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Individualisation and Student Responses to Higher Education

Tuition Fees in the UK 1998 - 2003

By

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in

Sociology

University of Warwick Department of Sociology

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Abstract

To this day the introduction of Higher Education tuition fees during the 1990s proves to be a contentious issue. Despite their financial implications few students actively oppose them. I conducted a detailed study on the issue of the £1000 tuition fees introduced in 1998. I aimed to explore why Higher Education students do not take part in campaigns opposing tuition fees. My research was guided by drawing upon the individualisation theory developed by Beck (1992, 2002) and Giddens (1991). The empirical element of the research is based on a sample of students taken from two universities in the same city.

It is argued that many Higher Education students do not actively participate in campaigns against tuition fees because they undertake individualised responses to the risks and problems associated with their education. They perceive their education to be an investment and accept that debt is a fact of life. It is further argued that students see themselves as individualised consumers who, as a result pursue individual rather than collective solutions to resolving problems related to educational provision.

Though the students who participated in this research overwhelmingly believed the state should pay university tuition fees few students actively oppose them. This research argues that they have a low sense of political efficacy and perceive themselves to be a socially marginalised group with little significance in the eyes of politicians and society. Findings of this research enable the lack of active opposition towards tuition fees to be understood in its social context.

Beck and Giddens' analytical framework provides a practical explanation of why many students do not take part in these campaigns. However, it needs to be developed to provide a more coherent explanation of so few students actively oppose tuition fees.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Why young people?

For several years I have been interested in investigating why so few young people engage in political activity. Before beginning this research I had noted that in recent years much legislation has significantly affected the status, rights and expectations of young people. Many school leavers are no longer entitled to receive welfare benefits and have to undertake training schemes or remain in post compulsory education. Laws have been introduced that limit the right of young people to gather in public places, listen to music, and enjoy themselves in the manner that they choose.

Despite these and other changes a body of research has emerged, which has revealed that few young people are interested in politics. Young people are seldom involved in political activity, many are cynical about the motives of politicians and political parties. Research has been undertaken into why young people choose not to participate in political processes (The Electoral Commission, 2003; Nestle, 2002). This research has mainly focused on the levels of interest that young people have towards politics (Park, 1996). Further research has concentrated either on young people's attitudes towards politicians and the political system (IPPR, 2001; The British Youth Council, 1995) or young people's views concerning policies that deal with social issues (Furnham and Gunter, 1989). Little research has been

conducted into how young people respond to the impact that social issues have on them and how it affects the likelihood of them becoming involved in political activity related to them. I therefore decided to undertake research to gain insight into this.

Young students

Around one-third of all young people aged between the ages of 18- 21 are in post compulsory education, a figure that will probably grow in future years. Young university students make up one of the largest sections of the youth population. In recent years, students have experienced major changes to their right to a free education.

During the 1990s, University vice-chancellors in the UK argued that Higher Education was experiencing a funding shortfall which was undermining the quality of educational provision offered by Higher Education institutions. In 1996 Conservative Prime Minister John Major commissioned the Dearing inquiry to make recommendations on how the funding of Higher Education in Britain should develop over the next 20 years. The following year, the Dearing Report (Dearing, 1997) was published and recommended that students should pay approximately 25 percent of the cost of tuition fees, but that grants should be reintroduced. Following the publication of the report, the then education Secretary David Blunkett announced the introduction of means tested tuition fees that would commence in September 1998. The introduction of tuition fees has effectively challenged previous commitments to the provision of a state education, free at the point of delivery. Since 1998 tuition fees have risen from £1000 to £1150 in the year

2004/2005. The introduction of tuition fees in 1998 raised many concerns amongst the student population. Many students disagreed with the introduction of tuition fees. This sentiment continued well past the date when they were introduced. A survey of university students undertaken in 2002 by the NatWest bank revealed that 66 percent of students thought that tuition fees were unfair (PR Newswire, 2002).

From 2006, the government will introduce a new Higher Education grant of up to £1000 per year for students from low-income families (with incomes of £10,000 to £20,000). It also intends to abolish the upfront payment of tuition fees and introduce the new Graduate Contribution Scheme top-up fee which will compel students to pay up to £3000 per year for each programme of study. The upper threshold of £3000 will be capped for three years. However, in future years it is entirely conceivable that many universities will seek to compel students to pay even more than this.

The prospective introduction of top up fees also concerns a great many students. Data revealed by the Student Living Report shows that:

the majority of students (72%) believe that if their first choice of university had demanded a top up fees (an added differential payment on top of the basic tuition fee) they would have reconsidered to some extent their choice of university (Unite / Mori, 2003:20).

Despite the concerns that many students have towards the various types of tuition fees, they have so far inspired little active resistance. The BBC reported that in

November 1999 around 12-15,000 students took part in a demonstration against tuition fees (BBC, 1999). An article published by the Association of University Teachers reported a similar attendance at a national demonstration in the year 2000 (Association of University Teachers, 2000). Such acquiescence takes place in spite of the fact that in 2002 the government outwardly proposed the introduction of top-fees, which could result in students being compelled to pay several thousand pounds more every year for the privilege of undertaking a Higher Education course. Despite the proposed introduction of top of fees, just a small fraction of the student population actively displayed its opposition to them. Polly Curtis reported that on the 4th of December 2002, around 20,000 travelled to London to attend a national demonstration opposing the introduction of top up fees (Curtis, 2002).

My interest in young people and politics led me to ask why such a significant element of the youth population are unwilling to get involved in campaigns that oppose tuition fees? After all, there is no shortage of evidence detailing the impact of fees and financial hardship on the student community. Since the introduction of student loans and fees, levels of student debt have grown considerably. Clare and Jones reported that the average debt incurred by students upon graduation was £10,000 (Clare and Jones, 1997:7. By 2004 this figure had risen to an estimated £12,069 (BBC, 2004a). As a result, many young students have had to take contingency measures to help them cope with the financial demands of undertaking a course. For many young students paid work is now a regular feature of university life. Since the introduction of student loans in 1991, the numbers of them undertaking paid work has risen. Recently, The Student Living Report (Unite /

Mori, 2004) reported that 40 percent of students do some form of paid work during term time, tuition fees are an added financial load that many students could well do without. Many people feel that they exclude poorer students from ever entering university. Tuition fees have created a hot political issue that has angered many students and has effectively forced them to consider political issues such as citizenship rights and taxation policy. Their introduction in 1998 provided an ideal opportunity to conduct research on young people's attitudes towards political participation by offering the chance to find out how young students (aged 18 to 25) understand a political issue that directly affects them.

An Individualised Group

This thesis contends that the individualisation thesis developed by Beck (1992, 2002) and Giddens (1991) provides insight into why so few students choose to become involved in campaigns. I will critically apply this framework in an attempt to explain why there is such a low level of student participation in campaigns opposing tuition fees. I argue that low levels of participation in campaigns are symptomatic of the individualisation that is taking place within society, the education system and the sphere of politics. Students reside in a society in which it is expected that isolated individuals (rather than collective groups) should be the reflexive authors of their own life journey. This outlook discourages large-scale active student involvement in campaigns related to tuition fees.

This thesis will examine how social and cultural changes, including the decline of community, political and social solidarities have contributed towards the process of individualisation. It will also examine how globalisation, the declining influence of metanarratives, political ideologies and changing value systems contribute towards this process. The thesis also focuses on how governmental policies assist the process of individualisation by encouraging self-help outlooks and consumerising aspects of social life. This thesis then examines how the marketisation and consumerisation of the education system contributes towards the process of individualisation among the student community. It critically employs concepts used by Beck (1992, 2002) and Giddens (1991) including abstract systems, globalisation, the duality of structure, sub-politics and reflexivity as a guide to understanding the process of individualisation within Higher Education and the low levels of active participation in campaigns connected with tuition fees.

Alternative insights

The work of other social theorists could be used to provide an analytical framework from which to examine the process of individualisation and why few students actively participate in these campaigns. Rational choice theory has many similarities with economic theory and has had been employed in the attempt to explain human actions. It argues that all human actions are instrumental rational actors who are fundamentally calculative. Rational choice theory subscribes to methodological individualism, which holds that the elementary unit of social life is

individual actions. Coleman (1990) maintains that individual preferences are motivated by their desires or goals. Rational actors act within given constraints on the basis of the information that they have. They attempt to anticipate the costs and rewards associated with various courses of action and calculate which is likely to give them the greatest 'utility' or satisfaction, not just in monetary or material rewards, but also in terms of gaining non-material rewards such as social recognition by one's community. Rational choice theory can potentially provide an analytical framework for understanding why rationally motivated individual actors decide not to participate in political campaigns.

It is undeniable that the data produced by this research shows that individuals make rational decisions about whether they should become involved in campaigns and consider the costs and rewards attached to their decisions. However, after careful consideration and a critical assessment of the explanatory capabilities of rational choice theory I decided that it was not able to provide a satisfactory analytical framework from which to effectively explore the issue of low levels of active participation by young students in campaigns pertaining to tuition fees.

Rational choice theory fails to adequately deal with the fact that established social norms of behaviour and a sense of obligation may often encourage individuals (and indeed large sections of social groups) to behave in a selfless, altruistic manner. Also, it does not adequately explain why some forms of collective action take

place. Scott (2000) argues that collective action often involves some individuals joining with others and undertaking actions that may not benefit them personally. Some people join organisations on principle knowing that they may never see any increase in personal material reward. Finally, its emphasis upon methodological individualism means that rational choice theory fails to sufficiently consider how structural factors such as political, ideological, social class, ethnic and gender issues can impact upon life courses and the decisions that individuals make. In doing so it devotes insufficient attention to developing understanding of the interaction between structure and agency and how this impacts on every day behaviour.

Parker (2000) undertook an examination of the value of rational choice theory as a basis for understanding how Higher Education students experience issues, and understand and deal with the impact of structures upon them. He argues that the strategies that students use to deal with the economic and academic issues that they face change throughout the period of time that they spend at university. He also asserts that a dynamic interplay between structure and agency takes place. For example, the existence of tuition fees inspires some students to perceive themselves as customers and in turn impose demands upon the structures that brought them about. His research leads him to conclude that the interplay between structures and agents needs to be considered in the attempt to develop a coherent understanding of student behaviour. Parker's work not only provides an interesting insight into views

of university students, but also underlines my view that rational choice theory is not suited to understanding the process of student individualisation, the interplay between structure and agency within Higher Education and the reluctance of so many students to actively involve themselves in campaigns opposing tuition fees.

The individualisation theory developed by Giddens and Beck gives greater recognition to the impact of social structures on individuals and importantly the interplay between institutions, structures and agents. Giddens' (1984) concept of duality of structure maintains that social change occurs as a result of this interplay. For example, Giddens (1991) argues that a coherent understanding of society and social change requires an understanding of the interaction between the institutional dimensions of modern-day society. Both Giddens and Beck recognise (if imperfectly) the influence of wider norms and traditions upon every day decision-making. In addition to this, the methodological individualism that lies at the heart of rational choice theory means that it is less able to comprehend the historical and social reasons that explain why traditional solidarity systems are declining and why individuals may undertake higher levels of individualised behaviour than before.

While considering the theoretical frameworks that may inform the basis of this piece of research the usefulness of the work of Mary Archer (1995, 2003) was also considered as offering a theoretical insight into the phenomena of low levels of active student participation in campaigns pertaining to tuition fees. Her contribution

to the structure-agency debate offers a multi faceted explanation of social change. Her model of social action called the morphogenenic cycle illustrates the interplay between agents and social structures within the process of social change. Archer (1995) argues that structural conditioning results as a consequence of previous actions which influence social situations and endow people with differing sets of interests. She then argues that the process of social interaction involves a critical interplay between structures and agents. Archer maintains that within this interaction agents play an active role in social change and that structural elaboration (the final part of the morphogenic cycle) results from conflict and concession between the different groups.

This insight, coupled with her analysis of the significance of ideas and culture in social life would have proved useful to me in understanding the phenomenon of student responses to debt and the introduction of tuition fees. Her more recent work (Archer, 2003) develops the idea that there are different types of individuals who, (as a result of undertaking internal conversations) undertake differing types of reflexive decision-making strategies. This insight into the nature of these internal conversations and their subsequent impact upon individual decision-making strategies would have proved useful when analysing the fieldwork data produced by this research.

Upon considering the insights provided by Archer's work I decided to adopt the

individualisation theory developed by Giddens and Beck as a framework that may inform the study. Despite the fact that Archer's work could offer insight into the role of institutions, structures, ideas and individualised reflexive decision-making processes upon student attitude towards campaigns connected with tuition fees. Her work can be criticised for failing to develop a coherent understanding of the relationship between social structures and individuals. Healey (1998) observes that on one hand Archer maintains that social structures are activity dependent, that is, the efficacy of these structures depend upon the actions of contemporary members of society while on the other hand some social structures are the effects of the activities of previous generations and therefore are 'ontologically independent of the activities of those people here present' (Archer, 1995:145). Healey argues that this is problematic in the sense that 'it makes us believe in social structures whose existence in the present is entirely independent of the people who make a society, which is impossible' (Healey, 1998:518). Archer does attempt (as I have mentioned above) to examine how previous actions impact upon situations in which individuals find themselves today. However, I agree with Healey's assessment that Archer needs to develop a more in-depth causal explanation of how the actions of past individuals and social structures created in the past supervene upon individuals of today.

When I first decided to investigate why so few young students actively protested against introduction of tuition fees I was aware that their low level of political

participation was paralleled by a historical decline in participation in traditional mass based political organisations and protests. I therefore concluded that I would need to conduct a historical analysis to comprehend the impact of previous events upon political activism. The work of Giddens and Beck is better suited to examining historical factors that may contribute towards low levels of active student participation in campaigns opposing tuition fees.

McAnulla (1998) argues that Archer's work fails to 'capture the interrelationship of the structural and ideational' and that she doesn't sufficiently explain how ideas impact upon structures and vice versa. I also concluded that Archer needs to devote more attention to this issue. The work of Giddens and Beck provides a clearer conceptual framework that more specifically analyses the role of ideas, politics, sub-politics and reflexivity in social change, both as being a cause and result of the individualisation process.

After careful consideration of Archer's contributions and rational choice theory I concluded that the work of Beck and Giddens has produced more developed explanatory frameworks which can both be used to examine the low levels of student participation in campaigns pertaining to tuition fees and consider the extent that their individualisation theory offers a useful guide to explaining this phenomenon.

Chapter 2

The individualised society

Introduction

This chapter begins by exploring the meaning of individualisation and reflexivity. It then examines the social context that has caused the phenomenon of individualisation. It explores how structural changes have fragmented the collective consciousness of whole communities. It explores how the declining influence of metanarratives and changes in ideas contribute towards the individualisation of society. Finally, the roles of politicians and government within this process is examined. It tries to develop an understanding of the social context that can be used to provide insight into Higher Education students' attitudes towards the risks that they confront and political campaigns that oppose tuition fees.

What is individualisation?

Throughout history, societies have developed economic, political and ideological systems that have enabled them to sustain themselves. Marx (1973) identified slave, feudal and capitalist societies as examples of historical epochs. Emergent ideological, economic and political forces have eventually fragmented and replaced existing social, ideological and political frameworks and have often established progressively freer and more modern social epochs. Several contemporary sociologists including Beck (1992, 2002), Bauman (2001) and Giddens

(1990, 1991) argue that contemporary society is being fragmented, not by a new challenge mounted by aspiring groups aiming to reconstitute society upon superior economic, ideological or political frameworks, but rather by a process which seems at this point in time to be bound to further atomise society.

Today, Western societies are experiencing large-scale changes that are having a marked impact on economic, social and political life. The process of modernisation is gradually eroding the established social and economic structures of modernity or 'industrial society'. Industrial society is being gradually replaced by the emergence of a new social formation that Beck (1992) terms 'reflexive modernity'. Within it individuals experience an uncertain existence. The political ideologies, political organisations, social class solidarities, truth systems, community frameworks, national identities and moral frameworks that during modernity gave individuals a frame of reference with which to collectively understand or change society are being eroded. This has propelled the process which Beck (1992) terms 'individualisation', which involves people becoming increasingly freed from, or becoming sceptical of established community, solidarity networks and truth systems and traditional expectations of behaviour. Within this context, people strive to comprehend their existence and pursue individual rather than collective solutions to social problems that effect them. Individualisation both propels and reflects the social phenomena that give rise to it. Bauman has examined individualisation and argues that it entails:

the emancipation of the individual from the ascribed, inherited and inborn determination of his or her social character: a departure rightly

seen as a most conspicuous and seminal feature of the modern condition. To put it in a nutshell 'individualisation insists in transforming the human 'identity' from a 'given' into a 'task' - and charging actors with responsibility for performing that task and for the consequences (also the side-effects) of their performance (Bauman, 2001:144).

Today, individuals find themselves increasingly 'alone' in an uncertain world and are forced to deal with the risks and problems they face as individuals rather than members of collective groups. Within Western societies, individualisation has given rise to a situation where the individual becomes the centre of existence:

We live in an age in which the social order of the national state, class, ethnicity and traditional family is in decline. The ethic of individual self-fulfillment and achievement is the most powerful current in modern society. 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 a central character of our time (Beck, 2001:165).

Risk consciousness and reflexivity

In contemporary society, people deal with dilemmas that they face on an individual rather than collective basis. They increasingly see their problems as risks that

should be constantly monitored and reviewed. Today, risk consciousness influences people's daily actions. Furedi (1997), Lupton (1999), Beck (1992) and Giddens (1991) contend that contemporary society is characterised by an increasing preoccupation with risk. People recognise that risks are increasingly man-made, that is a product of industrialisation, politics and war. Public preoccupation with risks such as environmental disaster, war, economic insecurity and potential scientific catastrophes has encouraged distrust towards government and the scientific community. People also recognise risks to be global in their nature. For example, the threat of war, AIDS, environmental problems, and financial insecurity know no borders and afflict all members of society regardless of their social background.

Traditional institutions such as government, the welfare state, the family, religion political ideologies and political movements are no longer understood by individuals and society as being effective at offsetting the risks produced by the process of modernisation. For example, statutory welfare entitlements are increasingly being means tested or removed altogether. Political ideologies that once claimed to offer an understanding of the world, how to manage it and how to change it have been called into question. Communications play a crucial role in spreading information to millions of people across the world. The world is often portrayed as being increasingly uncertain, unpredictable and uncontrollable. As a result, the concept of risk enters people's living rooms and consciousnesses on a

daily basis. A significant example of the power of the media in raising levels of risk consciousness is illustrated by its profile in reporting the government's role in the mismanagement of the BSE crisis. It defined the boundaries of the debate and portrayed the risk as a future 'time bomb' likely to explode at an unspecified date somewhere in the future. Media reports heightened public distrust of the scientific community and as a result intensified peoples fear of risk.

Reflexive responses to risk underpins the behaviour of individuals and organisations alike. While organisations institutionalise their responses to risk, individual reflexive responses most often reflect the increasingly individualised nature of social interaction. In modern society, individuals no longer refer to traditional truth systems and community expectations to inform their interpretation of risk. Their declining influence increasingly induces individuals to see social phenomena in terms of a set of risks that they must deal with on an individual rather than collective basis. Today, individuals reflexively deal with the risks they face by considering facts and strategies drawn from an eclectic realm of influences.

Individuals are not alone in trying to deal with risk. Organisations are also trying to deal with potential risks by attempting to manage them at all times. For example, it is not unusual for employees to undertake risk assessments, schools to have electronic locks and TV stations to broadcast warnings about the possible effects of strobe lighting that may occur during some of their program output. In a risk conscious society, politicians try to reinforce their legitimacy as governors by trying to play a central role in managing risk. They are keen to be seen to be

actively concerned with the environment, health, security and safety issues. Members of the public regularly accept that things such as traffic cameras, tighter border controls and greater levels of surveillance are justified in the name of minimising risk. The most striking example of which is the government's role in combating international terrorism. President Bush's recent election victory was attributed to his ability to portray himself as being more able than his opponents to defend the USA against the risk of terrorist attack.

Social change and individualisation

Within contemporary societies, community identities, political ideologies, traditional systems of knowledge and moral systems are in a state of flux. The uncertainties produced by their breakdown coupled with economic uncertainty, globalisation and environmental degradation have caused increasing levels of social reflexivity by inducing many sections of society to re-evaluate various aspects of social life. Organisations and communities have become more reflexively self-critical of their missions and roles. Modern society is in a state of change. Social reflexivity is a key reason behind the fragmentation of society. The social developments that have contributed towards the development of reflexive modernity and individualisation are discussed below.

A Globalised World

Globalisation can be described as a process, which is making the world become increasingly smaller and more interlinked. It has had a marked impact on the nature

of economic and social development, individual and local identities and is intrinsically linked to individualisation. A globalised world is characterised by the presence of interconnected commercial, transportation, communication and governmental systems. As a result of these events and phenomena that occur in any area of the globe will have consequences for other areas. Mann argues that in modern society the lives of every individual are intrinsically linked to the wider fate of the global community:

Today we live in a global society. It is not a unitary society, nor is it an ideological community or state, but it is a single power network. Shock waves reverberate around it, casting down empires, transporting massive quantities of people, materials and messages, and finally, threatening the ecosystem and the atmosphere of the planet. (Mann, 1993:11).

In a globalised world, the fate of the individual is linked not only to the localities in which they find themselves, but also to global structures and events. Global forces are undermining and fragmenting local and established identities, governmental and belief systems. These forces lie outside the control of any individual or nation state and play a key role in propelling individualisation.

Globalisation and individualisation

Young people live in a context in which developments in technology have enabled the distances between people and places to be compressed to the extent that it may be contended that people are living in a single world. The greater interconnection of global networks has led to the disembedding of social systems, which is undermining local identities and encourages individualisation. Ritzer (1988) argues that multinational companies have played a central role in the process of economic globalisation and dissolution of regional cultures. He argues that a process of McDonaldisation is at work in which multinational companies are able to standardise production and consumption to the extent that local identities are rendered less significant. Globalising forces, cheap travel networks, live TV, Internet link-ups and the growing influence of consumer goods from other cultures are diffusing local cultures and identities even further. Klein (2000) and Ritzer (1998) argue that multinational companies have made significant inroads into national economies and that brand named goods have had a significant impact on consumer culture.

Global developments have led more people and communities to question the legitimacy and effectiveness of their own governmental systems. Supranational organisations such as the World Bank, multinational companies, global communication networks and organisations such as the European Economic Community, have undermined much of the ability of individuals, local groups, governments and nation states to order their daily activities. Today assistance from

the World Bank is often accompanied by the insistence that nation states employ social policies that are acceptable to the bank. Sklair (1995) maintains that the ability of transnational corporations to transfer funds and assets across the globe has made it more difficult for governments to city plan their own policies. Recent developments in Europe have shown that the EEC is gradually imposing more and more of its own economic and social policies upon its members.

Globalisation is accentuating the individualisation of society by actively compelling individuals to question their own sense of social identity. A Mori survey entitled 'Undoing Britain', published in the Economist revealed the largest group of respondents believe that in 20 years time the EEC rather than the British government will have the most influence over political life. (The Economist, 1999). On one hand many individuals and political parties in Europe recognise the process of change and identify their interests with a wider union of nations. While on the other, globalisation has produced other notable tendencies. The European political scene is chequered with various parties and political groups who actively resist the encroachment of globalised governance and social identities.

Globalisation has created a sense of malaise among many local communities that has led some to develop nationalistic and regionalist identities to try to reassert their dissolving sense of being. Billig (1995) argues that many individuals demonstrate what he calls 'banal nationalism' which manifests itself through acts such as

displaying flags and the defence of local currencies. Only the passage of time will reveal how these two notable tendencies may (if ever) resolve themselves. One thing is certain; the process of globalisation has created a context in which many people are beginning to question their personal identities. Young people's lifestyle habits draw from a constantly changing, eclectic mixture of cultural influences, which reflect the individualisation of society. They routinely watch satellite TV and use the Internet and telecommunications networks. According to Appignanesi (1995) the 'Wigger' phenomenon which involves white people actively adopting many aspects of 'black culture' into their every day lives is a striking example of how globalised popular culture has caused some young people to question their own racial identity and thereby create a more diffuse society in which continuity and tradition seems less obvious.

Individualisation and the decline of social class solidarities

For many years, class-consciousness encouraged many people to develop common identities and become involved in collective struggles. The corporatist system that underpinned many 'social democratic' states was based on recognising the interests of organised labour. Left-wing intellectuals, political parties and working-class organisations made significant contributions to the understanding of how society works. In addition to this, historians, sociologists and politicians have all recognised the significance of the working-class in shaping social development. In recent years however, levels of working class collective solidarity have declined. Its

decline has contributed to the individualisation of society by creating a social context in which mass organised campaigns expressing solidarity with other similarly placed people occupy a lower profile than in the past.

Today, young people have little experience of mass social classed based political action. Several factors have contributed to this situation. One explanation can be found in the post Fordism thesis that contends that over the last 30 years the composition of the manual workforce in many Western societies has changed significantly. Production techniques have changed from Fordist assembly lines to a production system based upon flexible specialisation. Today, goods are increasingly produced in small batches in smaller workshops. The assembly lines that characterised the Fordist era have become outdated as an increasingly skilled workforce constantly changes and diversifies in response to market demands. Post Fordism and flexible specialisation have given rise to the development of a core and peripheral labour force. The core labour force consists of highly skilled workers often employed on permanent contracts while the peripheral sector is made up of a growing number of less skilled workers employed on a variety of contracts. Robin Murray (1989) of the New Times group argues that these developments have eroded collective organisation and class consciousness by placing workers in small-scale workplaces where trade union influence is weaker. This development effectively accentuates individualisation, producing an increasingly fragmented, disparate group of isolated workers who are forced to tackle the risks they face

alone rather than as members of collective groups.

Social mobility and structural changes in the occupational structure have accentuated individualisation by reducing levels of working class solidarity. Between 1975 and 1994 the numbers of people employed in manufacturing in Britain declined from 55 percent of the working population to 46 percent, while the numbers of people involved in non manual jobs increased from 42 to 53 percent (Bennet, et al., 1996:195). The British are not alone in experiencing this trend. Sassoon (1996) has noted that similar declines have taken place throughout Europe. These developments have had an impact upon levels of class solidarity because workers in service industries are traditionally less organised. It is perhaps significant to note across a similar period of time, the increasing amount of workers employed in service industries has been paralleled by decreasing levels of industrial action. Data revealed by Sassoon (1996) points out that between 1980 and 1990, trade union density levels in Western Europe universally decreased and that during this period levels of trade union action also declined.

In the recent past, trade unions represented an active medium of collective class struggle and solidarity. During the 1970s they were linked with the demise of both Labour and Conservative governments. Pakulski and Waters (1996) point out that throughout Western Europe, trade unions have experienced a decline in membership and undertake lower levels of industrial action. This pattern has been

repeated in the UK. In recent years, the numbers of working people in trade unions has declined from 13.1 million members in 1979 to 7.1 million members in 1998 (Biz/ed, 2001). Statistics produced by The Office for National Statistics reveal that the number of working days lost due to strike action decreased from 3754 in 1983 to 449 in 2003 (Monger, 2003). Various explanations have been forwarded for declining levels of trade union struggles. Governmental legislation has strongly contributed to the decline of collective union action. Various acts of legislation have limited the ability of trade unions to undertake action and for workers to show solidarity with others. The 1980 Employment Act outlawed secondary picketing. The 1984 Employment Act compelled unions to undertake secret ballots before strike action could take place. The latter also revised striker's entitlements to social security benefits. In addition to this, the use of subcontracted workers, on fixed term contracts and performance-related pay, have served to undermine collective solidarity. Today, trade unions seem less able to function as a focus for collective struggle, which seems likely to accentuate the individualisation of society.

The objective conditions that reduce class-consciousness and encourage individualisation among the working class have also impacted on the young. Today, few young people experience a working environment within which they can express class solidarity with other workers. Cohen (1997) argues that the scaling down of the traditional apprenticeship system in factories has contributed towards the detachment of working class school leavers from identification with labour

politics. As result it is less able to transmit class-consciousness amongst young workers. Today, young people are less likely to be members of trade unions than older workers (Mulgan and Wilkinson, 1995). Also young people are overwhelmingly concentrated in service occupations where unions are less evident (Furlong and Cartmel, 1997). It also seems that many young people appear to be adopting the economic individualist outlooks displayed by many members of wider society. Mulgan and Wilkinson (1995) point out that the young are increasingly displaying individualistic attitudes to work including a growing preference for performance related pay. A study undertaken on trade unions by Rose found that even in manufacturing industries, young employees displayed a 'sheer lack of interest' in trade unions (Rose, 1996:126). Individualised responses to problems in the workplace seem likely to become an established aspect of young people's outlooks well into their future.

Changing ideas and individualisation

Besides the structural changes described above, changes in the value systems and ideological outlooks which once enabled large sections of society to collectively understand and confront the problems and risks they face have encouraged individualisation. Today, young people experience a landscape of ideas that is constantly changing. They have no collective frame of reference to refer to when understanding social phenomena and making decisions that affect their lives. The ideological systems developed by the Christian religion, and the scientific

community are increasingly being called into question. Governments have done much to redefine the conception of citizenship. In addition to this, evidence points to young people increasingly adopting individualistic ideas of meritocracy and hedonism. The following section will examine how they contribute to the phenomenon of individualisation.

Christian secularisation and individualisation

Religion is a metanarrative that offers explanations for social and spiritual phenomena and has provided a foundation for community identities and social value systems. Many parents attempt to encourage them to adopt their religious beliefs by sending their children to schools that correspond to their religious outlook (although it should be noted that much of their evidence focuses upon Western societies). Supporters of the secularisation thesis argue that the influence of the Christian religion is declining. In recent years, levels of weekly attendance at Christian churches in Britain has dropped. In 1998, just 7.5 percent of the population attended church each week. (Denscome, 2000:27). In addition to this, the established Christian church is less able to influence government. Despite findings that can be used to contend the secularisation thesis, including surveys showing high levels of belief in God and the contentions of sociologists such as Parsons, (1964) who argued that religious values strongly influence daily life, evidence shows that Christian religious values have a declining influence on people's lives. For example, the numbers of babies baptised into the Christian

religion has significantly declined (Bruce, 1996), as has the number of couples who get married in a Christian church (Brierley, 1998). Wilson and Kidd (1998) have also revealed that between 1981 and 1993, the levels of divorce in 16 European countries had on average increased. Secularisation contributes to the individualisation of society by fragmenting the identities of significant numbers of people who previously identified with religious creeds. Fewer young people today are conscious of the sense of identity that organised religion vested upon its followers.

It should be mentioned that in Britain, the Muslim and Sikh places of worship have experienced a growth attendance at weekly worship. However, the declining influence of the Christian religion in Britain has led to the growth of new age practices, which accentuate individualisation. In recent years there has been a growth of new religious movements and new age practices which are focused around things as diverse as the worship of the earth to herbalism. New age religious practices encourage individualisation because they are most often undertaken alone and are focused around individual self-fulfillment rather than collective worship. Lynn Revell (1996) also believes that the growth of the new age is a symptom of individualisation:

New age ideas seek to strengthen the individual in this modern maze of everyday survival, these are philosophies that can be adapted and

integrated into conventional lives with the minimum of disruption but which nonetheless served as a way of reordering people's lives in some sense (Revell, 1996:19).

Revell goes on to argue that new age practices reaffirm the centrality of the individual over the community. She contends that 'what distinguishes the New Age Sacred is not merely the emphasis on the self, but the rejection of virtues and affection outside the self as an illusion' (Revell, 1996:127). The established church seems to have recognised the impact of individualisation and is grappling with it. Elements of the Christian church have developed an Internet access service called the Alpha Course in order to make itself seem relevant to the lifestyle issues of people today. Individualisation and the growth of new age practices seem to reflect and reinforce the breakdown of social value systems that once gave some sense of identity and regularity to everyday life and in turn, further bring about the atomisation of society. The declining influence of the Christian religion has not necessarily lead to the decline of spiritualist outlooks, it has been paralleled by an increase in personalised forms of spirituality. It is not the only metanarrative that has been called into question.

Science and individualisation

Collective identities depend on a belief in truth systems, metanarratives that underpin many peoples deference to institutions and help galvanise social

solidarities. Throughout the period of modernity, science and technology assumed an almost unquestioned role as the means by which the human race would achieve technological mastery over nature. In the past, the scientific community felt it had a definite sense of mission. Science and technology were almost universally seen as being inherently progressive and many individuals deferred to expert knowledge. In Victorian society the scientific community enjoyed a great status. Their achievements were seen to be intrinsic to social development. In more recent years Cold War rivalry between the two great superpowers was often symbolised by each bloc's wish to outdo each other in the sphere of science and technology. The appliance of science and the pursuit of economic growth were perceived to be a central motor of human progress. In the recent past, chemical fertilisers were uncritically portrayed as beneficial to society. Thousands of parents in Britain and elsewhere had their children vaccinated against illnesses without questioning the standpoint of the medical establishment. Technological rationalism strongly influenced the political agenda, mainstream politicians tried to be seen as being at the forefront of the achievement of economic growth and scientific mastery over nature.

In more recent years, the aims and assumptions of the scientific community have been questioned. This has accentuated individualisation by creating a society of less deferent individuals. Like members of wider society, young people no longer always defer to the authority of the scientific community. The environmentalist

critique, coupled with food scares and growing public doubt about the trustworthiness of medicine among other developments, have all served to undermine the standing of science and technology in society. A report publicised by the Mori organisation revealed that:

two people in three think that British companies neither pay enough attention to their social responsibility, nor their treatment of the environment. As do 39% of Captains of Industry themselves and as do 76% of MPs, including 83% of Labour MPs. These are worrying figures, and the trends are down. There is a mistrust of institutions generally, and both business and government suffer from it. That can't be good for the country. (Worcester, 2000).

Today, scientists and politicians alike less often openly support scientific development. They espouse a precautionary principle that stresses moving forward in small steps and a nostrum of not continuing until something can be proven to be achievable. Today, large-scale debates are focused on whether humans should 'play God' around issues such as genetic modification of food and human cloning. Increasing public consciousness of scientific problems has made society at large more sceptical of the role of scientific reasoning, economic growth and in turn, the role of government. Fitzpatrick (1996) comments on the reaction to the CJD scare and argues that the public sense of malaise towards technology and progress has

provided a fertile ground for panics around safety and science:

The panic about mad cow disease took off in a society which has become preoccupied with collective fears of impending doom and with individual anxieties about threats to health, security and safety. We worry about nuclear war and global warming, AIDS and Ebola, mugging and burglary, road rage, child abuse and violence against women. The collapse of established frameworks in the fields of economics, politics and morality has created a uniquely insecure society (Fitzpatrick, 1996).

A growing sense of public unease relating to science and technology is perhaps illustrated by Matthew Broersma (2000) who reveals that around 70 percent of people in Britain expect the government to take an active role in informing them about possible dangers arising from scientific and technological developments. Increasing public scepticism towards the scientific community has not only undermined public confidence in their role, but has accentuated individualisation by encouraging isolated individuals to understand scientific and technical issues and to take individualised forms of action in order to address them.

An example of growing public distrust towards the scientific community is perhaps illustrated by the growing popularity of complimentary and alternative medicine (**CAM**). Hehir points out that up to five million patients had consulted a CAM

practitioner in the past year and at least 40 percent of general practices in the UK provide some CAM services (Hehir, 2001). Giddens (1991) argues that in an increasingly individualised world, people make themselves (rather than society) the focus of action and control. British society has become increasingly health-conscious. The underlying theme of health consciousness in modern society is that the individual, rather than society, should be the site of development and change. Magazines often proclaim the capacity of the individual to take control of their own lives by controlling their own conduct. Alan Peterson and Deborah Lupton note this development by asserting that 'the 'healthy body' has become an increasingly important signifier of moral worth' through which 'the individual can express publicly such virtues as self-control, self-discipline, self-denial and will power' (Lupton and Petersen, 2001:25).

The declining influence of science has been paralleled by the growth of individualised healthcare practices. Traditional truth systems used to encourage many people to adhere to established moral codes. Today, these are increasingly being questioned as increasingly atomised individuals attempt to establish their own versions of the truth in an increasingly fragmented world.

The fracturing of values and hedonism

In modern societies the truth systems, which used to order the value systems and moral behaviour of many individuals have been undermined. Individualised people

find themselves within an increasingly secular, reflexive society. Giddens (1991) accepts that unifying value systems are in a state of flux. He argues that in contemporary society, social behaviour is less influenced by religious or political ideologies and community value systems, but is increasingly influenced by processes such as globalisation, social reflexivity and individualisation. The fracturing of established value systems is illustrated by Mulgan and Wilkinson who, drawing upon empirical evidence, argue that a large-scale shift in the values held by the young and older members of society is taking place. 'Our map of British values also shows how values are fragmenting, as younger groups moved towards more 'modern' values, such as autonomy and authenticity and rising tolerance'. (Mulgan and Wilkinson, 1995:11). Differences in social values between older and younger generations are nothing new. However, in the past some social values seemed to be forever enduring and almost immutable. In contemporary society this doesn't seem to be the case. It is useful to note that ideologies of masculinity and femininity that have existed for many hundreds of years are now being challenged. Mulgan and Wilkinson found that men's values are becoming more feminine while women are becoming more masculine. Despite calls by some philosophers and politicians for a return to the basics and calls by communitarians to reinstall community identities, evidence points to the fact that truth systems and moral frameworks will remain in flux for quite some time. We are living in an age in which nothing is taken as known and this outlook may well contribute towards the individualisation and the fragmentation of society for the foreseeable future.

A further aspect of the individualisation of society and the revision of moral frameworks is the growth of immediate gratification and hedonism. Bauman (2001) notes that today many individualised members of society place a greater emphasis on hedonism and immediate gratification as a means of enabling them to achieve fulfillment. Evidence of growing hedonism amongst the young is revealed by research conducted by Mulgan and Wilkinson (1995) who contend that young people seem to enjoy 'living on the edge'. Ritzer (1998) argues that within the McDonaldised society we live in, many individuals expect to have their needs catered for quickly before moving on to undertake something else. Companies ranging from McDonalds to local stores, often publish customer charters stating that they should receive service of a prescribed quality within a given time. Young people are living in a society in which unifying value systems are increasingly being questioned and in which hedonism seems to be an increasingly accepted aspect of social life. The influence of cultural factors such as these encourage individualisation among the young still further.

Self-betterment and Individualisation.

In modern society, individualised people feel a sense of isolation and insecurity. They constantly feel the need to show a sense of identity, self-worth and belonging, establish security and better themselves. The truth systems and political ideologies which once offered a collective sense of vision and the possibility of creating

community identities no longer apply. Faced with this situation individuals are increasingly embarking on individual, rather than collective, paths of betterment. Membership of trade unions in western societies has generally declined, while participation in individualist paths of self-development has increased. Bauman outlines the reality of this situation:

Less and less we hope that by joining forces and standing arm in arm we may force a change in the rules of the game. Perhaps the risks which makes others afraid and catastrophes which make us suffer have social origins - but they seem to fall upon each one of us at random, as individual problems, of the kind that could be confronted only individually, and repaired, if at all, only by individual efforts (Bauman, 2001:149).

The growing number of people undertaking education is symptomatic of this development. Young people are strongly influenced by the individualist ideologies of self-betterment. In contemporary society, they are frequently reminded that job security is never guaranteed. Young people are constantly told that gaining credentials is the surest means of securing their futures. The individualistic ethos of credentialism has impacted on the consciousness of many young people involved in education. Research by The Adam Smith Institute (2000) and Mulgan and Wilkinson (1995) reveals that young people strongly believe that the attainment of

credentials and training is the most effective means of confronting the risks associated with the employment market. The individualist outlook that focuses on the importance of lifestyle, choice and individual meritocratic self-betterment encourages individualisation and provides a cultural context within which young people less often associate their own situation or misfortune with wider political mechanisms and the political interests of similarly placed individuals.

The ideology of self-betterment is not only confined to education, it has penetrated many different areas of social life. Christopher Lasch's (1979) remarks perhaps best capture the mood of the times. He argues that individualisation has led to a situation where people have become increasingly introspective. The focus of betterment for many people is the self and not society. Today individuals focus on:

improving their lives in any of the ways that matter, people have convinced themselves that what matters is the psychic self-improvement: getting in touch with their feelings, eating health food, taking lessons in ballet or belly dancing, emerging themselves in the wisdom of the East, jogging, learning to 'relate', overcoming the fear of pleasure, harmless in themselves these pursuits, elevated to a programme and wrapped in rhetoric of authenticity and awareness, signify a retreat from politics (Lasch, 1979:29-30).

In an uncertain, individualised world, young people increasingly focus their attentions upon lifestyle choices over which, they believe they have some semblance of control. It could be argued that body piercing, alternative therapies, dieting and counseling, are becoming increasingly popular mediums for self-betterment. The ideology of self-betterment that inevitably produces more introspective, individualised responses to the risks and dilemmas that people face seems likely to further fragment society.

Government and individualisation

In addition to the changes in the structures and ideologies outlined above, the British government has promoted ideas that have encouraged individualisation. Since the 1970s, governments have sought to popularise ideological themes that are based around the idea of challenging socialist and social democratic, political and economic ideas. They have promoted the so-called superiority of market forces and aimed to restrict state involvement in economic affairs and have promoted self-help and free market individualist ideas. Young people have grown up in a political climate where they are constantly subjected to these ideas. Many young people are unaware of political ideas that espouse anything other than the individualist values that encourage the atomisation of society.

