MIDDLE CLASS PARENTAL ASPIRATION AND THE TRANSMISSION OF ADVANTAGE IN CONTRASTING LOCALES

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Abstract

This thesis investigated parental aspirations regarding children's futurity, how they relate to parenting styles and to what extent their sense of belonging to their neighbourhood might be underpinned by values, personal and intergenerational biography and resources. This study considered how families help to reproduce social advantage and disadvantage through the perspective of Bourdieu's conceptual framework regarding social and cultural reproduction, with the family viewed as a habitus generating institution. Taken from a series of semi-structured interviews with parents of children at key transition points in the English primary school, qualitative data examined parental aspirations for children's futurity in three urban settings. In this thesis it is argued that locational habitus can be seen as a structuring device, mediated through embodied capital within education, cultural practices and family socialisation. Findings from this study illuminated how some parents are seeking to map the life of their children, particularly through the acquisition of specific personality traits which facilitate social fluency, adaptability and resilience. An original contribution arising from this research is how these desirable dispositions are transformative at times of transition and form the basis for future occupational competencies. Findings also propose changing parental attitudes to higher education with ambiguity regarding the pursuit of a university degree accentuated by high tuition fees, economic instability and uncertainty as to its value and whether future investment is likely to be suitably rewarded. No longer seen as purely securing educational advantage based upon the value of a 'good degree', parental rationale for university attendance is more explicitly linked to the accumulation of personal capital to maximise employability.

Keywords: aspiration, desirable dispositions, locational habitus

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And finally, to my grandchildren, Arty and Elijah, I dedicate this work to you in the hope that you also have every opportunity in life and know that you can follow you dreams, ‘aspice stellam’.

Contents

List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

Primary schools

PG Pine Grove Primary School

RH Rose Hill Primary School

WR Wood Rise Primary School

Secondary Schools

BPCC Bury Park Community Comprehensive

CCA Chapelle Carlton Academy

CG Coombe Gardens

F Fiveacres

RG Radley Grove

Terminology

NGS Non cognitive skills

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Chapter One - Introduction

This chapter outlines the background and rationale behind my research into parenting practices, life aspirations for children and elective belonging to chosen neighbourhoods in urban areas. The chapter provides an overview of UK government policy, current research in the area and a rationale for my engagement with the topic. It then explains the theoretical framework adopted in the study and outlines what this research provides in contribution to knowledge.

A personal reflection

Although I approach this study from a social researcher's perspective, it is important to acknowledge the 'me' by explicitly addressing my personal biography. In the recognition that in qualitative research the 'me' as a researcher is implicit in the research process, I have explicitly endeavoured to engage with my own experiences reflexively as a tool to make sense of the theoretical framework I have employed in an effort to 'sharpen my analytic lens'(Reay, 2017: 6).

My occupational background as an inclusion leader and school leader in inner city contexts was instrumental in shaping the direction of my research, in wanting to answer why whilst most parents had high aspirations many children would not pursue their education post-16 or pursue higher educational trajectories. As an inclusion leader in a large primary school federation, where a number of maintained schools join together under one governing body (National College, 2014), I welcomed government initiatives to benefit disadvantaged children although felt frustrated with the limitations of some enrichment programmes in benefiting the pupils for which they were targeted. As a privately educated middle class graduate and mother of three children working in a professional occupation, I consider myself to be typical of many parents I interviewed for this research. My own children pursued very similar educational and occupational trajectories to those which parents describe in their narratives. I taught at Wood Rise School and lived in the area for eight years, so what many of the parents said about living in the neighbourhood resonated very strongly with me.

Conversely, my early life was in a very different context from the one I operate as a parent. I was born into a working class family living on a large local authority housing estate and given up for private adoption as a toddler to a childless traditional middle class couple from a business family. Although my adoptive parents left school at 13 with no academic qualifications, in an effort to provide me with every opportunity I attended a private school located in an affluent part of the city, whilst living in a flat 'over the shop' they owned on a local authority estate. I often questioned what my life might have been if I had remained within the context of my birth family, and how or whether this might have transformed either my perspectives or outcomes of my life.

This personal history has undoubtedly been a driving factor in my choice to examine how family, socio-economic status and neighbourhood might impact upon life choices and chances of children and young people, and meeting my birth family recently has acted as a catalyst in completing this research. My two brothers and sister who remained within the family home left formal education at the age of 16, with my oldest brother excluded from school, and they still live in the same community where the norm is to leave school early. The local authority housing area of my birth was only recently cited in the Guardian newspaper as having the lowest figure in the country regarding the take up of higher education at only 8.6% compared to the 100% take up in the suburb close to the private school I attended (Fazackerley, 2019). The following section outlines how the education policy of successive UK governments, underpinned by choice and market forces, has contributed to inequality and class based segregation within schools.

