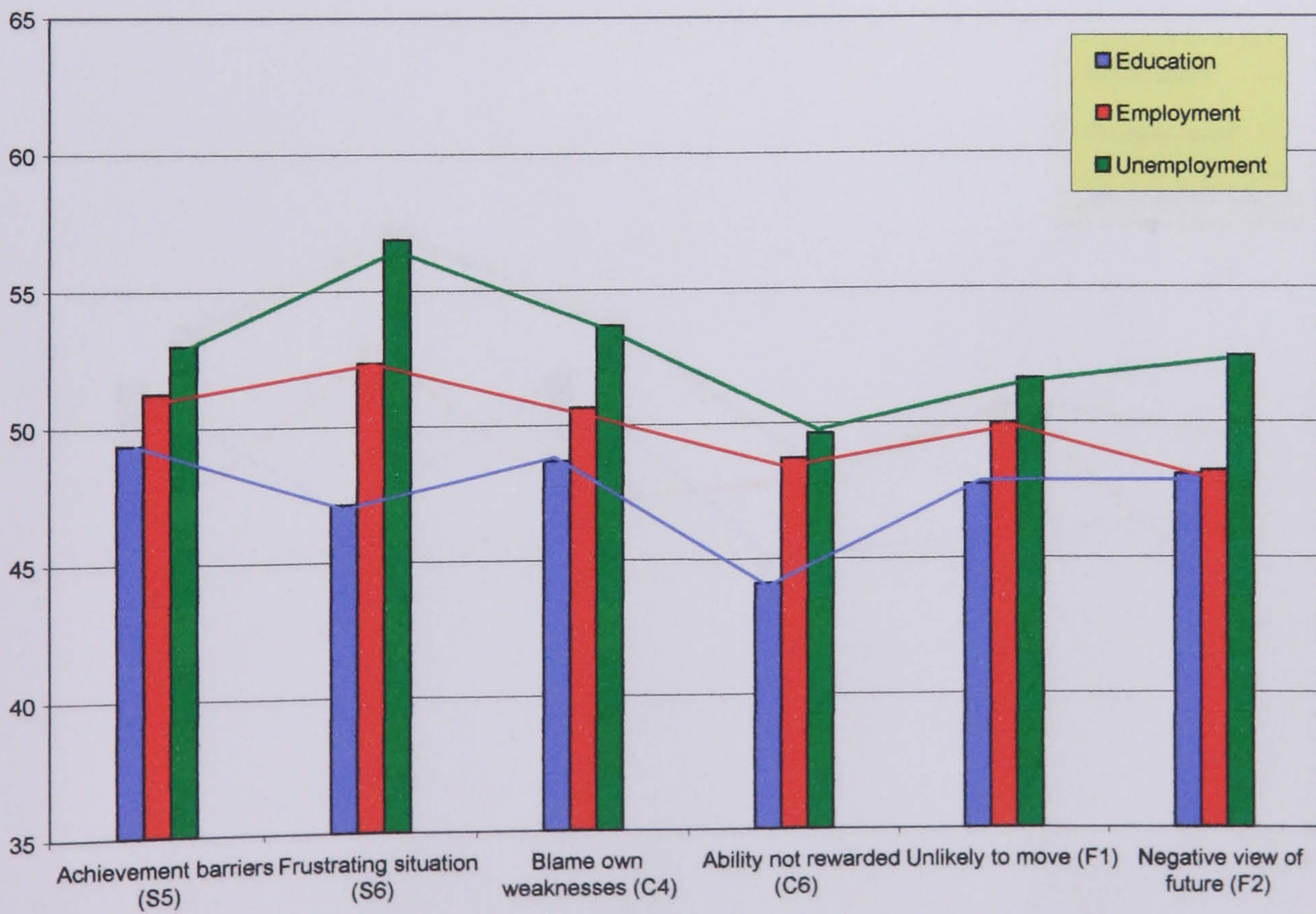
Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.
a. Rotation converged in 8 iterations.