From the end of the Second World War until the mid-1970s, British governments adopted Keynesian economic strategies and committed themselves to full

employment and the universal rights to welfare benefits. On paper at least, governments were influenced by the social democratic strategy of equality and aimed economic and social policy towards this objective. During the 1950s, Britain entered what was referred to as the 'Butskillite' consensus period. Within this period successive governments aimed to promote the objective of securing full employment and adopted the objectives of tackling the five giants of ignorance, idleness, want, squalor and disease. Though Conservative governments objected to various aspects of social democratic thinking, throughout the consensus period governments of all persuasions espoused the belief that social policy should set up a system of tax contributions and aim to provide full employment and universal entitlement to welfare benefits.

The Thatcher government that came into power during the late 1970s extolled many New Right ideological standpoints and pursued the objective of minimising state involvement in various elements of economic activity and social policy. It also embarked on a process of cuts in services and by doing so it openly challenged the social democratic ethos of universal entitlement to services and benefits. The Conservative government, deeply influenced by the New Right, argued that businesses and individuals should become more self-reliant and become less dependent upon state assistance. Ordinary people were encouraged to develop an individualist outlook of self-reliance and espouse business values. Kingdom's (1992) observations encapsulate the thinking of Margaret Thatcher's government:

Margaret Thatcher ended the culture of cosseting industry with government aid, threw open the windows, switched off the life support machines and drove the patients from their beds. The strategy for survival was Darwinian and would have pleased the shade of Herbert Spencer. The lame were told if not to take up their beds and walk, at least to stand on their own two feet (Kingdom, 1992:46) .

Both Conservative and Labour governments have tightened the criteria for claiming welfare benefits. The ideology of self-reliance is clearly manifested in prejudicial attitudes towards some welfare claimants. At this point in time, there seems little active resistance against the moves to introduce greater levels of means testing into the administration of welfare benefits.

Consumer citizenship

The individualisation of British society has been assisted by the government's attempts to redefine the nature of citizenship. The social democratic conception of citizenship that was so influential for many years after the war was accused by the New Right as promoting a kind of 'passive' citizenship where the citizen placed emphasis upon his or her own rights at the expense of obligation and duty. In the late 1980s, the Conservative government began to promote a more active form of citizenship by attempting to popularise the concept of, what Heater and Oliver

(1994) call the 'Consumer Citizen'. This concept is focused around the idea that citizens are customers who should be entitled to receive their services or welfare entitlements from organisations who should provide an inclusive, businesslike and efficient service. Statutory and commercial service providers have been compelled either by market forces or by governmental decree to be accountable. The introduction of the parent's and patient's charters reflect this policy objective. Today the new consumer citizen is empowered and is encouraged to pursue grievances or problems with the services on an individual rather than collective basis. The consumerisation of education and its associated consumer rights has played a significant role in the individualisation process within the student community, a development which will be discussed in the next chapter.

Today, policymaker's conception of citizenship is one that is based upon promoting self-reliance, respect for the community and individual proactive pursuit of self-interest. The growing culture of consumer litigation reported by Furedi (1999) is perhaps symptomatic of this policy objective. While it is difficult to prove that ideological themes have had an impact upon people, growing numbers of people are undertaking to provide for themselves instead of relying on the welfare state. In recent years, the numbers of people taking out private pension schemes and medical care has grown immensely. Governments have also sought to further redefine the concept of rights and obligations that form the central ideas behind the concept of citizenship.

The Third Way, social exclusion and individualisation

In recent years the British government has developed policies based upon the Third Way outlook, in part developed by Anthony Giddens (1998, 2000). Third Way policies supposedly stand between capitalism and socialism. They aim to keep elements of conservative thought and re-engage people with the democratic process by promoting dialogic democracy. They also encourage individualism by promoting the idea of meritocracy and lifelong learning. The specific outlook of the Third Way is at times difficult to define. Its objectives appear to promote an inclusive society that combines the values of social inclusion, equal opportunities, individual autonomy and reciprocity in which, citizens can expect the provision of equal opportunities and possibilities for them to pursue their own individual courses of self-betterment. The third way places emphasis on the individual to seek their own, rather than collective solutions to their problems.

Third Way policy objectives can be interpreted as being part of an ideological and political strategy, focused upon regulating the lives of individuals and inducing those who are disadvantaged to follow individualist meritocratic solutions to their own problems, while leaving fundamental disparities of inequalities of wealth and power untouched. Levitas reiterates this viewpoint:

Social inclusion now has nothing to do with distribution or equality,

that means lifting those poor over the boundary of the minimum standard - or to be more accurate inducing those who are sufficiently sound in mind and limb to jump over it - while leaving untouched the overall pattern of inequality, especially the rich (Levitas, 1998:156).

Third Way policy objectives that appear to pursue the objective of creating a more cohesive society are entirely consistent with the promotion of a capitalist individualist outlook where individuals aim to better themselves. David Hill (1999) argues that the promotion of individualism, consumer choice, private enterprise and privatisation are at the centre of new Labour education policy. He feels that it aims to promote 'determined Thatcherism, in its neoconservative and in particular, its dominant neoliberal form' (Hill, 1999:28). Social inclusion policies are part of a wider strategy that seeks to promote the ideology of individual opportunity and self-betterment, that in turn atomises individuals from each other and lessens the possibility of people becoming involved in collective struggle in connection with the issues that impact upon them. Equal opportunities and social inclusion policies appear to be social democratic, however their aims are entirely compatible with market forces, individualism and the idea of the consumer citizen.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined a number of social and political factors that have individualised society at large. Today students live in a society in which traditional

forms of solidarity are eroding. Deference towards ideological systems, experts and established knowledge systems is being questioned. The actions of the government have contributed to the individualisation of society. This chapter has also discussed how the reflexive actions of individuals and institutions accentuate individualisation. The ideas discussed above provide my research with a number of concepts that can be applied to the sphere of education in order make sense of the reflexive behaviour of universities and students. Most importantly they also provide a set of concepts that can be used to understand student responses to tuition fees and campaigns that oppose them.

Chapter 3

Contemporary education, reflexivity and individualisation

Introduction

A number of developments have taken place within education that contribute towards the individualisation of the student community. This chapter will begin by discussing how the introduction of market forces and vocational education into the secondary school sector encourage the individualisation of school students. It will then discuss how these factors impact on the Further Education sector and contribute towards individualisation within it. Finally, the chapter will discuss how marketisation, funding changes, vocational education, lifelong learning, the consumerisation of education and the introduction of student loans encourages the individualisation of Higher Education students.

Market forces and individualised consumers

The marketisation of education has played a significant role in the individualisation of the student community. It has contributed towards the emergence of active consumer students. Heater and Oliver (1994) argue that the marketisation of education and many areas of social policy has led to the emergence of 'Consumer Citizens' who believe they have the right to receive a good quality service because

they have a de facto contractual relationship with the service provider. The introduction of market forces and governmental decrees has compelled statutory and commercial service providers to provide services that are accountable to the consumer. Today, the new consumer citizen is empowered and is encouraged to pursue grievances or problems with services on an individual rather than collective level. Giddens (1991) argues that people use consumption as a means of achieving self-actualisation; therefore an understanding of active consumerism is central to understanding individualisation. Active consumerism has been encouraged by the marketisation and vocationalisation of Higher Education. Their impact upon the individualisation of student experiences will be discussed below.

Marketisation and vocationalism in the secondary school sector

Since the late 1980s a number of changes have taken place within the state education system that have served to fragment the collective experiences of young people and individualise the learning experience. During the 1980s critics of the school system argued that it was overburdened with bureaucracy, it had no incentive to improve standards and it taught a curriculum that had little relevance to the needs of the economy. The introduction of market mechanisms under the remit of the Education Reform Act 1988 (**ERA**) aimed to address these deficiencies. The Act introduced open enrolment, a new national curriculum, SAT testing, performance league tables and local management of schools. These changes have had a significant impact on parents and young students alike, as the Act was

designed to empower parents as customers. This objective was reiterated by Sir Keith Joseph writing in 1987 who stated that the education system should aim:

to produce the quality and choice that we expect in education to improve our schools, we need to change the way that we fund and manage them. Making the education service fully responsive to parental choice and student needs, with a direct financial relationship between provider and consumer, is the way to better standards, and for a better way than administrative thinking and political exhortation (cited in Ball, 1990:44).

SAT testing, coupled with the publication of test results and the right of parents to send their child to a school of their choice, were supposed to enable consumer minded parents to find the best education for their child. The introduction of the Parents Charter in 1994 further consumerised the parent-school relationship by setting down so-called standards of provision which parents could then seek to address in the event of being dissatisfied with the service provided by the school. Ranson (1996) observes that the process of marketisation has encouraged individualisation within education by developing what he calls the 'atrophied process of individualism', which involves individual consumers and schools pursuing instrumental self-interested courses of action. Schools often focus themselves on marketing, pleasing parents and increasing their exam results.

Parents behave like consumers, pursuing individual rather than collective courses of action that they feel reflects their child's best interests. Studies undertaken by Ball (1990) have noted that competition between schools has led them to become far more responsive to parental demands. Ball also adds that per capita funding under the local management of schools element of the ERA 1988 has led many schools to consider their students to be units of financial income. They also point out how many young students are aware that they represent financial income and times seek to assert their status as consumers by complaining about services provided by their schools.

Paradoxically, critics of the reforms argue that consumer choice under the open enrolment aspect of the ERA is not as effective as it might seem. Gerwitz, Ball and Bowe (1995) point out that middle class parents are more able than working class parents to help their child gain access to 'higher' performing schools. Ball (1990) found that some schools were paying less attention to pupils with special educational needs, preferring instead to devote their resources to young students who could improve school league table results. They also state that, in an effort to achieve better results, many schools are increasingly reintroducing streaming and selection processes. The marketisation of the compulsory education sector has precipitated the process of consumerisation and seems set to fragment the collective experiences of young people by inducing the development of an individualistic consumerist outlook towards education.

Vocationalism and individualisation

After the Second World War a central philosophical strand of educational provision was aimed at boosting the stock of human capital. Exponents of the human capital outlook argued that educated people (educated in a variety of fields and disciplines, some vocational, some academic), were human capital who could contribute towards economic growth and profitability. They argued that the state should invest in providing education for all people because well-educated people are equipped to adapt to new environments and work effectively within them. Indeed, Schultz (1961) presented evidence to show that more educated workforces were more productive than less educated ones performing similar tasks. During the 1970s, this standpoint came under attack from those who argued that educational provision should be more specifically geared towards the development of vocational transferable skills.

The vocationalist agenda inevitably had an impact upon the educational system. In 1976, James Callaghan instigated the Great Debate, in which he contended that the economic problems that Britain experienced at the time were to some extent the fault of the education system. He argued that the education system should contain more vocational education in order to meet the needs of the economy. Former Labour education Minister David Blunkett reiterated the centrality of vocationalism in education by stating that 'employability' is really the key purpose of education at

all levels. Educational policymakers responded to these objectives by introducing (amongst others) The Youth Opportunities Programme, The Youth Training Scheme, General National Vocational Qualifications, National Vocational Qualifications and the Advanced Vocational Certificate in education provision for young people entering employment or Further Education.

Vocational education individualises the educational experiences of young students in secondary education. Currently, school students select between two and three options in addition to compulsory subjects. Each student undertakes a period of work experience and some vocational education. The government is now allowing 14 year olds to opt out of some of their GCSEs to follow vocational courses or to attend college to pursue a combination of GCSEs and vocational courses. In future, significant sections of the school population may be detached from their school environment and be less likely to develop shared aspirations along with other students.

Individualisation and Further Education

A number of policy developments have encouraged individualisation within the Further Education sector. Before 1993, Further Education and tertiary colleges were under LEA control. The implementation of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 changed how Further Education was funded. From April 1993, Further Education colleges and tertiary colleges began to receive their funding from the

Further Education Funding Council (FEFC). Further Education colleges became corporate bodies that were compelled to enter competition with each other, schools, universities and private providers of education and training. Today, Further Education colleges receive funding for students in the form of unit payments. These payments from the FEFC are dependent on the numbers of students enrolling on and completing courses. The Act also encourages colleges to earn money from various sources and enables them to charge whatever the market allows. Like schools and Higher Education institutions, the Act compelled Further Education colleges to show that they provide good quality provision and subjected them to periodic inspection by officials from the FEFC.

Today inspectors have the powers to compel colleges that offer 'substandard' courses to withdraw the course and suffer loss of funds as a result. The introduction of the Students Charter saw Further Education colleges enter into individualised learning agreements, which were designed to spell out learning goals, forms of assessment, levels of guidance and support that young students may receive. Today, like primary, secondary and Higher Education institutions, Further Education colleges are compelled to market themselves to guarantee their income. They must constantly strive to develop courses that can be aimed at ever-increasing disparate groups of potential students. Further Education colleges routinely offer flexible learning, day release courses and short courses that individualise people's learning experiences. Learning agreements further individualise the academic experiences of

many students by compelling colleges to devise personally tailored courses of learning and assessment in which the input of individual students is encouraged.

Further Education colleges have traditionally been at the forefront of providing vocational courses. Their role as a provider of vocational education was reaffirmed by the 1992 Act, which required that the governing bodies of colleges should be predominantly governed by individuals from the business community. The Act also required colleges to work closely with Training and Enterprise Councils. A central ideological aim of vocational education is promoting the individualist values of enterprise culture, self-help, meritocracy and economic individualism. Moore (1987) agrees with this assertion and argues that the hidden curriculum of the new vocationalism can be seen in terms of promoting possessive individualism. MacDonald and Coffield provided evidence to back this assertion. They undertook a study of 117 young people in various forms of enterprise schemes, co-operatives, community projects and in self-employment and concluded that 'individualism was an important part of the political consciousness of our informants' (MacDonald and Coffield, 1991:209).

The marketisation of Higher Education

Like the secondary and Further Education sector, the Higher Education sector has been compelled to introduce market forces and promote business and vocational values in its curricula. In the past, the University was seen as a privileged site of

knowledge. Its ability to pursue reason, truth and knowledge for its own sake were largely unchallenged, as was its status as the leading producer of research. Today, modern universities are increasingly run like businesses. This has occurred as a result of several developments. Universities can no longer rely upon the state as being the most significant or indeed a permanent provider of funding; they must instead seek other sources of funding. Levidow (2002) argues that a neoliberal political agenda has accentuated a process of deregulation and privatisation within Higher Education. As a consequence of these and further developments, universities must market their services in an increasingly globalised market in order to remain financially viable entities.

In contemporary society knowledge has become more democratised. It is now more available and is more often contested to the extent that Giddens (1991) argues that contemporary society is undergoing a phase of 'radical doubt' in which established truths are increasingly questioned. In addition to this, knowledge production is being increasingly undertaken by agencies outside the Higher Education including private companies, research centres and think tanks. These developments help undermine the assumption of universities as being unchallenged producers of knowledge (Bloland Harland, 1995). In a competitive environment, this challenge places further pressure upon universities to produce sound, socially useful, and above all, marketable knowledge.

Customer demands

In a globalised knowledge market, competition is accentuated as Higher Education institutions are routinely pitted against each other. Developments like these have compelled universities to become commercial entities that need to efficiently produce useful, saleable and profitable knowledge. Today, knowledge users are playing a greater role in determining the content of knowledge production. Within academia knowledge is less often pursued for its own sake, but rather is tailored to the expectations and needs of the users. This development is very apparent in research and development, the growing importance of credentials and the growing influence of industry and commerce within university curricula. Today, research undertaken by universities is increasingly focused on attaining research funding, providing for users and as such is becoming more problem solving focused. According to Delantey (2001), universities are increasingly providing standardised courses which are aimed at being vocationally relevant and at attracting students from other universities and other countries.

Managerialism

Because universities are being increasingly compelled to be financially viable, secure funds from private sources and students, heads of department are beginning to resemble managers who are often more concerned with generating income rather than the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake. Running an efficient and viable department is the order of the day. Not only must faculties secure funding, staff are

compelled to work more efficiently. According to Dominelli and Hoogvelt (1996) Taylorist work practices are becoming increasingly evident in the day-to-day running of university departments. They argue that staff tasks are becoming increasingly compartmentalised, costed, monitored and controlled and that services have become increasingly commodified. Delanty (2001) agrees with this standpoint by arguing that universities are increasingly compelling staff with departmental responsibilities to adopt managerialist practices akin to business rather than academia:

Universities are being forced to implement new regimes of management that more closely resemble businesses than the traditional sides of autonomous knowledge. Of diminished significance is the cherished belief of the Enlightenment that knowledge is the value in itself and can be pursued in the ivory tower of detached academe. Universities are increasingly forced to operate like businesses, competing with each other for students, the best professors and their share of the state's diminishing budget (Delanty, 2001:106).

Profits, efficiency, profits

Business, profits and costs are increasingly influencing the workings of universities. Slaughter and Leslie (1997) examined these developments and coined the concept "academic capitalism" to describe the process of universities entering a

competitive marketplace in an effort to secure external funding. In light of these developments, Clark (1998) argues that entrepreneurial universities have emerged whose rationale is increasingly influenced by the need to remain financially viable. Leslie and Slaughter's concept can be used to understand what is happening in Higher Education. Levidow (2002) has argued that the marketisation of education has prompted universities to accept that:

- all constituencies are treated through business relationships;
- educational efficiency, accountability and quality are redefined in market terms;
- courses are recast as instructional commodities;
- student-teacher relations are mediated by the consumption and production of things, e.g. software (Levidow, 2002:2).

These developments significantly impact upon the day-to-day relationships between universities, business and government. This thesis considers them in greater detail during the examination of the reflexive relationships that exist between these groups and, where relevant, discusses their impact upon the individualisation of the student community.

Business values in the classroom

Martin (1999) and Ecclestone (1999) argue that the values of business and the new vocationalism are increasingly incorporated into the content of many university courses. Business and vocational courses attract huge numbers of Higher Education students each year. Some university faculties have developed courses that attempt to redress the encroachment of entrepreneurialism and business values by introducing courses that are based upon the concept of social enterprise. The concept has been applied by business and by local community service providers. The University of Portsmouth has set up a non-profit making community project which involve students helping asylum seekers secure the services they need. The sociology department at the University of Warwick set up a project that involve undergraduates working with young offenders. Both projects enable university students to experience community based learning as part of their courses, but also enable them to work in environments that focuses on community service, rather than business values. Despite the attempts of some university departments to incorporate social enterprise into their course structures, at this point in time the marketisation of Higher Education and the promotion of business values amongst the student population appears to be growing.

The Higher Education Act 2004 further intensifies both marketisation of Higher Education and the promotion of business values in the curriculum. The Act further compels universities to compete for research funding. This legislation provides

incentives for universities to foster closer links with the industry, demonstrating the government's desire that universities more extensively design courses that teach skills and values that industry needs. The Act makes provision for incentives to be offered to universities to recruit students from non traditional backgrounds. It also provides a framework for the introduction of performance related pay for good teaching. The provisions of the Act also encourage students to further perceive themselves as customers by compelling universities to introduce more extensive student complaints procedures and introduce an annual students survey designed with the aim of increasing student choice and course quality

Some of the concepts and assumptions that underlie the argument that social change has brought about the emergence of entrepreneurial universities are subject to criticism. Though Deem (2001) does not necessarily question all of their contentions she argues that proponents of the entrepreneurial universities/marketisation standpoint need to undertake a more thorough analysis of developments in Higher Education before making such large-scale claims. She argues that in addition to investigating structural changes and the practical activities of university staff a deeper investigation of the level of cultural influence marketisation, new managerialism and entrepreneurialism has upon staff members and within all aspects of university life needs be undertaken. Furthermore, Deem also argues that Leslie and Slaughter's and Leslie and Clark's influential contributions draw on only limited data. She also criticises Clark's employment of

the case study approach. She suggests that their arguments would be more coherent if they develop a clearer understanding of the relative influence of global, national and local forces upon how universities are organised. While these criticisms deserve attention. A wealth of evidence exists that highlights the encroachment of market mechanisms with Higher Education.

This thesis examines the evidence and argues that the marketisation of Higher Education is influenced by commercial, social, global and political factors. All of which impact upon how universities work and, in turn, upon the student community. It also contends that the marketisation of Higher Education significantly affects the day-to-day relationships between universities, business, government and students which provides an important conceptual tool for understanding the reflexive relationships that exist between these groups, and where relevant, their impact upon the individualisation of student community. The thesis will now examine the consequences of these developments on Higher Education institutions and their impact upon the reflexive behaviour of universities and students.

Reflexive Universities in the risk society

Today, organisations have to reflexively re-evaluate their roles and status. In recent years, the financial security and the 'ivory tower' pedagogical status that many universities enjoyed in the past has changed significantly. Universities are subjected

to many of the uncertainties that characterise the risk society and behave reflexively in light of the risks that they face. Giddens (1981) argues that an understanding of social change and contemporary situations depends on comprehending the interaction between structures and agents. Universities act reflexively in an attempt to deal with the problems that they encounter; their actions, in turn, encourage the individualisation of students' educational experiences.

Funding changes

In recent years governments have lessened their direct funding commitment to Higher Educational institutions, while increasing their direct control over the amount of state funding that is dispensed to them. In addition to this, they have implemented policies that have caused universities to compete for alternative means of funding. Before 1988, universities were funded by the University Grants Commission, while Polytechnics and Higher Education colleges were under local authority control. Under this system universities received funding which paid staff to do a mixture of teaching and research. The 1988 Education Act created two bodies, the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council and the Universities Funding Council, which gave the government more control over funding. Since the late 1980s, the amount of state funding that each institution receives has become more dependent upon performance ratings.

In 1992 the Higher and Further Education Act created the Higher and Further

Education Council, a single body, which effectively gave the government more centralised control over how Higher Education institutions were funded. The Act established a framework, which now pays universities separately for teaching and research on a competitive basis. Today, the payments that each institution receives from the state are subject to them providing a satisfactory assessment of course quality and achieving a good score in the Research Assessment Exercise. In addition to these sums, Higher Education institutions also receive a fee for each student. These developments effectively created a competitive framework, where Higher Education institutions were compelled to adopt managerialist methods in order to run themselves in the most efficient manner possible. They also compel universities to compete to recruit students and for research and teaching funding. The introduction of market mechanisms and competition for funding in Higher Education has made the financial stability of Higher Education institutions increasingly uncertain. Miller (1995) points out that between 1974 and 1987, selected block grants to universities fell from 77 percent of university income to 55 percent. In 1991, 30 percent of university income came via research grants. In light of these developments, educational institutions are increasingly turning to alternative means of financial support including private funding from industry and are encouraging more self-supported students to enter university.

Today, universities devote much attention to gaining funding from research councils, employers, tuition fees and foreign students. The uncertain nature of

government funding has compelled Higher Education institutions to find new and more 'dependable' forms of funding. Many universities now offer individualised modular learning packages that can be studied on-line or by distance learning. These courses enable students to earn credits that can be used to gain qualifications including Higher Education diplomas and degrees. New funding arrangements have brought about a set of circumstances that have propelled universities into a more intense competitive arena. The implications of these changes, coupled with other developments, have accentuated the individualisation process within the Higher Education student community.

Competition , globalisation and universities

The increasing exchange of information, people and commerce across borders, has impacted upon the institutional consciousness of university hierarchies who aim their service provision at an increasingly electronic, information centred, globalised market place. The development of knowledge-based economies and the existence of globalised economic and communication frameworks have exposed universities to greater levels of competition from other would-be providers of education and training. In response to these developments, Higher Education institutions now offer a wider range of courses including vocational courses, part-time and flexible learning courses, correspondence and online courses. In the USA, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology openly proclaims its aim to make

considerable amounts of its teaching available online. In Britain many universities have followed suit and endeavour to offer a range of courses that can be studied online. Jarvis's comments capture the essence of these developments and how they have impacted upon the nature of universities:

In order to compete in the global learning market, there has been an expansion of all forms of provision of learning opportunities worldwide - both in what is offered and how it is offered: from face-to-face teaching in a 'real -time' situation to the utilisation of a variety of teaching and learning methods in realigned time and space. This expansion is not only made possible by the advance of information technology but also by the globalisation of the English language. Universities in general are now in the educational market, offering learning opportunities at all levels, including research degree programs, for those who need the education for work, or for those who just enrol in the educational programme for self-fulfillment, fun, or for other reasons (Jarvis, 2001:86-7).

Smith (2003) argues that globalisation has not only made universities market their services at potential students in other countries, they are trying to brand their products and services in an effort to be competitive in a global market place. He argues that many universities have tried to turn themselves into global corporate

undertakings, charging for the units of knowledge they produce. He adds that 'Information and communication technologies play a massive role in distance education, management systems and the political economy of universities and that such development is enmeshed in transnational educational markets' (Smith, 2003:19). Globalisation has contributed towards the consumerisation process within Higher Education. Universities are faced with the reality that education is increasingly situated within a globally competitive arena and are increasingly marketing their output as a product or a brand. Globalisation has not only compelled universities to compete to attract students to study at their campuses. Developments in communication networks enable universities to offer a wider range of courses to students learning in foreign countries. The World Student Organisation argues that the proliferation e-learning has tremendous implications for the way that many people will learn in future.

the rules of traditional education systems are also changing as more and more e-learning programmes are developed on-line. The classical three rules of education 1 fixed hours, 2 permanent location, and 3 one educational system are quickly being replaced by three new rules 1 adjustable times, 2 adjustable place, and 3 different educational systems. Flexibility, individualisation and distance capability have become three intrinsic necessities for today's educational system models (World Student Internet, 2000).

The global marketing of Higher Education courses seems to be an entrenched fact. Williams (2002) has pointed to plans to develop global quality systems that will monitor the standard of on-line courses which is likely to further precipitate this process. Firstly, it encourages students to develop consumerist outlooks by shopping around for the best possible product. Consumers typically take individualised forms of action when dealing with products or services that are unsatisfactory. Secondly, on-line learning encourages the proliferation of millions of isolated learners who may never come into regular contact with other students. The growth of globalisation and on-line learning may affect the likelihood of young students taking part in campaigns connected with tuition fees. Not only, may it play a part in creating a number of disparate, isolated learners, it may also undermine the existence of large university campuses as we know them. These developments have led Atkinson to state ' thirty years from now the big university campuses will be a relic' (Atkinson, 2001).

Higher Education, Vocationalism and Individualisation

Vocationalism has exerted a strong influence on Higher Education policy, which in turn may accentuate individualisation within Higher Education. The Dearing Report (1997) emphasised that Higher Education needs to prepare young students for the world by outlining the need to integrate vocational key skills into the

learning experience. Martin (1999) comments on the increasing influence of employers on the nature of academic provision at universities and concludes that 'employers see themselves as influential stakeholders and, increasingly, look for influence into what is taught and how it is taught. University staff now work closely and collaboratively with industry for the creation of joint consultative boards and committees'. (Martin, 1999:10). While universities have for several years run what might be understood as vocational degrees (business studies, computer studies etc), they are increasingly incorporating the aims and objectives of vocational education into course syllabuses and university curricular. Recently, faculties have incorporated (where appropriate) practical elements, sandwich placements and key skills into course structures.

The increasing presence of vocational educational objectives in Higher Education may encourage individualisation in universities. Drawing on observations based on the Further Education sector, Ecclestone (1999) argues that Outcomes Based Assessment (**OBA**) is being increasingly incorporated into university courses. The implications of OBA are that courses are more often designed to meet the specific needs of individual students. The outcome(s) of the course should be specific and measurable and that each student should be involved in the process of devising their learning experiences. Ecclestone argues that OBA creates an expectation that each individual student should follow an individual pattern of learning suited to their needs. The legitimisation of this expectation could have massive implications by

encouraging individualisation among young university students. Drawing on her observations of Further Education, Ecclestone argues that individual patterns of study assessment isolate learners from each other by stating that 'individualised approaches to study and assessment decrease the sense of oneself as part of a social group of learners learning together' (Ecclestone, 1999:40).

Assuming that the process of OBA is further integrated into Higher Education courses its influence upon individualisation could be significant, especially if one bears in mind that A' level students are increasingly opting for vocational rather than traditional A level courses (DFEE, 2000:67). The same picture is evident in the area of GNVQ provision, where enrolment in courses such as business-related GNVQ outstrips courses in areas such as construction or engineering. (DfEE, 2000:67). These trends have repeated themselves in Higher Education where the fastest growth in undergraduate enrolment is occurring in 'relatively modern subjects such as design studies, communication studies, computing, marketing and business' (DfEE, 2000:69). The ideological and practical aspects of vocational education that are experienced by many young students prior to entering university are becoming an integral part of university courses. They will further atomise the student population and accentuate individualisation on university campuses.

Lifelong learning

In an increasingly marketised environment, students are steadily assuming the

status of consumers. The introduction of individualised learning accounts, which involves students saving to pay for their education, may encourage individualisation. Smithers and Robinson (2000) have argued that when they are fully implemented they may individualise learning experiences by enabling individual students to have a greater influence over the form of the course that they undertake. They conclude that 'if the accounts take off they have the potential to revolutionise post school education, impacting strongly on Further Education, by putting its shape much more in the hands of the students' (Smithers and Robinson, 2000:199). The individualisation of Higher Educational student experiences is likely to be encouraged by the fact that many more people may return to education at various stages in their lives. This development has prompted McClure to argue that the move towards lifelong learning will mean educational provision is more likely to be delivered in unitised individual packages. He argues that it will 'inevitably require further unitisation of the curriculum, greater flexibility in modes of attendance and, in the information age, new modes of delivery' (McClure, 2000 :56). This development is perhaps, underlined by the then Permanent Secretary at the DfEE Max Bichard. In his address to the society of education officers he stated 'that lifelong learning objectives have at their core the needs of the individual learner rather than the convenience of institutions, of authorities, of agencies, or departments of state' (Dimbleby and Cooke, 2000:74). The impact of greater student involvement in devising their own educational experiences, coupled with the provision of flexible courses for people who periodically return to education

seem likely to further individualise Higher Education student experiences.

Students as reflexive agents.

Giddens' concept of duality of structure can be further used to illustrate how the actions of institutions and social actors have cause and effect on each other. This section has so far discussed how Higher Education institutions undertake reflexive actions in light of the changing context they find themselves in and how their actions may impact on the individualisation process. According to Giddens' theory of structuration, individualisation and institutional behaviour both reflect and contribute towards the maintenance and development of social structures. The actions of individuals can also be seen to both reflect and contribute towards the maintenance of social structures. Young students study in conditions that compel them to behave as individualised, reflexive agents. Faced with an uncertain existence, their actions can be seen to contribute to the individualisation process. Many of their actions are influenced by government policy and other factors that often lay outside the confines of Higher Education. The following sections will discuss how individual Higher Education students understand and interact with institutions and how this fragments the experiences and outlooks of the student community.

Higher Education Consumerised

Young students increasingly see themselves as individualised consumers and are acting accordingly. The marketisation and consumerisation of education

accentuates the individualisation of the student community by encouraging young people to view their education in instrumental terms. It also leads students who may be dissatisfied with their educational provision to behave like dissatisfied individuals rather than becoming part of a collective struggle to bring about wide-ranging change. Ritzer (1998) notes how universities in the US are compelled to market themselves and that this has given rise to the development of a consumerist outlook among both parents and students alike:

students (and often more importantly their parents) are increasingly approaching the university as consumers; the university is fast becoming little more than another component of the consumer society. Long before they enter the university, students are quite expert about the world of consumption and how to find their way about it (Ritzer, 1998:151-152).

Developments within Higher Education have encouraged students to behave like consumers when choosing their courses. These developments have also encouraged students to deal with problems relating to their educational provision on an individual rather than a collective level. Before we discuss examples of this a

number of further developments within Higher Education that have encouraged this phenomenon are examined.

Flexible modular learners

Other developments in education, particularly within further and Higher Education, have contributed towards the consumerisation of education and the individualisation of educational experiences. In recent years many courses have become modularised, enabling students to 'shop around' and take modules in different faculties. Completion of these modules now enables students to accrue credits to achieve a qualification. Modular courses effectively enable young students to exercise a freedom of choice, rather like a consumer. This viewpoint is reiterated by Maskell and Robinson who state 'Modularity is obviously intended to make university subjects student centred and not subject centred' (Maskell and Robinson, 2001:100). Modularisation has contributed to a consumerisation of Higher Education and the idea that courses should be aimed at students, rather than the other way round. Maskell and Robinson note that, in Higher Education, university departments aim to make sure that their courses are financially viable. This development can only result in making courses more student centred. It will accentuate the development of the consumerisation and individualisation process by creating an ever more disparate set of consumers who are enabled to pick and combine modules and count them towards their final degree.

The consumerisation of Higher Education is further demonstrated by the fact that many universities are now increasingly designing courses to fit in with student lifestyles. They have sought to develop more courses that can be attended by part-time students and those undertaking correspondence courses. John Moores University is now developing courses that can be undertaken by people using interactive CD programmes enabling them to study at home and attend campus based lessons when they are able to do so. In addition to these developments universities are developing courses that can be undertaken on-line. According to Ritzer (1998) universities are trying to set up courses that are accessible to various potential students. They offer vocational, professional development and short personal interest courses in an attempt to compete in a steadily growing market. These developments individualise student learning experiences. Today, many thousands of consumer university students may undertake degree courses that are different to many of their peers. Many students visit university campuses on an intermittent basis. It is not inconceivable that university campuses may soon be frequented by an increasingly fluid group of learners who will have less opportunity to get to know each other, let alone develop a consciousness of a common set of interests.

Individual learning contracts and student charters in Higher Education.

The Dearing Report 1997 outlined a vision of a Higher Education system that focuses on enabling young students to develop personal transferable skills. The

movement towards the vocationalisation of education, coupled with further recommendations outlined by the report, has caused universities to place increasing emphasis upon teaching towards quantifiable learning based outcomes. Vocational educational programmes increasingly require students to be involved in devising their learning programs. Universities have developed individual learning agreements. These involve students and providers negotiating a course that meets the needs of individual learners and the assessment methods that are to be used. The statement produced by the University of Teeside perhaps illustrates the aims and objectives of these contracts:

Negotiated cooperative learning is the notion that individuals and teams can negotiate their own learning objectives in projects. Negotiation takes place between student and student (within teams), between teams and tutors, and between individual students and tutors. This is a desirable objective because it can be argued that a negotiation process can improve learning autonomy in students. Learning autonomy is the ability to identify learning needs (or objectives), marshal the resources required to address needs, learn effectively, and self-assess outcomes, or to have the outcomes assessed by someone else. These are key transferable skills for lifelong learning (EPCOS, 1996).

The personalised nature of learning contracts encourages individualisation by

creating a vast number of learners who encounter different learning experiences and differing sets of learning objectives.

In addition to these developments, The Charter For Higher Education 1993 compelled universities to explain the aims and objectives of courses and develop accountability criterion. These developments have contributed towards a charterisation of university life. Higher Education faculties are now compelled to recognise the status of student consumer sovereignty by writing charters to establish a type of contract that compels university faculties to provide measurable outcomes. They also openly strive to provide information to students about how to use the services provided by university faculties. Many universities now include student representatives in faculty policy-making processes and create more effective channels for students to express their feelings concerning the nature of the academic provision that they receive. The charterisation of Higher Education has propelled the individualisation process by creating a set of frameworks and expectations, which lays the foundation for students to express their discontent with educational provision on individual consumer, rather than on a collective level. In doing so these developments propel individualisation by providing the basis for disgruntled individual students to follow customer grievances.

Alongside the introduction of consumer charters throughout Higher Education, universities are subjected to quality-control monitoring. The Charter for Higher Education 1993 and the Dearing Report 1997 contributed towards the development

of a framework that subjects universities to quality-control measures, including inspection by outside agencies. Under this system universities and Higher Education institutions find their teaching methods and research output placed under close scrutiny. The Research Assessment Exercise publishes the research ratings of universities in league tables rather like those used in primary and secondary education. In addition to this, academic results and teaching quality ratings are also made available to prospective students. The Charter for Higher Education 1993 and the Dearing Report 1997 have put into place mechanisms that effectively compel universities to improve their teaching and research output. While the overt agenda of these initiatives may be the improvement of the learning experience, these initiatives may provide a basis for consumer minded students to shop around for the best university and pursue individual grievances when they occur.

Student loans: standing on your own two feet

The consumerisation of Higher Education has been further aided by the imposition of student loans. They were implemented not only to reduce public expenditure and student dependence on the benefits system, but also to increase levels of student economic awareness and self-reliance. The policy was also designed to encourage the development of young students who would be eager to gain value for money for their investments. Writing in 1991 Alan Howarth, the then Under-Secretary of State for Education wrote:

Among the arguments for loans is that they will tend to increase

students awareness of the benefits and costs of their Higher Education. Greater consumer awareness by students should lead to a greater willingness by Higher Education providers to devise courses that meet student demands. Institutions will need to demonstrate that their courses bring career benefits and market them accordingly (Cited in Winn, 1997:147).

Hall (1984) and Bauman (2001) argue that the central aim of much social policy has been centred on the idea of promoting the ideology of self-reliance. Winn (1997) argues that the introduction of student loans was in part directed at achieving this objective. Findings produced by the Adam Smith Institute (2000) illustrate the impact of this ideological objective. They revealed that young people seem to expect little help from the government in their lives and careers. Just 5 percent of young people expect the government to help them. The individualistic idea of standing on your own two feet seems to exercise a great deal of influence among young people and may discourage mass involvement in organised political campaigns focused on issues that affect their common interests.

Tuition fees and student active consumerism

Like members of wider society, young students are increasingly behaving like consumer activists. The consumerisation of education has helped encourage individualisation by creating a multitude of individual student consumers, who are

willing to take individual rather than collective action in pursuit of their interests. Labaree (1998) has commented on the consumerisation of education in the United States and argues that parents and young students have become more concerned with gaining a grade and less with the content of their learning. This point is reiterated by Sacks who argues that many students:

don't distinguish between going to college and making other types of purchases. In return for paying the tuition fee (or having it paid by one's parents), one [each student] feels entitled to a measure of achievement meaning an A or B grade at a minimum (Sacks, 1998:3).

Sacks describes his own experiences of the new type of consumer-minded students who individually seek to use various channels to pursue their entitlements or grievances, he notes:

One of them for example complained in his evaluation of my teaching that I kept marking him down for awkward and unclear writing 'I like writing awkwardly and unclearly', he asserted. He added, with the flair of a true student consumer, 'if I don't get a good grade in this class I'll be taking you to your superiors' (Sacks, 1998:3).

This trend is establishing itself in Britain. Martin also argues that the

introduction of student tuition fees has caused students to increasingly perceive themselves to be individual customers or consumers:

students likewise, can be seen as customers to be satisfied. When governments subsidise fees, then governments, themselves, are keen to ensure that the student experience is effective and efficient. When students pay their own fees there is even more resolve to ensure value for money. The new breed of student is a much more exacting taskmaster than his or her predecessor (Martin, 1999:10).

The comments made by a university student reflect this trend:

If there were no tuition fees I'd say fair enough, whatever goes, y'know, I'm going to get a free education, I'll take what I can get and I'll grab as much as possible. But now they've given us a tool so let's work with it! It is so true, you can hold it to their throats and say, I've given you a grand, you're meant to give me an education. (Currie, 1999:11).

The consumerisation of Higher Education is further illustrated by the increasing numbers of British university students who are undertaking personal legal action against universities in connection with substandard educational provision (O'Neil ,

1997). The consumerisation of education has produced significant levels of consumer activism. This activism however, is conducted by individuals and does not seem conducive towards the development of mass student involvement in organisations, which campaign about student interests. The consumer activism that influences student life is, both a symptom and contributory aspect of individualisation within Higher Education. This reality is likely to fragment and individualise the learning experiences of many young students in the foreseeable future.

Individualised Young Students

The existence of student active consumerism is paralleled by the almost non-existence of a mass student movement that tries to argue for the provision of free Higher Education. Active consumerism often accepts the legitimacy of market forces and consumerism in educational provision. It does not appear to offer an ideological critique of market forces led educational provision and it cannot mobilise a mass student movement that could campaign in pursuit of its interests and articulate an alternative to student loans and tuition fees. It is conducted by individuals or small groups who are focused on making services more efficient, safer, less discriminatory and more inclusive. It could be argued that consumer activist campaigns (though at times they are critical of certain aspects of commercial and statutory services) are most often conducted by individuals or small groups of people. The evidence of active consumerism on campus has not

been accompanied by the development of mass active political participation in connection with tuition fees. It contributes towards individualisation both by depoliticising problems with educational provision and by creating a fragmented mass of individual consumers. The practice of active consumerism discourages the development of an effective critique of governmental policy, which could serve as the basis for the growth of a mass student movement that can effectively campaign against the imposition of tuition fees.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored how young students find themselves in an environment where Higher Education empowers them as individual consumers. They can now expect to have access to an inclusive, lifelong learning experience. The consumerisation and vocationalisation of education has fragmented student experiences. This individualises the outlooks of many university students and discourages the development of collective student action about welfare and political issues. The examination of these factors provides a set of concepts and issues that can be pursued in this research. However, any examination of student attitudes towards political campaigns needs to consider wider political factors that may influence their level of activism. These factors will be explored below.

Chapter 4

Disengagement and the individualisation of politics

Introduction

So far we have discussed how structural changes in wider society and education have encouraged the process of reflexivity and individualisation. We have also outlined how factors have encouraged individualisation within education. This chapter will begin to look at some of the specific political developments that have contributed towards the individualisation of young members of the student community. It will do this by examining the activity undertaken by young students in the late 1960s and early 1970s and consider how a number of social and political changes have contributed towards the individualisation of society and the political looks of young students.

Mass student activism today

A significant number of young students have taken part in high-profile political activity. During the 1960s and early 1970s, young students were often regarded as an organised group who would readily become involved in mass based organised political activity. It might be argued that this is not the case today. It could be assumed that high levels of distrust and disaffection with party political processes may account for why so many young people do not participate in political activity.