Appendices 10(ii): Group profiles on factor scores

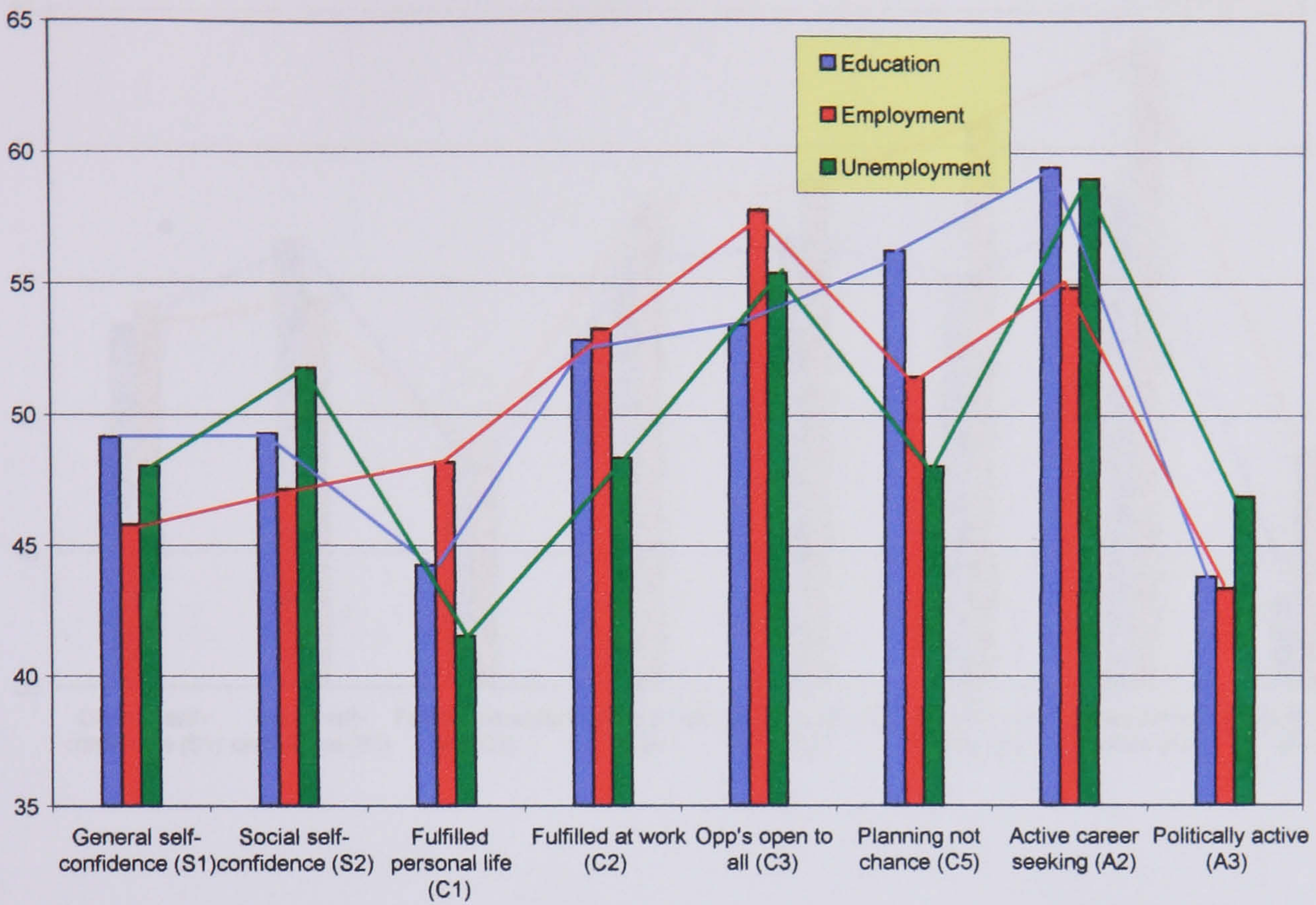
Males: scores on positive factors by setting



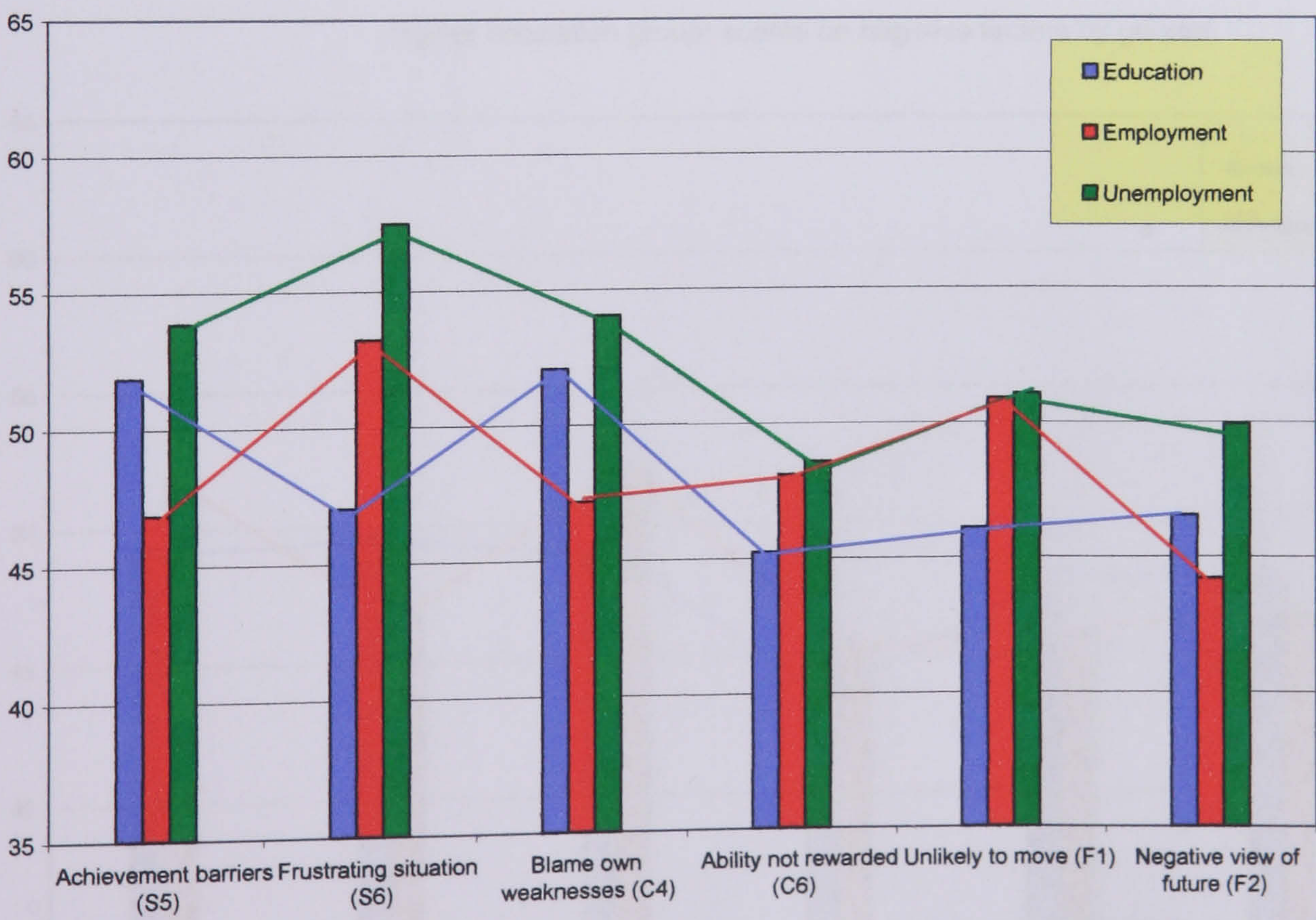
Males: scores on negative factors by setting



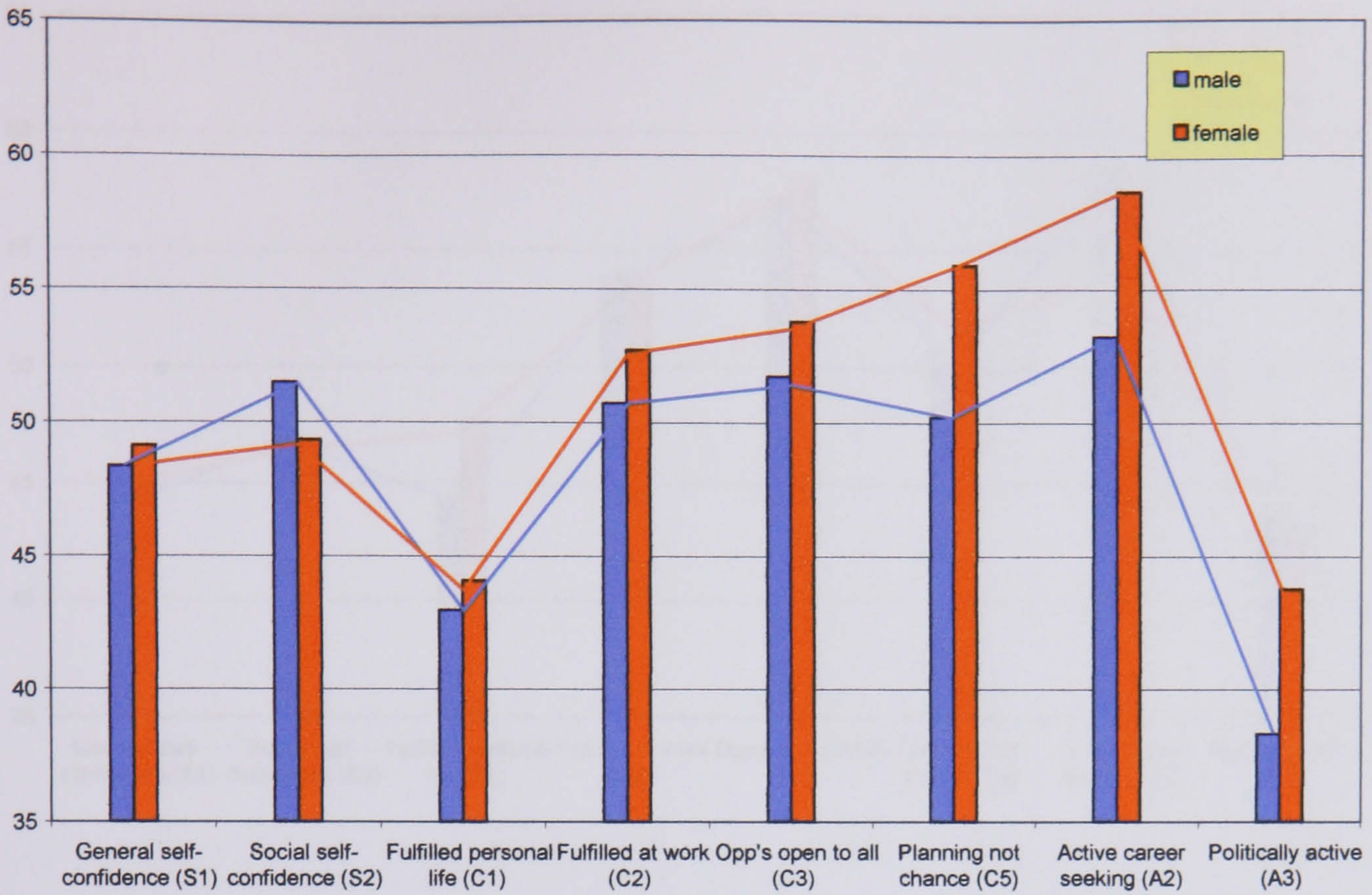
Females: scores on positive factors by setting