To simply assume this, however, overlooks some developments that may be crucial in understanding the attitude of young students towards political participation.

Distrust and disaffection towards established parties and processes is nothing new within the student community. During the 1960s a number of young students voiced their dislike and distrust of politicians. Significant numbers of student activists aimed to create a new, better society. What perhaps distinguishes young students of today compared to those of the 1960s, is that contemporary young students seem to show less willingness to involve themselves in mass organised political campaigns. This thesis does not attempt to make comparisons between young students past and present. It argues that the individualisation of society can be used to explain the low levels of student participation in campaigns pertaining to student hardship and tuition fees. We have discussed a number of social changes that have taken place over recent years that may be used to explain how the processes of individualisation have impacted on young students today. We will examine how the processes of individualisation, the decline of political ideologies and mass organised movements have impacted on young people's political outlooks .

Student activism in the 1960s and early 1970s

Over the last 30 a years wealth of literature has documented the high-profile student political activism that took place during the late 1960s and early 1970s. During this

period university young students throughout Europe and America were portrayed as being a radical group in society. Harman (1988), Sassoon (1996), DeGroot (1998) and Ellis (1998) have documented that many thousands of young students became involved in political activism and have examined student involvement in campaigns connected with class politics, civil rights movements, anti-imperialist struggles, women's issues, student rights and welfare issues.

Since the late 1960s a number of commentators have attempted to explain the rise in student activism during this period. Steadman Jones (1969) and Kenniston (1968) point out that the late 1960s witnessed large-scale technological and social change. They argue that a generation gap developed between young people and their elders and that they adopted differing outlooks concerning the function of technology and existing value systems. Many young people and young students became inherently distrustful of older people whom they believed epitomised authority. Perhaps this sentiment is best illustrated by Mario Savio's statement 'trust no one over thirty'. Steadman Jones (1969) and Hobsbawm (1994) argue that many young students became politicised by aspects of the university system that they believed subjected them to unnecessary control, affected the quality of their education and their financial interests. During the late 1960s, a variety of civil rights, anti-imperialist and labour issues seem to emerge almost simultaneously thereby creating a period of instability that served to politicise many young people and inspired them to actively consider the usefulness of political ideologies such as

Marxism, Maoism, anarchism, socialism and feminism, to name but a few.

In addition to these factors during the late 1960s Europe and America was beset by a wave of industrial unrest. Thousands of workers and students took to the streets in order to protest against redundancy and government austerity measures. At around this time students played a leading role in antiracist and civil rights movement in countries including Ireland and the USA. In addition to this students played a leading role in protests against the excesses of stalinism both within and the Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc, culminating in the jailing of many soviet dissidents and forcible suppression of Dubcek government in Czechoslovakia. This period also witnessed socialist struggles against both capitalism and Stalinism. Mao Tse Tung, Che Guevara and Ho Chi Minh became icons who many people believed represented the face of progressive socialism. These developments provided a social context in which many students became politicised and increasingly critical of the existing social order. The Vietnam War also politicised many students. The tenacious resistance of the Vietcong, particularly during the Tet offensive, inspired many students to take to the streets to express their solidarity with them and protest against western imperialism. The war served as an organisational focal point which enabled students to organise around a variety of issues, not just their opposition to the war.

New left and countercultural elements

Student activists of the late 1960s and early 1970s have been placed within the new left or countercultural groups. New left groups placed an emphasis upon group organisation and (though the emphasis changed from place to place) often aligned themselves to campaigns based upon social class, anti-war, anti-imperialism civil liberties and the pursuit of equality.

During the late 1960's, many students became disenchanted with traditional established left wing organisations. They formed their own new left organisations which, by the late 1960s, had attracted a significant student membership. Many of these organisations believed that they could play a progressive leadership role within the process of social change and attempted to forge alliances between themselves, peasants and the working class.

Berman (1996) describes how, inspired by Marxist and anarchist ideas, European students attempted to construct visions of a future society. The French student left imagined supra democratic worker's councils, while Italian students talked of 'workers autonomy'. German students spoke about recreating the Paris commune of 1871, whilst Dutch students proposed the establishment of libertarian communes as outlined by Peter Kropotkin. Political ideology and the visions of a new society strongly underpinned the outlook of many student activists during the late 1960s.

As Berman notes:

European students of the Sixties wanted to conjure up a hoped-for freedom and social change, they plucked off-the-shelf something more glamorous and exciting than mere democracy and came up with their notions of workers councils or the Paris Commune or some other wonderful bit of imagination from the 19th-century's workers movement (Berman, 1996:50).

Foss and Larkin (1976) argue however, that a considerable number of young freak and hippy student activists became involved in a counterculture outside the new left. Members of the counterculture were portrayed by the media and authorities as being nonconformist, destructive, radical and subversive. While many members of the counterculture shared many of the values of the new left they held different standpoints about how social change may be achieved. Members of the counterculture objected to becoming involved in political organisations and believed that social change should take place on an individual level. They placed emphasis on 'dropping out' of established society and establishing alternative lifestyles or new types of communal society that were separate from wider society. Their outlook was based on a value system that emphasised the values of individualism, non-violence, the here and now and peace and understanding.

Radicalism or hedonism?

A debate continues concerning just how radical student activists were during this period. Historical change has been propelled by people undertaking radical actions that have actively challenged existing power structures. Radical political activity and actions that have produced change include rebellion, protest, strikes, revolutions and direct action. While the actions of various elements of the new left were clearly aimed at achieving these ends it could be argued that hippies and freaks merely opted out of social structures rather than confronting them. On one hand this type of behaviour could be interpreted as radical in that the cumulative actions of many people opting out may subvert institutions, ideologies, obligations and conventions of existing social systems. However, this type of behaviour can be interpreted as evading the need to organise and bring about social change. In fact, Osberg (1998) argues that the freak values that focused on 'opting out' and 'doing your own thing' were more akin to the pursuit of hedonism than radicalism. He maintains that these values were often consistent with values of classical liberalism, capitalism and therefore, were not that radical at all. Foss and Larkin (1976) argue that the standpoints of hippies and freaks, which focused upon 'doing your own thing', could not reconcile the individualistic objectives of personal liberation and the objective of bringing about organised social change.

This problem contributed towards the decline of youth radicalism during the early 1970s. Personal liberation and political action can of course contribute towards

bringing about radical social change. The non-violent movements organised by Mahatma Gandhi, which urged personal action and non-compliance are example of this. The Indian non-violent movement however, combined personal action with participation in political organisations. According to Foss and Larkin, the hippy and freak ethos of 'doing your own thing' combined with their persistent objections to involvement in political organisations, was ultimately detrimental to the radical aims of some elements of the student movement. Calcutt (1998) concurs with this view and argues that the hippy and freak ethos of individual liberation often became self centred and obsessed with overcoming self alienation. Many activities were based around finding oneself, indulging in therapy and personal liberation rather than political organisation.

Radicalism or conservatism?

Though radical change may be taken to mean a significant return to the past, radicals throughout history have often been associated with a goal of creating something new or different. The outlooks of many 1960s student radicals both in Europe and in America can be interpreted as being conservative rather than radical. According to the modernist outlook political and social development must necessarily be accompanied by economic growth and technological development. Macradis and Hulliung (1996) point out however, that many young students were suspicious about technology and economic growth, 'students and "dropouts" feared the consequences of technology and lamented the entire historical record of

scientific advance from early modern to contemporary times.' (Macradis and Hulliung, 1996:280) Many young students also objected to the excesses of consumerism, blaming it for environmental and social deprivation. One French poster called consumerism 'an opium of the people' (Macradis and Hulliung, 1996:279).

Radical beliefs, radical actions

Critics may assert that many student activists were either individualist dropouts or subconscious conservatives. However, it could be argued that large numbers of students were indeed inspired by political ideas and were imbued with a vision of a different, more progressive society. During the late 1960s thousands of French students were disillusioned with the French national union of students and became inspired by Maoist and socialist ideas. Many joined organisations including the Union des Jeunesses Communistes Marxist-Leninistes and the Jeunesse Communiste Revolutionnaire, while others were inspired by situationalist ideas. Thousands of students suggested the need for cultural and social revolutions. Nathanson points out that participants in the student movements in the late 1960s actively grappled with the need to develop coherent ideological standpoints around the struggle to 'develop human socialism, solidarity with the Vietnamese liberation struggle, the struggle against police oppression, a rejection of Gaulism and the need to establish greater liberty for young people' (cited in Gordon, 1998:42).

In Britain many students campaigned around a variety of issues including the Vietnam war and civil rights. Like their French counterparts, a significant number of British students were inspired by political ideologies and joined organisations including the Young Socialists, The Vietnam Solidarity Campaign, The radical Student Alliance and the Revolutionary Students' Foundation. Ellis (1998) notes how during this period membership of Labour clubs increased as many newly radicalized students attempted to increase their influence amongst socialist students. David Triesman agreed that during the late 1960s British student activists became radicalised by the Vietnam war and inspired by socialist ideas:

The Vietnam's war was probably the decisive [event], for it jarred people into taking their socialism more seriously. For many the war produced a whole series of knock-on events in their political consciousness, which took them right to the heart of their own society and its economic character. And that produced a seedbed. (cited in Fraser, 1968:110).

The radicalisation of many students was not confined to Europe and Asia. Thousands of American students became inspired by political ideologies. Bailey (2003) notes how Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) attracted a mass membership and achieved a high political profile both on and off campuses. The SDS organised high level conferences and effective campaigns around issues

including the Vietnam war and civil rights. During the early 1960s the SDS attempted to assert a non-ideological stance. It focused around single-issue campaigns and stressed the importance of action instead of ideology. By the late sixties both the leadership and the membership of the SDS began to more often address questions of fundamental social change. Bailey notes how many students in the SDS began to shift their demands from civil rights to equality for all. Many students shifted their outlooks from anti-war to anti-imperialist stances. The radicalisation of many students was notable. According to a poll in 1969 100,000 students considered themselves to be revolutionary, while 350,000 students agreed with the statement 'that some form of mass revolutionary party was needed in the USA' (Bailey, 2003).

Student organisation

Finally, a debate also continues around the levels of political activity undertaken by young students during this period. Former student activists and those on the left, often emphasise the numbers of young students involved in radical causes while other commentators (Sassoon, 1996; Blackstone, 1967; Walton and Cohen 1971) point to evidence that student activism was confined to a statistically small active minority. It is feasible however, to argue that during this period Higher Education students were likely to undertake a variety of high profile political campaigns. During the 1960s, young students in Higher Education institutions right across the country used a variety of methods, ranging from protests to sit ins in an attempt to

influence politicians and university officialdom. Ellis's comments sum up the mood of the time:

Students in universities and colleges across Britain demanded increased participation in university policy-making, especially from 1967 onwards. Students complained about and took action on their role, or lack of it in university decision-making and management. They wanted involvement and input into the content and presentation of courses, freedom of expression, increased access to academic staff, and greater involvement in the governing bodies of their universities and colleges. They debated the usefulness and fairness of the examination system. British students were also politicised over a whole range of local, national and international issues (Ellis, 2000:56-57).

Caute (1988) documents how, during this period, many British students actively sought to resist the imposition of an alienating curriculum and control over their personal lives. Many British students were involved in campaigns to liberalise rules concerning conduct in halls of residence. Ellis (1998) points out how many young students demanded involvement in the development of university courses. She also notes that thousands of students were involved in campaigns to secure statutory funding for Higher Education and the provision of income for students. The principled character of student protest is perhaps demonstrated by the willingness

of many university students to support foreign students studying in Britain. In 1968, 100,000 university students around the country participated in a day of action protesting at proposed increases in tuition fees for foreign students (Ellis, 1998:57). Such a sizeable protest is unlikely to take place today.

British students were actively involved in wider political campaigns. Estimates place the number of people who attended the London anti Vietnam war demonstration in October 1968 at 100,000. (Fraser, 1988:251) A notable indication of levels of politicisation and radicalism around wider issues amongst the student community was uncovered by Paul Barker, who undertook a survey of protesters involved in the demonstration. He revealed that more than half of the demonstrators who attended the anti Vietnam war were students. His study also revealed that, in addition to their protest against Western military policy, 65 percent and 67 percent of students were also protesting respectively against the 'general structure of British society' and 'capitalism in general' (Barker, 1968:631).

Some commentators may contest outlooks, aims, beliefs, ideologies and the numbers of students who took part in political campaigns during the late 1960s. However, a variety of social issues radicalised a significant number of students. Political ideologies inspired both their beliefs and their actions. Most importantly, they inspired many to visualise a more progressive future society. Their activities are frequently discussed by historians, sociologists and the media. This reality is

perhaps testimony to the fact that their beliefs, ideologies and actions did constitute more of a challenge to the status quo than their critics will admit.

The decline of political ideologies.

In the preceding chapters I have argued that a number of substantive developments have taken place that have impacted upon the social, educational and political context that young students experience today. Young students live in an individualised society, which discourages the possibility of mass student organisation in connection with the issues connected to tuition fees. This section of the thesis will examine some of the social developments, which have contributed to this situation.

The contention that political ideologies are less relevant within the contemporary world of politics may be used to explain decreasing levels of involvement in traditional political organisations and processes, which in turn, contributes towards the individualisation process. In the past political ideologies formed the focus around which large groups of people aimed to both understand and change society. Fascist, communist, conservative and social democratic ideologies inspired thousands of people to undertake social revolutions, strive for social reform and fight wars. The political ideologies which once enabled groups to understand social problems and provided the basis upon which they collectively dealt with them, have declined in importance. Today, individuals are much less likely to refer to

ideological standpoints when undertaking political action. A number of factors have contributed towards this development. In particular, the failures of the communist bloc, the horrors of nazism and totalitarianism have done much to discredit these political ideologies.

For many years, political debate in the United Kingdom was centred around competing socialist and conservative ideological standpoints. Each standpoint outlined a set of beliefs and a vision of a just and productive society. In recent years however, both these standpoints have been discredited. Giddens (1994) argues that the ideological onslaught mounted by conservative political parties during the 1980s did much to discredit socialist policies which once commanded a great deal of working class support. Giddens feels that socialism is now under fire as globalisation undermines the conditions for macroeconomic regulation. Traditional class identities and collective actions are dissolving. As a result the working class is much less likely to be a historical agent of change. The crisis of the welfare state and state intervention into the economy has further undermined the credibility of socialist politics. Furthermore, Kumar (1995) notes that the economic inefficiency and political repression that took place in the Soviet bloc did much to discredit socialist ideas by providing a negative example of 'socialist societies'. Richards (1990) reiterates this view and adds that the proclamations of the superiority of free market forces by many former Soviet bloc leaders contributed towards undermining the credibility of socialist ideologies. The collapse of the former Soviet bloc took a

heavy toll upon communist and socialist parties throughout the world. Many socialist and communist parties have now disbanded or reformed themselves as parties of the democratic left.

Though conservative and free market capitalist ideologies assumed ascendancy during the 1970s and 1980s, the credibility of these ideas has come under question. Furedi (1995) argues that, since the mid-1990s, the free market capitalist ideologies and policies of the New Right have also been discredited as Conservative parties have failed to solve economic and social problems and sustain economic growth. In light of this, neither the Labour or Conservative parties are able to offer a coherent political vision or an alternative to the status quo. Both of these parties are currently trying to develop both a new set of policies and a new ideological approach. Crane (1998) points out that the Labour Party is currently seeking to develop the ideology and policies of a 'Third Way' between capitalism and state socialism. The Conservative party on the other hand, is trying to distance itself from New Right policies and is currently trying to develop a new political credo. A speech delivered by Peter Lilley to a Conservative Party conference revealed that the party was undertaking a policy review, which aimed to fight the 1997 election in the Conservative centre ground. Lilley emphasised that the party should be seen as a caring party and 'repudiate the absurd caricature of the Conservatives as the selfish party' (Sparrow, 1998:3). The disavowal of key ideological concepts by political parties such as the Conservative and Labour parties has undermined the standing of

political ideologies as the focus of political debate and activity. While in recent years both the Labour and Conservative parties sought to distance themselves from their respective socialist and New Right policies, in reality neither of these parties attempt to offer a concrete alternative to the free market system. In light of this, it is perhaps not surprising that both these parties proclaim themselves to be the 'party of business' and accept the legitimacy of market forces.

Today, it appears that the political ideologies and organisations that once gave significant sections of the population an organisational focus, or a political standpoint upon which to understand and act on the problems that face them, are no longer accorded the same significance by people at large. The lessening significance of political ideology is perhaps demonstrated by Crewe and Sarlvick (1983) who argue that people are increasingly more likely to vote on the basis of self-interest rather than class interest. According to Sassoon (1996), virtually all mainstream political parties have committed themselves to accepting greater levels of marketisation in economic and political life.

Students, ideology and mass movements

According to Feuer (1969), students are periodically radicalised by ideologies. He also argues that they transform their concerns into political action when they can attach themselves to established political 'Carrier Movements'. History reveals that radical student movements have grown during times of social upheaval and the growth of radical ideas. During the late 1960s and early 1970s, many Western nations such as Great Britain, the United States, France and Italy experienced social upheaval and the growth of many influential radical political groups. Many students were influenced by them and became involved in political action in connection with both student centred and wider political issues. By contrast, the political scene of contemporary Britain is characterised by the absence of 'credible' radical political ideas and movements. The declining significance of political ideologies may have fragmented the student population and impacted upon its willingness to organize itself in the connection with issues such as tuition fees.

Students and political ideology

Today, political ideology has been largely discredited. The lessening ability of political ideologies to mobilise mass movements in search of social change has accentuated individualisation by creating a mass of atomised people who, without guiding political beliefs, are more likely to pursue individualised, rather than group collective based, solutions to the risks and problems they face. Political ideologies seem to inspire few young people. Research findings indicate that young people

display little interest in politics. A British Social Attitudes Survey published in the year 2000 revealed that interest in politics amongst first-time voters is low. The survey found that just 10 percent of 18 to 25-year-olds were 'quite' or 'very' interested in politics compared to over 20 percent of a comparable group surveyed around 13 years earlier (Park, 2000). Alison Park (1999) found that between 1991 and 1994, the difference between the political interest of 18 to 24-year-olds and older adults widened from 7 to 17 percentage points. The apparent declining significance of political ideologies (which according to Feuer sustained the carrier movements that provides the focus for much student activity) may therefore explain why some students may not involve themselves in campaigns connected with tuition fees. Like wider society, it is apparent that political ideologies failed to inspire more than a few students. A recent Mori poll revealed that most of today's students consider their politics to be 'middle-of-the-road' (Mori, 2000).

Research has also revealed that young people in general are indifferent towards political ideologies. Denver and Hands (1990) undertook a study, which revealed that young people are more likely to support a party on the basis of self-interest than upon an ideological or principled standpoint. A Mori survey undertaken in 1996 reported that just 5 percent of young people aged 15 to 21 described themselves as being politically active. (Fahmy, 2000). The Adam Smith Institute (1999) reported that few of them associate themselves with what might be termed as political extremists. The absence of ideological alternatives as an organisational

focus for student discontent has disappeared. Brown and Scarse (1994) argue that the declining significance of Marxist ideas has played its part in depoliticising and atomising students:

The ideological impact of Marxism, for example with its offer of alternatives non-capitalist realities, which was pronounced among some student groups in the 1960s and 1970s, is now almost dead. The demise of the Soviet Union has reaffirmed to students that their futures are within an established socio-economic and political order which is unlikely to move in the direction of the more utopian radical appeals that they may still encounter at university (Brown and Scarse, 1994:112).

The declining significance of political ideology in society means that it is unlikely that in the near future it will provide an organisational focus for mass organised student movements to pursue social change. Jacoby (1999) agrees and categorically states that today, political ideologies are less likely to motivate significant sections of society in pursuit of social goals. He argues that the utopian ideas that several political ideologies once subscribed to are seen as obsolete or even bizarre:

A utopian spirit -- a sense that the future could transcend the present -- has vanished. This last statement risks immediate misunderstanding,

since Utopia today connotes irrelevancies or bloodletting. Someone who believes in Utopia is widely considered to be out to lunch or out to kill (Jacoby, 1999:xi)

Mass movements in decline

The absence of ideological alternatives to market capitalism fragments already disparate student communities and discourages the development of a mass student movement against tuition fees. Many young students have never experienced large-scale social movements and competing political alternatives to the self-help ethos of free market economics. The political ideologies and social movement that, according to Wilson (1970) and Osberg (1998), constituted an organisational focus for young students to express their alienation and dissatisfaction with their lives and wider social issues have now been defeated or deradicalised.

Byrne (1997) argues that organised feminism in Britain is in decline and points to indicators such as the closure of Spare Rib, one of the last feminist journals to enjoy national circulation, as an indication of this situation. Few young people are feminist activists. Research reveals that the younger generation born since the 1970s tends to see the movement as 'extreme, man hating and separatist' (Byrne, 1997:123). It is perhaps not surprising that large numbers of young people do not actively involve themselves in the antiracist and feminist movements if one considers that recent research has revealed that young people feel that the problems

of racial and sexual discrimination are likely to decrease in the future (Mori 2000). In the past, the anti-war movement also provided a focus for mass political action. During the nineties, the anti-war movement had a low profile on the political stage, though in 2003, it enjoyed a resurgence in support just before the start of the invasion of Iraq. Its impact sharply declined as huge demonstrations quickly dwindled to just a fraction of their former size.

The NUS

Young students exist in a social context within which ideas and social movements, that could have provided them with a focus for organisation no longer enjoy a high profile. However, The National Union of Students is a political organisation that has a mass membership. It could be argued this organisation enjoys a high enough profile on university campuses and could potentially form an organisational focus for active campaigning on behalf of student interests. However, the NUS seems unable to articulate arguments that could motivate a mass movement of students to undertake action in connection with tuition fees. It bases its arguments against tuition fees upon the idea that graduates are beneficial to society. It has also argued that tuition fees imposed an unfair financial burden upon many students both during their time at university and after graduation. The NUS also maintains that financial problems experienced by students act as a disincentive against undertaking a university education. It argues that government policies and their associated hardships prevent many members of disadvantaged groups from entering

education. However, its policy outlook does not consistently propose an alternative to tuition fees.

While on the one hand the NUS has argued against tuition fees, it has in fact accepted that they may remain in place. It has accepted the recommendations outlined by the Cubie Report which suggested that tuition fees should not be paid upfront by Scottish students, but rather their payment should be deferred until after they graduate. Jones noted this development:

The National Union of Students (NUS) will tell the select committee for education this week that students across the United Kingdom should benefit from the work of the Cubie Report. The NUS will argue against "Scottish solutions for Scottish problems," saying that all students face the same financial worries. "Cubie has done some excellent work on what it costs to be a student," said an NUS spokesman. "Please let's not have yet another committee to look into it for the rest of the UK." Should the Government refuse to allow Cubie to apply to the whole country, the Union warns it will demand a separate inquiry, refusing to let the issue go away (Jones, 2000).

The unwillingness of the NUS to articulate a consistent political alternative to the

imposition of tuition fees undermines its ability to mobilise mass active student support against them. Many young students have no conception of any other political or ideological alternatives to the free market and tuition fees. In light of this, it is perhaps not surprising that some of them now agree with the idea that they should support themselves through their university education. Thomson reported findings of a survey that reveals that students 'came out fairly in favour of a graduate tax to cover maintenance'. The survey also revealed that 44 percent of the respondents felt that they should contribute towards tuition costs. (Thomson, 1996:17)

It seems that in the current political climate no set of ideas or organisations seems to be willing to offer young students a political and practical alternative to the market forces economics, that has led to the introduction of tuition fees. The absence of organisations that are able to articulate a coherent political and ideological alternative to the imposition of tuition fees discourages the development of an effective organisational focus that could serve as the basis for the development of a mass student movement capable of effectively campaigning against their imposition..

Politics reinvented

The ideas and movements that once formed the organisational focus for many mass based political campaigns have declined in significance. Giddens' and Beck's

contention that people are increasingly questioning their loyalties towards established political ideologies, political parties and processes, which have contributed towards individualisation seems credible. They do not feel that individualisation has simply created a society of atomised, politically powerless and disengaged people. Rather, this development is paralleled by the development of new political arenas, outlooks, solidarities and forms of political activity. They argue that social change has caused politics to be reinvented and has brought about the emergence of sub-politics and life politics within which individual people, rather than mass movements, empower themselves to bring about social change.

In the risk society, Beck (1992) argues that images of technical - economic rationality and control are called into question. This organised uncertainty results in a heightened consciousness of risk, social reflexivity and a multiple self-criticism of society. Society becomes a theme and a problem for itself and social reflexivity involves individuals and organisations at all levels becoming self-critical both of how they function and their own *raison d'etre*. This self criticism leads organisations and individuals to question their loyalties both to organisations and established forms of thought. The process of de-traditionalisation in the risk society has led individuals to increasingly question the desirability of technical - economic growth and the efficacy of established government.

This has influenced two significant political developments. Firstly, it has altered the

focus of much political activity and debate. In the past, competing ideological visions influenced politics, in particular the class nature of politics formed the central pillar of political activity. Within an industrial society, politics was largely concerned with the distribution of benefits to society (wealth, income, jobs). Within reflexive modernity, the dominant focus of politics is the distribution of costs and risks of social development. Today, Lash and Wynne (1992) argue that politics is increasingly centred upon conflicts over bads, that is, conflicts over who is responsible for threats and risks. In short, the political landscape has changed from one centred around class politics and competing ideologies to one where confronting risk becomes a central aspect of political life.

Secondly, according to Beck (1992) modernisation has brought about the emergence of 'sub-politics' or what Giddens (1994) terms 'life politics', which are focused around various issues such as personal freedom, environmentalism and ethical issues. These developments have led to the reinvention of politics, where the rules and boundaries of the political system have been changed. It is a politics of politics, which by its very nature is rule altering and reflexive. People involved in sub-politics feel that existing institutions do not work. This has led to the emergence of a number of political struggles, which are conducted outside existing ideological, organisational and political frameworks. Today, the direct action tactics of groups including animal rights, anti capitalist and environmental campaigners are grabbing more attention. Pre-existing political parties,

organisations, trade unions and political programmes have become less relevant to ordinary people. Political activists are openly questioning their relevance and are choosing to become involved in sub-politics, which often operates outside of the party political or corporatist system.

The individualisation of politics

Today, students find themselves in a context within which political ideologies and established organisations are unable to inspire students to become involved in campaigns opposing tuition fees. They find themselves in a markedly different social and political context to that experienced by their predecessors during the 1960s and early 1970s. In the individualised society the very idea of participation within mass organised political movements may be alien to the outlooks of many young students.

Many political activists undertake individualised forms of political action including consumer boycotts, web site construction and pamphleteering. Other activists involve themselves in small sub-political organizations, such as citizen's action groups, DIY political groups or non-violent direct action groups. Many governmental and commercial organisations are routinely subjected to public criticism from environmentalists, ethical consumers, direct action activists, and pressure groups. Campaigners argue that corporate greed, environmental

degradation and exploitation of the most disadvantaged groups are often intrinsically linked. Campaigns have been launched against multinational companies who have been accused of openly degrading the environment or employing technology that is potentially damaging to the environment. The impact of these campaigns can be clearly felt. The growing public consciousness of globalised risks have compelled various organisations to attempt to portray themselves as being interested in the welfare of the environment and people who they are involved with. Today, petroleum companies try to portray themselves as environmentally friendly, while other companies are keen to stress their willingness to engage in charitable activities overseas. The aims of the activists often enjoy significant levels of public sympathy. Muller-Rommel and Poguntke (1990) argue that the causes and aims subscribed by activists in the sphere of sub-politics enjoy a good deal of support. They argue that in Western Europe, they receive the support of 20 percent of the population (cited in Crook, Pakulski and Waters, 1992:141).

An appreciation of declining influence of political ideologies and mass student movements, coupled with the growing profile of individualised forms of political activity, is important in developing an understanding of the attitudes of young students towards participation in campaigns relating to tuition fees. The emergence of sub-politics and life political issues as described by Beck and Giddens reflects the individualisation of society and further encourages it by popularising the legitimacy of individualised political activity rather than contributing to a political

culture which could encourage mass student involvement in organised political movements opposing tuition fees.

New forms of engagement or disinterest?

For Giddens and Beck, these changes indicate the substantive advent of a new form of politics in which individuals seek to exercise their power within the sphere of sub-politics. It is of course undeniable that a significant number of people are involved in sub-political activity. It should be recognised that Giddens (1991, 1994) would not necessarily contend that any growth in the sphere of sub-politics and life politics (which are often centred around ethical and environmental issues) would necessarily facilitate the development of emancipatory political campaigns such as those undertaken in connection with tuition fees. They do assume however, that a new form of political culture is emerging.

Conversely however, it could be argued that their assertion that the political landscape may be changing does not necessarily mean that political involvement within the spheres of sub-politics and life politics is increasing and that activists are completely committed to the causes they adopt. In spite of the growing media profile now being enjoyed by sub-politics, the campaigns have so far failed to create a broader culture of political involvement amongst the British people. While Beck and Giddens have never been specific about the number of people involved in these political spheres, it could be argued that sub-politics or life politics inspires

few people to become politically active. Nichol revealed that on average, just 11.5 percent of people aged between 18 to 55 years of age described themselves as being politically active. (Nicholl,1998:8) This pattern of non-involvement in politics is critically evident amongst the young. On average just 6 percent of people aged between 18 to 24 described themselves as being politically active. The Student Living Report (Unite / Mori, 2001) revealed that just 7 percent of students involved themselves in environmental groups, 5 percent in human rights groups and 4 percent in political parties. In addition to this Dalton et al found that people who become active within the sphere of sub-politics do so on an ad hoc, often temporary basis (Dalton et al., 1990:12). It is clear therefore, that young British people are living in a society in which few of them express an active interest in politics and few people of any age regularly participate in political activity, which may accord with their material interests.

Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the political factors that contribute to the individualisation of society and how they have been paralleled both by disengagement from party political processes, low levels of interest in politics amongst the young and a growing public profile for sub-politics. It has also considered developments that have depoliticised students. The ideas discussed provide insight in to political behaviour, which prove to be significant in exploring student attitudes towards mass organised campaigns that oppose tuition fees.

Chapter 5

Analytical framework

Introduction

Today, young students find themselves in a society within which class solidarities no longer exert a strong influence over social values and behaviour. The process of globalisation has caused many people to question their own identities. The influence of religious and scientific systems of thought, which once promoted deference to organisations, have been called into question. Young people consider the individualistic concepts of meritocracy and the pursuit of hedonism to be central aspects of everyday life. Government policies have actively promoted the individualistic values of enterprise culture, self-help, meritocracy and consumer litigation. Young people exist in a social context in which political ideologies exert little influence and political parties are distancing themselves from their traditional political beliefs. Involvement in individualised sub-political activity often enjoys a higher media profile than traditional forms of political activity. Young students live in an individualised society where people show less traditional deference to authority and the idea of involvement in mass organised movements is largely alien to them.

Beck and Giddens' work provides an analytical framework that can be used to understand and explain how the changes above encourage individualisation and militate against mass student involvement in organised campaigns opposing tuition fees. This analysis of the conditions that directly influence the actions of university organisations and students considers the central concepts and ideas developed by both Beck and Giddens. It critically applies them to develop a theoretical understanding of the behaviour of young students and universities. This chapter will consider some of these key concepts and ideas in action.

Late modernity

Giddens (1984) argues that attempts to analyse social organisation should be undertaken by locating change within its historical context and must understand the interaction between people and structures. For example, political change must also be understood with reference to ideological and economic developments. In his attempts to distance himself from functionalist, Marxist and other forms of evolutionary reasoning, Giddens' structuration theory argues that there can be no universal laws that can be used to explain social development. He also attempts to avoid reductionist explanations of social change by introducing a multifaceted analytical framework into his work. Giddens (1991) argues that within modernity an equal interaction between four institutional dimensions (capitalism, industrialism, surveillance and military power) takes place and their presence influences the workings of institutions within contemporary society. According to

his structuration theory, sociological analysis must develop an understanding of the interaction between these four dimensions to understand the workings of modern-day institutions and their consequent impact upon society. Both Beck and Giddens try to develop a framework of understanding that explains how social change is affected by a variety of factors.

They both argue that the processes of abstract rationality, globalisation, reflexivity and life politics play a key role in social change. Their attempts to develop this analytical framework are not without criticism. Kaspersen (2000) argues that Giddens has not really developed an in-depth analysis of the interaction between the four institutional dimensions of modernity. He feels that when examining social change, Giddens tends to stress the significance of one or two of the four structures. He makes no clear connection between the four dimensions. He points out that Giddens often places emphasis on the role of politics and war, which contradicts his claim that none of the four levels can gain dominance at the expense of the others. Clearly, Giddens needs to address this obvious shortfall.

Both Giddens and Beck concentrate on explaining how abstract rationality, globalisation, life politics and reflexivity propel the process of social change. Though they recognise the presence of capitalism, Rustin (1994, 1995) argues that both Giddens and Beck fail to understand the central role that capitalism plays in

ordering institutions and everyday behaviour in contemporary society. According to Rustin, Beck's focus on 'techno scientific rationality' in the process of social change neglects the role that the institutional power of capital has played within the process of social development:

Beck's critique especially in chapters 1 and 2 is directed towards a 'techno scientific rationality, not the institutional power of capital as if he thinks that it is the mode of scientific thinking itself rather than its sponsoring corporate agencies which is a decisive agent of change' (Rustin, 1995:9).

He adds 'There seems to be in Beck's argument a tendency in part politically driven, to gloss over actual concentrations and dynamics of power within modern capitalism' (Rustin, 1995:9). Rustin makes a similar observation of Giddens' work and points out that Giddens' emphasis on reflexivity within analysis of contemporary society to a large extent overlooks its class based nature, he argues that it:

has the 'quality of turning a blind eye to problems and realities which no one currently has a solution. The most important of these remains the control and ownership of capital, and its embodiment in large-scale

private property. These categories are largely absent from Giddens' discussion (Rustin,1994:23).

In a similar vein, Loyal (2003) criticises Giddens for often failing to consider the role that capitalism plays in social structures and in the process of social change. On one hand, Giddens (1991) recognises its significance, but at times devotes insufficient attention to it. Giddens assumes that individuals (armed with information) are free to make informed choices. Loyal, however, feels that individual reflexive behaviour is ideologically loaded. It is often influenced by capitalist ideological structures and as such may not be objective or truly informed.

These critical remarks need to be considered when understanding student attitudes towards tuition fees and campaigns that oppose them. They do not mean that Giddens' explanatory framework cannot be used to explain social change, but its use should, as Giddens contends, consider all of the factors that can influence change. I attempt to address Beck and Giddens' failure to actively consider the influence of capitalism and industrialism, (which is defined as being the use of materials in the production of goods) which impacts upon many aspects of social and domestic life. This thesis discusses the role of the market, the consumerisation and vocationalisation of education when examining the process of individualisation in Higher Education and student attitudes towards participation in campaigns connected to tuition fees.

Abstract systems and trust

In pre-modern societies the daily lives and actions undertaken by institutions and individuals were embedded in local traditions, institutions and expectations. In these societies, individuals and institutions were required to have an intimate knowledge of them in order to successfully interact with society at large. According to Giddens, drastic developments have brought about changes in time-space relationships that mean this is no longer the case. In modern society individuals need no longer interact on a face-to-face basis in order for daily life to take place. In contemporary society abstract systems (such as legal, economic, political, professional systems) largely operate separately from individuals.

Abstract systems may operate at a distance, but still enable individuals to order their lives. For example, in contemporary society, modern science provides technology to equip people for modern lifestyles. Traffic and communication systems enable people to travel from place to place and enable transactions to take place without individuals or institutions having to directly interact with anyone. Giddens (1991) argues that in modern society, people place trust in abstract systems even though they may have little direct contact with them. He also maintains that this type of trust relationship is crucial to the functioning of contemporary society.

Paradoxically however, he argues that in contemporary society, a dialectic exists

between individuals and the abstract systems that they depend upon. He argues that on one hand, individuals are highly dependent upon abstract systems, whilst on the other, the individualisation of society has made individuals more critical of the power and prestige vested in them. Students also depend on abstract systems to realise their aims and aspirations. However, research also shows that they too may choose to actively question and at times oppose the way that organisations or 'experts' behave.

This analysis will prove useful in understanding the individualisation process among the student community and the propensity of young university students to become involved in campaigns connected with tuition fees. Giddens' (1984) work can provide a framework for understanding the interaction between students and government as one that occurs within a duality of structure, this concept will be discussed below

Time space separation and globalisation

According to Giddens, time space relations within late modernity have drastically changed. People's lives no longer take place at the same place and time. People communicate with each other across vast distances to the extent that time has become standardised. New technology has enabled individuals and organisations to be in the same space, but not necessarily in the same locale. Giddens ascribes

tremendous importance to the process of globalisation. He points out how economic, political and technological developments have brought about a more integrated, globalised world where individuals and organisations are conscious of how events can have an impact upon daily life around the globe.

Globalisation is a multidimensional process that has economic, cultural and political aspects, which simultaneously fracture and restructure social life, creating diversity as well as uniformity. Global forces can at the same time undermine existing belief systems and in turn germinate movements that seek to protect them. In a globalised society organisations, individual and community lives are increasingly interlinked and bound by economic networks, interstate relations, military alliances and the global division of labour. Giddens (1990) ascribes a key significance to the transmission of knowledge within the globalisation process. He claims that the dissemination of information across time and space has precipitated the process of reflexivity and individualisation, which in turn induces individuals and organisations to interrogate and undermine traditions. This fragmentary aspect of globalisation contributes to the process of detraditionalisation and the disembedding of social systems by prompting individuals to question long-standing norms, expectations and values. For example, the Western media regularly attempts to popularise Western culture elsewhere in the world. Conversely, aspects of non-Western culture clearly influence the tastes and values of many Westerners.

Giddens' standpoints on globalisation have been subjected to criticism. Hirst and Thompson (1996) contest the globalisation thesis, dispute the levels of economic globalisation that he contends have taken place and question his assumption that a multi-directional , globalised interdependent relationship exists between national economies. Giddens assumes that the fates of national economies are inextricably linked with those elsewhere. Hirst and Thompson agree with Giddens' contention that national economies rely on foreign markets. They, however, contend that trade, the flow of finance capital and direct investment is not global, but mainly occurs between three blocks including Japan/East Asia, North America and EEC. Third World countries are often excluded from equal participation in major markets. Many more developed economies exploit less developed ones and actively prevent a truly global reciprocal, mutual trade of goods and services. They accept that a great deal of economic change has happened over the last 120 years that has resulted in an internationalisation of the world economy. However, the geographical concentration of capital, trade and investment coupled with the unequal terms of trade that the most powerful economies often impose upon others has prevented a truly reciprocal globalised economic framework of trade and exchange. Robertson (1992) argues that Giddens neglects cultural aspects of globality. He contends that many non-Western cultures are often heterogeneous rather than homogenous. Robertson argues that in non-Western societies a large number of communal narratives and cultures exist. He contends that the process of globalisation often brings about a relativisation of cultural narratives rather than a

process, which sees western institutional, cultural and economic practices gain complete worldwide dominance.

Also, during the process of social change local cultures and expectations come into play, which means that cultural dimensions of globalisation may differ. Robertson argues that Giddens' explanatory framework seems to overlook cultural reflexivity. It may be fair to say however, that with reference to this kind of criticism, that Giddens has in part considered this phenomenon by acknowledging the development of fundamentalisms and emergent nationalisms in response to the globalisation process. This observation does however call into question, Giddens' view that increased global integration is a multi-directional phenomenon that brings about a greater level of shared ideas. This assertion needs to be scrutinised when assessing the impact of globalisation upon Higher Educational provision, its implications for Higher Educational organisational practice and student attitudes towards educational provision.

A coherent understanding of globalisation in the process of social change requires a consideration of global change standpoints and actions of more than one nation state. Kasperson (2000) argues that Giddens has given insufficient attention to the significance of the standpoints and interests of other nation state apparatuses in the process of globalisation and social change. It could be argued that he needs to develop a more in depth analysis of intergovernmental relations, most especially as

it would be useful in understanding how global factors may affect state educational policy. In reply to his critics, Giddens (2000) does recognise often divergent interests of different economies and nation states and outlines the central role that supra-national organisations like, the International Monetary Fund play in reconciling their interests. It is perhaps true to say that the process of globalisation may not be multi-directional and may bring about a relativisation of values rather than universally held ones. Giddens however, is rarely criticised when he contends that economies are increasingly reliant on the global exchange of information and marketing of services and products. This contention is certainly relevant in understanding the globalised nature of competition that takes place between Higher Educational institutions and its impact upon the student population. I contend that it has individualised young students' educational experiences, which can in turn help explain their low levels of participation in campaigns connected to tuition fees.

The duality of structure

Giddens' (1984) social theory attempts to provide a multifaceted explanation that transcends the dualism between actor and structure. He argues that an understanding of the concept of duality of structure is central to comprehending society and social change. He contends that individuals and organisations undertake actions with reference to existing structures, which in turn reproduce them. Giddens does not argue that existing social structures are simply understood and reproduced by institutions and individuals. For example, the actions

undertaken by individuals can change owing to unintended outcomes arising from their behaviour. Also, the revelation of new information and data enables individuals to acquire new forms of knowledge, which causes them to question forms of behaviour and expectations. Humans utilise their discursive consciousness to question their interaction with complex systems, obligations, values, rules and procedures. As a result of this, institutions may seek to alter themselves or their practices in response to the changing actions and outlooks held by individuals.

According to Giddens, individuals are free to reflexively respond to changes brought on by structures and actively play a part in shaping them. Critical reviews of Giddens' work contend that his analysis of modernity, agency and structure does not devote an in depth examination of the constraining aspects of social structures. Giddens' description of contemporary society focuses on identifying structures and rules (rather than distinct organisational, political and ideological aspects of a society that may represent the opposed interests of social groups) and how individuals and institutions interact with them. He pays little attention to how structures and rules may actively impede the ability of individuals to bring about changes in social structures. For example, Archer (1990) points out that though elaborated structures can be shaped by practice, Giddens fails to discuss fixity and durability as a consequence of practice. While Giddens may respond by saying that structures are both enabling and constraining, he needs to devote more attention to this observation. This theme recurs in several critical engagements with his work.

According to Thompson (1989) Giddens' analysis of social structure tends to focus on rules and resources rather than specific aspects of structure that may have a deciding or constraining influence on social action. Giddens fails to explain why some rules are more important and constraining than others.

In a similar vein, Rustin (1995) argues that Giddens needs to be more specific about the constraining side of the concept of structure. He goes on to argue that not all individuals are equally well-placed to draw upon resources when responding to risks and not all people are as able as others to bring about change in social structures. Beck's assumption that, armed with knowledge, individuals are equally well placed to reflexively question their own *raison d'etre* and their interaction with organisations and wider society is also criticised by Elliott (2002). He argues that socio-economic realities and life chances associated with certain groups affect how people reflexively respond to the situations they find themselves in:

One must be able to deploy certain educational resources, symbolic goods, cultural and media capabilities, as well as cognitive and effective aptitudes, in order to count as a 'player' in the privatisation of risk detection and risk management. People who cannot deploy such resources and capabilities, often the results of various material and class inequalities, are likely to find themselves the other disadvantaged and

marginalised in a new world order of reflexive modernisation (Elliott, 2002:305).

Drawing from these critical remarks It might also be argued that groups such as students are constrained, atomised and, as a result, may be less able than other social groups to have an affect upon certain social structures. They may only have a limited ability to bring about changes in governmental policies. These critical remarks demand that Beck pays attention to socio-economic factors that may affect how people respond to the situations they find themselves in. In spite of these criticisms, I will, however, contend below that Giddens' concept of duality of structure provides an acceptable basis for explaining how the everyday interaction between students and educational organisations encourages individualisation within Higher Education and how this may in turn be used to explain low levels of student involvement in organised campaigns related to tuition fees.

Life politics and sub-politics

Giddens (1991) argues that modern societies have achieved many of the aims of emancipatory politics. He also argues that many of the political ideologies and movements that once inspired involvement in mass organised political activity have been sidelined or discredited. Giddens contends that life politics is enjoying a greater profile and is focused around what Inglehart (1977) terms 'post materialist'

concerns centred upon issues such as risk, ethical issues or the environment. Beck (1992) argues that individuals or small groups of people most often undertake sub-political activity. Activists are often suspicious of political ideologies and have disengaged from the realm of class politics. Instead, they concentrate their activities on a multitude of single issue campaigns focused on issues such as environmentalism, ending sweatshop labour, civil and political rights and upon the encroaching power of transnational corporations. Beck and Giddens argue that life politics has a significant impact on social change and has the potential to re-engage people with politics. It has created a new political agenda in which thousands of people may become involved in political campaigns.

Beck and Giddens' analysis of the new politics is not without its flaws. Kaspersen (2000) criticises Giddens' assumption that life politics now determines the political agenda. Kaspersen argues that emancipatory political issues still concern less affluent members of Western societies and that they still make up the key day-to-day political issues within Third World societies. This criticism is reiterated by Elliott (2002) who contends that social inequality still strongly influences the material interests and political priorities of many people in society. Both Beck and Giddens may be correct in assuming that the development of life politics seems to encourage individualisation. However, their assumption that life political issues will inspire many more people to become actively involved in politics seems to be contentious. The environmental and ethical concerns that lie at the centre of life

politics have so far proved unable to inspire mass involvement in politics. The anti-ideological and single issue outlooks held by many activists makes them and their groups less able to connect with other campaigns within the spheres of both life and emancipatory politics.

In spite of the criticisms made against them, Giddens' and Beck's analysis of the new politics still proves useful in understanding low levels of student involvement in campaigns connected with student hardship and tuition fees. Life political issues have in recent years began to enjoy an increasing profile in public affairs. As both Beck and Giddens contend, sub-political activity is contributing towards the development of a political culture that has turned away from political ideology and mass organised political protests. I argue that concern with life political issues encourages individualisation and discourages the development of large-scale mass political organisations. Political activity based around post materialist issues does not necessarily correlate with interests of specific groups, but rather the personal standpoints of sympathetic or interested individuals. As such it has only limited ability to create mass organised movements of activists. Sub-politics' emphasis upon individual deeds, rather than mass organised group participation has created a political context which seems less likely to offer a political example that could inspire mass organised involvement in political protest. With this in mind, it is perhaps understandable that young people are unfamiliar with the concept of mass organised campaigns opposing the imposition of tuition fees.

Reflexivity in society.

Both Beck and Giddens argue that within Western societies during the modernist period, much social behaviour was influenced by the assumptions that technology was inherently progressive and economic growth should be encouraged. The modernist outlook also extolled the belief that alternative, more just, political and economic systems should be constructed. Beck (1992) argues that within industrial society, risk was understood to stem from natural hazards, and was seen as being a tolerable aspect of the modernisation process. Within reflexive modernity, the process of industrialisation has created a situation where the hazards of the modernisation process and the nature and understanding of risk have been greatly transformed. Within reflexive modernity risk is understood as being socially produced, democratic in the sense that it affects all social groups, and a product of the industrialisation process. It is understood to be a less manageable, global phenomenon, sometimes abstract in nature, since specific risks may not always be directly perceivable or be controllable. In reflexive modernity, much institutional and individual behaviour is driven by consciousness of risk. It is motivated by reflexive responses to the dilemmas and risks they face. Risk therefore, forms the new site where the duality of agency and structure are expressed.

Both Beck and Giddens argue that in contemporary society, individuals are party to a great deal of knowledge and use it to constantly monitor their actions in light of new information available to them. Reflexive modernity is characterised by moral

relativism, the declining influence of political ideologies and social class solidarities. Within reflexive modernity, individuals are less likely to rely upon established forms of knowledge and are more conscious of the risks that impact upon their everyday lives. According to Beck, the sum total of many informed people responding reflexively to the risks that they face plays a significant role in both constituting and changing the social order.

Beck and Giddens also argue that institutions are subject to a number of risks and a shifting social and political landscape, which in turn requires them to behave reflexively in order to manage the risks and dilemmas that they face. In contemporary society these include factors such as a consciousness of the environmental and ethical implications of actions undertaken by institutions, governmental decrees and the campaigns undertaken by social movements. Institutions are also sensitive to public opinion and are aware of the effects of cultural, political and economic globalisation.

Beck and Giddens contend that in an uncertain world the reflexive actions of both institutions and individuals contribute towards the individualisation of society by creating a pool of disparate people. These individuals increasingly take action to confront the risks they face without ever considering referring to a collective systems of knowledge or solidarity to help them deal with them.

These contentions have been subjected to criticism. Lupton (1999) points out that Giddens and Beck's assumptions seem to overlook (if not deny) the existence of group variance in cultural and social norms and how this may impact upon social actions and interpretations of risk. She argues that factors such as class, gender and ethnicity affect social behaviour. While this thesis does not seek to examine these specific factors and their relationship to how students perceive the issue of tuition fees and campaigns, it is important to realise that group values can influence behaviour and the nature of the individualisation process. For example, Furlong and Cartmel (1997) agree that social class can affect young people's perception of risk. While they accept that young people are increasingly pursuing individualised courses of social behaviour, their life chances and behaviour are still strongly influenced by social class:

Young people can struggle to establish adult identities and maintain coherent biographies, they may develop strategies to overcome various obstacles, their life chances remain highly structured with social class and gender as being crucial to an understanding of experiences in a range of life contexts (Furlong and Cartmel, 1997:109).

Where Giddens and Beck touch on this type of issue they tend to do so in relation to the individualisation process and assume that each individual follows an eclectic

strategy, aimed at dealing with the risks and the opportunities they face. They devote little attention to how group norms or life chances may affect the perception of risk and the reality that group patterns of understanding and dealing with risk may in fact exist.

The student community is becoming individualised. However, it is possible to argue that they still have a degree of shared experiences and interpretations of risk and that this could impact on their attitudes towards taking part in campaigns connected with tuition fees. Individualised student responses to tuition fees may reveal shared views of risk and a sense of personal and political weakness rather than students having a mass of different interpretations on the issue (As Giddens and Beck would imply). The concept of reflexivity is useful in understanding individual student behaviour, the individualisation process, and how students use their consumer status to individually deal with dilemmas they face. The concept of reflexivity is also useful in understanding how the individualisation process impacts upon student participation in campaigns. My analysis will however, devote more attention than Beck and Giddens do to examining group perceptions of issues and their resultant impact upon the individualisation process.

Conclusion

The analytical frameworks developed by Beck and Giddens provides a theoretical explanation of the factors that can be used to explain the individualisation process. It provides a number of concepts and ideas that can be used to analyse everyday

student attitudes to various aspects of student life and political campaigns. However, critical reflections upon their work reveal that the limitations of their analytical frameworks be carefully considered when applying them to the exploration of student participation in campaigns relating to tuition fees.

Chapter 6

Methodology Chapter

Introduction

This research explores why so few students are actively involved in campaigns opposing tuition fees. It not only seeks to uncover the meanings that motivate student actions, but also to understand the reflexive nature of the decisions they make. For this reason it was important to consider in detail how the empirical research should be undertaken in order to facilitate the most insightful exploration of the phenomenon. Before embarking upon the fieldwork, which took two years and three months to complete, I gave consideration to a number of methodological issues. This chapter will discuss aspects of the research design. It will include the research questions, the research strategy, the type of data required by the study, data collection techniques and procedures for ensuring that accurate and valid data was produced. Finally, consideration was given as to how the data was analysed.

Sensitising concepts , rooted findings

This research aimed to conduct an exploration of low levels of active participation in campaigns opposing tuition fees. It did not seek to test established theory by scientifically testing the relationships between variables, neither did it seek to

achieve theoretical saturation and in turn generate new, grounded theoretical explanation. It sought to investigate this phenomenon and explore the usefulness of individualisation theory in explaining it.

Many researchers involved in the field of qualitative social enquiry, particularly those who advocate the grounded theory approach, stress the need for theoretical conclusions be both grounded in and generated from fieldwork data. My aim was not to generate theory but to explore existing theory's usefulness in explaining a phenomenon. Alike researchers employing the grounded theory approach, my research utilised qualitative research methods so that the findings would be rooted in the meanings of research participants. When I undertook the data analysis I placed units of meaning into categories where rules of inclusion were bounded by propositional statements. I also ensured that during the field work the use of semi-structured interviews would also allow for new emergent data to arise, which could allow for new areas for consideration to be established. Though my approach was conscious of the positive aspects of the grounded theory approach, in practice it marked a significant departure from it.

Exponents of the ground theory approach such as Strauss and Corbin (1990), outline how existing theoretical concepts can inform the process of comprehending and conceptualising data. They emphasise that theories should be drawn from the data itself. They stress that literature should be introduced like further data to the

data analysis process when theoretical directions have been established and that researchers should not commit themselves to one preconceived theory. My aim was to explore the usefulness of individualisation theory in explaining low levels of active student participation in campaigns opposing tuition fees. Therefore, in contrast to grounded theorists I used the conceptual frameworks that emerged from my reading of Beck, Giddens and other contributors to the field of sociology and Higher Education to inform my research before, during and after the fieldwork took place.

In manner similar to that outlined by Blumer (1954) I used existing sociological concepts as sensitizing concepts to aid my approach. They did not constitute specific benchmarks that could be used to understand and classify instances drawn from data. They instead, provided a general guide to my investigation while making me receptive to new emergent issues and areas for consideration. I would argue therefore that my approach represents a departure from the grounded theory approach

The sensitizing concepts that I used were not fixed and they enabled me to identify what was relevant in the data, to further develop and illuminate aspects of concepts (in their contexts) and allowed me to discover emergent issues for consideration which may not be explained by these concepts. The use of qualitative methods ensured that all of the findings, and critical exploration of the concepts and issues

were rooted in the meanings outlined by research participants. In short, the use of sensitizing concepts provided a useful guide to investigation while enabling me to remain open to emergent discoveries and, where relevant question the usefulness of individualisation theory in explaining the phenomenon of low levels of active student participation in campaigns opposing tuition fees.

Research questions

Yin (1994) argues that research strategies have at least one of three objectives, which are ultimately related to the research questions being asked. This piece of research has exploratory, explanatory and descriptive objectives. Exploratory research aims to find out what is happening and attempts to develop new insights into phenomena. Descriptive research aims to develop an accurate profile of a person, groups, events and situations. Explanatory research seeks to develop an explanation of a phenomenon in the form of causal relationships. This study's exploratory objectives sought to explore the reasons why students have remained mute and that large-scale opposition to university tuition fees has not been forthcoming. Its explanatory objective focused on applying theoretical insights in an attempt to explain this phenomenon. To produce the necessary data to achieve these objectives I devised a number of research questions that guided the research process, these are discussed below.

The objectives of this research demanded that a consideration of student attitudes towards financial hardship and state provision for Higher Education be undertaken. Therefore, I considered that the question, 'what are students feelings concerning student hardship and tuition fees?' would be an appropriate one to include. The students' feelings, concerning hardship and tuition fees could provide insight into why so many have failed to participate in campaigns opposing tuition fees.

Available research shows that young people display a low sense of political efficacy, that is a sense of confidence in their ability to bring about a little change. (The Electoral Commission, 2003; Nestle, 2002; IPPR 2001). Research seems to indicate that students display little interest in political participation and low levels of political efficacy. Therefore, I concluded that the question, 'what level of political efficacy do students display?' should be investigated. This is because a social group's sense of political efficacy could be a key factor in understanding their attitudes towards political participation, in connection with their interests.

I also felt that it was important to investigate the question, 'what profile does individual active consumerism occupy within the student community?' because Beck (1992) and Giddens (1991) argue that contemporary society is characterised by the breakdown of traditional communities, solidarities and truth systems. They contend that individuals increasingly rely on consumer goods and services to enable

them to construct their own biographies and deal with the risks and dilemmas that they face. The literature review also revealed that students pursue individualised consumerist solutions in order to confront the issues that may affect the quality of their education. I concluded that this question would be particularly useful to gain insight into the manner in which students deal with problems and how this may compare to their attitudes towards political organised campaigns, regarding issues that affect many members of the student community.

Research indicates that few students involve themselves in organised political activity (Unite/Mori, 2001). According to Giddens (1994) and Beck (1992), levels of committed participation in mass organised political activity seem to have decreased. Today, political activism is often undertaken on an individual basis, or by small groups and is centred on the realm of sub-politics. Giddens argues that contemporary political activity is less focused on ideology and is more often focused around life political issues, rather than the emancipatory issues, such as student hardship and tuition fees. In order to build an understanding of student attitudes concerning political issues and political activism I decided to include the question, ‘what attitudes do students have towards political campaigns and what levels of involvement do they undertake within them?’

Research Strategy

My research has three objectives: exploratory, descriptive and explanatory. Robson (1993) identifies three key research strategies that are used by researchers. These include experimental, survey and case study strategies. I considered the suitability of each of the strategies.

The experimental strategy is undertaken by researchers in order to test cause and effect relationships. Laboratory experiments are often associated with the natural sciences, but have been used in a variety of ways to investigate human behaviour. Notable examples of laboratory experiments include those undertaken by Milgram (1968) and Zimbardo, Haney and Banks (1972). They are undertaken in controlled conditions where the experimental variables are closely manipulated and behaviour is observed. Experimenters attempt to eliminate or control for the presence of intervening or confounding variables, which might affect the accuracy of data that is produced. Experimental research is most often undertaken using quantitative research methods. It seeks to observe outward relationships between visible variables and often aims to produce data that can test hypotheses and produce reliable and generalisable results.

Though they have been used in an attempt to understand human behaviour experiments have been criticised for lacking in ecological validity. That is, that they

are contrived situations which do not necessarily produce data that would accurately reflect behaviour that would normally take place in social settings. Field experiments are a derivative of the laboratory experiments, which to some extent overcome these drawbacks. They involve researchers conducting experiments in social surroundings, within which they manipulate variables in an attempt to establish a causal relationship between dependent and independent variables.

Proponents of qualitative research (Silverman, 2000) argue that people are thinking beings who make choices and respond to things in different ways. Therefore, it would not be prudent to make conclusions and generalisations about the real-life behaviour derived from experimental research. They make the criticism that experimental conclusions involve only a superficial observation of visible variables and their conclusions may not, in actual fact, provide an explanation for the real reason behind people's behaviour. With these considerations in mind I decided that the experimental strategy was not an appropriate research strategy that suited the requirements of this research. The data produced by laboratory and field experiments is based upon observation and would lack the depth to adequately satisfy the demands of the exploratory, explanatory and descriptive aspects of this research. They do not provide rich in-depth data that enables a contextual investigation of reflexive social behaviour to be undertaken.

After discounting the suitability of this research strategy I considered the suitability of using survey research strategies within my research. Robson (1993) argues that surveys are commonly understood as involving the 'collection of standardised information from a specific population' (Robson, 1993:49). While surveys can employ either quantitative or qualitative components, he points out that they typically gather quantitative data. Surveys are undertaken on a face-to-face basis, by post, by telephone or over the internet. Robson points out that they are particularly suited to descriptive studies and may also be used to explore and explain social phenomenon. Survey methods may be criticised because the quantitative methods that are typically used during survey research often produce limited data. Their standardised structure leaves little flexibility for the exploration of novel emergent data to take place. I therefore, concluded that the survey strategy was not able to produce the in-depth data that complied with the objectives of this research.

Robson states that case studies are 'a strategy for doing research which involves empirical investigation of particular contemporary phenomena within their real-life context using multiple sources of evidence' (Robson, 1993:52). Case studies can be exploratory, explanatory and descriptive in their nature. Essentially, case study research aims to gain an in-depth insight into phenomena by establishing the units of analysis and by outlining the boundaries between the case and its context. It aims to gain a holistic insight by seeking to preserve the wholeness, unity and integrity

of the case and, where appropriate, undertake research within a real-life context. Case studies often use a variety of data collection methods, which may produce both qualitative and quantitative data.

After considering a number of possible research strategies I decided to employ the case study strategy. This type of strategy may be differentiated from the experimental strategy in that there is no attempt to investigate the influence of variables upon each other within some kind of laboratory or field experimental context. I decided that the research would not aim to produce statistically generalisable results. This research may also be differentiated from the survey strategy in that semi-structured interviews were used to go into considerable depth and were not completely standardised.

This research project attempts to gain insight into a phenomenon that is of national significance by selecting two cases, in this instance universities, as the source of research data. Like many case studies this research involved the use of more than one research method. The study attempted to investigate both the feelings of participants and the contextual reality in which they are founded. Qualitative interview and focus group research methods were employed in order to develop an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon. 46 semi-structured interviews were conducted: 34 with single interviewees, while the remaining 12 participants were interviewed in focus groups interviews. The research interviews took place over 27

months thereby enabling any contextual changes that might impact upon the phenomenon and group being studied to be examined.

According to Berg (2001) and Yin (1994), case study research is often informed by theory, which can influence the nature of research questions, data collection and the analysis of the data. Robson (1993) and Yin (1994) argue that case studies can be used to assess existing theories. While existing theory informed the research questions and interpretation of the data, this study utilised research methods that enabled the emergence of data that may be used to evaluate any theoretical standpoints that informed the research.

The use of case studies is not without criticism. Robson (1993) points out that case studies are criticised as being 'a soft option', lacking methodological rigour and are often accused of producing purely descriptive data and failing to produce conclusions that may be generalised or made applicable to wider populations. Conscious of this, researchers like Yin (1993) and Pyecha (1988), have sought to inject methodological rigour into case study research procedure. Proponents of this strategy (Ward Schofield, 2000; Gomm, Hamersley and Foster, 2000; Stake, 2000) disagree with the viewpoint that case study data has little value in informing phenomena that lie outside the specific case being studied. They argue that if they are rigorously conducted, case studies may produce conclusions that could be utilised by other researchers. Berg argues that their findings can be generalised

(though not statistically) to explain phenomena that may take place elsewhere, within a similar environment. He responds to the criticisms leveled at case studies by stating:

for those with a more positivist orientation, where concern about generalising to similar types of individuals, groups, or events, case methods are still useful and to some extent generalisable. When case studies are properly undertaken, they should not only fit the specific individual, group, or event studied, but generally provide understanding about similar individuals, groups and events (Berg, 2001:232).

Stake (1994) argues that though case studies don't produce statistically generalisable conclusions as they are not based upon representative samples, he claims that they can produce analytically generalisable conclusions that can be applicable to similar cases and enable researchers to expand and generalise theories. Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that generalisability can be assisted by researchers providing a 'thick description' of case study data, in order to enable other interested individuals to assess whether a case study's conclusions are transferable to the understanding of a phenomenon in another similar case. Robson (1993) also agrees that case studies may provide generalisable conclusions and

suggests that the data produced by multiple case studies may enhance the possibility of producing analytically generalisable conclusions.

As stated earlier, proponents of the case study method have sought to inject methodological rigour into the case study throughout all of its stages. Far from being a 'soft option', Robson (1993) goes on to argue that case studies require a great deal of rigour because their flexible nature means that researchers often encounter novel or emergent data which may require them to constantly reconsider their findings, their research approach and research questions. I concluded that a case study undertaken using qualitative methods was best suited to generating the necessary data for my research. If competently executed it would produce data, which is able to comply with the explanatory, descriptive and exploratory aspects of this research

Ethics

I was consciously aware that the primary concern of any researcher is to safeguard the psychological and physical welfare of the research participants while actually participating in the interviews. A number of procedures were incorporated into the research process in order to ensure that the research was conducted according to the ethical principles for conducting research with people, as set down by the British Sociological Association (2002). When undertaking this research I ensured that participants were enabled to exercise informed consent by being told about all

aspects of the research that might be reasonably expected to have influenced their willingness to participate in it. All participants were made aware of the fact that they could exercise the right to withdraw from the research at any time. I made sure that participants were not deceived at any time during the process of research.

I also told them they could gain access to the information generated by the research either by contacting me in person or by visiting the Modern Records Centre at the University of Warwick. At appropriate points during the research process, research participants were debriefed. During debriefing I aimed to provide participants with any information that they may need to gain an understanding of the nature of the research and who might use its findings in the future. I also aimed to monitor any unseen negative consequences that may have arisen during the process of the research. Before commencing the interviews I informed all research participants of my intention to protect their identities by assuring confidentiality at all times. I suggested that I would only use their first name or a false one if they desired (in the final instance I decided to only publish false names to ensure it). I also told them, that if requested, I would not specifically name the title of their course.

Validity, generalisability, objectivity,

Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that qualitative research design and practice may be undertaken with the view of producing methodologically sound conclusions and

rigorous data. They argue that qualitative researchers should therefore, where appropriate, strive to include the considerations of transferability, credibility, confirmability and dependability into their research.

Lincoln and Guba argue that, where appropriate, qualitative researchers should strive to achieve transferability (which is in qualitative research the equivalent construct to external validity or generalisability). Transferability concerns itself with how the findings about one situation or case may be considered to be sufficiently similar to other cases to permit generalisation to take place.

Though I do not claim to have produced research findings that can be generalised from researchers who may be interested in this research could consider how applicable the findings are to the wider student community and therefore ask themselves 'how inclusive was the sample used in this research?' For this reason I aimed to achieve a degree of transferability by including people from the various sections of the Higher Education student community within the research sample. Though the sample did not strive to be representative, it did to some degree, reflect the various elements of the student population. Lincoln and Guba also argue that researchers should aim to achieve credibility, which is, according to qualitative research, the equivalent construct to internal validity. The achievement of credibility concerns itself with ensuring that the subject of the enquiry is accurately identified and described. It means that the research process should accurately uncover and reflect the meanings, feelings and understandings of the participants

included in the research who are involved in the phenomenon being studied. While undertaking the interview process I attempted to familiarise myself with the standpoints and meanings expressed to me by the research participants.

Dependability is another consideration that Lincoln and Guba argue should be built into qualitative research. It is analogous to reliability and may be achieved by the use of more than one research method. I attempted to achieve a degree of dependability by using focus group interviews to supplement the interviews with single students. I hoped that the focus groups would provide a context within which, the data produced by them and individual interviews could be carefully considered. Finally, Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that confirmability is another consideration that should be built into qualitative research. This corresponds to the concept to objectivity. According to Maykut and Morehouse (1994), qualitative researchers are an instrument that record and interpret data. They emphasise that they must accurately and objectively interpret the subjective opinions of others. At all times during the research process I attempted to both understand and classify the meanings conveyed to me by the research participants and attempted to objectively use it within the process of making conclusions from the research data.

Qualitative methods and data

While planning the research process I reflected upon the type of data that would be

needed to enable me to gain insight into the standpoints of the student community and satisfy the research objectives. I concluded that quantitative data would not produce the in-depth data required to satisfy my research objectives and that qualitative data would be more suited to this purpose. Qualitative research methods techniques actively involves the standpoints, views and perspectives of those involved in the research being understood in rich detail. Researchers who undertake qualitative research do not simply derive conclusions by counting appearances (like researchers who undertake purely quantitative research), but seek to understand social relations by attempting to draw their data from the subjective standpoints of the research participants. Qualitative research methods are sometimes regarded as being a 'soft option'. It is often thought that they do not entail the same kind of methodological rigour that are supposedly employed by qualitative researchers, the data interpretation is subjective and generalisable results are not produced. As discussed above, my research does not strive to produce statistically generalisable results, but rather conclusions that people who are interested in this work may consider sufficiently transferable to similar cases and hence broaden the understanding of a phenomenon.

My research questions attempted to understand the in-depth, often complex explanations that people used to explain their behaviour. The research objectives that form the foundation of this research required that I produce data that was rooted in the subjective interpretations of university students. With this in mind I

decided to use qualitative research methods.

According to Maykut and Morehouse (1994), qualitative data produces in-depth rich insights and information, which is rooted in people's perspectives and illustrates the feelings and motives behind social behaviour. Qualitative data uncovers the meanings behind naturally occurring data. Researchers who undertake qualitative research use methods that include participant observation, non-participant observation, in-depth interviews and the use of unobtrusive methods such as studying qualitative secondary sources.

Qualitative researchers would argue their data is truly rooted in the feelings, assumptions and understandings of people and therefore reflects reality. However, Silverman (2000) points out that the use of qualitative data may generate the 'problem of reliability'. He points out that, during the course of their research, qualitative researchers may not achieve consistency in categorising the data they uncover and they may also misinterpret or miss important data.

Silverman (2000) points out that qualitative research data has been criticised for being too anecdotal and is not generalisable to wider populations. He argues that its critics contends that its research output often focuses on telling examples, while avoiding less clear ones and contradictory data, which will inevitably affect the

validity of its conclusions. Maykut and Morehouse (1994) have considered problems such as these and suggest that researchers can 'indwell'. This involves a researcher acting as an interactive spirit within the research, in order to develop an accurate understanding and categorisation of the standpoints of participants involved in the research. With reference to the generalisation issue, Stake (1994) argues that though qualitative data may not form the basis upon which statistical generalisations may be founded, he contends that rigorously undertaken qualitative case studies can produce useful analytically generalisable conclusions. Though I did not aim to produce generalisable results I aimed to include participants who might, to a reasonable degree reflect the make up of the university student population with the view of producing results that might be transferable to similar cases.

Bryman (1988) argues that qualitative data is able to reveal in-depth information that emerges from detailed description situated within real-life contexts. It is capable of enabling the depth of understanding that allows researchers to gain insight into the subjective standpoints of those being studied. Unlike quantitative data, it is also capable of revealing the complexity of understandings and processes and their changing nature. He also argues that qualitative data is suited to enabling emergent information to come to the surface. With these considerations in mind, I concluded that qualitative research methods would more appropriately provide this research with data, which satisfies its objectives.

Reflexivity

For some years a debate has taken place between quantitative and qualitative social researchers concerning the objectivity and validity of research results. As a researcher I was acutely aware that all data requires subjective selection and interpretation. I was aware that, consciously or otherwise, I might be imposing my own values or interpretations upon data, which may in turn affect my own research practice and how I interpreted data. With this in mind I was conscious of the need to be reflexive at all times during the research process. Payne and Payne argue that reflexivity involves:

the practice of researchers being self-aware of their own beliefs, values and attitudes, their personal effects on the setting they may have studied, be self-critical about their research methods and how they have been applied, so that the evaluation and understanding of their research findings, both by themselves and their audience may be facilitated and enhanced (Payne and Payne, 2004:191).

I attempted to be reflexive within the process of social research by constantly questioning the impact of my own values upon the process of research and analysis and how they may have an effect on the research outcomes. I strove to achieve what May (1998) terms 'endogenous reflexivity' by attempting at all times to

understand the processes by which the student community makes sense of their lives. I was always conscious of the need to clarify the meanings of statements made by students. I also attempted to achieve 'referential reflexivity' by striving to understand the relations between myself and students and how I might impose my own meanings upon the research data. This made me doubly conscious of the need to faithfully and accurately record data, in order to reflect the meaning that the student desired. I attempted to 'indwell' and maintain an interactive approach, both with the research participants and the data produced from interviews. The process of being reflexive enabled me to more clearly understand the standpoints of the research participants, but also ensured that emergent data could enable me both, to develop my understanding of the research topic and where appropriate, pursue new avenues of interest.

Sampling

Much empirical research involving people aims to give an indication of the feelings and standpoints of those involved. I gave careful consideration to the nature and structure of the sample that would be used during the research process. Before proceeding to describe the sample used in this research, my review of the literature concerning young people and politics has often focused on research aged 16 to 25. Though technically, young (that is not mature) university students are considered by many universities to be 18 to 21 years of age I decided to include students aged 18 to 25 in my sample. This was because I wished to investigate some of the issues

raised in the research literature and because young students aged 18 to 25 form a significant section of both the undergraduate and postgraduate populations of most universities. In addition to this, recently enrolled young postgraduates may have had some experience of paying tuition fees and therefore may have had direct experiences relating to this issue.

My knowledge of qualitative research methods told me that the exact structure may be subject to change according to the demands of new data and considerations that may emerge during the research process. Before beginning however, I drew upon established literature in order provide me with insight into how the sample might be structured.

Stake (1994) argues that selection of a case should be primarily based upon one's ability to learn from it. Therefore the selection of appropriate cases is necessary if its conclusions are to display any kind of transferability. While conducting qualitative research, many researchers utilise purposive sampling. Robson (1993) describes a purposive sample as being composed of subjects who are typically of use to the researcher in order that he or she may satisfy the project at hand. Punch (1998) and Robson (1993) identify theoretical sampling as a form of purposive sampling. According to Silverman (2000) the precise nature of a theoretical sample is influenced by theoretical standpoints that inform both the research and the overall aims of the research itself. Mason reiterates this viewpoint:

Theoretical sampling means selecting groups or categories to study on the basis of their relevance to your research questions, your theoretical position... and most importantly the explanation or account, which you are developing. Theoretical sampling is concerned with constructing a sample... which is meaningful theoretically, because it builds in certain characteristics or criteria which help to test your theory and the explanation (Mason, 1996 :93 - 4).

Silverman (2000) argues that the use of a theoretical sample may inject rigour into the case study design, as it enables researchers to more clearly define the population being studied. He also points out that the process of theoretical sampling typically enables the sample parameters to be adjusted in light of new, emergent data and theoretical developments, thereby making them inclusive, responsive and flexible.

For the reasons described above, I employed the use of a theoretical sample. It was composed of people who broadly reflected the student population and therefore complied with my aim to produce a degree of transferability. Thousands of university students across Britain study at redbrick or Higher Education institutions that became universities during the 1990s. When undertaking my research, I

decided to incorporate two universities in an attempt to provide insight into the standpoints and experiences of students studying at red brick and 'new' universities.

The research sample used in the study was derived from students at Cheswick and Northwick Universities which are located within a city in the Midlands. The economy of the city was until relatively recently dominated by heavy industry. However, in recent years industry has experienced a decline. Service industries are the biggest employers in the area. The city centre is being redeveloped into a modern complex offering shopping, sporting, entertainment services.

Established in the 1960s, Cheswick University is situated outside of the city centre. Most of its teaching and research is undertaken at its purpose-built main campus site. Around 15,500 students attend the university, which enjoys a good reputation both for teaching and research and is able to attract high calibre undergraduates, staff members, researchers and notable levels of funding from industry and other private sources. In 2003-4, 71.8 % of its undergraduate population was comprised of students from middle class backgrounds, while 28.2% came from working class backgrounds. (Guardian, 2005) In the same year 76.5% of its undergraduates came from state schools (Guardian, 2005) On April 2006 a member of staff who deals with admissions informed me that in 2006 the university will offer provisional grades to prospective undergraduate students ranging from 280 to 360 UCAS points

Northwick University is a former Polytechnic which gained a university status in 1992. Its campus is situated in the city centre. In 2002 - 2003 around 18,000 students attended courses at Northwick. Some of its departments have a good reputation for academic excellence. However, compared to Cheswick; Northwick does not enjoy such a high reputation for teaching and research. In 2003-4, 58.9% of its undergraduate population was comprised of students from middle class backgrounds , while 41.1% came from working class backgrounds. (Guardian, 2005). In the same year 94.4 % of its entrants came from state schools (Guardian, 2005). In 2006 the university will offer provisional grades to prospective undergraduate students. ranging from 200 to 300 UCAS points (Northwick University, 2006)

This research focuses on students' non-participation in campaigns connected with tuition fees and therefore, includes a number of students who, to some degree, reflected the composition of the university student populations. The sample did however, include some deviant cases consisting of people who have been involved in campaigns connected to this issue, in order to allow the theoretical concepts that inform the research to be actively scrutinised.

Robson (1993) outlines how the use of multiple case studies can be employed in order to develop theories. He argues that case studies can be used to develop a

theory, which can then be tested by subsequent case studies. I decided to conduct two case studies, in this instance, for different reasons. The use of more than one was undertaken in order to produce data that could be compared and used to assess the credibility, transferability, dependability and the confirmability of the findings across the two cases. By doing so it aimed to enhance the transferability of the conclusions by making them pertinent to both the experiences of students in redbrick and new universities. However, I also aimed to use data from both cases to make myself aware of the similarities and differences in circumstances and outlooks that may exist between participants in the two universities and how they might inform the conclusions of the research and address any significant differences in my research findings. No significant differences existed between them and I concluded that (with the exception of participants who did take part in campaigns opposing tuition fees) the findings broadly applied to the participants in both universities.

I attempted to develop a research sample that would include a number of student groups within the university population. I recruited the sample by putting up posters and posting flyers around the respective university campuses. My advertising material specifically asked for students who were paying tuition fees and were in debt. The reasoning behind my attempts to interview this type of student was to build a sample of students who would, by virtue of their circumstances, be conscious of the issues under investigation and provide useful in depth, pertinent

data for me to analyse. The poster mentioned that I was undertaking research into both student debt and tuition fees, in order to attract an array of students from the undergraduate and postgraduate sections of the population.

During the early stages of fieldwork I initially aimed to attract people to my research by printing posters that merely asked students to participate in research relating to tuition fees. The poster contained tear off slips with my e-mail address. After experiencing just a small take-up rate (5 participants) I began to realise that some kind of financial incentive should be offered in order to induce people to participate in the research. Even with a financial incentive the recruitment process was time consuming and painstaking. Between August 2000 and December 2002, I put up over 150 posters and posted over 300 flyers at both universities. In total, I interviewed 46 people. Twelve people were interviewed in focus group situations. The others were interviewed individually. Each interview lasted around 90 minutes. In total, I received 96 responses to my interview publicity material. 25 respondents did not fall within my chosen sampling framework. A further 22 students who initially contacted me made no attempt to respond to my efforts to arrange an interview. An additional 3 students arranged to meet me for interviews, but did not arrive at the specified time.

I finally managed to put together a sample that was composed of 23 students from

each university. The research sample was made up of 24 males and 22 females, including social sciences, engineering, English, modern foreign languages, mathematics, business studies, philosophy, the natural sciences, media studies, computing, history and medicine faculties as well as some NUS sabbatical post holders.

Of the students who participated in the research all but one had debts incurred while studying at the university, the average debts incurred by students at both universities were similar. Overall, the average debt shouldered by each participant was £6382 The Cheswick participant's average debt of £6521 was just £278 greater than the average debt of Northwick participants. Similar numbers of students at both universities had paid full, some or no tuition fees and similar numbers of students at both universities had participated in campaigns opposing tuition fees.

My research sample also contained five members of ethnic minority groups (two Chinese, one Asian, one white European and one Afro Caribbean student) normally resident in Britain. I was also able to interview 5 foreign students. Though these students paid the full cost of their course I decided to include them in the sample because they compose a significant element of student population and could therefore, provide insight into the attitude of large number of students towards the issues of tuition fees. The sample also contained six postgraduates. Three of these

postgraduates paid £1000+ tuition fees introduced in 1998. I felt that undertaking research with these students would prove valuable in gaining insight into the attitudes of a significant element of the student population concerning tuition fees. Five former students who were undertaking sabbatical posts and were involved in student union activities during their time as an undergraduate student were also interviewed, none of these had paid tuition fees while studying as undergraduates. Six undergraduates received financial assistance and did not pay fees. These were deliberately included in order to gain insight into their perspectives concerning tuition fees, student hardship and campaigns relating to these issues. The sample also included six negative cases, that is, people who had been involved in campaigns connected to tuition fees. In total 27 students were interviewed who were paying or had paid the £1000 + tuition fees.

Interviews

Interviews are often undertaken by an interviewer and an interviewee, either on a face-to-face basis or over the phone. Researchers sometimes utilise focus group interviews which will be discussed below. Frey and Fontana (1994) have classified interviews into three types. Structured interviews are undertaken with a highly structured set of questions, with pre-coded answers that may be used to produce standardised responses. Semi-structured interviews involve the use of a pre-planned set of questions. The interviewer will normally take care to investigate all of these questions, but the semi-structured nature of the interview allows emergent data to be explored by the addition of probes and supplementary questions. Semi-

structured interviews enable interviewees to develop their answers in even more depth than in structured interviews and can produce rich data. Lastly, with unstructured interviews the interviewer may begin with a loose framework of questions that are to be investigated. However, the process of each interview is much more spontaneous than in the previous two types. In this type of interview the responses made by the interviewee are far more determinant of the ground that the interview will cover. Unstructured interviews can produce in-depth data and have great potential to reveal novel emergent information that may significantly influence the nature of the research that is undertaken.

This study utilised semi-structured interviews as they are sufficiently standardised in their nature to enable data derived from each individual interview to be compared. However, they allow for sufficient flexibility, for additional questions and some probes to be inserted during the interview in order to investigate emergent data.

I considered the potential problems arising from the use of interviews including the fact that they are recognised as being time-consuming. Robson (1993) also points out that interview situations often produce sensitive or personal data, which then leads ethical considerations to arise. In addition to this, memory can be a factor that may undermine the accuracy of data produced in an interview. If one requires an

interviewee to reflect upon past events, then any inability they may have to recollect them accurately will inevitably impact upon the value of the data produced. Fielding and Fielding (1996) point out that interviewer effect may also significantly undermine the accuracy of the data produced by interviews. It may cause the interviewee(s) to change or alter their behaviour and answers, because the status or behaviour of the interviewer somehow influences them to behave in ways that they do not normally do. They also point out that interviewer bias may occur which involves the interviewer, either intentionally or otherwise, interpreting the data in terms of their own knowledge and value frameworks, thereby leading to a misunderstanding or reinterpretation of the actual data at hand. These issues may impact upon the confirmability of the findings. After considering the various strengths and weaknesses of the interview methods I concluded that it would be a suitable method to use. I considered these potential problems and used my literature review to familiarise myself as much as possible with the phenomenon being studied. I took steps to overcome observer error and interview bias by aiming to clearly and accurately understand the meanings of participant's statements and clarify any ambiguities. I also refrained from expressing (Verbally or physically) my own opinions in order to enable students to accurately and confidently express their points of view.

Using more than one method.

After considering the above stated problems I thought that it would be useful to use

an additional research method, in order to enhance the validity and accuracy of the data. A number of researchers have used more than one research method, in order to enhance the accuracy and broaden the scope of their research. Robson (1993) argues that relying on just one research method could fail to reveal important findings and data that are pertinent to a study. He argues that using more than one method reduces the problem of 'inappropriate certainty', which occurs when the results revealed by the use of a single research method may lead the researcher into thinking they have found the right answer, when in reality their approach might fail to reveal information that could significantly challenge the conclusions they may have drawn. The use of multiple methods (which may include a combination of qualitative and quantitative or two or more research methods drawn from the same research tradition), sometimes produces data that conflicts with the findings drawn from another research method. The revelation of data that confounds initial findings could demand that the researcher more closely scrutinise his or her findings.

According to Robson, researchers employ triangulation to assess the value of their findings:

triangulation in its various guises (for example using multiple methods or obtaining information relevant to a topic or issue from several informants), is an indispensable tool in real-world inquiry. It is particularly valuable in the analysis of qualitative data where the trustworthiness of the data is always a worry. It provides a means of

testing one source of information against other sources (Robson, 1993:383).

Triangulation enables researchers to 'get a fix' on something from more than one place, in doing so this process can bolster the accuracy of the findings revealed within the research process. Lincoln and Guba (1985) emphasise the importance of using more than one research method and argue that, where possible, it should be undertaken by researchers in order to endow research with greater levels of dependability, that is akin to reliability within quantitative research.