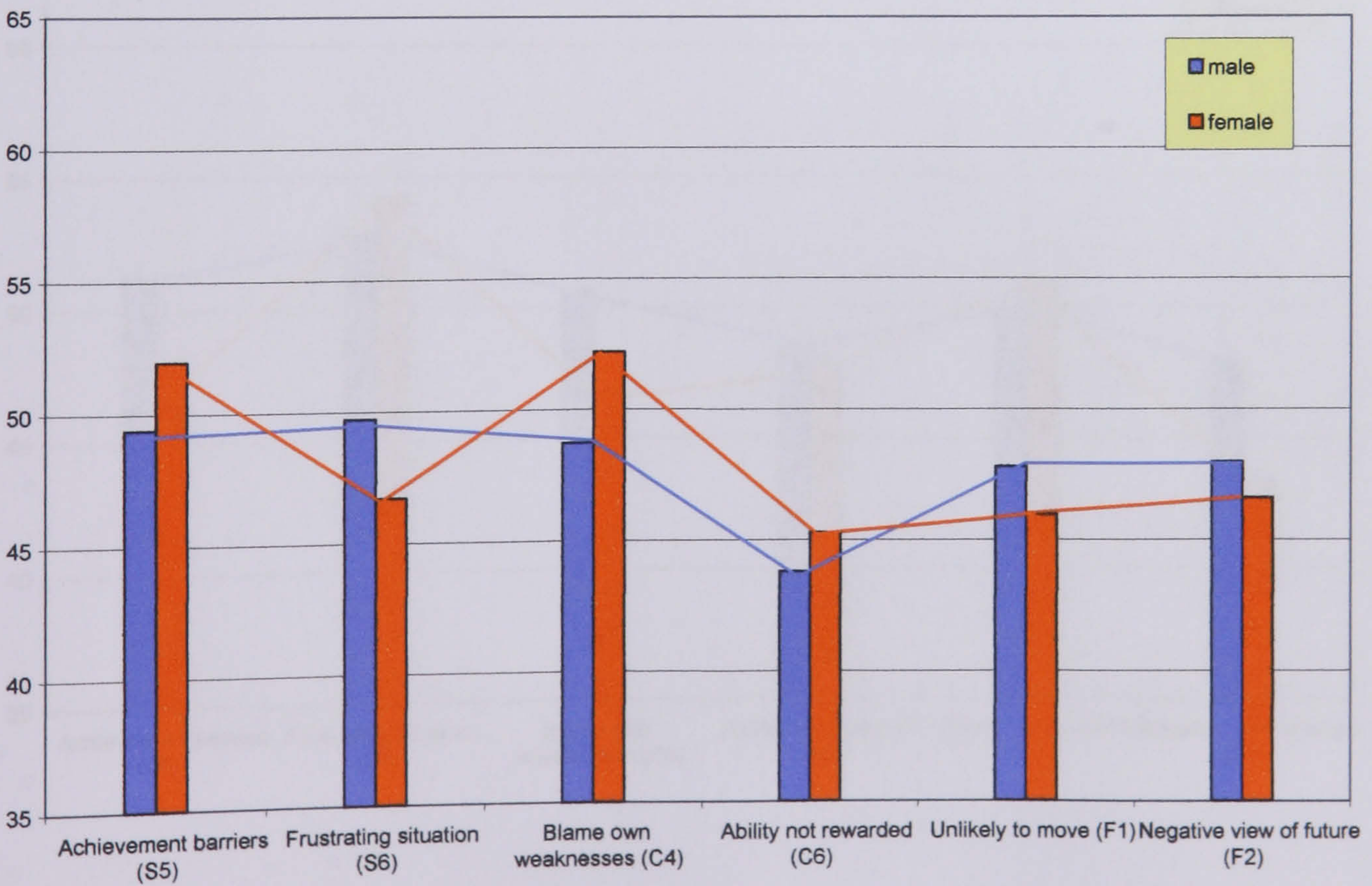
Females: scores on negative factors by setting