Focus groups

I was strongly aware of the fact that just one research method may fail to reveal data that was significant in understanding the phenomenon being studied. With this in mind I utilised another research method. Though focus groups do not represent a complete departure from interview research methods, they are sufficiently different to enhance the findings of the study. Focus groups involve a facilitator (researcher) interviewing several individuals at the same time, using some form of question schedule in order to stimulate group discussion and the production of rich data. They are used by researchers in order to gain insights into the perspectives and feelings of target groups. Berg points out that focus groups enable researchers: 'to learn through discussion about conscious, semiconscious, and unconscious psychological sociocultural characteristics and processes among various groups'

(Berg, 2001:111). Focus groups can be distinguished from group interviews in the sense that they rely on interaction between participants who talk to one another and exchange anecdotes and questions, as opposed to asking individual people questions as is the case when conducting group interviews.

Frey and Fontana (1993) point out that focus group interviews may be structured or unstructured and involve interaction, conversation and the exchange of views between group members. Focus groups are particularly suited to the study of group attitudes and experiences and allow researchers to examine people's different perspectives, as they operate within a social network. As such they can 'provide the occasion and stimulus and collectivity for members to articulate those normally unarticulated normative assumptions' (Bloor et al., 2001:5). They are particularly useful in allowing participants to generate their own frames of reference. Focus groups can be an enabling experience, which allow participants to express their own priorities on their own terms, using their own vocabularies. 'The group meanings accessed in focus group discussions, are of course, expressed in the argot and everyday language of the group' (Bloor et al., 2001:7). They also argue that the use of focus groups can both enable and enlighten participants by allowing participants to develop a conceptual understanding of the phenomenon they have been asked to talk about (Bloor et al., 2001).

I concluded that the discursive data produced by focus group interviews would be useful to the study, in that it would facilitate the visible production of data that is rooted within a group cultural context. Their use was also advantageous to this study, because I felt that it may reduce the possibility of 'inappropriate certainty' occurring. This research method can be used to assess the credibility, dependability and trustworthiness of the findings. Frey and Fontana (1993) and Johnson (1996) argue that focus groups can be used for exploratory research, because they can enable new data to emerge. As an investigative tool, Johnson argues that group discussions are particularly good at investigating 'what participants think, but they excel at uncovering why participants think as they do' (1996:522). Waterton and Wynne argue that, not only do focus groups enable novel data to emerge, they provide medium for a deepening understanding of it. They also argue that the reflexive nature of focus group conversations compels researchers to Consider their role and how they may impose their own meanings upon the discussions:

focus groups offer a more critical or reflexive framework for research on the nature of attitudes, on the construction of the issue at hand , as well as on the constructive role of the social scientist as interpreter or part-constructor of such views (Waterton and Wynne, 1998:129).

Focus groups are particularly useful in that they can enable participants to take a dynamic and leading role within the course of the interview. Another related quality

of the focus group investigation, is that when they are appropriately managed, focus group sessions can facilitate the enabling process by developing a positive dynamic, which may encourage brainstorming and often marginalised voices to speak out. Padilla (1993) perhaps goes further by arguing that group discussions raise consciousness and can potentially empower participants because they enable group members to understand individual narratives and can foster a collective sense of identity.

Frey and Fontana (1996) also argue that focus groups are useful, enabling triangulation to take place. In particular, they argue that focus groups are useful in the process of examining individual interview data. Lastly, they argue that use of focus groups is so multifaceted, that they can be used to generate or test theoretical assumptions. This is because they can serve 'as a testing ground for hypotheses or analytic suggestions and can expand the depth and variation in response or description of relevant social events' (Frey and Fontana, 1993:33)

The use of focus group methods is not without drawbacks. Frey and Fontana point out that facilitator's words or actions may wittingly, or otherwise, affect the objectivity, validity and reliability of the data. They also point out that it may be difficult for facilitators to set up group sessions in a natural setting, in order to enhance the accuracy of data produced. Morgan and Kruger (1993) point out that focus group participants may be reluctant to talk about sensitive topics, which raises

ethical issues for the researcher. Isenberg's (1986) study of focus group interviews found that group dynamics may alter people's normal behaviour and therefore, impact upon the accuracy of the data produced. Quantitative researchers may argue that the generalisability of data from focus groups is suspect because they are not statistically representative of the group being studied.

In response to these criticisms however, Morgan and Kruger argue that appropriately designed and conducted focus group sessions may overcome these problems. They maintain that a facilitator who strives to produce a non threatening, empowering comfortable and positive group dynamic, who assures informed consent, confidentiality and who carefully considers data, may address many of these issues. With reference to the generalisability issue, Dawson and Manderson (1993) argue that statistical representativeness is not the aim of most focus groups. Usually focus groups employ qualitative, purposive or convenience sampling. However, many are designed to include considerations of demographic diversity, representativeness and strive to encourage the voices, which might be excluded.

This research aimed to produce results that have a degree of transferability. With this in mind I strove to ensure that all the focus groups were composed of students that to some extent reflect the composition of the cases or universities being studied. The focus groups were issued with similar questions in order to ensure

uniformity of procedure. However, the exploratory aspect of this research allowed for the revelation of new, emergent data. Therefore, when appropriate, probes and additional questions were inserted in order to pursue emergent information. The objective of producing credible data requires researchers to be aware of potential problems, including interviewer affect and the problem of interviewer bias. This research aimed to undertake focus group interviews in an appropriate environment and facilitate an atmosphere, which enabled participants to feel comfortable and to express themselves honestly and accurately. Particular attention was also given to understanding the meanings attached to participant's statements and clarifying any ambiguities that arose.

Data analysis

In order for any piece of research to produce accurate and insightful findings, the analysis of its data must be carefully considered. The theoretical understanding developed by Beck and Giddens influenced explanatory objectives of my research, informed its design, the interpretation of data and its conclusions. In addition to this the qualitative research methods used during this investigation would allow for emergent data to arise, which would satisfy the exploratory and descriptive objectives of the research. I was conscious that the use of these research methods would allow for the emergence of new data that may explain phenomena in a manner that may challenge the theoretical suppositions (concerning the phenomenon of individualisation) that I used to understand the levels of non-

participation in campaigns pertaining to student hardship and tuition fees.

The analysis of data produced by this research involved a careful reading of transcribed conversations. Units of meanings were then identified and were placed in provisional categories for analysis. The constant comparison of different units of meaning, using what Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe as the 'look/feel like' criteria, enabled these units to be placed in appropriate categories. The rules for inclusion of units of meaning were drawn from the theoretical and research work that informed the study and were bounded by propositional statements like:

Students invest faith in expert systems and accept that financial hardship is a short-term problem that will be eventually outweighed by the long-term gains that a university education will bring them.

While the categories and rules for inclusion were influenced by the theoretical work that informed the study, the analysis of data also allowed new ones to emerge. The exploratory aspect of the research also allowed for new categories and rules of inclusion to be inductively generated. The research propositions remained largely unchanged. However; this proposition below was developed in light of emergent data, which indicated that some students felt a sense of isolation from the wider community. Therefore, the original proposition was modified from 'Students display a low level of political efficacy to this alternative one'.

Students display a low level of political efficacy and in some respects a sense of isolation from the wider community.

The use of the look like /feel like criterion proved useful, by enabling conceptual analysis to take place, while providing opportunities for new emergent themes to be considered. This approach enabled me to reflexively respond to emergent themes and produce valid data.

Conclusion

Careful consideration of the aims of this research informed me that qualitative research would provide the most insightful, rich data that could facilitate an exploration of low levels of student participation in campaigns opposing tuition fees. I have discussed the consideration I gave to the, strategy, research methods and data analysis techniques that would suit the objectives of this research. This process imprinted some practical objectives in my mind. It constantly reminded me that I should strive to produce a contextual understanding of students' attitudes towards participation in campaigns related to tuition fees. The conceptual framework developed by Giddens and Beck enabled me to make sense of much of the data. My recognition of the need for researchers to be reflexive proved useful. While undertaking my fieldwork it prompted me to constantly consider the inclusion of new interview questions and how data should be interpreted. I was

constantly aware of the need to pursue emergent themes and develop new understandings of the phenomenon under investigation. As a result, I feel that I was able to identify the useful aspects of the conceptual frameworks that might be used to explain student attitudes towards campaigns opposing tuition fees. At the same time however, I was able to recognise their limitations and the need to develop them in order to deepen the understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.

Chapter 7

Finding my own way

Introduction

The realities of debt and financial hardship are clearly etched on the consciousnesses of many students. Many of them feel that fees are an unfair drain on their finances and that tuition fees exclude financially disadvantaged students from undertaking a university education. Bearing in mind the impact that financial hardship and the introduction of tuition fees has on the everyday lives of many university students, why do so few students participate in campaigns connected with tuition fees? Giddens (1991) argues that in late modernity the self becomes a reflexive project in which people seek to understand and act upon specific risks and opportunities that they face. Both Beck (1992, 2002) and Giddens (1991) argue that risk increasingly preoccupies the public. Although they acknowledge that factors such as social class and gender may affect the way that individuals interact with risk, they have not attempted to develop a specific framework for understanding how each individual interprets and responds to the risks they face. In an increasingly individualised world, people more often seek to independently interpret and act upon the risks they face.

A number of concepts emerge from Beck and Giddens' work that could be used to analyse the standpoints and actions of students contacted in this study. In an individualised society, people, more independently than before, piece together their own biographies and undertake risk assessment. The literature also contends that an outlook of self-help and self-blame often informs people's actions when they consider the risks they face. In contemporary society, individuals are actively involved in maintaining their own ontological security and strive for self-actualisation. Today, individuals encounter fateful moments at which they must make assessments and judgments about potential courses of action. These concepts and ideas are used to enable the exploration of individualisation and its impact upon participation in campaigns connected with tuition fees. This chapter will consider some of the everyday risks and dilemmas faced by students and how their responses inform the lack of participation in campaigns regarding tuition fees.

Firstly, it will examine the effects of debt upon the lives of students, including how debt and paid work affects students' ability to study effectively. Secondly, the chapter will examine how students understand the causes of debt and their perceptions of the costs incurred while undertaking a Higher Education course. Finally, it will explore some of their feelings relating to participation in campaigns and how they may explain their low active level of involvement in campaigns connected to tuition fees.

Risk and debt culture

In contemporary society, one of the most common forms of risk assessment that individuals undertake involves the consideration of debt and how it will impact upon their lives. When considering the possibility of taking a loan, people arrive at a fateful moment, at which decisions concerning attendant risks must be made. Since the introduction of student loans in the 1990s, debt and its attendant risks has increasingly impinged upon the lives of many students. Debt is an important aspect of social existence. People are regularly faced with having to consider its implications. Students are no exception to this. The reality of debt provides the opportunity to explore student financial hardship in a real life context.

Any examination of student attitudes towards participation in campaigns connected to tuition fees, must consider the issue of debt amongst students. In British society, debt seems to be an integral part of everyday existence. Many people have credit cards, mortgages and hire purchase agreements. Between 1995 and 2003, consumer borrowing doubled to £140 billion, representing approximately £3000 per adult in the UK (MacErlean, 2003:13). Between 1995 and 2002, personal borrowing (excluding mortgages) grew by 126 percent, exceeding the growth in earnings during that period. (Lawrence, 2002:18). Mac Erlean also points out that between 2001 and 2003, the Citizens Advice Bureau experienced a 37 percent rise in the number of inquiries concerning consumer credit. In addition to this, half the adult population has debts that they cannot repay in four months.

Levels of debt are particularly high among the younger generation, 65 percent of the 25 to 34 year old age group also have debts that they cannot repay within four months. Research undertaken by Kensington Mortgages revealed that approximately 63 percent of 18 to 30-year-olds, who have money problems, attributed them to debts incurred while studying (Guardian, 2002:13). Many young people accept that debt is often a part of everyday life. Data produced by the marketing consultancy, the Henley Centre, showed that 76 percent of 16 to 34-year-olds felt that it was 'inevitable that you will get into debt.' (Guardian, 2002:13).

Debt is a risk that individuals must deal with. It is part of the risk assessments that individuals have to undertake as part of their daily lives. When students decide to pursue a course of Higher Education, many recognise that they must make short-term financial sacrifices in order to gain a long-term reward. Students understand that there are risks involved in undertaking a Higher Education course. Illness may afflict them or they may simply not be able to keep up with the demands of the course. It is never certain that they will gain a job upon leaving university. Some students may be compelled to take low skilled, low paid jobs, which simply do not reflect their level of education. All these considerations form part of the portfolio of the risk that each student must manage.

Debt, financial hardship and study

Before embarking upon any analysis of attitudes towards student debt, hardship and political campaigns, it is important to spend some time examining how Higher Education students understand and experience financial hardship is understood and experienced by Higher Education students. The problems that are generated by financial hardship can affect many areas of life. Students attend university in order to attain qualifications that will serve them in future life. Therefore, the ability to study effectively is imperative, if they are to realise their aims. For the purposes of this study, I sought to investigate its impact upon their ability to study effectively. The students interviewed in this research had average debts of around £6000, compared to the national average estimated debt upon graduation of £12,069 (BBC, 2004a). The research findings show that financial hardship clearly impinges upon the lives of many students and can impact upon their ability to study effectively.

Interviewer: Can you tell me more about financial problems that have affected your work?

Lillian: Em, I think it stressed me out a lot, because- especially at the beginning of the term, em, it's worried me. And I think, continually throughout the student semesters, it will continue to be a problem, em, especially when it comes close to paying the rent, or paying bills, because I'll be thinking and being stressed.

[Lillian, 23, Postgraduate in Politics, Northwick University]

The interviews with the students revealed that stress was regularly experienced by students in debt. Lillian's comments graphically illustrate how consciousness of debt is constantly compounded by the need to meet periodic costs, including rent and bills.

Interviewer: Have financial problems affected your ability to study?

Hannah: I'll be thinking, 'Where's the money gonna come from?' You know? Am I gonna be able to get it from my parents, or is my boyfriend going to be able to help me? Em, or, am I gonna be able to get a student, em, hardship fund loan thing? Em, that's another thing, em, some students are entitled to student hardship funds from the Student Loan Company. As an existing student, I'm automatically exempt from that; I can't receive that. I don't know if I can receive anything from the Student Union, em, in regard to a hardship fund or a loan. Em, I haven't actually, sort of, felt that even though I am in debt, em, felt that desperate, I haven't felt that desperate to go and ask yet.

[Hannah, 21, Undergraduate in Media Studies, Northwick University]

Hannah's comments clearly illustrate how financial problems create a multitude of uncertainties. Many students are forced to consider financial problems on a daily basis. Budgeting in order to avoid committing themselves to further debt is something that many students are forced to consider. Her comments are particularly interesting in that they illustrate the dilemma experienced by several students

interviewed in this research. Many students leave home to study in order to develop a sense of independence and self-sufficiency. However, several students were conscious of the fact that they may reluctantly had to consider turning to their parents (many of whom have financial problems of their own) to make ends meet.

Interviewer: Have financial problems affected your ability to study?

Morten: Em, yes, I'd, I'd say up to a point, yes, because I did have to work. I worked in a nightclub for my first year, which was hard because sometimes I was working three nights a week it would mean not getting to sleep until four, maybe five in the morning. And obviously, if you've got lectures the following day, or if you've got, er, course work to be done, it's, it is hard. You did feel tired a lot. And then I started working in pubs, and I found myself working sometimes up to thirty, forty hours a week. And when you're trying to get your education on top of that it's very, very hard, I would say. Definitely, even my final year work was affected by the fact that I had to work, just to maintain my income

[Morten, 22, NUS Sabbatical post holder, Northwick University]

Morten's comments were typical of students, who expressed concern about how the amount of hours they worked impinged upon their ability to study effectively. His comments show just how much of a struggle student life is. For many students, it involved juggling study time, lectures and paid work in a bid to make ends meet.

Higher Education students who study overseas often work to supplement their

incomes; it is an established fact of life. In spite of the fact that paid work and study are a regular part of their studies. The overseas students who participated in this research still felt that it had a negative impact upon their studies.

Interviewer: Have your financial problems affected your ability to study?

Paul: Well, er, probably yes, because, er, work, so I have got less time to study. I think if I wouldn't have to work, I would have, have more time to study, so I could be better in my studies.

[Paul, 21, Undergraduate in Engineering, Northwick University]

Interviewer: Have your financial problems affected your ability to study?

Francois: Well, er, probably yes, because, er, work, so I have got less time to study.

Interviewer: Yes.

Francois: So, probably it affects, yes, my, er, abilities

Interviewer: To study?

Francois: Yes.

[Francois, 20, Overseas undergraduate in Engineering, Northwick University]

The remarks made by the foreign students are interesting. Even though undertaking paid work is something that was accepted as a fact of life by many students studying overseas, its impact is clearly not considered to be something that is part and parcel of student life, but rather something that inevitably undermined the quality of their education.

Interviewer: Have financial problems affected your ability to study?

Sam: Em, I think, I think it's probably a vicious circle and I think em, I had times at university of being okay and, and em, everything being okay. And then times where em, because I was very stressed about financial- my financial situation, I then got very stressed about everything and found it hard to work and I found it hard to, sort of, settle to thinking about things, because I was worried about stuff. So, I think, I think probably in, in that sort of way, it probably did.

[Sam, 22, Postgraduate in Management Studies, Northwick University]

These remarks proved enlightening in that the actuality of debt was referred to as 'a vicious circle'. It constantly impinges upon students' abilities to focus their minds and their ability to study. Sam's remarks illustrate how incurring debt may be necessary to pay for education. However, the worries associated with it undermined the quality of students' educational experiences.

Interviewer: Did those financial problems affect your ability to study?

Kirsty : Yes, I'd have said so, because you worry about it all the time, so to be able to study effectively, I think you have to be able to sit down with a clear head and read and understand what you're reading. Em, but I don't think if you're, if you're worrying about it. I don't think you've got the ability to do that, so I'd say yes, definitely. And I probably didn't go to as many lectures when I was having financial problems.

[Kirsty, 22, NUS Sabbatical post holder, Northwick University]

The students' accounts indicated that financial problems did affect their ability to study. Clearly, the worries described by students had an impact upon their ability to concentrate and focus themselves upon their academic tasks. Students felt they were affected by debt and the dilemma of involving their families in their financial predicament. Debt not only impinges upon their consciousnesses as a singular concept, but also creates a number of related considerations and hardships, that students had to deal with including stress, guilt and the additional burden of paid work.

Debt, paid work and study

Debt and other financial considerations are an integral aspect of student life. Many students have no alternative but to supplement their incomes by undertaking paid work. Students who undertake work during term time often experience additional

strain and stress. Some participants felt that they do not get sufficient sleep, which could be detrimental to their health. The reality of having to work during term time affects their ability to study.

Interviewer: When you undertook paid work, how did it affect your ability to study?

Lillian : The first three years' worth I did, it didn't at all. During this last year, with pressures of dissertation, final modules, it does.

Interviewer: Forgive me if I misinterpret you - then, it did affect your ability to study when you worked?

Lillian: It did, finally, it did.

Interviewer: In terms of?

Lillian: Em, the job I used to do was, em, five till nine, Monday to Friday and Saturday morning. Em, some of my lectures didn't finish until, em, about half past four, so, it was a, a fight against traffic to get myself there, that kind of thing. Em, and just, obviously, when you come home then, and you're, you're going home at half nine, ten o'clock, you're not in the best mood to think, I need to read that book, and write whatever. My dissertation required a lot of study. So, it was getting really ridiculous; I was taking work with me to work, to do when I wasn't doing that work, and it was very muddly, it was trying to squeeze everything in. It just I was just tired by it, it all.

[Lillian, 23, Postgraduate in Politics, Northwick University]

For many students the burden of paid work was not only a tiring experience, it created an atmosphere of uncertainty, which students need to deal with. They often had to contend with hectic daily routines, during which simply being able to undertake necessary tasks and attend lectures is never completely guaranteed.

Interviewer: Em, did you undertake paid work during your time at university?

Kirsty : Yes, I used to work at a Student Union bar, and then I drove the women's priority transport bus last year. So, I did work until I worked till two, actually, up until the last term of my third year, when I gave up. In the holidays I used to temp and stuff right through, like two summers.

Interviewer: Did it affect your ability to study?

Kirsty: Em, well, I had loads of different jobs, like during the term time, I had lots of different jobs, obviously all part-time. Em, I think it made me more tired, obviously, because, I mean, life until late at night. I mean, doing the Women's Priority Transport Arrangement, driving the bus I used to work till half three, four in the morning. Some night I needed the money, so even if I did have a lecture the next day, I'd still do it and I'd just miss my lecture. So, I definitely didn't go to as many lectures as I would have if I didn't have to work. Em, also, because I didn't have as much time to do my homework, well, not homework, but, you know, my reading and preparing for my essays and research and stuff, so I suppose I probably didn't go to as many lessons.

[Kirsty, 22, NUS Sabbatical post holder, Northwick University]

Interviewer: Your paid work, would you say that it has affected your ability to study in any way?

Sam: Em, yes, because, I think if you're working until late. I work in a pub with extended hours. It means that I don't get in until past twelve, and that can be a week night and then I've got to get up and be on campus by nine some mornings, and so, I'm not awake in the early lectures. And I don't have time, always, to prepare. So those are the main problems. And I don't have as much time to do the reading as I could have done, cuz I'm a night-before sort of person, if I don't have that night before it doesn't get done, essentially

[Sam, 22, Postgraduate in Management Studies, Northwick University]

Sam's comments were particularly poignant. He was one of several students to mention that the burden of work made them feel tired. This is perhaps one of the clearest indications of how the burden of paid work affected the ability of students to study in the most effective manner possible.

Interviewer: How did this paid work, affect your ability to study?

Rachel: Well, it doesn't leave so much time if you work in the evenings, er, when you can't study in the evenings, and if you're working weekends, you get home from work, you don't fancy doing anything, or you're going out, and then it leaves you evenings during the week, when you're not at work, or not doing anything. You're often tired, too tired to even enjoy itself. So, I think it does affect it.

Interviewer: Does it affect your work?

Rachel: Yeah.

[Rachel, 22, Foreign Languages undergraduate University of Northwick]

Rachel's comments revealed a new concern that was expressed by other students who participated in this research. Not only does paid work impinge upon students' ability to study effectively, it also made some students so tired that they are unable to relax in the manner that they may desire.

Interviewer: Does, er, the paid work that you mention affect your work ?

June : Em, well, my summer work, I obviously wanted to go away for the summer as well. I couldn't have afforded to if I hadn't have worked. Em, my other work: sometimes I have to go on training days and miss days of lectures. And, it also cuts my study time down quite a bit, em, particularly over Christmas. By the time I get to Christmas, I think, I'm gonna be that exhausted with all the projects that we're doing and stuff, that I really need a break, but, from when we break up, I'm working every single day, em, up till Christmas Eve. And, on one particular day, I'm working from nine till six, doing the promotion work, and then I'm working from nine at night till six the next morning working for nightclub. And then, I'm working from ten till four the next day, em, doing my job. So, that will tire me out quite a bit, so, so, I'll be ready to, to come back and take a break.

[June, 21, Undergraduate in Business , Northwick University]

June's remarks perhaps most graphically illustrated the juggling act that many students had to undertake in order to combine paid work with academic study. Her remarks not only show how paid work impinged upon her ability to study effectively, but also many students saw paid work as conducive to maintaining a reasonable quality of life outside university. Many students referred to paid work as a means of funding their social lives, which they regarded as a way of relaxing from the burdens of both paid work and university study.

The research found that many of the students were compelled to work in order to maintain their existence. Giddens seems correct to argue that when faced with this type of problem, students arrive at a fateful moment where they must make important decisions, which can affect their lives. Students consciously consider the merits of undertaking paid work and decide that in spite of the fact that it can affect lecture attendance and the quality of their study time, it is a necessary 'evil' to get them through their period in Higher Education. Again, this was evident from a focus group conversation.

Peter: Yeah having to work in the evenings is a drag, but you learn to get through.

[Peter,23, Undergraduate in Social Work, Northwick University focus group]

Ellie: Yes Peter, but it makes our debts manageable though and pays for holidays.

[Ellie, 20, Undergraduate in Business , Northwick University focus group]

Peter: And nights out.

[Peter,23, Undergraduate in Social Work, Northwick University focus group]

Ellie Yes.

[Ellie, 20, Undergraduate in Business, Northwick University focus group]

Debt a fact of life

An investigation of debt and its associated risks, proved to be valuable in understanding student perceptions of financial hardship, tuition fees and their attitudes to campaigns connected to these issues. The research revealed that many students considered getting into debt, and its associated risks, to be something that is unavoidable and that loans are an inevitable aspect of student life.

Interviewer: Do you feel that students should have to take out loans?

Harriet: Em, well, I don't see how you can stay at university if you don't take out a student loan, because, em, how can you pay the rent for three years without, well, without any capital, unless you'd happen to, say, well, have a very rich parent?

So, it's just the rent, really, and, obviously, food and living.

[Harriet, 20, Undergraduate in English, Cheswick University focus group]

These comments are indicative of the viewpoint of many students. A large proportion adopted a pragmatic outlook and accepted that loans were the established means of funding themselves through their university courses. Students accepted that education involves unavoidable expenses.

Interviewer: Do you think that students should have to take out loans? in order to pay for themselves at university?

Norbert: Yeah, maybe for student whose parents can't pay for them. It's very good for the poor people because, it allows these people to have a lecture and that's very important.

Interviewer: Right, so could I just make that clear, then, to make sure I've understood. You think that if certain students' parent's are poor and they can't afford to pay for their son or daughter to go to university, then the loan could be quite a good thing

Norbert: I think it is a good thing,

[Norbert, 20, Overseas Undergraduate in Engineering, Northwick University]

Several students expressed remarks similar to those made by the student above. Not

only were loans accepted (if pragmatically) as being the legitimate means of enabling students to undertake a university education, students often considered loans to be an enabling mechanism that is especially beneficial to less well off students. This outlook illustrates how the self-help nature of loans have replaced LEA grants as being the commonly accepted means of enabling financially disadvantaged students to undertake a Higher Education course.

Interviewer: Do you think that students should have to take out loans?

Sam: I suppose you shouldn't have to, but I don't think it does too much harm having to take out student loans. Because I mean I don't think it's a bad thing, if you have to take out a student loan, I don't think it's going to be terrible to you in the long term, at all.

[Sam, 22, Postgraduate in Management Studies, Northwick University]

Sam's comments reflected the widely held view that loans are a service that students can elect to undertake if they choose to do so. Rarely, did the students who participated in this research ever refered to the viewpoint that the state may incur some lifestyle costs. Many regarded loans as a convenient option.

Interviewer: Do you think that students should have to take out loans? Meaning obviously the loans that can be got from the L.E.A.

Graham: I think um, there should be the option. I think there should definitely be the option, because, I mean, I can understand that the government obviously can't cover everything.

Interviewer: Do you see any other ways that perhaps they could be helped?

Graham: Sponsorship, university sponsorship as well as business sponsorship, um it's difficult because um, you know, there's no, there's a risk in if they're going to get a job or be successful in the future so you could I don't know, really. Um, obviously parental contribution, if it can be done um, but really I can't think of any other real, sort of, big way of getting money through university and I don't feel it's up to government to pay for the living expenses.

[Graham, 23, Postgraduate in Business Studies, Cheswick University]

Graham's comments were particularly poignant. Not only did they reflect the widely held view that loans are a convenient option, but his comments about using commercial sponsorship as an alternative means of income also shows how students rarely considered any possible role for the government in providing for lifestyle costs.

Clearly, students were influenced by a self-help outlook discussed by Bauman (2001). Many felt that they should have to support themselves through university.

Undertaking a university education is a fateful moment for anyone. The students undertook a risk assessment and accepted that debt is (for most students at least) an unavoidable aspect of student life. In the past, students were given awards by local authorities, which included elements to pay for tuition expenses and some cost of living expenses. Today, students consider loans as being a useful service that can be drawn upon in times of need. This illustrates how students feel that governments may only have limited amounts of money to spend on education. Their attitude towards financial hardship may provide insight into their low levels of participation in connection with campaigns around financial hardship and tuition fees.

Debt and life skills

During our discussions about debt, some students reiterated the New Right self-help outlook and commented that taking out loans teaches money management skills and financial consciousness. For some students paying back a loan developed financial management skills.

Crispin: Again, I think it's a good way to learn and teach responsibility definitely if you have to take a loan. And specifically you have to take a loan from a bank not from your parents or friends or anything

[Crispin, 19, Undergraduate in Chemistry, Cheswick University]

This outlook was not confined to British students. It regularly featured in interviews with foreign students.

Interviewer: Okay, em, who should pay for the living expenses and the tuition costs, when a person goes through education, er, university education, and why?

Francois: Well, er, for the living expenses, I think the student, or his family should pay these expenses. Because, if, any, organisation pays this, lots of students will abuse it. So, I think this expense should allow the student to know, to know how to, to manage his life. So, I think it's, it's a very good learning.

[Francois, 20, Overseas Undergraduate in Engineering, Northwick University]

The viewpoint was expressed by a significant number of students that financial problems were a way to teach financial responsibility is perhaps indicative of the attitude that they should be increasingly self-sufficient and depend less on others for help with their studies. For some students, financial hardship was a means of developing life skills. It could be understood as an individual challenge, a target rather than a political issue that might have motivated students to become involved in campaigns connected with tuition fees.

Self-help

The outlooks of many university students concerning sources of financial support for students further illustrated the self-help outlook. The idea that influenced social policy for many years, that students should be entitled (according to means testing) to some money for living expenses, seems to have declined in significance. Almost all of the interviewees accepted that they should be responsible for finding the money for their living expenses. The word grant rarely entered our conversations.

Interviewer: Who should pay for living costs when a student undertakes a university course ?

Jake: Personally I believe that the student, should pay for the living costs but the tuition fees should be paid for by the Government. I fully, you know I will, you know, by all means borrow the money to live on, I accept that I have to support myself

[Jake, 20, Undergraduate in Law, Northwick University]

Interviewer: Who should pay for living costs when a student undertakes a university course ?

Alan: The student should pay for living costs. Um, the reasons behind that are you have to live anyway, the way you live, whether it's at home or if it's away from home.

[Alan, 20, Undergraduate in Economics, Northwick University]

Alan's comments were typical of the students who participated in this research.

Many regarded lifestyle costs and as something that they would incur in any walk of life. No student ever argued that they undertook a university education to, in part at least benefit their communities and therefore that they might expect some help with costs. There was an almost universal acceptance that students should pay for their own living costs.

Interviewer: Who should pay for the living expenses and tuition costs when a person goes through university and why?

Sam: Um, there was once this , sort of, idea of free education for all, which seemed like quite a nice rosy idea and I kind of do believe in that. I think you should be entitled to go through a university education and not have to actually pay for tuition fees and things. Um, I think it's fair enough to say that the loan idea is a fair enough idea, that you can pay back um, money that you've borrowed over the course of the time that you're working. I think that's, that's not an unfair idea.

[Sam, 22, Postgraduate in Management Studies, Northwick University]

Sam's remarks clearly illustrate the distinction that most of the students who participated in this research made between lifestyle costs and tuition fee costs. These research participants understood tuition fees as being unfair. However, they never referred to the fact that, currently at least, lifestyle costs perhaps represented the most significant expenditures that students must deal with. As such, they may represent the most significant factor that may have excluded potential university students from entering Higher Education. Not only did the students accept that they

should pay for lifestyle costs, not a single one envisaged that the costs incurred during a university course may cause some students to reject the idea of undertaking a university course.

Students clearly expected to pay their living costs. The social democratic standpoint that the tax paying community could provide students (subject to a parental means testing) with non-repayable grants, to cover cost of living expenses has almost disappeared from student consciousnesses. This self-help outlook provides insight into the low levels of student participation in campaigns connected with tuition fees. Particularly when one considers that the annual £1000+ tuition fees represents just one quarter of the annual loan which students seem readily willing to accept as a necessary cost of undertaking a Higher Education course.

Hardship and Investment

In an individualised society people are expected to make considered, ongoing assessments concerning the risks and dilemmas that they face. The interview data shows that young students actively considered the merits and demerits of undertaking a university course. Many students felt that the debts that they may incur would be outweighed by long-term benefits gained by undertaking a university education.

Interviewer: Do you expect the debts you have accumulated to be a problem in future?

Alan: I've taken out two full student loans over the two years I've been here, which amount to, I think, off the top of my head, about six and a half thousand pounds. I expect that to go up by another three and a half thousand next year. Um, I don't see that as particularly a problem, um, mainly because I hope that the degree I'm hopefully going to get and the area of work which I want to go into, will, hopefully I'll be able to pay that off quite quickly

[Alan, 20, Undergraduate in Economics, Northwick University]

Outlooks like these displayed an instrumentalist, individualist standpoint towards loans and debt. These viewpoints perhaps illustrated how the individualised understanding of the impact of debts may explain why university students did not get involved in campaigns connected with tuition fees. The problem of debt was understood as a personal, rather than a political issue. Few students made any remarks concerning how debts may impact upon other students.

I'll pay my debts back

Interviewer: Do you expect the debts you have accumulated to be a problem in future?

Michelle: Worried about it? I'm quite confident I can get a job, and if not, then I-I'm gonna be in the same basis as many other people. Em, I think I handle my money really well anyway.

[Michelle, 20, Undergraduate in Business, Northwick University focus group]

Michelle's comments also showed how many students felt debts incurred while in Higher Education are a temporary burden, which they can pay back.

Interviewer: Do you expect the debts you have accumulated to be a problem in future?

Colin: I don't, and that-that's probably why I've spent money as if it grew on trees. And because I'm going, probably, back to Sandhurst to do army officer training, cos I was there before, an-and if I go back, they will take responsibility for some of the debts that I've run up and pay some of it off for me. So, I haven't been quite so cautious with getting a hardship loan, or running an overdraft up to God knows what. So, I don't envisage it being that big a problem once I've left university.

[Colin, 23, Undergraduate in Engineering, Northwick University focus group]

Colin's remarks once again reflected the education as an investment outlook. In his case, his employers will take some of the responsibility for his debt. Colin aimed to

use qualifications in order to gain promotion within the armed forces. He was confident that he would achieve his aims and that his debts would be more than compensated for by his long-term career advancement.

Many students felt that the debts that they incurred would not represent a long-term problem. The remarks made by the participant below reflect a viewpoint held by some students that, far from being a future burden, loans represent a flexible, potentially user-friendly method of repaying debt.

Ellie: I don't think I'm, I'm not worried at all about my, my loans, because if- I think that the way that they structured it is quite good, that if you do voluntary work afterwards, or if you don't earn more than ten thousand pounds, em, then they don't take anything back from you. I'm not really sure exactly the figures, but if you earn, like, ten to fifteen, then they take one per cent, and then fifteen to twenty, they take two per cent. And then it goes according to your wages, so, the whole point of us going to university is to get these enhanced wages, but if we don't get them, but then we only lost our three years. We didn't lose any money.

[Ellie, 20, Undergraduate in Business, Northwick University focus group]

The viewpoints of students contacted in this research reflected an middle-class, individualist deferred gratification outlook. Alan's comments clearly outlined this standpoint. The findings of Eccles' (2003) student spending survey revealed that many young students believed that the expenses that they incurred during their

university studies to be a necessary evil, a kind of investment which would more than repay for itself in the future. Eccles concludes that young students believe 'that once they leave and get a job, they will be able to pay the whole thing off' (cited in Curphey, 2003:7). Perhaps the investment viewpoint was rational if one considers research reported by the BBC which shows that graduates can expect to earn £150,000 more over their lifetimes than non graduates (BBC, 2005).

Self-blame and self-sufficiency

Bauman (2001) maintains that within the individualised society, individuals increasingly attribute their own success or failure to decisions of their own making. When asked about what they perceived to be significant causes of student debt, interview data revealed that students often perceived their financial predicament to be something that they themselves had a strong influence upon. The students often perceived the problem of financial hardship as a problem of their own making.

Interviewer: What do you feel is the main reason that you are experiencing financial problems?

Sean: Er, the main reason I've had financial worries is basically because I've spent too much money and gone out too much, where I could've managed my money a hell of a lot better, if 'd, like, budgeted properly. Like, worked out exactly what you need to spend and where, which I haven't done. So, I don't see much money.

[Sean, 23, Undergraduate in Law, Northwick University focus group]

Sean's statement illustrates how many students felt that they were significantly responsible for their own financial difficulties. His remarks reflected an individualist outlook. They imply that his financial difficulties were a product of his own lack of budgeting skills. Sean's comments were perhaps surprising bearing in mind that his debts, which amounted to around £4200, were in actual fact well below both the average debt of the students who participated in this research and the national average student debt of around £12,000

Interviewer: What do you feel is the main reason that you are experiencing financial problems?

Colin: Yeah, mine's come from bad budgeting, basically, I attribute it to the fact that I came to uni from, either from work or full-time while I was at the Army. I never adjusted my lifestyle. If I could go out four, five, six nights a week and spend, a decent amount, I would, and I still did. And it's just something that-that's taken me a little while to get under control, but I'm just about getting there. I should have thought a bit harder about how I have spent my money. I don't think that the loans and the money that I get from my job cover everything. I think my debt problems really began when I started going out a lot in my first year. You know, to parties and that. Despite of working I've never really had much chance of getting on top of the debts I've mounted up.

[Colin, 23, Undergraduate in Engineering, Northwick University focus group]

Colin's remarks once again illustrated how many students felt that they were, in part

at least, responsible for their own financial predicament. His comments once again reflected the viewpoint that debt, however it is incurred, will be paid back in future.

Interviewer: So you see your debts as primarily being your fault then?

Becky: Well no, not entirely, if you see what I mean.

Interviewer: Sorry?

Becky: Well of course I'm going to get into debt. The cost of living, go to uni and all that costs money. That's unavoidable. What I am saying is that quite a large portion of my debt is down to me. s'pose I will have to think a lot harder about how to pay it back in the future wont I?

[Becky , 21, Undergraduate in Media Studies, Northwick University]

These comments revealed that many students attributed much of their debt to their own 'irresponsible' spending habits. None of the students considered that that they should have a legitimate right to relax, have a social life and be entitled to financial provision that might pay for the cost of living expenses they incurred. Their viewpoints accord with the individualist outlook that they were responsible for their own financial predicament.

The data revealed by the interviews concurs with research conducted by Eccles

(2003) who found that first-year undergraduate students entered university with the intention of budgeting responsibly. She points out however, that many do not stick to their initial budgets. Students are offered a variety of entertainments, discounts and credit agreements in order to encourage them to spend. Over the course of their university studies, students gradually become more accustomed to debt to the extent that 'By their final year, they had become 'debt blind', with a large overdraft which may be shrugged off as part of undergraduate life'. (Curphey, 2003:7). This widely held standpoint expressed by students can in part explain their lack of involvement in campaigns connected with student tuition fees. It effectively transformed a political issue into a personal one. Many students reproached themselves, rather than the government for their predicament.

Non-participation in campaigns

Giddens (1991) maintains that within an increasingly individualised society, people are more often compelled to undertake individual assessments of how risk may impact upon them. In doing so they strive to maintain a sense of ontological security. Many students contacted in this research gambled on the fact that their university studies were a long-term investment that they believed would pay dividends. Many student' s attitudes towards participation in campaigns connected with tuition fees were affected by a consideration of how their actions may impact upon their interests. When asked why students did not participate in campaigns connected with tuition fees , they provided a number of illuminating explanations.

Time constraints

Many students who participated in this research stated that they did not have time to take part in campaigns opposing tuition fees.

Interviewer: Why did you not participate in campaigns against tuition fees?

Sam: Just quite simple reasons really. Like there was one [a demonstration] on Wednesday, but like Wednesday is my biggest day at university and I just didn't go mainly because just time constraints, really, I think. I give priority to the actual course that I'm doing really.

[Sam, 22, Postgraduate in Management Studies, Northwick University]

Interviewer: Why did you not participate in campaigns against tuition fees?

Graham: Because I didn't have time, because I'm so busy here.

[Graham, 23, Postgraduate in Business Studies, Cheswick University]

Comments like these reflected an individualist outlook, in that they believed that their actions should not prejudice their investment. Becoming involved in campaigns that may be beneficial to the collective interests of student population

was considered to be detrimental to students' own personal interests.

Interviewer: Why did you not participate in campaigns against tuition fees?

Becky: You can't ignore issues like this. When you walk around campus you see posters for demos and things. But, I'm here to get my degree. A lot of these protests were arranged during the university week. I've got to attend lectures on every working weekday. If I had gone down to London or wherever together on one of these demos I would have missed some important stuff, you know? I suppose it's a case of priorities. I'm not sure that the campaigns will achieve anything, yet I am sure that I will lose out if I don't go to lectures. I need them. Some of the stuff in the books that we have to read is bloody hard. Sometimes lectures help me understand stuff that I find hard. I know it might sound harsh but you have to look after yourself don't you?

[Becky, 21, Undergraduate in Media Studies, Northwick University]

The data above reveals that students decided not to participate in campaigns connected with tuition fees, because to do so would have affected their learning experience. Paradoxically, it is useful to recall that the data above shows students were very often prepared to undertake paid work which may impact upon the quality of their learning experience, even to the extent where they lose significant amounts of time and may not be able to attend all lectures. Students perceive paid work (and its related benefits) during term as a necessary 'evil'. On one hand

students had the time to undertake paid work, but not to protest against fees and that will compound their level of debt. The data reveals that students were prepared to sacrifice their time to undertake paid work (even when it may have some detrimental effects upon their education) however, they were unwilling to sacrifice their time upon campaigns that they saw as having little chance of success.

Costs are a fact of life

When students were specifically asked why they did not participate in campaigns connected with student hardship and tuition fees, their answers often returned to the viewpoint that costs are a fact of life and would be unavoidable regardless of the direction that their lives may have taken.

Interviewer: More specifically then, could you tell me why you didn't participate in the tuition fees campaign? What were your reasons behind that?

Alan: Um, I think it's probably because like I just said, I'm here for a reason, that's to get a degree I made that decision, I knew it was going to cost me quite a lot in terms of money and in time. And so all these things were made clear prior to coming so I just wanted to get on with it really. Um, I don't feel that what I say or do is going to change anything um, so, why bother really.

[Alan, 20, Undergraduate in Economics, Northwick University]

Students seemed to understand costs, debt and the need to undertake paid work as being a fact of life, something that is outside of their control. Many students could be proactive in complaining about consumer issues that impacted upon their educational provision. However, when they were asked if they would consider being involved in tuition fee campaigns, normally proactive consumer students felt powerless to change anything. In one sense students possessed a sense of agency and purpose, while also believing themselves to be almost powerless in a cruel sea.

Lucy: When you go to university I think it's fair to say that you know you have to pay. Costs are something that we have to live with. After all, you would have to pay costs even if you decide to get a job and buy a house. Yes, ideally it would be nice that we didn't have to pay. But, any course of life has costs. Uhm I don't like these costs. Do I make myself clear? I am aiming for a decent lifestyle. I suppose you could say that these costs are something that will mean short-term pain for long-term gain.

[Lucy, 21, Undergraduate in Foreign Languages, Cheswick University]

Lucy's comments clearly illustrated the stance held by many students that education is a transaction. Though students were reluctant to pay tuition fees this research has found that they accepted that costs are a fact of life, which may explain why many do not participate in campaigns connected with tuition fees.

Fees do not affect me

Research undertaken by (Ecclestone 1999; Ranson, 1996; Gerwitz, Ball and Bowe 1995) illustrates how young people's educational experiences contribute towards individualisation, by individualising educational programmes and by consumerising educational experiences. In addition to this, Furlong and Cartmel (1997) argue that few young people in employment have the opportunity to develop solidarity with other workers that. I'll our and if so what if your all seems a long ways. Young people encounter a set of experiences both in education and the world of work that militate against collective action. Young workers are less likely to be unionised and university students are increasingly experiencing individualised programmes of study. Many students have only limited opportunities to develop a sense of solidarity with others. A small number of students expressed what might be interpreted as egoistic or rational choice type standpoints, when asked why they did not participate in campaigns against tuition fees. They simply stated that fees did not impact upon them, so why should they be interested in campaigning against them?

Interviewer: Um, are there any other reasons why you didn't participate in action against tuition fees?

Sam: I think because my personal situation has meant that I personally have not had to pay tuition fees. It's not something that's personally or directly affected me

[Sam, 22, Postgraduate in Management Studies, University of Northwick]

Sam's comments clearly illustrated how some students solely considered how tuition fees impacted upon them without too much regard for how they might have affected members of the wider student community.

Interviewer: Um, are there any other reasons why you didn't participate in action against tuition fees?

Morten: It wasn't effecting me, why should I bother shouting about it? It was probably quite a selfish point of view, but also the peer groups that I hung around with, or, you know, that I was in we didn't really feel involved, you know, we didn't feel like it was effecting us so why should we shout and howl and go all the way down to London.

[Morten, 22, NUS Sabbatical post holder, Northwick University]

Comments like these reflected the attitude that expressing solidarity with other students is simply something that many students may ever think about it. This is perhaps not surprising if one considers the data, discussed elsewhere in this document, that revealed that many students perceived the education they received in terms of a transaction. Customers typically consider themselves to be individual, rather than collective recipients of services and address problems that they may have on an individual basis. The fees don't affect me standpoint was reiterated by some foreign students.

Interviewer: You mentioned that tuition fees, for you are a problem, um, have you taken part in any campaigns against tuition fees, in any way?

Vincent: No, I haven't, no. Uh, it is a small problem, uh, a small obstacle for me and like I said there are lots of people out there in a much worse situation than I am.

[Vincent, 22, Overseas Postgraduate in Business Studies, Cheswick University]

The above data revealed that many students had little desire to participate in political campaigns that claimed to establish a more 'just' system of funding for present and future university students. This supports Bauman's (2001) assertion that individualisation is producing large numbers of self-interested people with little sense of collective solidarity.

No future problem

Some students expressed the standpoint that once they had left university, tuition fees would not constitute a significant problem. Therefore, they did not feel compelled to express solidarity with other students by participating in campaigns opposing tuition fees.

Interviewer: Do you think that you will ever get involved in campaigns against tuition fees?

Edward: Um, probably not because um, although it's quite you know, if I was going to do it I probably would have done it by now. And bearing in mind in six months or so I'm not going to be a student anymore uh, selfish as it sounds, I probably won't be, as I won't be effected, I probably won't be interested in the matter, you know.

[Edward, 21, Undergraduate in Sociology, Cheswick University]

Edward's comments illustrate the individualistic viewpoint held by several students that once they left university the ordeal of financial hardship would be over. His comments illustrated the significant lack of solidarity that students displayed towards the wider student community. Upon leaving university, many students felt that the burden of financial hardship would disappear as would the need to actively consider the welfare of other students.

A foreign student reiterated this standpoint

Norbert: I think I just here for one year and I'm not involved in um, the English education so I just have to pay the fees for one year, if I have to pay, so after it won't be my problem. It's the English students' problem.

[Norbert, 20, Overseas Engineering undergraduate, Northwick University]

Norbert's comments further illustrated the absence of solidarity within the student community. Foreign students referred to how they felt that the NUS had failed to make them feel like an included section of the student population. Bearing in mind these comments it is perhaps not surprising that foreign students chose not to involve themselves in campaigns opposing tuition fees.

No objections

Before and after the introduction of tuition fees, the Labour government articulated the idea of the 'social investment state' (Giddens, 1998), which involves the state entering into a partnership where both parties make a contribution towards enabling individuals to develop themselves along a course of lifelong learning. Education is posited as a means of enabling self-development and as an investment that individuals may intellectually, spiritually or financially benefit from. Data from the research revealed that a very small number of students had no objection to the introduction of tuition fees

Interviewer: Why did you not participate in campaigns against tuition fees?

Lucy: I suppose it's because I haven't been directly affected by it in anyway, it's not made me feel angry or upset me, it hasn't

forced me into hardship and therefore, I don't feel strongly. Whereas, if I did, I agree I probably would have gone on one of these marches, but since I haven't had to struggle, like some of these people, it hasn't provoked anger in me. I'm not particularly anti, because I can understand the government's point of view. I'm not small minded enough to think, we should have it, we should have it free, I've actually thought about the consequences. I don't think that it's reasonable to expect the government to be able to pay for everything.

[Lucy , 21, Undergraduate in Foreign Languages, Cheswick University]

Interviewer: Why did you not participate in campaigns against tuition fees?

Jill: I think it's right to expect us, students that is, to contribute something towards fees. I think it's fair that the government pays something towards fees because society benefits from graduates. It boosts the economy.

[Jill, 21, Overseas Postgraduate in Sociology, Cheswick University]

The comments made by the students are particularly interesting if one considers that the data that has been examined so far in this chapter has revealed that some students accepted that fees (and loans) were an unavoidable cost. The above quotations however show that some students accepted the idea that they should make some kind of contribution towards their fees. This outlook may also explain why some students did not participate in campaigns connected with tuition fees.

Campaigners

The conceptual framework developed by Giddens (1991) and Beck (1992, 2002) coupled with the research that illustrates how changes in the educational environment individualises the educational experiences of young people and can be used to explain how students perceive fees, debt and financial hardship. It also explains how they undertake individualised courses of action when confronted by these issues. For the purpose of further examining Beck and Giddens' explanatory framework, a consideration of data produced from students who did participate in campaigns connected with tuition fees was undertaken.

The data that emerged during interviews undertaken with people who participated in campaigns (which will also be discussed in a further data chapter) , shows that their perception of risk, or social problems, differed from students who did not take part in campaigns. Significantly, students who did participate in campaigns connected with tuition fees felt that the debt they had accrued would be a problem in the future.

Interviewer: Do you envisage the debts that you currently have, you just mentioned, being a problem for you in the future?

Scot: Er, yeah. mainly because you're starting off your professional career owing so much money. So, you know, you've always got that, sort of, debt hanging over your

head. Even if it's paid back over a long period of time, it's still gonna have an effect over you buying a house and all those sort of things, cuz you've already got so much money in debt. When you could have had eighteen thousand pounds going towards the house, you owe that to a government.

[Scot, 23, Undergraduate in Law, Northwick University]

Scot's comments illustrated how the spectre of future debt was clear in the minds of students involved in campaigns opposing tuition fees.

Interviewer: Do you envisage the debts that you do have being a problem in the future?

Kirsty: Em, I think, now that I've finished university, yes, I do think it's a problem. Now that I'm actually earning, and paying my own rent and my own bills and stuff, it's made me think 'Oh, I'm not actually that well off.' So, yeah, I think it will be a problem. Em, but whether I'll get a well paid enough job or not, I don't know. I'm hoping to do a PhD, so it's probably going to be, like, ten years until I'm earning a lot of money anyway.

Interviewer: In Psychology?

Kirsty: Yeah, so have to wait and see.

[Kirsty, 22, NUS Sabbatical post holder, Northwick University]

Kirsty's comments clearly revealed that she felt that the financial implications of

undertaking study were likely to be a long-term problem. This illustrates the different perceptions of implications of hardship and tuition fees held by members of the student community involved in opposing tuition fees.

Comments like these showed how the students who participated in campaigns connected with tuition fees perceived the impact of tuition fees upon their future lives. They had a clear grasp of their financial implications and feel that debt would have a negative effect upon their future lives.

Interviewer: Do you envisage the debts that you do have being a problem in the future?

Hannah: Yeah, yes I do. I mean, if you think about it loads of students like myself are going to find it hard leaving university up to their necks in debt. OK, I'll probably be able to rely on my boyfriend a bit. But, that's not fair I shouldn't really have to do that. If we find permanent employment down south of England where mortgages are expensive it's going to be tough. I'm really not sure how the payments will affect me and at what salary level you start having to pay back at. It's a big thing to think about. I don't know what to say really other than it's going to be very difficult. We could all do without the debts. Really, governments should do more to help students get through university.

[Hannah, 21, Undergraduate in Media Studies, Northwick University]

Hannah's comments were particularly revealing. She raised a concern mentioned by

some other students that they were faced with the dilemma of turning to their parents or loved ones for financial assistance. Hannah felt that this dilemma was not likely to be confined to her student years, but may extend beyond that.

Interviewer: Do you think about debt a lot?

Kelvin: Yes, I've got strong feelings about it, not just because it affects me, but others too. It stresses me out quite a lot. I'm not the only one. Some of my friends are in exactly the same boat. They say the very same things as I do.

[Kelvin, 19, Undergraduate in Maths, Cheswick University]

Students who took part in campaigns connected with tuition fees were concerned about the stresses caused by being in debt. Unlike students who did not participate in campaigns, they expressed a sense of uncertainty about how their lives may develop. Some students expressed concern that they might find themselves relying on family members in future. This outlook stands in direct contrast to the individualistic idea of self-help that is held by many university students who do not participate in campaigns concerning tuition fees.

Individuals have their own portfolios of risk. There is no one given way in which individuals must necessarily respond to the risks caused by the introduction of

tuition fees. The data above clearly illustrates how students who participated in campaigns connected with tuition fees perceive the issue of financial hardship and the associated risks in a markedly different way to those who chose not to become involved in campaigns. This data proved to be enlightening. When it is contrasted with the viewpoint expressed by the students who did not participate in campaigns, it further emphasised that most university students perceived the problem of debt and hardship to be tolerable or not sufficient to warrant involvement in campaigns connected with tuition fees. This outlook can explain why so many university students chose to pursue individualised, rather than collective, courses of action with respect to these issues.

Conclusion

In the risk society, individuals must become increasingly more informed and self-reliant in order to make effective judgments to deal with the risks they may face. According to Giddens (1991), individuals strive to maintain a sense of ontological security in a rapidly changing world. The self becomes a reflexive project in which individuals strive to maintain a self-narrative and a coherent sense of self-identity. The data revealed by the interviews can, be understood in terms of the individualisation framework, developed by Giddens and Beck and research that provides insight into how individualisation may impact upon young people's educational experiences and social outlooks. It provides a means of understanding how concepts of debt, financial hardship and their attendant risks occupy a central

place in young students biographies. Importantly, the data also shows how the standpoints held by the students, in turn, contribute towards, and propel the individualisation process.

My findings show how individualisation impacted upon student outlooks and how it can be used to explain why so many students chose not to participate in campaigns connected with tuition fees. Like members of wider society, the students encountered a number of fateful moments. They actively considered the merits of undertaking a Higher Education course and its attendant risks. They also considered the risks attached to undertaking paid work and involvement in campaigns opposing tuition fees. They learned to deal with fateful moments and make decisions, which are considered to be consistent with their interests. Students believed debt to be an unavoidable, integral aspect of their daily lives. They often opted to deal with it by undertaking paid work even though this may have a detrimental impact upon their academic achievement and may in turn develop related risks and dilemmas for them to deal with. Students also chose not to become involved in campaigns because to do so would have been detrimental to their studies. Some students simply felt that they were not adversely affected by the impacts of fees. Paradoxically, however, many decided to undertake paid work, which ironically can have an adverse impact upon educational experiences. Importantly, some students showed no desire to consider how fees may impact upon current or future students.

Student attitudes towards debt, hardship, funding and fees reveals that many students believed that they should be largely self-reliant or at least expect only limited state assistance in enabling them to undertake a Higher Education course. There was a commonly held perception that education constitutes a kind of investment, clearly demonstrated that they, to some degree, subscribed to an individualised meritocratic viewpoint. This outlook explains why many students chose not to participate in campaigns connected with tuition fees. This is especially evident if one considers the contrasting views held by students who did participate in campaigns. These individuals considered the impacts of fees to be a long-term problem, which would affect them in the future.

This is related to Bauman's (2001) assertion that individuals increasingly perceive themselves to be the author of their own success or failure. The remarks made by those students who attributed a level of their own financial hardship to their own mistakes perhaps illustrates the individualised (in this case personal, rather than political or sociological) perspectives held by some students concerning the cause of the disadvantages they may encounter. This outlook not only individualised the problem of student hardship, but also depoliticised it and discouraged student involvement in campaigns connected with it.

Chapter 8

Individualised Active Consumers

Introduction

We have, so far, explored some of the factors that may explain why few students participate in campaigns regarding tuition fees. We have discussed how mechanisms that have been put into place within education actively promote consumerism among students at all levels of the education system. This chapter will utilise the concepts used by Giddens (1990, 1991), Beck (1992, 2002) and Bauman (2001) to develop an understanding of the role of consumerism within education, how it contributes to the individualisation process and how this in turn may explain why few students actively participate in campaigns connected with tuition fees.

Abstract systems and the changing nature of trust

Giddens' (1984) analysis of the significance of abstract systems, trust relationships and the duality of structure can be used to understand the attitudes of Higher Education students. He describes late modern or post traditional society as being an entity in which much social interaction is undertaken across time and space. This interaction is bound together by trust relationships. These relationships are necessary in order to enable society to function and for individuals to develop a

sense of ontological security. Giddens argues that in post traditional society individuals realise that they depend upon abstract systems and 'informed' experts that enable them to realise their aims and aspirations. He maintains however, that individuals do not simply allow their lives to be passively shaped and ordered by these systems. Individuals play an active role in influencing how they work. It is too simplistic to assume that individuals always defer to abstract systems and that their actions simply add to their maintenance and legitimacy. Whilst in essence much social action does owe its influence to them, the declining influence of metanarratives, faith in science, and a growth of litigation culture have caused individuals to become more reflexively critical of the actions of individual experts, whole institutions and abstract systems they sustain. He argues that when individuals consider that these experts can no longer legitimise themselves, they may take matters into their own hands and choose to utilise alternative systems of knowledge to address their needs or problems. The interaction between students and university institutions can be understood using the concept of duality of structure. This interaction can be seen to take place between universities and consumer minded students and will be examined in this chapter.

Consumer Consciousness and the self

Consumerism has been used by the public to enable them to satisfy their needs and attain positive social and cultural experiences. Advertisers attempt to gain customers by associating products with various 'desirable' connotations. It could be

argued however, that the process of consumerism is not merely a top down process in which companies market goods to willing consumers. Consumers are actively involved in the process of consumerism for their own purposes. Sarup argues for example that consumerism is used by individuals, to help them form a sense of identity.

The market puts on display a wide range of identities from which one can select one's own. Commercial advertisements often show commodities, which they try to sell in their social context (that is, as part of a particular lifestyle), so that the prospective customer can consciously purchase symbols of such self-identity as he or she would wish to possess (Sarup, 1996:125).

Klein (2000) agrees that consumerism occupies a significant place in everyday life in Western societies. She develops an interesting analysis of marketing and consumption in contemporary society and argues that since the 1970s, companies have increasingly marketed their goods by using brand name symbols or logos. While she accepts that companies have always aimed to associate their products with positive social or cultural experiences, she also maintains that the use of symbols or logos is now being promoted with the view of, 'taking these associations out of the representational realm and making them a lived reality' (Klien, 2000:29).

For many people, commodities imbue them with a sense of life.

Lury (1996) and Quart (2003) argue that young people are encouraged to be consumerists. Whole marketing industries are targeted at young people. These include music, clothing and food, among others. They market their goods by seeking to associate them with positive connotations and experiences. Both Lury and Quart describe how the younger generation make use of consumer durables and services in the process of forming their own identities. Items of clothing are routinely used by young people to define their own sense of image. Quart argues that since the 1980s, the process of marketing branded products at the young has intensified and has influenced many young people's buying habits.

Adolescence has been transformed radically since then [1980s]. No longer can teens' interest in brands be reduced to an ordinary concern with differentiation, or distinguishing one's identity from that of the group and the converse, that of conforming, or fitting in with the group. The reliance on brands has shifted to the extent that 'brands have infiltrated preteens and adolescents' inner lives (Quart, 2003:4).

Brands do not solely represent a means of identity but form a part of many young people's *raison d'etre*. The insights developed by Klein, Lury, Quart and Sarup all illustrate the key place that consumerism occupies in the inner lives of individuals

within western societies. In modern Britain, the marketisation of many areas of welfare provision means that recipients increasingly perceive themselves to be customers. University students are no exception to this trend.

Consumer culture and the reflexive project of the self

Giddens (1991) argues that modernity has produced the conditions that give rise to an emergence of, what he terms, a 'reflexive project of the self'. Post traditional society is an individualised society in which we are faced with greater levels of risks, dilemmas and choices than ever before. According to Giddens, consumerism and lifestyle choices enable individuals to maintain a sense of being, ontological security and self-identity. He argues that the individual need of personal autonomy, self-definition, authentic life or personal perfection are all translated into the desire to possess, and consume, market-offered goods' (Giddens, 1991:198). Giddens goes on to argue that many individuals associate consumption with the achievement of the goal of self-actualisation. He argues that 'commodification is in some ways even more insidious than this characterisation suggests. For the project of the self as such may become heavily commodified. Not just lifestyles, but self-actualisation is packaged and distributed according to market criteria' (Giddens, 1991:198).

Drawing upon Giddens' explanatory framework, it is possible to conclude that one

of the highest achievements a Higher Education student might aim for would be to achieve a degree of self-actualization by successfully completing their course of study. It would also be possible to assume that they would take the necessary actions to ensure that they achieve it. Since the 1980s a rapid introduction of market mechanisms has consumerised the nature of education. Today, educational provision is increasingly portrayed as a commodity (Ritzer, 1998; Maskell and Robinson; 2001; Martin, 1999). It is something that can be bought and sold and has impacted upon the expectations of the students who make use of it. Not only do students aim make the most effective use of the service that they pay for, they are more than willing to exercise their consumer status and command compensation when they feel that service provision does not match up to their expectations.

Complaints, compensation culture and individualisation

In recent years there has been much talk of a compensation culture, which entails the growing willingness of individuals to undertake litigious actions against fellow individuals or institutions. Beck (1992) and Peysner (2002) argue that litigation consciousness is not just confined to consumer affairs. It often extends into action against employers and other institutions. They both conclude that its incidence may be attributed to an increasingly individualised society. Peysner argues that declining levels of collective security arrangement are increasingly driving individual litigious actions:

Our society has increasingly moved from the post-war consensus on collective provision to individual provision and individual 'rights' that flow from these new arrangements. Workers who do not belong to trade unions will seek to rely on rights against dismissal enforced through tribunals (Peysner, 2002:4).

Litigation consciousness produces two key developments. Firstly, it promotes the individualisation process, in that individuals rather than collective groups seek to redress the wrongs they feel they have experienced. Secondly, Brown (2002) argues that this development actively operates as a barrier that prevents achievement of social justice for all:

compensation culture is a barrier to better sources of social justice and asks individuals to make their own individual claims. It is not social at all. Those who claim do not have to take into account anyone else's predicament or try to change anything about how society works (Brown, 2002:34).

Many students have undertaken legal action against universities. They are actively involved in pursuing individualised forms of redress, which reflects both the

marketisation of education and the individualisation of student learning experiences.

The New Right and market individualism

In addition to the introduction of market forces into education and its resultant contribution to the individualisation of student experiences, the promotion of New Right ideas extolling the virtues of self-help, consumerism and market individualism have contributed towards the individualisation of society. It is important to recall that, despite its rhetoric the government continues to play a central role in economic affairs. Since the 1970s governments have set about lessening state involvement in certain aspects of economic life and welfare provision (Kingdom, 1992). In doing so their actions challenged the social democratic ethos of universal entitlement to services and benefits. Governments have argued that businesses and individuals should become more self-reliant and be less dependent upon state assistance. Today many people not only subscribe to the individualist idea of standing on your own two feet, but are also critical of publicly funded social welfare provision for the less well off.

Bauman (2001) argues that various social developments, like those mentioned above, have developed a market individualist outlook of 'Am I my brother's keeper'? He argues that welfare dependency has become a dirty word. Social,

economic and ideological developments have undermined support for the welfare state:

And so, the welfare state is falling out of favour and is over determined. The rich and powerful see it as a bad investment and money wasted, while the less rich and powerful must feel no solidarity with the welfare clients and no longer see in it their predicament as a mirror reflection of their own troubles (Bauman, 2001:78).

Evidence has emerged to support Bauman's contention. Taylor Gooby (1998) revealed that in several European countries, levels of public support (between 1985 - 1996) for the government being 'definitely responsible' for healthcare and a decent standard of living for the old and the unemployed have all declined. These indications seem to provide evidence for Bauman's contention that society is becoming increasingly individualised. He contends that people seem more ready to accept that they, as individuals, need to provide for their own welfare, a reality that may only accentuate individualisation still further. New right ideas actively promote the idea that one should be self-reliant rather than relying on collective welfare provision. Its ideological framework actively promotes the idea that market forces and active consumerism (such as that found in Higher Education) are the best means to promote the interests of self-reliant market individualists. The ideas

of self-reliance, active consumerism and market forces occupy a significant profile within the student community and actively contribute towards the individualisation of student learning experiences. The concepts discussed so far in this chapter, will now be used to analyse the practical everyday experiences of consumer minded, individualised Higher Education students.

Students, experts and abstract systems

Students involved in this research believed that Higher Education is an abstract system, of educational provision, that operates largely separately from them and which can help them realise their own particular life goals. The students who participated in this research perceived the organizations, services and 'experts', which they made use of as being responsible for providing them with the things they needed to achieve their targets. Many of the students undertook their Higher Education courses as a means to an end. Interview data revealed that students almost exclusively undertook their education with a career in mind.

Interviewer: What is the main reason that you undertook a university education?

Gemma: Em, basically because to get a degree is very, very important nowadays, and I think for the kind of work that I eventually want to go to, a degree is vital. That's basically the main reason, I think.

[Gemma, 21, Undergraduate in Social Policy, Northwick University]

Gemma's comments clearly illustrated that a that many people feel that an university education is often one of the only routes that people can take to obtain jobs that they desire. Her statement clearly indicated her reliance upon education as a means of realising this end.

Interviewer: What is the main reason you undertook a university education?

Sean : The main reason I undertook was, er, really toward getting-er, I really wanted to be a lawyer, and I undertook a university education because I believe in its imperative to do a university degree to get anywhere in law, really. So, it's my aiming to get, er, a better career, really, that's why I chose a university education.

[Sean ,23 , Undergraduate in Law, Northwick University focus group]

Sean's comments to some extent reflected the sentiments expressed by Gemma. Her comments indicated that a university education is often necessary to obtain a rewarding career.

Interviewer: What is the main reason you undertook a university education?

Hannah: I felt that it would help me gaining employment that I want, I felt that I needed a degree to actually have any, sort of,

chance of getting some sort of good job that in the sector that I wanted. Which is basically P.R. really I know that there are other sorts of avenues, that you can go through like such as um, sort of, apprenticeships and things like that. I felt I wanted to gain a sort of, good understanding of it and the only way that you can really do that is to go through Higher Education, really.

[Hannah , 21, Undergraduate in Media Studies , Northwick University]

Hannah's comments not only revealed that she perceived Higher Education as a means to achieve her own ends, but rather as a means of imbuing her with a necessary understanding and skills that could prepare her for her future occupation. The fact that the students placed a great deal of reliance upon Higher Education as an abstract system does not mean that they were not actively prepared to be critical of some of its practices. A number of social developments have taken place that have contributed towards this and have in turn had an impact upon how Higher Educational institutions operate.

Student consumers

O'Neill (1997), Martin (1999) and Woodhouse (2001) argue that the introduction of market forces into Higher Education has effectively consumerised student educational experiences. I contend that consumerism contributes towards the individualisation of student experiences by encouraging singular individuals to seek

out goods and services that will meet their needs and aspirations rather than striving to achieve collective provision for them. The introduction of tuition fees has encouraged students to perceive themselves as being customers as well as being students.

Interviewer: What standard of educational provision do you feel you should receive and why?

Kimberley: A good standard

Interviewer: Why is that?

Kimberley: I don't see why we should pay tuition fees to them if they're not going to give their best to us, because we're paying to be here, and they're paid to be here, so, really, we're the customer, and it should all be about customer satisfaction and doing the best for us.

[Kimberley, 23, Postgraduate in Philosophy, Cheswick University]

Comments like these clearly illustrated that students felt that they had a right to receive a service. Not only did students clearly expect their lecturers to do their best as a matter of professional integrity, but because they paid for it. The introduction of tuition fees ratified a set of expectations that are based upon the idea that students should receive a satisfactory service as a consumer right

Interviewer: What standard of educational provision do you feel you should receive and why?

Deng: I think it's the duty of universities to offer students the best educational package they can.

Interviewer: Why is that?

Deng: First and foremost you go to uni lectures expecting a good set of lecture notes.

Interviewer: Lecture notes?

Deng: Yeah lecturers give them in lectures. So you don't miss out on, we think its not fair if we don't get them and others do. Sometimes you have to download them and you don't get any printing credits for it.

Interviewer: Interesting. Can I bring you back to what we were talking about ?

Deng: Yeah well, I think we are entitled to a good education because it costs so much. After all we have to pay fees now. You could say that we should expect one

[Deng, 22 Undergraduate in Computer Science, Cheswick University
focus group]

The remarks made above illustrated that students were not only keen to receive a good quality education, they also revealed that they had specific expectations about the types of services they should receive. These comments were illuminating in that they highlight how consumer expectations are not fixed. The students were

conscious that other departments may be providing a service. As active consumers, students also came to expect this provision as a right.

Interviewer: What standard of educational provision do you feel you should receive and why?

Mick: This university, like all others charges over £1000 per year to study. It's not as if it's free like it was a few years ago. We now pay for the services we receive. I reckon that we should receive a good standard of education because that's what we've paid for. If you pay for a service you expect a certain standard of delivery don't you?

[Mick , 21, Undergraduate in Philosophy, Cheswick University]

The above remarks clearly highlighted that students perceived themselves to be consumers who are entitled to a high quality service. Mick's comments were particularly poignant in illustrating the recent emergence of consumer consciousness among university students. He referred to the fact that education is now no longer free. (Though he perhaps did not mention that it has never been free if one bears in mind that taxpayers are required to pay for it). His distinction between the 'free' education of the past and the pay as you go education of the present clearly demonstrates how the introduction of tuition fees helped cement the idea of the customer relationship in the minds of many students.

The government's objective of consumerising Higher Education by introducing

tuition is having an impact upon the outlooks of Higher Education students. This standpoint was not solely confined to students who actually paid fees.

Interviewer: What standard of educational provision do you feel you should receive and why?

Kelvin: I believe that the government should provide good quality education. I'm willing to take it and well, particularly this year, I mean they're paying tuition fees now. So, you know, it's almost like a customer relationship that the university has with their students.

Interviewer: Did you pay tuition fees?

Kelvin: No, I didn't, I was in the last year that didn't have to

[Kelvin, 19 , Undergraduate in Maths , Cheswick University]

A sabbatical member of staff who dealt with welfare issues outlined a very significant indication of student consumer consciousness. She commented on how students approached her about problems and would assume the status of disgruntled consumers who were not happy with the quality of service that they were paying for when talking to her about problems with educational provision.

Carla: I mean, we've got situations like this with some of our students now, um, they're saying 'We can't have this lecture, but I paid for that lecture' out of their own pockets and the

university's not providing. So, it is a customer relationship they've got going now, a nice little company.

[Carla, 21 Sabbatical post holder, Cheswick University]

Carla's remarks clearly illustrated the impact of the consumerisation of education. Her position as a sabbatical post holder meant that she regularly experienced this kind of approach. During my interview with her she asked two sets of students to return later after they had asked her for help relating to consumer (course) based issues.

Interviewer: What standard of educational provision do you believe you should receive, and why?

Graham: I think the highest possible standard available, really, because, at the end of the day, we're paying a lot of money to be here, and if you don't, you know, achieve what you've come here for, then it's a waste of time, basically.

Interviewer: Right, paying money meaning?

Graham: Paying money, like, tuition fees.

[Graham, 23, Postgraduate in Business Studies, Cheswick University]

Graham's comments clearly illustrate how the introduction of tuition fees has not

only encouraged students to expect a good education. His outlook elucidates the attitudes that encourage many students who are critical of university educational provision to actively pursue their consumer rights.

Interviewer: Right. Em, what standard of educational provision do you believe you should receive - that could be teaching, equipment, all sorts of things - and why do you believe that you should receive it?

June : I believe that we should, em, receive the highest quality that they can provide, er, for how much Money they get a decent education, lecturers being on time, em course work back on time, as well, because, sometimes, it's unfair that they give us a month to do it, and then they don't mark it for three months, or something. So, I definitely say that as well. Erm, lecture notes, as I say, I think, because we pay tuition fees, they ought to give them to us, rather than us have to pay to print them out. Em, as well, it would be a lot handier if they gave them out at the beginning of the lecture, because then they're there, whereas sometimes, we don't have time to print them out and our money allowance on the printer has gone, or we just forget them, and stuff. So, that would be a lot better, as well.

[June , 21, Undergraduate in Business , Northwick University]

June's comments illustrated the fact that students constantly monitored the quality of service and provision. Many of the students were critical of the day-to-day running of courses. An attitude, which can translate into a willingness to seek individual redress for problems arising from educational provision.

My research suggests that the introduction of market forces and tuition fees into Higher Education caused a student consumer consciousness to develop. Interestingly, the data revealed that the introduction of fees encouraged the development of consumer consciousness, even among students who do not pay them. The combination of these two factors led many students to perceive the education they received as being like a financial transaction rather than a social right. This had profound implications for levels of student involvement in campaigns connected with tuition fees. The widely held student perception that taking a Higher Education course constituted some kind of commercial or business transaction effectively depoliticised its nature by transforming it into a customer/provider issue.

Students and brand consciousness

In recent years universities have striven to market themselves by branding the services they produce. Today, universities are subjected to globalised competition from other universities, private companies and virtual universities. In Britain and elsewhere, prospective Higher Education students are being subjected to marketing information that increasingly attempts to package educational institutions, not only in terms of the services they offer, but also in terms of a brand name with

associated positive connotations and social status. Indeed, this research demonstrates that students were very conscious of the social status of the universities that they attended. Today, students can access performance league tables, websites that offer online university performance reviews, as well as an array of good degree guidebooks. Students also attach differing levels of social status to the qualification gained from their respective universities. This became evident when students from Cheswick were asked what standard of education they believed they should receive.

Interviewer: What standard of educational provision do you feel you should receive and why?

Sandra: Um, the best, because I'm at one of the best universities in England. When I was in the sixth form I was advised that this university was one of the best. My sixth form tutors told me so. All students there know there is a pecking order.

Interviewer: What do you mean?

Sandra: Well some universities have higher status than others. They get better lectures, more sponsorship and that and your degree is worth more. You can get a better job. The top companies try to recruit from here. They say that a degree from here is known internationally.

[Sandra, 19, History undergraduate , Cheswick University]

Sandra's comments illustrate how many students associated the quality of their

education with the name of the institution that they attended. They were aware that qualifications gained from more prestigious universities not only enjoyed higher levels of social esteem, but also opened more doors for students who attend them.

Interviewer: What standard of educational provision do you feel you should receive and why?

Lucy: I'd expect a good standard.

Interviewer: Why is that?

Lucy: This university has got one of the best reputations in the country, the English faculty is very hard to get into, thousands of students apply for just a few places.

Interviewer: Why has it got the good reputation?

Lucy: Well, you can see it highly rated in the performance table thing. All the best lecturers are here so a degree from here is currency.

[Lucy, 21, Undergraduate in Foreign Languages, Cheswick University]

The data above reveals that not only did students perceive their education to be a product or a service, but that the service they received from their particular institution enjoyed a level of prestige within society at large. Just like in the marketplace, customers accord differing levels of quality and social status to certain products and services. The students were no exception to this. They attached

differing levels of social status to their university institutions rather like a consumer might to a product.

A foreign student at Cheswick, who had clearly undertaken an investigation concerning the relative worth of universities in the UK prior to undertaking his course also mentioned how he was conscious of the reputation of his own university in the wider order of things:

Interviewer: What standard of educational provision do you feel you should receive and why?

Vincent: Uh, I would like to have as good education as possible. And that's what my expectations were when I entered Cheswick. That's what the reputation is at Cheswick, so I would naturally expect to get that quality.

[Vincent, 22, Overseas Postgraduate in Business Studies, Cheswick University]

This student's comments clearly showed how the global reputation of universities impacted upon the minds of potential consumers. Many foreign students paid their own fees (and had done so for many years). Vincent's comments showed how shopping around for the best quality and most prestigious education was not only

confined to British students, but was an established aspect of the educational experiences of students in many countries.

On a number of occasions students from Northwick University recalled how they felt that the qualifications that they gained from their own university, had a lower status than those gained from elsewhere.

James Em, I'm not sure Northwick University is, you know, not the highest. I would expect a better education and better quality from places like Oxford and Cambridge.

[James, 21, Undergraduate in Economics, Northwick University]

On one occasion a student talked scornfully about the thought of qualifications from her own university (Northwick) being considered as having the same level of prestige as universities with a supposedly higher reputation.

Gemma: Laughs. Oh um, well according to standards I'd say, the same standards I'd get if I went to any other university, because a degree should be a degree whether you go to Oxford or Northwick.

[Gemma, 21, Undergraduate in Social Policy, Northwick University]

Though universities do not outwardly claim to offer superior educational provision to other universities, it is clear that students did not see it that way. The process of branding education only accentuated the perceived differences in the qualifications gained from so-called prestigious and less prestigious universities.

Though it is perhaps fair to say that it is nothing new to assert that certain universities enjoy a higher status than others, this is now becoming more pronounced. The quotations below however, illustrated that the global marketisation of education caused this to become an international phenomena. The efforts that are being made by universities to raise their profile in an international market place do seem to be having an impact (Woodhouse, 2001; Conn, 1995). The comments made by an overseas student attending a year course at Northwick, provided an indication of the global reputations of university institutions.

Paul: Yes, er I needed to attend Northwick University for one year as part of my degree course in France.

Interviewer: Is it compulsory? Did you have to come as part of your course?

Paul: Yes?

Interviewer: Are you happy?

Paul: The course is OK, but the university is not important.

Interviewer: What do you mean by important?

Paul: Well, my university in France has an agreement with this university so we can study for one year here. But it is not a good university I think.

Interviewer: How do you know this?

Paul: Because we have information in France about good universities and bad universities . This university does not have a good image, but I have to come here.

[Paul, 21, Overseas Undergraduate in Engineering, Northwick University]

Universities and complaints culture

The introduction of market forces, within education, has propelled the individualisation process. Data produced by this research has shown that it encouraged the emergence of consumer minded students who accorded differing levels of social prestige to the goods and services that they received. University students were acutely conscious of their position as active agents within Higher Education. The actions undertaken by students have had an impact upon the practices undertaken by the institutions they attend. Like members of wider society, students place their faith in abstract systems. They do not totally reject these systems, but sometimes sort to actively challenge the expert outlook that may legitimise aspects of them. Martin (1999), O'Neill (1997) and Utley (1999) also argue that in recent years there is growing evidence of consumer minded students increasingly undertaking litigation against university institutions when they

perceived that facilities are not up to scratch, lecturers are not grading in an objective manner or when they feel that they do not receive appropriate levels of support.

The Higher Education students that were interviewed during this research did, as Giddens (1984) argues, not passively accept organisational practices. The data gathered in this research revealed that they were aware that they played an active role in helping determine how their institution operates. None of the students that were interviewed had actually undertaken litigation against their respective universities. However, the interview data displayed that many of them would have taken proactive steps when they felt that their university was not providing a service that met their expectations. An interview with a student revealed that when a number of students became dissatisfied with their educational provision they began to consider undertaking strong forms of action. At one point, this involved contemplating the use of one of the strongest sanctions that a consumer can make, the withdrawal of payment for the service.

Hannah: Well I think, it's um, stemming from that, um, we had, there was this one incident when um, I was going room 102 I was supposed to give a group presentation and we didn't, we weren't um, equipped with the necessary, sort of, things that we needed for it. I went to my Head of Year and expressed my concern in the fact that we hadn't received, like, the um, necessary equipment for the presentation and the buildings had been double booked and he said, he apologised on

behalf of the faculty, but he said that there wasn't really much that he could do about that and that it was really something that had to be taken up by the university. Um, there were several meetings at the student union about doing something extra, something further to, sort of like, um, almost push the university into some sort of reaction, because they hadn't, apart from giving us an apology for not finishing the building, hadn't really, sort of, gotten back to us about what they'd been doing. So, there was actually a um, referendum about what was to be done, um, whether there ought to be increased media coverage? Or whether we actually wanted to actually, um, go on strike, or whether we wanted to withhold fees.

[Hannah , 21, Undergraduate in Media Studies, Northwick University]

Comments like these perhaps most clearly highlight the impact of tuition fees and consumerism within Higher Education. Action like this may be compared to consumers seeking to exercise their statutory rights. Though, paradoxically it actually constituted a potential example of collective action.

Although just a few students contacted in this research had taken action in connection with any problems they may have had, many individuals expressed the view that if appropriate, they would have been prepared to take consumer action to address the issue of unsatisfactory educational provision.

Interviewer: If you were to experience, in the future any substandard educational provision, what would you do to try to overcome the problem, if it obviously bothered you?

Graham : I would probably go to speak to the lecturer, or my seminar

tutor. Or if not, then I'd speak to the head, my year tutor. And if not then, what I'd do, more to see what options were available.

Interviewer : Would you feel comfortable about doing that?

Graham: Yeah, yeah, definitely.

Interviewer : Why is that, then?

Graham: Because if you don't understand something, then they're paid for it, basically that we get a good education. So, yes.

[Graham, 23, Postgraduate in Business Studies, Cheswick University]

Graham's comments clearly echoed the sentiment of a number of students who felt that their consumer status not only entitled them to pursue grievances, but to be proactive and unrelenting in the process of doing so.

Interviewer: Just to expand on this, this with the last thing, em, what would make you feel that you have this, em, legitimate right, if you like, or, em, position to make the grievance?

Marian: Em, I suppose there's two routes you can take you can either go through the student rep route; go and speak to- because, I mean, I was, sort of, the student rep, so I could take it to their course consultative committee meetings. Or, board meetings, things like that. Em, or we could go direct to the lecturers, to our Head of Year for stuff. I think, I mean, I'm the sort of person who would just speak out and say, 'Look, this isn't good enough; will you sort it out, please?' I'm quite lucky like that. But a lot, I think, a lot of people probably wouldn't; they'd probably sit and whinge about it. But eventually, some of them do something about it and go to the lecturer and say, look, this isn't good

enough.

Interviewer: You say you would tell them that it is not good enough, what gives you the desire to say that, do you think?

Marian: Students are customers. We pay money for our courses.

[Marian, 20, Undergraduate in English , Cheswick University focus group]

Marian's comments displayed an assertive attitude towards achieving consumer rights. Her sentiments clearly echoed the comments made by Martin (1999) who vividly described the emergence of assertive consumer minded students.

Interviewer: Could I ask you, sort of, like, as a thing that you might do in a situation, as it were, if you experienced, or were to experience substandard, or unsatisfactory educational provision of some sort, what would you do to overcome the problem?

Deng: The first thing I'd do would be complain, either to the person providing the service, or to go to the Head of Department. And, after that, I don't know. I've got a lot of friends who work for the student newspaper, and that seems a very good channel of complaint to say you've got enough facts. That'll usually stir up and gets quite a lot of things done.

[Deng, 22 Undergraduate in Computer Science, Cheswick University focus group]

The quotations above show that students would have, if required, actively taken steps to complain about unsatisfactory educational provision. Deng's comments highlight the new sense of empowerment that many student consumers believed they had.