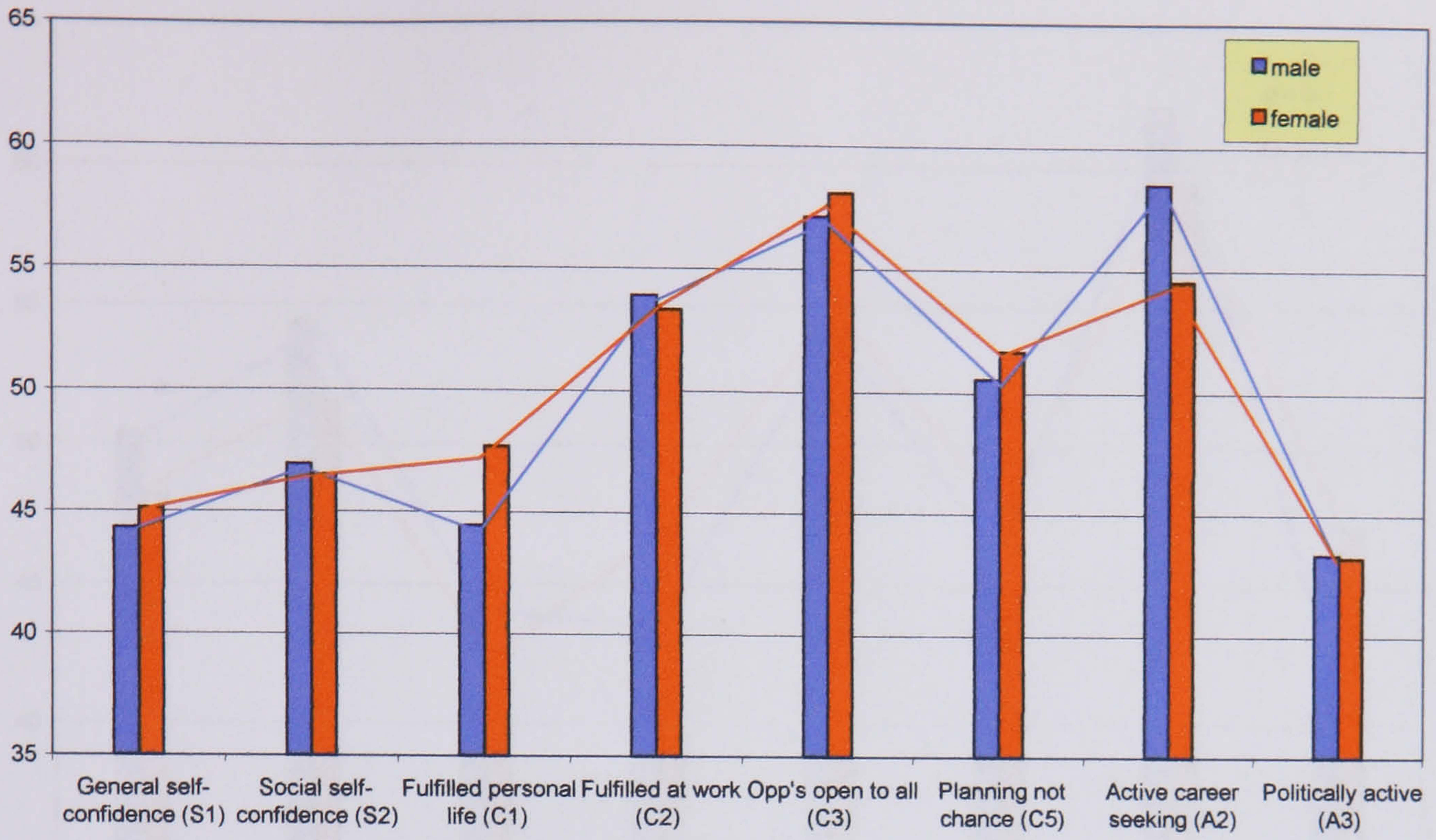
Higher education group: scores on positive factors by gender