Beck (1992) and Giddens (1991) maintain that in contemporary society, individuals increasingly strive to deal with the problems they face on an individual basis. The data revealed by my research also showed that most students took individual rather than collective action to address problems with their educational provision.

Interviewer: Would you pursue a grievance alone or with other people?

Raj: Probably alone. I mean if it was a big problem that a lot of us felt we needed to act together then I'm sure students from the course concerned would do so. More than likely though, I would want try to sort out the problem myself. If it's something that affects you then you can see someone about it. If it got really bad and nothing was being done about it I might go and see my course representative.

[Raj , 22, Undergraduate in Foreign Languages , Northwick University]

Raj's comments echoed the sentiments of many students contacted in this research.

Rarely, if ever, did they mention that they would have joined others to bring about a collective resolution to their problems.

When students talked about confronting problems on their own, they frequently referred to how they were encouraged to do so by the complaints/consultation systems put in place by university faculties.

Interviewer: Would you pursue a grievance alone or with other people?

Gemma: I think I would probably try to take care of it on my own. We are encouraged to do so if we get any problems.

Interviewer: How is that exactly?

Gemma: Well, we know that we are able to see the people who run the courses with our problems. Also, the welfare officers in the university student union can help us with problems that we might have with course delivery.

[Gemma, 21, Undergraduate in Social Policy, Northwick University]

Gemma's remarks once again revealed that students were conscious of how to use faculty complaints procedures. Her comments resonated with those made by the student welfare officer (in the previous chapter) who pointed out that many students would visit her and expect her to use her personal influence to address their grievances.

Interviewer: Would you pursue a grievance alone or with other people?

Peter: If I had a problem I would try to sort it out myself. I don't think I would get time to organise a protest or anything with any of my friends or fellow students. I would try to get to see someone who had some influence over the course and who might get to help with the problem. Otherwise, I suppose I would just have to do battle with the problem and get on with it. If I certainly would fill in one of those course satisfaction questionnaires and hopefully something might be done.

[Peter, 23, Undergraduate in Social Work, Northwick University focus group]

Comments made by Peter, once again illustrate the individualised routes that students followed when pursuing problems related to their educational provision. He clearly pointed to the fact that it would have been useful to aim his concerns at someone with influence rather than attempting to engineer a collective response to the problem. His comments also graphically illustrate the profile that institutionalised complaints procedures have on university campuses. Peter was not alone in mentioning this channel of redress. Many of the students commented about completing a course satisfaction questionnaire, which was the most frequently referred to form of individualised consumer activism.

The quotations above show how the process of marketisation has precipitated the emergence of individualised consumer students who would singularly seek to

address any problems with the goods and services they receive. These standpoints accord with Peysner (2002) and Beck's (1992) view that individualised consumer action reflects declining collective welfare bargaining arrangements. They also reflect Brown's (2002) assertion that individualised actions mitigate against the achievement of social justice for all. Almost none of the students mentioned the problems they faced as being a common issue, but rather an individual problem. The comments below reflect the viewpoint that many customer minded students now feel that they have a moral right to pursue a grievance.

Interviewer: What do you think would make feel that you have the legitimate desire to pursue the grievance?

Haley: When a student comes to university and thinks it's right to say that they should expect a certain standard of service. The qualifications we take out of here are supposed to command respect. Universities supposedly gained their reputations as centres of excellence. Also you could say that because we have to pay for our education it's fair to assume that we should receive a decent standard of lecturing and so on and we should be able to complain about it if we don't get it.

[Haley, 25 , Maths Undergraduate , Cheswick University focus group]

Haley's comments, echoed the consumer sentiments expressed by many students. On one hand, she represented the sentiments of many students who simply relied on the professional integrity of institutions to provide a good standard of education.

Her comments however, made it clear that they should be maintained by each university in accordance with what customers expect.

The Students' Union

Almost all of the students who were interviewed mentioned that they would have undertaken individual complaints if any significant aspect of their educational experience did not satisfy them. They rarely made reference to undertaking collective action in connection with grievances. This widely held individualised consumer outlook was perhaps reflected by the interviewee's comments concerning the role of the Student's Union. The vast majority referred to it in terms of being an organisation that provides services or that represents individual students, rather than being one that has a broader political or campaigning role connected with student welfare and wider political issues.

Interviewer: What do you see as the role of the students' Union?

Alan: It's to stand up for student voices as well, not to let an institution bully the individual, you know, so that's what I believe they're for, anyway

[Alan ,20 , Undergraduate in Economics , Northwick University]

Interviewer: What do you see as the role of the students' Union?

Jake: The um, I suppose any large organisation ought to have it's own union of some sort, um, just to make sure that the views of it's members are put across, to the higher people, in this case it's the um, governors and the university. And there needs to be a balance between what the students want and what the governors think the students want. So, in my view, the union is to make sure that every view is represented.

[Jake, 20, Undergraduate in Law, Northwick University]

In accordance with their consumer outlook, students were keen to outline their belief that the union should be involved in providing a variety of services for students.

Interviewer: What do you see as the role of the students' Union?

Rachel: I feel that is what the students' union should cater not only for um, their health, but money, of course, but also maybe looking out for things like student entertainment time their leisure time, career wise, travel wise, looking for a job.

[Rachel, 22 , Undergraduate in Foreign Languages, University of Northwick]

A foreign student expressed a similar standpoint.

Interviewer: What role do you see as the students union as having?

Paul: Um, to provide facilities and help in issues which are not academic, for more leisurely purposes and to help in

general issues uh, such as finding accommodation and so on. Although that's partially a university's duty, but you could say being there for non-academic purposes I think that's what it's good for.

[Paul, 21 Undergraduate in Engineering, Northwick University]

Interviewer: What do you see as the role of the students' Union?

Rose: The NUS? I don't know that much about the um, the actual body. I do know that we get the, you know, the N.US. card and that is supposed to be almost like a nation-wide body for students looking out for students. I think they're more interested in the, sort of, educational side of things, whereas the student union might be more, sort of like, diverse and looking out for all aspects of student life. Um, they're sort of, campaigning against the tuition fees, I think, that's the most important issue at the moment and um, I think it is a very important one. Um, their role is, I think, basically to keep students informed as to um, what's going on with regards to the government um, all around the U.K. what the um, universities are saying on it and what the students are actually saying on it as well.

[Rose, 21, Postgraduate in Computer Sciences, Northwick University]

The comments not only demonstrated a lack of clarity concerning the role of the students union, but also a perception of the separate roles of the local and national organisation. Most of the students, who were interviewed, in fact professed to be ignorant of the national campaigning role of the NUS.

Interviewer: What do you see as the role of the students' Union?

James: The role is to look out for the students well-being and welfare and to assist with any problems that arise, because, socially and financially, um, fight for you and they provide services for you and obviously provide, um, escapism entertainment, which one can relax to.

Interviewer: What about the national organisation ?

James: Um, I don't know much about the national, the whole thing about it. I know it's pretty massive and it's a big business,

[James, 21, Undergraduate in Economics, Northwick University]

Interestingly, data reveals that most students perceived the students' Union to offer legal services that may help them deal with their individual problems. Few students saw it as a political organisation. Peysner's (2002) and Brown's (2002) viewpoints are reflected by the findings of this research. Just a few students mentioned its campaigns to outlaw tuition fees. Significantly, some students perceived the student union to be a business. They believed it to be an organisation that profits from them and, as such, should provide students with services. The widely held perception that the *raison d'etre* of the student union was to provide services and to help individuals deal with their personal problems perhaps militated against it becoming a focus for mass organised campaigns in connection with tuition fees. The fact that some students also saw it as a business may further undermine its ability to become a focus for these campaigns.

Individualisation, Individuation or Market Individualism?

Bauman (2001) argues that individualisation not only involves individual consumers seeking to secure the best services for themselves, it also encourages self-interested individuals to care little about the welfare of others. Although Beck and Giddens do not concur with this outlook Kingdom (1992) argues that a number of governmental policies and ideological debates contributed towards the development of this phenomenon. These include the promotion of ideas such as free market individualism, share ownership, self-reliance and meritocracy. Since the 1970s, governments have gradually scaled down universal welfare benefits, privatised industries and encouraged individuals to buy shares and pursue individualised courses of self-betterment.

The data revealed by the interviews so far shows clear evidence of an individualised active, consumer conscious outlook, which supports Beck's (1992) view of individualisation. The responses to the question 'who should pay for the living expenses and tuition costs, when a person undertakes a university education, and why?' revealed some interesting attitudes. The interview data actively challenges Bauman's contention that the individualisation process has produced solely self-interested individuals. It revealed that while it was clear that students perceived education in terms of a provider/customer relationship, they felt that

ideally, educational tuition fees should not have to be paid by students, or customers, but should be paid for them by the state, a citizenship right.

Rose: Um, well I think education, you know, to any level should be a right. Um, and that's a right for all and I don't think people who can't afford education should be excluded from having a Higher Education, because they can't afford it.

[Rose, 21, Postgraduate in Computer Sciences, Northwick University]

Rose's comments clearly illustrate the sentiments held by many students that individuals should not be excluded from undertaking a Higher Education course, purely because they are less able to pay. No students who participated in this research expressed the viewpoint that students who were unable to afford to undertake a Higher Education course should do something else.

A theme that was returned to time and time again by the students who participated in this research was that the state should pay tuition fees because the imposition of tuition fees would be exclusionary, to those from lower socio-economic backgrounds and would prevent them from undertaking a university education.

Cathy: To some people a thousand pounds is a drop in the ocean and for some people a thousand pounds is like climbing a mountain, do you know what I mean? So, it just makes it mean that people who are less well off show their disadvantage in obtaining an education

[Cathy, 24, Undergraduate in History Cheswick University]

Aron: Ah! A touchy one isn't it? Um, I believe for starters that tuition fees should be paid by the government, your L.E.A. I don't think it's right to say that someone has to pay for their own tuition, education for all and obviously, if you've got to pay for yourself it's always going to be, it's always going to rule people out.

[Aron, 21, NUS sabbatical post holder, Cheswick University]

Most of the students mentioned that the state could have used revenue gained from taxation to pay for the provision of tuition fees. This standpoint was outlined in response to the question. Where would the money come from to pay for tuition fees?

Rose: Um, well that's perhaps quite tricky, but um, I mean in theory it should come from, you know, the taxpayer,

[Rose, 21, Postgraduate in Computer Sciences, Northwick University]

Kelvin: Everyone pays taxes in this country. Everybody should have the right to a Higher Education they want to. Education should not be about ability to pay. It's about intelligence ability. Those who can do it should be able to do it. I suppose you could say it's like healthcare. We all

know we have to pay taxes for that. It should be a matter of right not privilege.

[Kelvin, 19, Undergraduate in Maths, Cheswick University]

Kelvin's comments clearly illustrate the willingness displayed by many students contacted in this research to help others undertake a university education as a matter of a social right.

Peter: Um, taxes um, sort of indirectly um, I, taxes are the main way of doing it certainly, um, but I feel that's fair as everyone is entitled and can get to university if they, you know, put their mind to it and once we've been at university and um, had the free education as soon as we start working we'll pay for the next generation to go to university and it goes on like that.

[Peter, 23 Undergraduate in Social Work, Northwick University focus group]

The comments made by Peter illustrate the strong commitment that many students displayed towards collective provision for education. Perhaps the sentiment is not surprising if one bears in mind that right up until the age of 18 most students will receive their education as a matter of right. Many felt that this right should continue beyond compulsory and Further Education. They were also conscious of the fact that the community as a whole shoulders the bill for it and were willing to pay taxes

in order to ensure that other individuals can also benefit from a Higher Education course.

Cathy: The LEA should pay fees. Tuition fees discriminate. What's for sure is that some poorer members of society won't be able to go to university because of these fees. It's not fair. That's why I am against them. Taxes should be used to pay for education, not fees. I'm the first person in my family who has been to university. My parents couldn't afford to go. They paid taxes all their lives and shell out money to help me go now. I think it's fair to pay taxes to help future generations of students study and not have to think about whether they can afford it or not.

[Cathy, 24 , Undergraduate in History, Cheswick University]

Research has so far revealed that many students were confident and prepared to be proactive in pursuit of their consumer rights. The comments made by Cathy echoed the sentiment of some students who participated in this research. They outwardly thought that the imposition of tuition fees was discriminatory, unfair, exclusive and generally unjust. Their sentiments, coupled with their commitment to taxation in order to pay for education, stood in stark contrast to the individualistic outlook of the consumer student.

The data revealed in interviews, so far, shows that students thought very much like

individualised consumers. Few were involved in campaigns connected with tuition fees. They were, however, willing to undertake individualised action in connection with issues that affected them personally. The data in the previous chapter demonstrates that they clearly expected to have to make financial provision for themselves throughout their lives. This individualised outlook does not necessarily mean, as Bauman (2001) asserts, that they have adopted a complete 'look after yourself' standpoint, but rather they have developed a pragmatic individualised assessment of the current situation. The students expressed the view that society at large (including themselves at sometime in the future) should be responsible for providing university tuition fees and educational opportunities for all students. While students may, in the daily course of their lives, think or behave like self-interested consumers, their attitudes reveal that they would have preferred not be customers at all, but recipients of a free statutorily provided education service.

While the process of consumerisation within education may have compelled students to pragmatically behave in an individualised way, the data reveals that it does not seem to have completely undermined collectivist attitudes towards Higher Education and the view that access to education should be universally available, without charge, to those intellectually able to undertake it. Neither does the consumerisation of education seem to have undermined their conceptions of both the rights and obligations that accompany this belief.

Conclusion

Giddens' (1984) concept of the duality of structure can be used to understand how the consumerisation of the education system contributes towards the individualisation of student community. It can also offer insight into how it may mitigate against mass student involvement in campaigns connected with tuition fees. The data above illustrates how individuals were not simply shaped by the organisations and systems that they depended upon, but rather they felt that they could play an active part in shaping them.

The students who participated in this study showed an awareness of their status as individual consumers and their associated rights and expectations. They were dependent on abstract systems, but were likely to view them critically. Like consumers elsewhere in the economy, they typically undertook individualised courses of action when they perceived that the quality of the service they receive did not meet their expectations. It is notable to recall that students rarely seemed inclined to undertake collective action in connection with consumer-based issues, such as unsatisfactory educational provision. Significantly, the data revealed that students rarely saw the primary role of the students' union as being a campaigning organisation, but rather perceived it as an organisation that may provide services or look after individual student grievances. The data supports Beck and Giddens' standpoint in that the consumerisation of education and the two-way interaction between students and Higher Education institutions, form part of a duality of

structure whose interactions effectively reflect and propel the individualisation process.

My analysis also provides insight into understanding notable levels of consumer activism and contrasting low levels of activism in mass organised political campaigns. As Beck and Giddens suggest, the individualisation process has not necessarily created a society populated by self-interested individuals, but a society of rational, pragmatic actors who actively construct their own biographies. Consumerisation and the introduction of tuition fees of education has not completely eroded students commitments to collective provision for tuition fees, but have individualised student responses to the problems they face. While it has on one hand induced active individualised consumerism, on the other hand, it has also, in part, militated against mass student involvement in campaigns against tuition fees. Specific political factors that also contribute towards low levels of active student participation in these campaigns will be discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 9

Powerlessness and Isolation

Introduction

The findings of this research have so far examined some of the reasons why students do not involve themselves in campaigns connected with tuition fees. This research has also discovered that although students were not often active in campaigns concerning these issues, they displayed a proactive disposition towards undertaking individualised courses of action, if the educational provision (quality of teaching, university facilities, support from academic staff) did not meet their expectations. They focused their concerns on practical issues rather than considerations of principle. This research has attempted to explore how students perceive student hardship, tuition fees and their associated risks and why so many choose not to be active in campaigns connected with these issues. This chapter will attempt to explore the usefulness of the work of Beck and Giddens in understanding the specific political reasons why many young students did not participate in campaigns associated with fees.

In recent years the landscape of politics has significantly changed. In contemporary society, political ideologies are less able to motivate mass organised political

movements. People are losing confidence in the political parties and processes that once commanded the allegiance of a significant number of voters and activists. According to Beck (1992) and Giddens (1991, 1994), the nature and focus of political activity is changing. A number of social and political developments have encouraged greater levels of participation in individualised forms of politics focused around sub-politics and life politics, rather than emancipatory political issues, like campaigns against tuition fees in Higher Education. This chapter explores student levels of interest in political issues, their sense of political efficacy and political power. It will explore how individualisation affects the political outlook of ordinary students and its impact upon their willingness to involve themselves in organised campaigns opposing tuition fees.

Students and political interest

A body of literature asserts that young people are generally disinterested in politics (The Electoral Commission, 2003; Nestle, 2002; IPPR 2001; Park 1996; The British Youth Council 1995; Furnham and Gunter 1989). Beck and Giddens argue, however, that a new political culture is emerging. It could be argued that this new will culture inevitably encourage young people to become involved in some form of political activity. The new forms of politics are supposed to empower young and old people alike. The interview data produced in this study corresponds with the contention that young people are largely disinterested in political issues and show little interest undertaking political action of any form. The interview data below

revealed like the wider youth population, students are disinterested in politics. This attitude was illustrated in a focus group conversation.

Interviewer: Why have you not been involved in any political campaigns?

Michelle: Erm, there are things really come to mind, because I'm really responding to that. Er, generally, I don't really respond to things, I just let it go past and let other people do it.

Interviewer: Have you been involved in any consumer boycotts or anything?

Michelle: No

Interviewer: Why is it that you might not be involved in political campaigns or actions?

Michelle: Because I don't in my circumstances, I don't know all the facts. I don't know all the right reasons; I don't know all the wrong reasons. I don't have enough information to fully know that I'm making the right reason, making that opinion. That's why I don't usually have a right or wrong opinion, because I don't know enough information.

[Michelle,20, Undergraduate in Business, Northwick University focus group]

Michelle's comments mirrored those made by many students. Almost all of the students contacted in this research displayed a lack of interest towards political issues. A number pointed to their ignorance of political issues and processes to

explain their non-involvement in political campaigns of any sort. This outlook seemed responsible for a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy: I am not interested in politics, therefore I don't know anything about issues, therefore I can't do anything about it, so why should I be interested was a commonly held standpoint amongst students who participated in this research.

Rex: I don't really think there's any, sort of, issues that are really setting me on fire at the moment.

Interviewer: Okay. Is there any particular reason why you think that there are not any issues that might motivate you to do anything about them?

Rex: Em, I just, er, don't think that anything is going on at the moment. You know, there's nothing around that I could really identify with.

[Rex, 19 Undergraduate in Engineering Northwick University focus group]

Students who participated in this research also often expressed Rex's outlook. His comments referred to the fact that he felt that there was nothing that he could identify with. This was a recurring theme that came up during interviews. Giddens (1994) and Beck (1992) contend that class and ideological based politics are less influential in contemporary society. Rex's comments perhaps illustrate how ideological frameworks inform the political outlooks of few young people in

society.

Scot: Yeah, I agree with Rich. If it's something that's not gonna directly influence me to or someone close to me, then, I don't really see why I should get involved, because I don't really have that much passion about it. Er, so, I wouldn't have all the, the knowledge and information to do anything properly.

[Scot, 23, Undergraduate in Law, Northwick University]

Scot's sentiments once again illustrate the widely held view among students who participated in this research, that they would not be interested in participating in political campaigns that did not address political issues they felt directly affected them. Once again, these comments perhaps illustrate how the decreasing influence of class and ideological based politics contributes to the individualisation of society. Political ideologies and class solidarities once informed people (including many students) and enabled them to develop a political stance in relation to issues. Scot's unwillingness to become involved in political campaigns connected to issues that did not directly affect him illustrated how many young people saw political issues from an individualised perspective.

The data above also tends to concur with available research findings that contend that young people are largely disinterested in politics. Interview data seems to demonstrate that, at this point in time, the new political culture identified by Beck

and Giddens seems to have had little impact upon students who participated in this study. The comments above symbolise students' non-committal attitudes towards politics. They typically felt that political issues today were of little direct concern to them. They were rarely motivated to find out more in-depth information concerning political matters. It seems that self-interest was the driving issue that motivated them. Certainly, it could be argued that many young people have a direct interest in opposing tuition fees. The data revealed in chapter seven shows that self-interest often accounts for why young people choose not to become involved in these campaigns. The data discussed later on in this chapter will address some of the specific political reasons why young people decide not to become involved.

Distrust powerlessness and isolation

The findings of this research have considered the ability of established political parties and processes to encourage significant levels of political activism. Beck and Giddens contend that many people are losing faith in established political processes. Research has revealed that many members of the public feel a significant level of distrust and disaffection towards established political processes and organisations. Findings, revealed by Bromley, Curtice and Seyd (2004) show that levels of trust towards government have steadily declined and that this trend has become more pronounced since 1990. Surveys have also revealed that turnout levels at general elections in the United Kingdom have generally declined from almost 84 percent in 1950 to just above 50 percent in 2001 (The Children and

Young People's Unit, 2002:14). Figures produced by Mori show that 39 percent of 18 to 24-year-olds voted in the last election, indicating a further decline of approximately 6 percentage points from the previous election (The Children and Young People's Unit, 2002:14). High levels of distrust towards the established political parties and processes seem to be contributing towards the fragmentation of political affiliations and the wider individualisation process, by undermining already low levels of participation in party political processes. Their contention that this is contributing towards the individualisation of society is perhaps correct. However, Giddens (1994) and Beck's assertion (1992, 2002) that growing detachment from established political processes does not disempower people, but is paralleled by the development of a new political culture, which offers the opportunity for individuals to become empowered and can inspire them to become active within the new sphere of life or sub-politics politics, needs to be treated with caution as far as students are concerned. Though both Beck and Giddens maintain that individuals or small groups undertake political activity within this new political arena, evidence from the study shows that sub-politics or life politics has so far inspired only a limited amount of people to become politically active. Conversely, it could be argued that detachment from established political activities and organisations does not inspire significant levels of involvement in alternative forms of political activity, but rather a sense of powerlessness emerges which discourages people from any political activity because they feel they lack the capacity to change anything. This outlook concurs with the findings of the Student Living Report

(Unite/Mori, 2004) that found that few students believe that politicians will listen to them.

When students were asked about why their reasons for not participating in political campaigns (other than those linked to tuition fees), many felt that they had little power to influence things.

Interviewer: Why have you not been involved in any political campaigns ?

Ellie: Em, even though I feel quite strongly about the fire-fighters, I think- cos, I think, they are bringing in a, you know, new legislation, so they can't strike, I don't think it's, em, fun to play with people's lives. They can, they can campaign for higher wages, but I don't think they should put people's lives at risk. Even though I feel that, feel that, I wouldn't get really involved in the end. And I wouldn't campaign for it. And I don't believe in the war against Iraq, either. I think there should be other ways to do that, through the UN and stuff, but I wouldn't camp-campaign for it.

Interviewer: Can I just ask for the record, obviously, why is that?

Ellie: Erm, cos I don't think that I could make that much difference.

[Ellie, 20, Undergraduate in Business, Northwick University focus group]

Here the data suggests that the students felt that they had little ability to affect the

political issues that they were concerned about. This point of view was perhaps demonstrated by the fact that just two of the students contacted during this research had involved themselves in political campaigns other than those connected to tuition fees.

Interviewer: Why have you not become involved in any political campaigns ?

Becky: They don't listen to us at all. I mean they do what they want. You vote them in to power and you can't do anything about it until the next election they pretend to listen, but they don't. Anyway all the parties are all the same.

[Becky ,21, Undergraduate in Media Studies, Northwick University]

Becky's' comments were telling. Not only did they reaffirm the sense of powerlessness expressed by Ellie. Her comments illustrated how she felt there was no alternative and how it developed a feeling of helplessness.

Interviewer: Why haven't you got involved in any political campaigns ?

Raj: I reckon that politicians in power do what business wants first and if we're lucky they might consider our point of view. There's no point in campaigning. It's just a fluke if we have any influence

[Raj, 22, Foreign Undergraduate in Languages, Northwick University]

Remarks like these certainly emphasised the sense of powerlessness that many of the students felt. Few believed that they could make a difference. Raj's reference to the ability of people to influence politicians and change things as 'a fluke' graphically illustrated this outlook. Many of the students displayed little hope that any party would bring about significant change to the status quo. It is also interesting to note that just two students mentioned (other than those who were involved in campaigns opposing tuition fees) that they had undertaken any form of political work, consumer boycott or voluntary or charitable work in recent years.

Student collective powerlessness

During the late 1960s and early 1970s, which is now widely regarded as being a 'heyday' of student involvement in politics, many student activists certainly did not have faith in politicians and established political organisations. Thousands of students advocated developing new forms of society and actively believed that they had a collective ability to bring about social change. Today, however, the data revealed that students who took part in the research did not feel that they had the collective ability to achieve this. Just six of the students who were interviewed involved themselves in campaigns against tuition fees. The students who participated in this research largely displayed an outlook of collective powerlessness. In spite of their numbers they felt that they had little ability to influence political events and campaign effectively in pursuit of their interests. This outlook corresponds with that held by many young people in wider society. A study

undertaken by the British Youth Council concluded that many young people feel that politicians do not represent them:

Politicians and parties are indifferent, uninterested and complacent, as they do not seem to give consideration to the extremely difficult position young people are facing or contemplate how young people will be affected by the proposals and legislation they produce (The British Youth Council, 1995).

This viewpoint of collective powerlessness was reflected in the responses that the students gave to the question, 'How effectively do you think that students can influence politicians?'

Interviewer: How effectively do you think that students' can influence politicians?

Sam : Erm, not very. Erm, I, the thing about students at the present moment is, is that there's a lot of them, but they're not very powerful. And, I don't think politicians really listen to them that much. And I don't think they're taken that seriously because there's an image of students always going out, being drunk, you know, doing like, you know, em, rag pranks, and all that sort of stuff, and I think there is a minority of those sort of people, but they're all the ones always shown in the papers, rather than the actual hard-working students. They are shown are out partying, rather than working, you know, all that sort of stuff. So, I think the actual image of students is not reflected fairly at all, by the media or the government.

[Sam, 22, Postgraduate in Management Studies, Northwick University]

Sam's comments were most illuminating. He was not alone in expressing the viewpoint that students are perceived to be a ramshackle group of people who are not able to organise to defend their interests. This perception inevitably had an impact upon the students' sense of political efficacy. Not only did some students feel that politicians did not take them seriously, but Sam's comments revealed that as a student, he felt a sense of isolation from the wider community. This theme will be returned to later in this chapter.

Interviewer: How effectively do you think that students' can influence politicians?

Geraldine: I would say that on our own, not very effectively. If it's just students marching around London, if it's just students writing letters or going to Parliament to lobby MPs not very effectively, because we haven't got money, we haven't power, we're just sort of, in many ways I think they're just so sure of expectations, students will demonstrate and stuff, that's what they do and they feel that's their role. So us sort of, standing there wielding the placard is probably not terribly effective. If we had the university support, if we singing from the same hymn sheet, for example, on top-up fees, then I think that would greater effect. But just students, unfortunately no, I don't think we can change government policy on things.

[Geraldine, 21, NUS Sabbatical post holder, Cheswick University]

These comments reflected the views of many students contacted during this research. Many referred to the idea of student protest as merely being a symbolic activity, something that they are expected to do. They felt that it is an aspect of everyday political life which achieves very little. These comments also illustrate how many students believed that their efforts to change things would fall on deaf ears and that politicians would not feel compelled to respond to their requests. This viewpoint was reiterated by Edward, a social sciences student.

Interviewer: How effectively do you think that students can influence politicians?

Edward: Um, unless they're doing things very original and very radical um, I don't think they're going to have much influence on politicians, um, because students aren't a particularly powerful group and also they're not, you know, they're kind of they used to be feared by politicians for being so radical, um, and now they're not. Now they're, students seem to be quite passive these days, I mean, one example, like I've not really taken part in any main protests or campaigns. Um, so, really no, I don't think politicians will, will take much notice of students, due to the fact that, you know, the vital resistance in student life is dissipated, I don't think it'll change.

Interviewer: So like, why do you think that students can't hit them?

Edward: Why? Because I don't think we do anything out of the ordinary, like to get attention. Because all you do is, like you go to London, march around a bit and come home and it causes a bit of disturbance, but it doesn't actually stop

anything, does it? I mean everything just carries on as normal.

[Edward, 21, Undergraduate in Sociology, Cheswick University]

Edward's comments once again clearly expressed the sentiments held by many students that protesting against tuition fees amounted to a symbolic gesture rather than something substantive. This outlook outlined their low sense of political efficacy. His comments also illustrate that many of the students believed that they simply did not have the power to influence things. He felt that many were passive and that the sense of political confidence that the student community may have had in the past has 'dissipated'. Foreign students reiterated this standpoint.

Paul: I don't know, I think it's very difficult for students to influence politicians.

Interviewer: Why do you think that? That's very clear, but why do you think that?

Paul: Why? Um, because the politicians have the power, are powerful and the students are not powerful. The politicians are powerful, but the students are not.

[Paul, 21 Undergraduate in Engineering Northwick University]

Paul's comments are quite telling if one bears in mind the strong tradition of student activism in France. It may not be proper to surmise that French students are more able to actively campaign in pursuit of political interests. It is perhaps interesting to note, however, that his assessment (as a foreign student) of the British student body as being politically powerless concurred with the majority of people who participated in this research.

Like some sections of wider society, students place little faith in politicians to act in their best interests. The interview shows that they believed that politicians would not consider student standpoints when considering policies that may impact upon them. The above quotations clearly illustrate that they felt powerless. They felt unable to play a part in shaping the governmental decrees that may impact upon them as a body of people. Established research seems to indicate that students show little faith in established political processes and have little belief that government will recognise their needs and cater for their interests. The Student Living Report (Unite/Mori, 2001) revealed that just 30 percent of students voted in the 1994 general election compared with the average of 72 percent of the general public. A survey reported by the Times Higher Educational Supplement showed that only a small minority of students believed that any political party would implement the tax changes needed to pay for the NUS policies on Higher Education funding (Thompson, 1996:17). Established political organisations and processes seemed to inspire little confidence amongst students. In this context it is perhaps not

surprising that many of them adopted an outlook of collective powerlessness and pursued individualised, rather than collective, solutions to the problems that they face. This outlook may also explain why many of them did not become involved in campaigns connected with tuition fees.

Political efficacy and the future

The research data reveals that students appeared to have a low level of political efficacy. They had little belief in their ability to collectively understand, organise and campaign effectively in pursuit of issues that impacted upon them as a whole. The interviews undertaken with the students showed that they believed that they have little ability to influence politicians. When asked specifically about the issue of tuition fees, most students were resigned to the fact that tuition fees would remain. The data below reveals that they not only felt they have little ability to influence politicians, they also felt that this was unlikely to change in the future.

Interviewer: Do you feel that politicians will do anything about tuition fees?

Jake: Em, I don't really feel that they will, because they want more money for spending on, on whatever other things they want to, to do it, to do with it. So, I think that while they can, and while people will pay, I think they're not really going to change it.

[Jake, 20, Undergraduate in Law, Northwick University]

Jake's comments reflected a sense of resignation towards the imposition of tuition at the fees. Several students contacted in this research referred to how they felt that the student community had largely resigned itself to the reality of paying tuition fees and the fact that they did so undermined any attempt to effectively oppose them.

Students commented that they felt that the government was unlikely reverse its stance and scrap fees, because to do so would be consistent with its interests or policy framework. Any revocation would amount to an admission they were wrong to implement fees in the first place. This would harm its public image.

Interviewer: Do you feel that politicians will do anything about tuition fees?

Graham: What get rid of them?

Interviewer: Could be.

Graham: They'll never be got rid of. I mean they might go up but they'll never, they'll never go back down.

Interviewer: Can I just ask, sorry, why? Why do you think that is the case, then, they'll never be got rid of?

Graham: Well, because as I said earlier if they say, well, you know, 'okay it's free again' is, you know, it's like saying 'well, we

were wrong' and that's like shooting yourself in the foot.

[Graham, 23, Postgraduate in Business Studies, Cheswick University]

Few students contacted in this research appeared to have an active interest in political processes. However, many of them were to some extent informed about the realities of the political processes that affect them. Graham's comments illustrated a consciousness of the wider political implications of any attempt by the current government to revoke tuition fees. Many felt that the government had a direct political (as well as economic) interest in making sure that the policy remained in place.

Interviewer: Do you feel that politicians will do anything about tuition fees?

Lucy: I think they would be highly reluctant to have an about turn and admit that they were wrong and change because there's some pressure from students. I think that now they've made their decision they're not going to back down and suddenly say, yes we'll give them some money, after all. I would be highly surprised they did.

Interviewer: Why do you think they'd be so reluctant?

Lucy: Well, because of the effect on the media. The media would be very pleased to have that sort of news would say that the government was being weak and the Conservatives would jump on the band wagon, especially with the elections approaching. And they would have to bear that in mind, that any decisions that they've been making recently they

don't want to be seen to be backing down or making U-turns , because of how the newspapers would grab it.

[Lucy, 21, Undergraduate in Foreign Languages, Cheswick University]

Lucy's comments are once again very revealing. Her comments echoed the sentiments of several students who participated in this research. Her comments are useful in developing an understanding of the wider issues that students consider when they decide not to participate in campaigns opposing tuition fees.

The sentiments illustrated by the students who participated in this research are particularly interesting. The comments above highlighted the low sense of political efficacy held by students. A student activist contended that it was the duty of students to expose that the government are wrong to impose tuition fees. Political debate is about rights and wrongs and the necessity of defending a point of view. The students' comments graphically illustrate that some of them felt that it was pointless to campaign because one side may have to admit defeat. This abstentionalist outlook may illustrate why, for many students, the issue of campaigns related to tuition fees may not have constituted a topic for debate, let alone a focus for political activity.

Several students mentioned that campaigns related to tuition fees were likely to be unsuccessful because university hierarchies approved of them.

Interviewer: Do you feel that politicians will do anything about tuition fees?

Geraldine: No I don't feel they will do anything about tuition fees, because the problem that we've got is that the Vice-Chancellors want to have tuition fees, want to have top-up fees, they know that to remain a competitive university they have got to run with that.

[Geraldine, 21, NUS Sabbatical post holder, Cheswick University]

Geraldine's standpoint was reflected by the comments of several students who participated in this research. University vice-chancellors argued that tuition fees and the proposed top up fees were necessary for universities to maintain teaching standards and the quality of educational provision. Some students felt that they would not only have had to battle against politicians in Whitehall, but against university hierarchies who had an interest in compelling students to pay for their courses.

Other students made the point that politicians were not under any large-scale political pressure to do anything about tuition fees

Interviewer: Do you feel that politicians will do anything about tuition

fees?

Edward: Um, Well, I mean, I think, I don't think they will now, because I mean, the storm has blown over to some extent since when they were enforced a couple of years ago, um, the storm has blown over and now I mean, funding students has always been a problem, but now they have this law coming into force in order just to finance them um, and now the storm has blown over and there's not as many protests I think they'll keep it. Opposition parties will keep fees anyway. Um, and overall there's no point in protesting. They just brush it under the carpet and pretend we never complained about it. I don't think so.

Interviewer: So you don't think opposition parties, if they got in, would change it necessarily either?

Edward: No I don't.

[Edward, 21, Undergraduate in Sociology, Cheswick University]

It could be argued that the 'defeatist' (or realistic) outlook held towards tuition fees campaigns may have created a self-fulfilling prophecy. This in itself, may have militated against mass student involvement in campaigns connected with tuition fees at any point in the future. These comments are particularly interesting and illustrate how student perceptions (that politicians were under no real pressure to do anything about tuition fees) contributed to their low sense of political efficacy.

Interviewer: Do you feel that politicians will do anything about tuition fees?

Jake. No, not at all, I don't think there is really any impetus or desire to do anything to do anything about it. Um, at the moment, if we were to maybe publicise over and over and over again, the issues that are effecting students and the fact this is going to be a problem and then maybe, there's a possibility, that tuition fees would be removed. Um, but I don't see unfortunately, with the current Government being probably in power for at least the next six years, I don't really see them moving and backing down on tuition fees at all. Um, so in the near future I don't see that really as a possibility.

[Jake, 20, Undergraduate in Law, Northwick University]

Jake's comments were once again revealing. They illustrate a consciousness of political processes. Jake described how he felt that owing, to the point of time in its term of office, the government was in an unassailable position. His comments reflected the fact that, despite their remarks that they professed not to be interested in politics, many students make rational assessments about situations that affect them based upon careful considerations of wider political processes.

The NUS and student political efficacy

When considering the students' level of political self-efficacy, I asked my respondents whether they felt that their national organisation, the NUS, is effective in campaigning over the issue of tuition fees. Students overwhelmingly, felt that the

NUS had little power to influence the political decisions that affect their lives. Some students felt that the NUS was unable to effectively publicise its campaigns and that its policy aims were disadvantaged as a result.

Interviewer: Do you feel that student organisations are effective in campaigning over tuition fees ?

Jake: No, not at all, let's take the NUS as an example, they had a massive march in London last year, last academic year, to get it acknowledged in the press. Before even the broad sheets even the leading broad sheets absolutely no mention of that what-so-ever and it was a massive march. So, if they have to, they can do all these marches and they can make all these statements, you know, to students, but they need to make the students, the statements to people outside of the student bubble and they need to make that known in the media and the press. They need to make it known to government, something they are just absolutely failing to do at the moment.

Interviewer: So, it's really a case of, the fact, are you saying, should I say, that's it's a case of the fact that they can mobilise some students obviously, but they're just failing to get the issue known?

Jake: That's exactly it, they can mobilise, you'll always be able to mobilise students when it involves money, but they are failing to get that, the student feeling about tuition fees known outside the student bubble

Interviewer: Right.

Jake: Em, I don't really know much about what they do. They certainly don't publicise everything that they do that much. I would have thought, I wouldn't have actually thought any student organizations are effective, just from the fact that we, we do still have them in place. And, er, I can't

remember if it's next year, or some other year that they're on about, em, abolishing all student loans and everything, aren't they? I think, as well, with tuition fees having been in for several years now, I think people are just resigned to the fact that it's not going to change, so have stopped campaigning about it. It's hard.

[Jake, 20, Undergraduate in Law, Northwick University]

Jake's comments are particularly enlightening. His sentiments are echoed by other students who participated in this research. They also pointed to the failure of the NUS to actively publicise the issue of tuition fees amongst the wider public. Many members of the public have young children and therefore have an interest in knowing about tuition fees. It is difficult to assess whether the NUS was guilty of this. It is however, perhaps useful to recall that Jake's comments link with the comments made earlier in the chapter which illustrate how many students believed that the wider public doesn't sympathise with their welfare issues.

Some students reiterated the view that the actions undertaken by the NUS were symbolic and would not achieve anything.

Interviewer: Do you feel that student organisations are effective in campaigning over tuition fees ?

Alan: Um, I don't really have any experience of what they've

done, it's not something I pay close attention to I don't think it's effective, sort of occupying the Senate house or anything like that, um, really don't think that makes a difference. I think it's just another time, a case of students just protesting for protesting's sake

[Alan, 20, Undergraduate in Economics, Northwick University]

Alan's comments once again resonate with comments made earlier in this chapter. Many students contacted in this research expressed the viewpoint that actions organised by the NUS merely amounted to a token resistance to tuition fees. Students also commented that they felt that the NUS was simply not powerful enough to influence political decisions relating to tuition fees.

Interviewer: Do you feel that student organisations are effective in campaigning over tuition fees ?

Rose: No, not really, cuz, well, I don't think much has been done. I don't think the government's gonna back down, or anything, on charging us. They keep putting it up every year, more than anything. And I don't think they're gonna change their mind, so I don't think there's a lot that any organisation will be able to do about it.

[Rose, 21, Postgraduate in Computer Sciences, Northwick University]

Rose's comments concurred with many students who participated in this research. For University students tuition fees and the associated problems that they may

generate were an ongoing aspect of student life. Many students assumed that the NUS had not mounted any form of effective opposition to tuition fees. This outlook produced a self-fulfilling prophecy which undermined the student community's sense of political efficacy helped explain why so few students actively opposed tuition fees.

Interviewer: Do you feel that student organisations are effective in campaigning over tuition fees ?

Sean: No I don't think they're powerful enough.

Interviewer: Why is that?

Sean: Because they just can't organise things for us, there's a lot of students like us, but little evidence that any thing is being changed

[Sean ,23, Law Undergraduate, Northwick University focus group]

The above quotations illustrate the student community's sense of collective powerlessness. They perceived that the NUS could do little to tackle the issue of tuition fees. In addition, research has revealed that few students regard it as a focus of political organization. Data from the previous chapter shows that only limited numbers of students actively regarded the NUS as having a national political role.

This outlook further undermined its ability to wage effective campaigns in connection with tuition fees. It was also notable to recall that some foreign students pointed out that they were not contacted by the student union and were not encouraged to voice their views about the campaigns

Interviewer: Do you feel that student organisations are effective in campaigning over tuition fees?

Francois: The union? We never see it. It never comes to us. I saw posters in the first weeks here, but I don't, don't know about campaigns or fees.

[Francois, 20, Overseas Undergraduate in Engineering, Northwick University]

Interviewer: Do you feel that student organisations are effective in campaigning over tuition fees?

Norbert: The students' union does little. The French students use the football pitches, but nobody from the union speak to us. I did not know about these demonstrations or anything.

[Norbert , 20, Overseas Undergraduate in Engineering, Northwick University]

While many students assumed that the NUS is ineffective in mounting campaigns that oppose tuition fees, the experiences of these foreign students perhaps points to the fact that it needed to more effectively organise to incorporate this large section

of the student body. By doing so it would have been able to encourage some foreign students to show solidarity with British students and, in turn mount a more effective campaign against tuition fees.