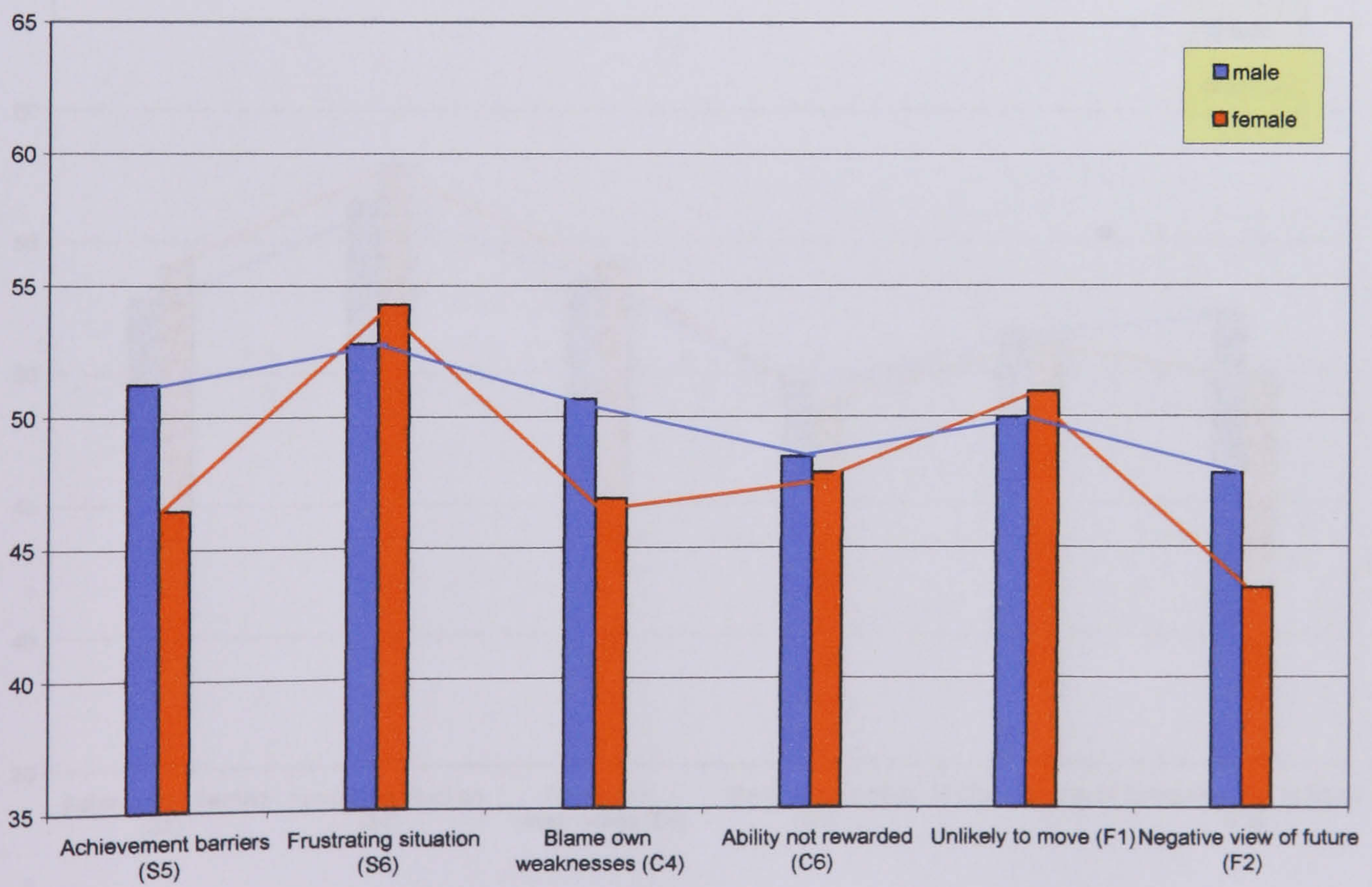
Higher education group: scores on negative factors by gender