The data derived from the interviews reveals that students expressed little belief in the NUS' power to influence events. While some students contacted in this research discussed tactical 'mistakes' made by the NUS, some foreign students felt excluded. Other students were clearly not convinced that it had achieved anything other than nominal resistance to the imposition of tuition fees. This outlook may, in part, explain why many students have decided to confront the financial hardships that they face alone rather than investing their hopes and efforts in student organisations or politicians. Carl McLean, has undertaken research concerning student debt. He revealed that many of the interviewees adopted a pragmatic attitude towards it. This has affected students' political views and their perceptions of their representative body, the National Union of Students. He states that 'For many of them the NUS is not relevant'. Research has also revealed that many Higher Education students feel that students' unions simply do not represent their interests. A poll of 2037 university students revealed that 61 percent of respondents felt that students' unions were a 'waste of time' (Students UK, 2000). Bearing in mind the clear sense of powerlessness that existed amongst the students who participated in this research, it is perhaps not surprising that so few students have decided to become involved in campaigns organised by the NUS.

Self help and isolation

A sense of self-help and isolation is an integral aspect of individualisation. Bauman (2001) argues that this sense of isolation is influenced by a social expectation that individuals should be self-reliant and not be a burden upon others. Interview data revealed how it contributed towards the collective sense of powerlessness displayed by the students. Many students felt that they were isolated from the wider population and could not rely on its support. The interview data revealed that many of the students believed that the public at large perceived them to be to be a burden upon society and the welfare and taxation systems.

Edward: The general view of students that a lot of people have. Um, a lot of people don't you know, students are a bit of, you know, looked down on by society, I think. Yes, the public at large, you know how, you know, a lot of people see them

as kind of, scroungers or lazy or layabouts, you know all kind of, they're having this great life for free, um, paid for by the tax payer.

[Edward, 21, Undergraduate in sociology, Cheswick University]

Edward's comments reiterated the sentiments of some students who participated in this research. Though many of the interviewees perceived that a university education as a means of preparing them to undertake socially useful roles, they

often felt that they were perceived to be a burden upon the public at large.

James: I think the consensus of opinion with- among the working population is, their view of what students do, er, is just, you know, go out to the pub every night, and, sort of, you know, liquidate their, er, their tax, if you like.

[James, 21, Undergraduate in Economics, Northwick University]

Sentiments like these only further undermined the student body's sense of political efficacy. Students who participated in this research actively believed that they were in some respects estranged from the wider population and as a result concluded that they could not expect the public to show solidarity with them.

Sean: I think a lot of people believe that students just, like, basically, lazy, and, you know, all that sort of stuff. Erm, I don't think many people - especially people who have never been to university, which you do find quite a lot - erm, just don't understand that you are working, and that you aren't just dossing around for four years.

[Sean, 23, Undergraduate in Law, Northwick University focus group]

Sean's comments reiterated this theme. He felt that the public perceived students to be almost a 'race' apart from wider society, a group whose actions would never be fully understood by the wider public.

The evidence derived from the interview data reveals that students often perceived

themselves to be seen by the public at large as being a burden or lazy. They believed that they would not receive support from the wider public. This outlook may, in part, explain the non-involvement of university students in campaigns opposing tuition fees.

Campaign participants

Some interviews were undertaken with students who had participated in campaigns in connection with tuition fees. These interviews were undertaken in order to compare the data with that derived from the interviews with students who did not participate in any campaigns opposing tuition fees.

Interviewer: Why did you take part in the campaign against tuition fees?

Hannah: Um, I felt that I needed to voice my opinions as an individual and as part of the student body. Um, that it was unfair that they were giving all these sanctions, they were saying 'Right, you've all got to pay', it doesn't matter, you know, whether you're poor or you're rich, you've all got to pay.' And I don't, I don't know, I don't feel that um, it's a fair way of doing things and it's basically um, adhering to a rich man's society. It's allowing rich people to get into university and not giving any sort of consideration what-so-ever for those that can't afford it and yet might be, you know, Einstein's or the politicians or the great people of our next generation, basically.

[Hannah, 21, Undergraduate in Media Studies, Northwick University]

Hannah's sentiments reflect those students who campaigned against tuition fees. Principle, as well as pragmatism, defined their outlook in relation to this issue. This research shows that the students who became involved in campaigns opposing tuition fees perceived the problems generated by student debt to be a long-term problem.

Interviewer: Why did you take part in the campaign against tuition fees?

Kelvin: Um, there was, it all kind of started when the students' union had a sit-in at Senate House you know, you've heard about that?

Interviewer: Yes, I have, yeah. Yeah!

Kelvin: And I was around when that happened and I went and was part of the sit-in. Um, I was also involved, there was a day of action organised, that was last year as well, which was organised to be on an open day um, for the university, um and I was that, I was walking around with my bill-board on. Um and there was also the big N.U.S. march in London um, that I took part in and I also, for that, um, did some of the advertising of the march, like in the week before I helped out in the students' union.

Interviewer: Thank you.

Interviewer: You mentioned that you've been involved in various activities, or campaigns in connection with tuition fees, um, why did you get involved in those?

Kelvin: Um, to um, because of the unfairness of fees and the escalation that I can see happening and to stop it from happening.

[Kelvin, 19, Undergraduate in Maths, Cheswick University]

Kelvin's comments, once again, displayed a clear commitment to political principles. Unlike many students who believed that their education represented an investment and that its rewards would finally outweigh its drawbacks, Kelvin's remarks reflected the standpoint of those who were involved in campaigning against tuition fees. They felt that fees may be exclusionary and were likely to thus excluding even more people from less well-off backgrounds from entering university.

The data from the interviews revealed that, in contrast to the students who did not involved themselves in campaigns in connection with tuition fees, students who did participate in campaigns displayed a more positive sense of political efficacy and a willingness to belong to a wider movement that aims to bring about a more just system of Higher Education funding. Their contrasting outlook explained why so many students choose not to participate in campaigns connected with tuition fees.

Interviewer: Do you think that politicians will do anything about tuition fees?

Aron: Um, a lot of them have, actually, there's an early day motion, um in the House of Commons, um that quite a few politicians have put their names to. One of the things we're actually encouraging people to do um, certainly when we go down for the A level results day, we'll be talking to parents of sixth formers, asking them to get in touch with their local MP to see whether they've signed the early day motion and if not, why not? I think it's a very, very interesting time for politicians to be acting on this, because um because of the general election.

Interviewer: Do you think that politicians will do anything about tuition fees?

Aron: Labour are under a lot of pressure to respond to it and I think now's a very crucial time for the student population to actually, to make an impact on them. And to get politicians seriously thinking about it. So, what was the question? Do I think they'll do anything about it? I think, yeah, I think it's going to be interesting, if there's enough of them, to do something about it. I'm quite positive that they will.

[Aron, 21, NUS Sabbatical post holder, Cheswick University]

Aron's comments were echoed by the students who participated in campaigns opposing tuition fees. All of the campaigners had a purposive outlook. They too considered a number of strategies that might be used in order to develop support for student campaigns. Like the other campaigners, Aron was acutely aware that politicians were accountable to the electorate, particularly at election time and that this would have provided opportunities for the student body to publicise their interests.

Interviewer: Do you think that politicians will do anything about tuition fees?

Lara: Um that's the issue raised that's quite a difficult question um I'm not sure exactly what, what would the motivations be honest ah I think, I think there are probably some who share the motivations of the student campaigners on the grounds that they, they on principle um believe there are better ways to do education funding

[Lara, 21, Undergraduate in English Cheswick University]

Lara was alone in thinking that politicians could, on principle, be motivated to address issues of concern. Most campaigners shared the standpoints of the rest of the students involved in this research. They perceived politicians to be essentially pragmatically orientated. Regardless of these differences both of these beliefs inspired campaigners to be involved in campaigns and have a political focus that was clearly not evident amongst most students.

My conversations with the students who participated in campaigns showed that they often adopted a 'principled' outlook. They displayed a proactive approach towards this issue and often had a better understanding of the political processes involved in bringing about political change. In contrast to the other students, they also felt that wider social groups and politicians may be sympathetic to their

interests. The contrasting attitudes of the students involved in campaigns opposing tuition fees graphically illustrate how a low sense of political efficacy held by most students may have actively militated against their involvement in campaigns.

The role of the NUS

The contrasting views held by the campaigners can also be illustrated by their differing attitudes towards the effectiveness of the NUS as a campaigning organisation.

Interviewer: Do you feel that student organisations are effective in campaigning over tuition fees ?

Karen: Um, I'd say, they can effect the influence I mean demonstrations are very, they're very, sort of like, aware of them, um, because they get a lot of press coverage and stuff, so the politicians have to be seen to be doing something about it, whether they are is another thing. Um, so in that way I suppose, we do have quite a big influence. So. I suppose if you think about it in those terms then we do have quite a lot of influence, not only on the government, but on people with voting rights, because obviously, democracy and whatever.

[Karen, 21, Undergraduate in American Studies, Cheswick University]

Karen's standpoint illustrates the more positive view that student campaigners had of the NUS's ability to campaign against tuition fees. Her comments reflected the

view held by people involved in campaigns that the NUS was able to use a variety of channels to build influence. This sentiment not only helped explain why campaigners continued their efforts, but also graphically contrasted the standpoints held by most students who participated in this research that saw the NUS as being largely unable to do anything about tuition fees.

Students who had participated in campaigns often stated said that they would continue to be involved in campaigns in the future.

Interviewer: Do you think you will ever get involved in future campaigns against tuition fees?

Lara: Um, I think I will because of why I got involved in the first place, I mean I know, from a personal point of view because of the difficulties I had in my L.E.A. I did spend at least two weeks considering the possibility of not coming to university at all, because it looked as if, from idiotic reasons best known to themselves I might end up paying tuition fees.

[Lara, 21, Undergraduate in English Cheswick University]

Lara's comments mirrored the principled outlooks of the students who participated in campaigns. Many clearly believed that tuition fees were unfair, exclusionary and should be opposed in the future.

Hannah: Uh, if they're properly organised then I think I probably will. Fees are not fair. I didn't go to one recently in London, because Northwick University they didn't actually organise anything. While I was in another university in the Midlands they did actually manage to get some sort of petition forms, where you signed up and you went on a coach. And if they did something like that in Northwick I'd definitely do that, yeah.

[Hannah, 21, Undergraduate in Media Studies, Northwick University]

Hannah's comments once again reflect the principled outlook held by students who participated in campaigns.

The clear differences in the outlooks of students who involved themselves in political campaigns connected with tuition fees can be used to illustrate the outlook of collective powerlessness and isolation that influenced members of the student community. The students who took part in campaigns clearly believed they could change things, while the majority of students who did not participate in campaigns believe could not. As long as this outlook continues, mass student involvement in campaigns connected with the tuition fees, introduced in the late 1990s, seems unlikely to materialise.

Top up fees and protests

Data produced at the end of the field research (December 2002), which coincided with publicity concerned with the proposed introduction of substantially increased fees for students (top-up fees), appeared to reveal a significant difference in attitude towards involvement in political campaigns in relation to tuition fees.

Interviewer: When you mention the new fees, do we mean the top-up fees?

Peter: The top-up fees.

Interviewer: Yes

Peter: I would get involved in that to an extent.

Interviewer: Why is that, then?

Peter: Erm, again, that seems far too much, that seems way too much, em, to, er, you know, for someone that's got the intelligence and got the capabilities, and that what happens to those that can't afford it? They're completely cut out, and that's simply- that, that, well, it's just not fair, and it's, it's not you know, it's just not fair, really, to me.

[Peter, 23, Undergraduate in Social Work, Northwick University focus group]

The comments made by Peter are interesting in that they reflected the attitudes of many of the students questioned about this issue. While few of them were

motivated on principle to actively opposed tuition fees, the greater imposition of financial burden upon the student community, would on principle motivate them to join campaigns opposing top-up fees.

Interviewer: Could I just refer you back to the tuition campaign, tuition fee campaigns. Why didn't you participate in those?

Michelle: I haven't, em, felt that strongly opposed, not really had a really, really opinion either way. But this one, top-up fees, just, I have a strong opinion about, and I would go to a campaign for that.

Interviewer: Right.

Michelle: I, er, I haven't been involved at all, but, em, I'd get involved with the top-up fees one. I feel quite strongly against that, because it's just not fair for someone who's got no money from a really poor background and has to pay loads of, like, thousands of pounds, fifty, up to fifty thousand pounds after their degree, after going to one university, em, it's just not allocated people how clever they are. It's just to do with how much money you've got. The rich get richer, the poor get poorer. And also, by paying that fifty thousand pounds, you're not likely to get the whole lot back after you get a job. You might not even get a return above fifty thousand pounds, so, you're actually making a loss by going to university.

[Michelle , 20, Undergraduate in Business, Northwick University focus group]

Michelle's comments more clearly illustrate how the increase in financial burden encouraged students to adopt a principled stance opposing further course fees.

Interviewer: Why didn't you participate in campaigns in connection with tuition fees and student hardship?

Rex: Em, like sign petitions, etcetera, I haven't been on any, er, any marches, but I always support things when I can. Er, from a personal point of view, I do fight causes that are little sort of, er, selfish, you know, I mean, but something does have to be done, but in the future, with top-up fees, I'll be well behind any campaign against increases, because it's just ridiculous thing to introduce them.

Interviewer: Right.

Rex: Yes.

Interviewer: Can ask why?

Rex: Because they're not fair and it will stop people coming uni.

[Rex , 19, Undergraduate in Engineering, Northwick University focus group]

Data collected towards the end of the period of research appeared to reveal a new attitude towards participation in campaigns. The students were against the introduction of top-up fees, and believed that their introduction would exclude less

well off members of society from undertaking a university education. They felt that the increased debts that students would incur would mean that in future, they may not necessarily gain a financial return for the sacrifices they made. Importantly, students said they were more willing to become involved in campaigns against substantially increased fees even though they knew that they would not be personally affected by their introduction. The introduction of top-up fees seemed to have the potential to ignite significant levels of interest and participation in campaigns connected with tuition fees.

The issue of top-up fees has impacted upon student community and wider public debate. Morten Nicholls reported the findings of an AUT survey, which found 'seven out of 10 people do not want university top-up fees introduced'. The survey also found that 'opposition was strongest among 16 to 24-year-olds, with 81 percent rejecting fees' (Nicholls, 2004:11).

While these figures indicate that top up fees have provoked significant levels of concern, their proposed introduction seems to have inspired limited levels of active resistance. In October 2003, the BBC reported NUS claims that 31,000 people had travelled to London to attend a protest against top-up fees (BBC, 2004b). The widely felt reaction towards the introduction of top-up fees, so graphically illustrated in the comments made by students who were interviewed, has not inspired people to undertake active opposition against them. The student

community's sense of isolation and their lack of political efficacy appeared, once again, to mitigate against their involvement in campaigns relating to an issue that has huge financial implications for many people.

Conclusion

In light of this evidence, Beck and Giddens' contention that established forms of politics are seen as less relevant for many people in contemporary society, in this case, seems correct. Membership of established political parties is declining. Voting at election time is also decreasing. Few young people display an active interest in party politics. In this respect their analysis can explain the individualisation process and may reveal why many young students did not involve themselves in campaigns connected with tuition fees. Their contention that the emergence of life and sub-politics is creating a new political culture, which can empower people and can inspire them to become involved in new forms of political activity, needs to be treated with caution. Few people of all ages (including students) are actively involved in politics. Like wider sections of society, students feel powerless to influence political processes. The data revealed that although students overwhelmingly believed that the state should ideally pay for student tuition fees, they felt that they had little scope to influence politicians and that they were not supported by wider sections of society. This sentiment provides a significant understanding of why students did not participate in campaigns concerning tuition

fees.

Just a fraction of the student population and members of the general public, who feel that they or others may be adversely affected by the tuition fees and the introduction of top-up fees, seem willing to translate their concerns into active organisation against them. If one bears in mind the findings of the Student Living Report (Unite/Mori, 2004) that just 13 percent of students felt that politicians listen to them when considering funding issues, then their attitude towards campaigns opposing tuition fees may be understandable. It appears, that individualisation seems to have both undermined the students' willingness to oppose the introduction of top-up fees, either within the sphere of party politics or as a supposedly empowered user or consumer group (who are, according to Beck and Giddens often active within the spheres of sub and life politics) who are seeing the price of their 'purchase' increase significantly. Individualisation seems to have developed a culture of powerlessness and isolation that actively discouraged mass student involvement in campaigns against fees and may have serious implications for mass organisation in connection with wider political issues.

Chapter 10

Conclusion

Introduction

During this research, I have focused on Beck and Giddens' arguments in order to explore the relationship between individualisation, the Higher Education student community, and participation in campaigns connected with tuition fees. In this concluding chapter I will outline the findings and consider the contribution that this piece of research can make both to developing individualisation theory and understanding young students' political efficacy. I then consider some problems with the application of individualisation theory to comprehending low levels of student participation in campaigns opposing tuition fees. Finally, the last section considers the further avenues of research that may be inspired by the findings of this research.

Research findings

The research findings revealed that students subscribed to individualised standpoints concerning the aims and objectives for undertaking a Higher Education course and the problems and burdens associated with it. Individualisation theory allows an understanding that students are an instrumental, individualised group of

people who perceive their education to be an investment. They have the confidence to act as proactive consumers who are ready to complain about unsatisfactory educational provision. They however feel marginalised from wider society and have little faith in their ability to influence politicians. These findings are useful in enabling us to understand how, on one hand, individualised student consumers feel they have an influence on university life, while on the other hand they feel politically disempowered and as such attempt to deal with political issues that may impact upon them in an individualised manner.

As I have argued, young university students are members of an individualised generation who pursue individualised solutions to the dilemmas and the risks that they face. Young students live and act within a social and educational context, which actively propels individualisation. It has impacted upon student communities and affects students' willingness to engage in political activity that may be interpreted as being consistent with their interests. Individualisation theory, therefore, provides insight to why there are low levels of student participation in campaigns connected with tuition fees.

Investment

Today, young people aged 18 and above are more likely than ever to be in education and are increasingly gaining higher-level educational qualifications. They

assume that to gain good employment they must rely on their own individual efforts. Giddens (1991) argues that in late modernity, individuals invest a great deal of faith in expert systems. Today, many young people who would have otherwise entered the world of work, elect instead to undertake further study in order to give themselves the best possible chance of gaining a good job. This assumption is perhaps highlighted by a survey of young people undertaken by Mulgan and Wilkinson (1995), who have commented that 'the escalation of qualifications brings in its wake a greater desire to translate educational achievements to success; a greater assumption of autonomy and the capacity to make choices' (Mulgan and Wilkinson, 1995:26). Evidence presented by the DfEE (2000) indicating the growing popularity of vocationally related degrees supports this contention.

Findings from this research point to the fact that university students increasingly undertake courses as a means of securing employment. This development has emerged over recent years and is certainly not just confined to the UK. Data revealed by Bandalos and Selacek (1987) illustrates that between 1971 and 1984 the numbers of US undergraduates who stated that the reason for attending Higher Education was 'to be able to make more money', rose considerably. Many of them now understand that increasing expense is part and parcel of university life. Faced with this reality, many young students now conclude that the short-term sacrifices they make while undertaking university education may be more than compensated for by rewards in the future. This assumption is supported by evidence revealed by

the Adam Smith Institute (2000). The institute revealed that in spite of the fact that tuition fees have been introduced, 86 percent of the young people contacted agreed that university is one of the best investments that a person can make. Findings reported by The Times Higher Educational Supplement revealed that applicants for Higher Education courses in Scotland have a realistic view of what their course will cost them and view tuition fees as ' a small part of a bigger bill' (Thomson, 1996:17). Findings produced by the 2003 Student Living Report show 'three fifths of students believe that their current course is good value for money' (Unite/Mori, 2003:4). These revelations concur with the findings of this research. The students also consider costs as being an unavoidable part of student life and see their course as a means of gaining a bigger payback. Students often talked of the financial rewards that await them. This outlook militates against mass student involvement in campaigns connected with tuition fees.

No political alternative

It could also be argued that young people's disinterest and distrust towards established political organisations may have undermined the willingness of some young students to undertake political action in connection with issues relating to tuition fees. Many of today's young students behave in individualistic, consumerist ways. The consumerisation of educational provision discourages the development of movements and organisations that could campaign against tuition fees. Young students today are faced by an absence of political and organisational alternatives

that may address the issues they face. The circumstances that have precipitated the process of individualisation are likely to remain for some time. My research findings have revealed that students are rarely active within sub political or party political processes. However, they do display a willingness to undertake active consumerism in pursuit of their own interests should the need arise; although many young people may distrust the willingness of politicians to act on their behalf.

This perception clearly cannot explain the low levels of participation in politics and campaigns pertaining to tuition fees. Young students are living in an increasingly individualised society, which is having a marked impact upon their behaviour. In Britain, membership of political parties, participation within party political processes and mass organised movements are declining. A study of European young people revealed similar trends and showed that only 4.4 percent of all respondents were members of trade unions or political parties (Helve, 2001). Few of the students who participated in this research were involved in any political activities and none were a member of a political party. Many felt they had little ability to influence politicians. This reality is supported by Henn and Weinstein (2003) who argue that many young people feel that politicians do not respond to their needs. The individualised society is also characterised by the breakdown of communities, traditional value systems and solidarity networks. The research revealed that few students have an active disposition to show political solidarity with those who actively oppose tuition fees. Within this context it seems unlikely that young students will mount an effective political campaign against loans, tuition

fees and other aspects of student hardship.

Individualised Values

Young students are a group who reflexively respond to the risks and dilemmas that they face. It is argued that young people aged between 18- 34 are considerably less likely to subscribe to neighborhood and traditional values (Wilkinson Mulgan, 1995). They are also less tolerant of authority and more likely to accept unconventional behaviour. This outlook is perhaps reflected in the growing numbers of young students who are no longer willing to be deferential towards traditional systems of learning and are willing to undertake complaints procedures against their universities. Young people today are increasingly accepting a value system, which fragments their experiences and outlooks.

The students who participated in this research proved very willing to question the nature of the educational provision that they receive, they are willing to complain if something is wrong. Critics may raise the point of view that the values displayed by young people today are merely consistent with the life stage that they are undergoing. Mulgan and Wilkinson (1995) have considered this possible criticism. After comparing survey data gathered from young and old members of society, they argue that 'most of the changes in values are better explained in generational terms, rather than as effects of class or life stage. In other words today's young people will

probably still hold similar values in middle age.' (Mulgan and Wilkinson, 1995:12). Bearing this in mind, one could conclude that the individualised outlooks held by many young people today may become an established cultural norm, which many more young people in the future may emulate. The reality is underlined by Beck (1992, 2002) and Giddens (1991) who contend that the individualisation process will be a significant aspect of social life in the foreseeable future.

Theoretical problems

The individualisation thesis has proved useful in developing an understanding of organisational and individual behaviour in contemporary society. Giddens and Beck's framework offers a great deal of conceptual understanding concerning their actions. It provides a theoretical insight into the practical everyday reflexive actions undertaken by individuals and organisations in relation to the dilemmas and risks that they face. I would argue that it provides the basis for understanding that society and the education system is in a state of flux and a practical explanation of individualised reflexive behaviour that occurs as a result. Their explanatory framework does not however, provide a totally satisfactory explanation of the underlying causal factors that may bring about social change and the role of agents within it. While it provides a useful conceptual framework for understanding the low levels of participation in campaigns connected with student hardship and tuition fees, critical reviews of their work, coupled with the findings of my own research, mean that it needs to be revised to more fully explain this

phenomenon.

Social change and power interests

Individualisation theory tends to avoid developing any practical discussion of the role of power groups or governments within the process of social change. The omission of any real in depth discussion of specific social policies, the role of government and power groups in the process of change raises a number of problems. A discussion of the role of power groups within the process of social change may be undertaken with reference to the question, who or what was responsible for the introduction of tuition fees? The framework developed by Beck (1992, 2002) and Giddens (1991) perhaps provides an explanation by citing factors such as changing economic circumstances, globalisation, the actions of politicians, opposition groups and so on.

It can also provide a useful understanding of how the reflexive actions of various groups in society interacted within the process of introducing fees. Rustin (1994) points out that Beck seems to assume that power is evenly distributed between sub-political groups and reflexive individuals are responsible for social change. He argues that Beck seems to ignore that some groups and institutions have more power than others. For example, he accuses Beck of referring to the process of 'techno scientific rationality' and individualisation as being a driving force responsible for the emergence of reflexive modernity rather than capitalism and the

accumulation of profits. Loyal reiterates the view that Giddens' assumption that power is evenly distributed in society seems to ignore this. He argues that 'by implicitly prioritising the abstract individual as a basis for his sociology, Giddens' politics fails to understand conflict and contradiction as the basis of the social world' (Loyal, 2003:168).

It may be in the interests of certain groups in society to implement tuition fees, not just as an impersonal reflexive expedient in light of social change, but rather as a long-term strategy to maintain the primacy of its interests over other social groups. Attempts to develop analysis of social change should therefore more actively consider this. By doing so they need not revert to reductionism, but consider all the elements of social systems that influence social behaviour and social change. Kasperson (2000) criticises Giddens for not actively discussing the interaction between nation states within the process of social change. Beck and Giddens' failure to analyse social policies in any real depth means that these criticisms are entirely warranted. Inter governmental agreements have enabled millions of students to study abroad and have precipitated competition between universities. This research has considered the influence of vocationalism, consumerism, globalisation and the marketisation of education and its contribution to the individualisation of student life in an attempt to address this deficit.

Ideology and the duality of structure

Giddens (1984) assumes that a duality of structure exists in which an interaction between structures and informed individuals takes place. Thus Giddens' and Beck's frameworks may provide a broad understanding of various factors that may interact within the process of social change. It cannot explain why the idea of grants to cover cost of living expenses (despite campaigns organised by the NUS which attempt to raise their profile and the argument that they may reasonably improve the lives of students) has largely disappeared from student consciousness. These research findings reveal that the students readily accepted that they, and their families, should be responsible for providing the cost of living expenses. The data also reveals that not only do students accept that part of these costs should (if required) legitimately be funded by taking out student loans, but that some students also feel that undertaking a loan is conducive to developing financial responsibility.

Their explanatory framework argues that in everyday life, individuals possess information upon which to make informed choices. If this is the case then once again the question could be asked, why is it that the idea of grants rarely entered the consciousnesses of the students interviewed in this research? Loyal's (2003) critical remarks upon Giddens' sociology may provide an explanation. Loyal asserts that reflexive behaviour does not involve individuals undertaking an objective consideration of available facts, but rather people's standpoints and actions are influenced by ideological structures. This kind of criticism demands that Giddens

needs to more actively consider the extent that individuals are informed about the decisions that they make and to what extent they are influenced by ideological structures.

Rustin (1994) accuses Beck's analysis of contemporary society as being ideological. For example, he draws attention to Beck's assumption that norms form a central means of ordering society and that individuals and organisations involved in attempting to bring about social change strive to change these norms. This raises the question, where did these norms come from? Whilst the explanatory framework developed by Beck and Giddens may explain how the interplay of social, political and reflexive factors may have led to the establishment of norms, their analysis perhaps is less able to explain their specific origins and whom exactly they may benefit. These norms may benefit powerful groups, therefore the analytical framework developed by Giddens and Beck needs to more actively consider this reality.

Apathy and duality of structure

Giddens' (1984) concept of duality of structure has proved useful in understanding both individual and organisational reflexive behaviour. If one is to consider the imposition of tuition fees then this concept may have limited explanatory powers. The duality of structure suggests a two-way interplay between agents and structure. In fairness, they never hoped to provide a framework that will explain how each

and every person or organisation will respond to the risk and dilemmas they face. They recognise that individuals have different circumstances and deal with issues in differing ways. However, their failure to discuss in any depth how differing individuals and social and cultural groups (who may as a result of their circumstances and different sets of interests) respond to risks in different ways, represents an omission which needs to be addressed.

Beck and Giddens' assumption that individuals and political groups can furnish themselves information and may readily play a dynamic role in social change is flawed. This research reveals that, without exception, students are aware of the impact that financial hardship and tuition fees have upon their daily lives. In spite of this, most of the students decided not to play an active part in opposing fees. This finding begs the question, how does the duality of structure apply here? Is it fair to assume that an interplay of forces that encompasses those who are involved in an issue will take place? Giddens' (1984) assumption (based upon attempts to avoid reductionist explanation) that social change will involve a dynamic interaction between relevant social groups needs to be developed to account for this. Though Giddens may account for this by arguing that tuition fees lie within the realm of emancipatory politics, which are traditionally addressed by mass organised political movements, a consideration that differing groups may interpret risk in different ways needs to be more readily incorporated into their work.

They also need to consider more actively how the constraining aspects of social structures may influence how people respond to dilemmas. This consideration would illustrate how at times the process of social change may not involve a dynamic interaction between relevant social groups. It could illustrate some may remain passive or 'apathetic' in spite of changes that encroach upon them. My research has shown how many students did not become involved in the process of implementing or resisting tuition fees. They cited a number of self interested and political reasons for doing so. The data produced by this research demands that they more actively consider this deficit.

Top down change

Rustin (1994) criticises Giddens' assumption that, within late modernity, individuals have more power because they are becoming dissembled and detached from tradition. He argues that Giddens conducts an idealist analysis of contemporary society, which is based upon the assumption that power is no longer manifested in terms of a coercive or instrumental relationships, but in terms of overcoming the boundaries of time and space. He accuses Giddens of attempting to ignore power relationships, particularly those that exist between social classes. Rustin's point is that Giddens effectively ignores the fact that social change may be imposed from above by power groups wishing to advance their own interests at the expense of other members of society. This contention may be plausible if one is to consider the question, What role did students play in bringing about the

introduction of tuition fees? Certainly, Giddens' concept of duality of structure may account for the actions of student organisations within the political bargaining process that took place during the introduction of tuition fees. It may also be able to explain students' apparent acceptance of tuition fees and how this, in turn, reproduces the structures that demand them.

His concept of duality of structure may not be able to account for the fact that the process of imposing tuition fees is a top-down one and does not involve an equal interplay between agency and structure at all levels. Giddens' framework could also illustrate that a duality of structure takes place in a variety of contexts. Hence, it may constitute an interaction between government agencies who introduced tuition fees and taxpayers who may have an interest in seeing them do this. Once again the question needs to be asked, how equal is the interplay between individual agents (taxpayers) and government departments? Recent opinion polls have revealed that 59 percent (Travis, 2003:18) and 77 percent of taxpayers (AUT, 2004) oppose the introduction of university top of fees. With this in mind, it could be argued that Beck and Giddens need to incorporate a consideration of the sometimes one-sided nature of social change in order to offer a more satisfactory explanation of the various factors that bring this about.

In spite of these problems, there is merit in recognising that individuals have become detached from traditional social class and other solidarity frameworks.

Members of society increasingly perceive the dilemmas that they face in terms of individualised sets of risks that must be dealt with. Individualisation theory does provide a multifaceted analysis of the significance of both individualisation and risk and its impact upon contemporary society. As such, Beck and Giddens provide a valuable insight into the practical understanding that individuals and organisations employ in their reflexive responses to the dilemmas and risks that they face. In this respect, their explanatory framework has made an important contribution to social theory and has specifically proved useful in developing an explanation of why many young people choose not to become involved in campaigns connected with tuition fees.

Possible avenues for further research

The research raised a number of issues relating to the burdens imposed by the introduction of tuition fees and financial hardship and its impact upon the learning process, which could be of interest to students, researchers and educationalists. More research could be undertaken to further investigate the affects of the financial burden incurred while undertaking a Higher Education course that may inform debates concerning access to Higher Education, educational standards and the nature of funding provision. The research also considered the issue of citizenship entitlements to post compulsory education. The findings provide information concerning young people's perception of citizenship entitlements and obligations. The insights provided by the study could possibly inform future studies that may

seek to investigate the impact of social policy programmes upon public perceptions of entitlement to welfare provision.

Though this research is specifically focused upon the issue of tuition fees, the findings produced by this study may inform further research on the consumerisation of public services, the development of consumer activism and the affects they have on organisational and political decision-making frameworks. This research has developed an understanding of the consumerisation of education and its contribution towards the individualisation of educational experiences and the nature of student perceptions concerning their entitlement and solidarity with other consumers. These findings could inform further research on the specific aspects of consumerisation in other areas of social policy and their influence upon the individualisation process.

The findings produced by this research have provided insight into student political efficacy. It can provide a basis for additional research to further develop an understanding of why a significant section of the population do not participate in mass organised political activity relating to their interests. The findings reveal that young people often do not participate in party political processes because they feel politically powerless and unrepresented. This has been documented in previous research (The Electoral Commission 2003, Nestle 2002, IPPR 2001). However, data produced by this research provides insight into the fact that young students not only feel isolated or marginalised from party political processes but also from the

wider community. This revelation may inform the work and campaigns of organisations such as The National Union of Students who claim to represent the interests of the student population.

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Appendix 1 A profile of the research participants.

UG= Undergraduate. PG = Postgraduate. SAB = NUS, Sabbatical post holder. OS = Overseas student. Debt in pounds sterling. Ind = Interviewed alone. Focus = Took part in focus group interview

Name	Interview	Subject of study	Age	University	Year	Status	Nationality	Ethnic minority	Paid work	Debts	Fees Paid
Alan	Ind	Economics	20	Northwick	2	UG			No	6500	Some
Aron	Ind	N/A	21	Cheswick	N/A	SAB			No	4500	None
Becky	Ind	Media studies	21	Cheswick	3	UG		German	Yes	7600	Full
Cathy	Ind	History	24	Cheswick	2	UG			Yes	4900	None
Carla	Ind	N/A	21	Cheswick	N/A	SAB			No	7000	None
Crispin	Ind	Chemistry	19	Cheswick	1	UG			No	2000	Some
Colin	Focus	Engineering	23	Northwick	2	UG			Yes	14000	Full
Deng	Focus	Computer Sciences	22	Cheswick	3	UG		Chinese	No	11000	Some
Don	Ind	Medical student	23	Cheswick	3	UG			No	9000	None
Ellie	Focus	Business Studies	20	Northwick	2	UG			Yes	5800	Full
Edward	Ind	Sociology	21	Cheswick	3	UG			Yes	6000	Some
Francois	Ind	Engineering	22	Northwick	2	OS UG	French		Yes	3000	N/A
Gemma,	Ind	Social Policy	21	Northwick	1	UG			Yes	5600	None

Geraldine	Ind	N/A	21	Cheswick	N/A	SAB		No	0	None
Graham	Ind	Business Studies	23	Cheswick	2	PG		Yes	7400	Full
Hannah	Ind	Media studies	21	Northwick	1	UG	Chinese	Yes	5800	Full
Harriet	Focus	English	20	Cheswick	2	UG		Yes	6200	Full
Haley	Focus	Maths	25	Cheswick	3	UG		Yes	12000	Some
Jill	Ind	Sociology	21	Cheswick	1	OS PG	Chinese	No	7500	None
June	Ind	Business Studies	21	Northwick	3	UG		Yes	9200	Full
Jake	Ind	Law	20	Northwick	2	UG		No	3900	None
James	Ind	Economics	21	Northwick	1	PG		Yes	4000	None
Karen	Ind	American Studies	21	Cheswick	2	UG		Yes	7000	Some
Kimberley	Ind	Philosophy	23	Cheswick	2	PG		Yes	5000	Some
Kelvin	Ind	Maths	19	Cheswick	1	UG		No	3200	None
Kirsty	Ind	N/A	22	Northwick	N/A	SAB		Yes	8000	None
Lillian	Ind	Politics	23	Northwick	1	PG		Yes	5900	Full
Lara	Ind	English	21	Cheswick	2	UG		Yes	7300	Some
Lucy ,	Ind	Foreign Languages	21	Cheswick	3	UG		No	4000	Some
Mick	Focus	Philosophy	21	Cheswick	2	UG		Yes	8200	Some
Marian	Focus	English	20	Cheswick	1	UG		Yes	8000	Full
Michelle	Focus	Business Studies	20	Northwick	2	UG		Yes	6300	Full

Morten	Ind	N/A	22	Northwick	N/A	SAB			Yes	7000	None
Max	Focus	Maths	25	Cheswick	3	UG			Yes	7000	None
Norbert	Ind	Engineering	20	Northwick	1	OS UG	French		Yes	3000	N/A
Peter	Focus	Social Work	23	Northwick	3	UG			Yes	7300	Some
Paul	Ind	Engineering	21	Northwick	2	OS UG	French		Yes	4000	N/A
Raj	Ind	Foreign Languages	22	Northwick	3	UG		Asian	Yes	7800	Some
Rex	Focus	Engineering	19	Northwick	1	UG			Yes	3000	Some
Rachel	Ind	Foreign	22	Northwick	1	PG			No	8000	None
Rose	Ind	Languages Computer Sciences	21	Northwick	2	UG		Afro Caribbean	Yes	6200	Some
Sandra	Ind	History	19	Cheswick	1	UG			Yes	3200	None
Scot	Ind	Law	23	Northwick	3	UG			Yes	8000	Some
Sean	Focus	Law	23	Northwick	3	UG			Yes	4200	Full
Sam	Ind	Management	21	Northwick	1	PG			No	9100	None
Vincent	Ind	Business Studies	22	Cheswick	1	OS PG	Finnish		No	10000	N/A

Appendix 2 The questionnaire used with individual participants.

Individual interview question sheet

1. What is the main reason that you undertook a university education?
 2. What do you feel are the most important things that a university education should provide you with?
 3. Did you think that you got enough free time while studying at university?
- I
4. What do you see as the role of the Students Union?
 5. What standard of educational provision do you believe you should receive and why?
 6. Have you experienced substandard or unsatisfactory educational provision of some sort while at university ?
 7. Were you the only person to experience it?
 8. If so what did you do to try to overcome the problem
 9. Did you do it alone ?
 10. If you experienced substandard or unsatisfactory educational provision of some sort
 11. What would you do to try to overcome the problem?
 12. Would you do it alone?

13. Have you ever experienced financial problems since entering university?
How?
14. How have these affected your lifestyle?
15. Have financial problems affected your ability to study?
How?
16. Have you undertaken paid work during your time at university?
Why?
17. How did it affect your lifestyle?
18. Do you envisage the debts that you have accrued being a problem in the future? **How?**
19. Who should pay for the living expenses and tuition costs when a person through a university education **and why?**
20. Where would the money come from? **Why?**
21. Should students have to take out student loans? **Why?**
22. Should students have to pay tuition fees? **Why?**
23. Have you taken part in any campaigns in connection with tuition fees?
24. If so why?
25. Why did you not participate in action against tuition fees?
26. Do you feel that feel that student organisations are effective in campaigning over tuition fees ?
27. Do you feel that they are effective in gaining other things for students ?

Why?

28. Do you feel that politicians will do anything about tuition fees?

Why?

29. How do you feel that the issue of tuition fees can be pursued in the future?

Why?

30. Do you think you will ever get involved in campaigns against tuition fees in the future ? **Why?**

31. Are you or have you been involved in any campaigns while being at university? **Why?**

32. With which organisations ?

33. How effectively do you think that students can influence politicians ?

Why?

34. What area of work would you like to go in to when you leave university?

35. Do you envisage doing any postgraduate study?

Appendix 3
Focus group question sheet

1. What is the main reason that you undertook a university education?
2. What do you feel are the most important things that a university education should provide you with?
3. What do you see as the role of the Students Union?
4. What standard of educational provision do you believe you should receive and why?
5. If you experienced substandard or unsatisfactory educational provision of some sort What would you do to try to overcome the problem?
6. Have you ever experienced financial problems since entering university?
How?
7. How have these affected your lifestyle?
8. Have financial problems affected your ability to study?
How?
9. Have you undertaken paid work during your time at university?
Why?
10. Did it affect your ability to study?
11. What would you say is the main reason that you have experienced financial difficulties?
12. Do you envisage the debts that you have accrued being a problem in the future? **How?**
13. Who should pay for the living expenses and tuition costs when a person through a university education **and why?**
14. Where would the money come from? **Why?**
15. Should students have to take out student loans? **Why?**

16. Do you think that the wider population would support students in campaigns?
17. Have you taken part in any campaigns in connection with tuition fees?
(Mention possible top fees)
18. Why did you not participate in action against tuition fees?
19. Do you feel that student organisations are effective in campaigning
20. over tuition fees ?
21. Do you feel that politicians will do anything about tuition fees?
Why?
22. How do you feel that the issue of tuition fees can be pursued in the future?
Why?
23. Do you think you will ever get involved in campaigns against tuition fees ?
Why?
24. Are you or have you been involved in any campaigns while being at university? **Why?**
25. With which organisations ? **Why**
26. What kinds of political issues are you interested in and might you think about doing something about
27. How effectively do you think that students can influence politicians ?
Why?

Research interviews



I am undertaking research on the impact of tuition fees. I need to interview some students aged between 18 -- 25 years of age to find out more about the student hardship and tuition fees .

If you are aged 18 -- 25 and you are interested in being interviewed on campus for a period of around 60-90 minutes please contact Carlo

A payment of £10 will be made to students who are suitable for interview purposes

Please tear off a slip and contact me if you feel that you can help and I will be in touch.

Contact Carlo
Television_man@yahoo.com

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Research interviews.



I am undertaking research on the impact of tuition fees. I need to interview some students aged between 18 -- 25 years of age to find out more about the student hardship and tuition fees .

If you are aged 18 -- 25 and you are interested in being interviewed in a small group with 5 other participants on campus for a period of around 60-90 minutes please contact Carlo

A payment of £10 will be made to students who are suitable for interview purposes

Please tear off a slip and contact me if you feel that you can help and I will be in touch.

Contact Carlo
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