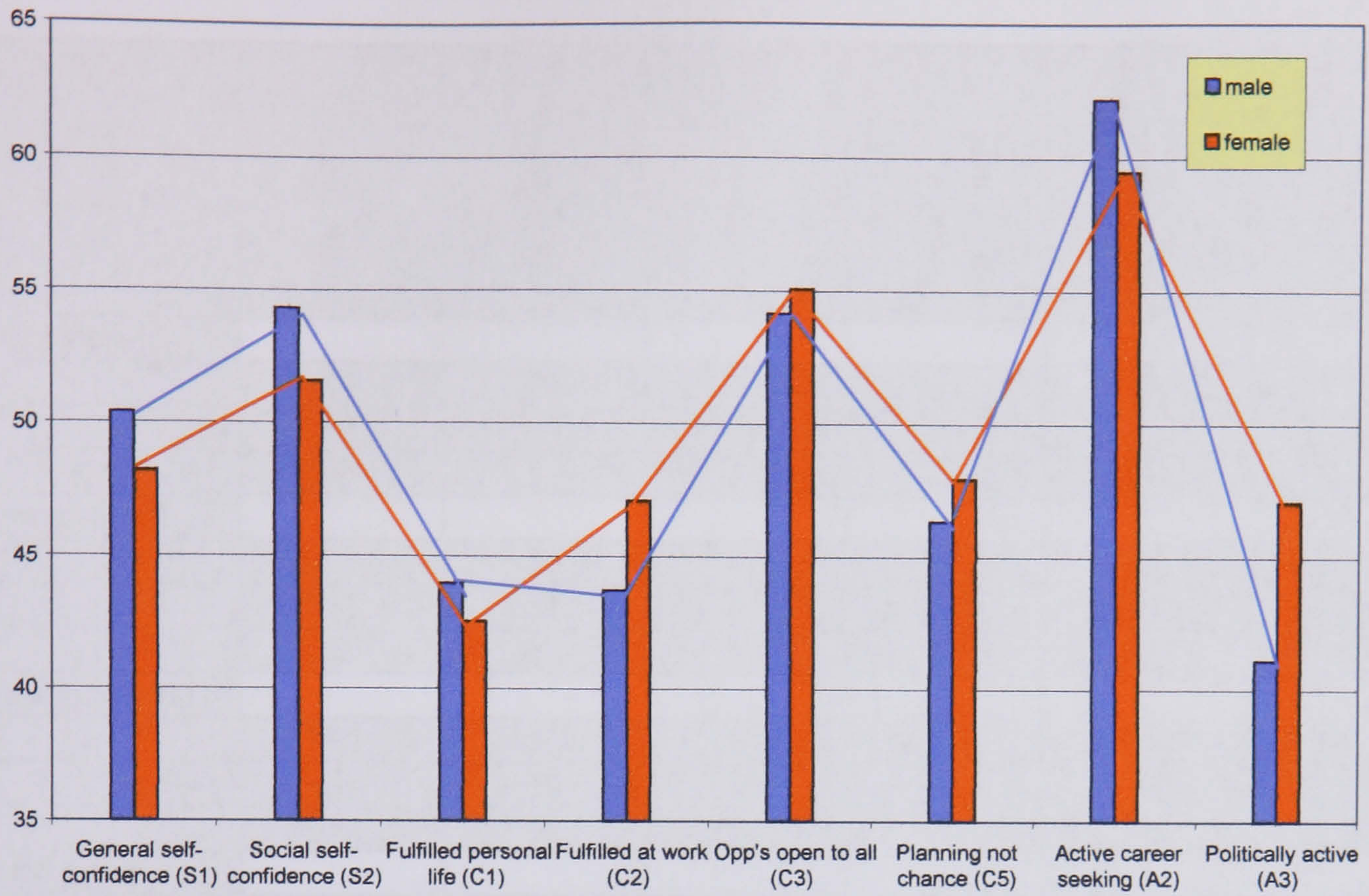
Employed group: scores on positive factors by gender



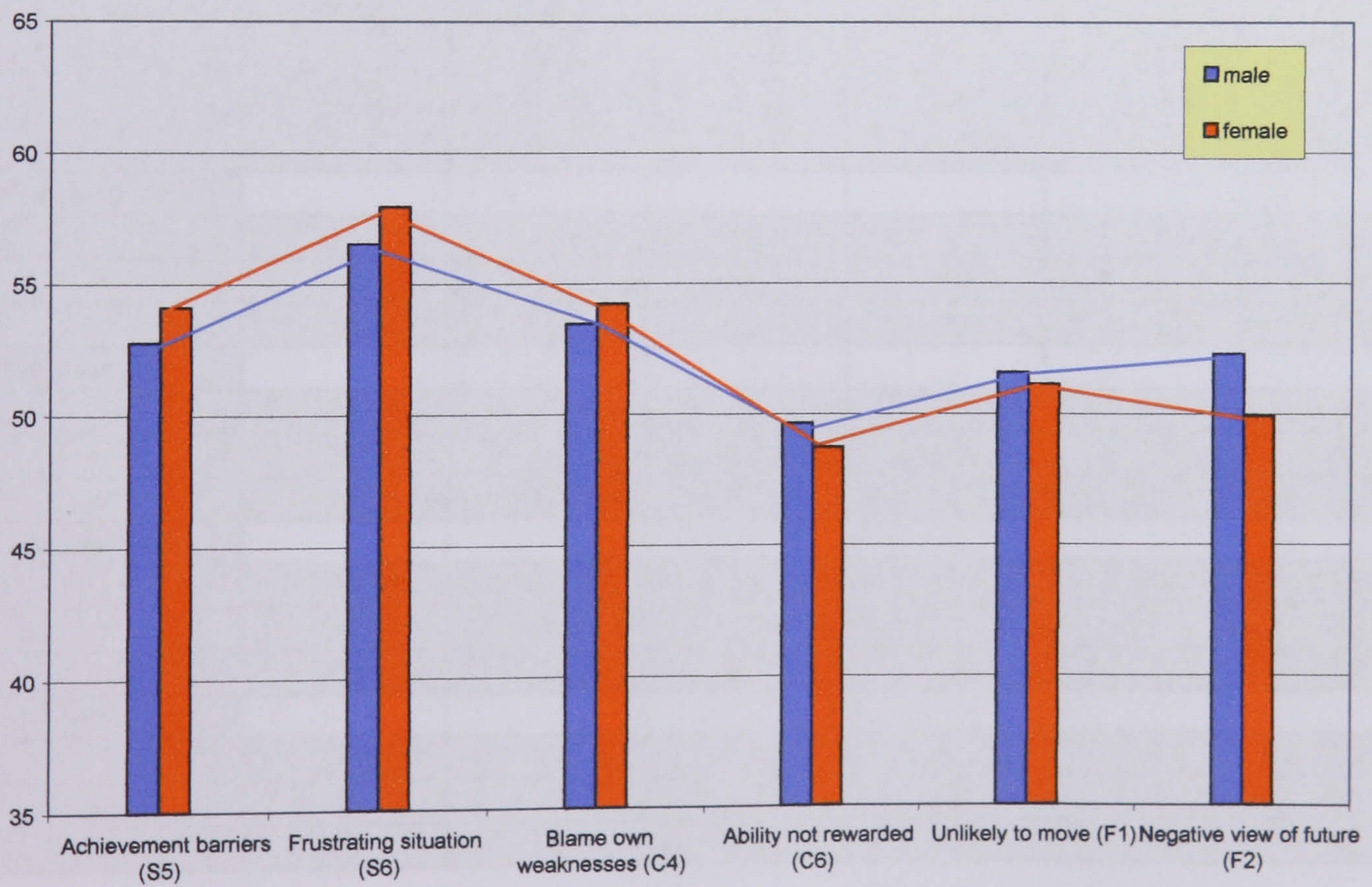
Employed group: scores on negative factors by gender



Unemployed group: scores on positive factors by gender



Unemployed group: scores on negative factors by gender



Appendix 10(iii): Table of data showing work-related values

	Good pay	Job security	Prospects	Friendly atmosphere	Challenges	Responsibility
Education						
M	81	58	54	48	33	23
F	71	44	48	42	35	19
T	76	51	51	45	34	21
Employment						
M	77	56	46	35	40	23
F	73	54	56	33	42	21
T	75	55	51	34	41	22
Unemployment						
M	90	62	54	54	32	28
F	68	54	48	34	32	20
T	79	58	51	44	32	24
Total group						
M	82	59	51	46	35	25
F	75	51	51	36	36	21
T	77	55	51	41	36	22

	Gain qualifications	Not intrude on leisure	Many relationships	Combine with child rearing	Help society individually	Help society as a group
Education						
M	15	19	19	8	13	8
F	17	14	8	23	20	17
T	16	16	13	16	16	13
Employment						
M	21	17	8	4	6	2
F	27	14	10	10	6	8
T	24	15	9	7	6	5
Unemployment						
M	28	22	26	14	14	18
F	32	24	18	16	24	20
T	30	23	22	15	19	19
Total group						
M	21	19	18	9	11	10
F	25	17	12	16	16	15
T	23	18	15	13	14	12

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