Education policy contextual implications

A driving force in this study has been the recognition that the UK has one of the most socially hierarchical systems in the world, with statistics demonstrating that those children from deprived contexts consistently do less well than their affluent peers and with tertiary education acting as a vehicle to enable more affluent parents to pass on advantage (Field et al, 2007; Wheeler, 2017). The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) reported that England has elevated levels of segregation, for example working class and migrant pupils clustered in the same schools, with middle class students generally educated in smaller classes than working class pupils (Braconier, 2012, OECD, 2010). Since 1979 government policy driven by market forces has resulted in an increased emphasis on the parent as the individual consumer (Power, 2006). As highlighted by Reay (2017), since the 1990's the impact of market driven educational initiatives, accompanied by a focus on parent choice, has led to increased division between schools. The Education Reform Act of 1988 reflected international educational policy trends related to globalisation, and provided the framework for government initiatives through to the present day which seek to improve educational outcomes through a culture of marketisation (Strain, 2009).

The imbalanced intakes have resulted in half of all free school meal children attending in 1/5 of all schools, and 27 per cent of those on Pupil Premium or free school meals less likely to attain 5 or more A*-C GCSE's (Fergusen, 2017; Poverty site, 2011; DfE, 2014). Pupil Premium is an amount of money given to schools to improve outcomes of disadvantaged children, with pupils eligible on the basis of receiving free school meals, being children in care or from services families (DfE, 2019). Successive policies by both Labour and Conservative governments advocating quality and change in the public sector have been underscored by a climate of competition which has legitimised parental and family self-interest, and resulted in the 'semi-privatisation of education' (Reay, 2017: 457; Orio et al, 2007). The accompanying focus upon excellence where the highest educational accolades are seen as pivotal to measuring success, has also culminated in this type of excellence being dependent upon exclusion and differentiation for some pupils with Lucey and Reay suggesting that excellence, in a similar way to intellect, is class specific and the culture of excellence promotes the failure of working class children against middle class success (2002). Reay proposes that successive educational initiatives, whether supporting access to higher education or through school-based initiatives for gifted and talented children in urban areas, have not addressed inequality but instead have been adopted by more privileged middle parents to advantage their children attending urban state primary schools (Reay, 2006).

The politicisation of parenting has been underpinned by a view that educational policy is the means of increasing social mobility, embraced by New Labour government policy from just before the turn of this century and reflected by the mantra, 'education, education, education' (Blair, 1996). However, the recent State of the Nation report identified that social mobility has remained virtually stagnant since (Social mobility commission, 2019). Goldthorpe (2012) identified the limitation of these policies and whether they facilitate absolute or relative mobility if not connected to adaptations in class or occupational structure. He suggests that improving social mobility by educational policy is limited by the ability of middle class parents to utilise economic capital to support their children's attainment and that even if those children do not succeed they will still have the family cultural competencies and family resources to cushion them (Goldthorpe, 2012).

The policy regarding school choice and diversity within the education sector, underpinned by marketised and competitive incentives regarding school choice in urban areas, has resulted in a classed model of parenting in terms of what is an accepted version of parenting practices and what it means to be a 'good parent' (Orio et al, 2007: 103). Research has demonstrated that working class parents do care about education but that poverty accompanied by the unfair educational system results in continued underachievement and disadvantage (Wheeler, 2017). The emphasis on parenting quality, and explicit connection between parenting practices and positive outcomes for children, has contributed to a shift to a proactive parenting model which is underpinned by multifaceted choices, actions and emotions (Ramaekers and Suissa, 2012). Successive research has recognised that middle class parents particularly view their children from an individualised and ‘proactive’ stance as an educational and family life project to be continually developed and accomplished (Riddell, 2010: 16; Vincent, 2000; Karsten, 2015; Arendell, 2001). This politicisation of parenting has been accompanied by governmental emphasis on the link between aspiration and educational attainment, with an explicit connection made between aspiration and educational outcomes. This has resulted in a variety of government initiatives which have sought to raise the aspirations of lower socio-economic groups (Riddell, 2010), manifested in previous policy interventions such as the Every Child Matters (ECM) programme (DfES, 2004), Excellence in Cities (DfEE, 1999), and the Aim Higher programme (DfEE, 2000).

A recent report highlighted how the attainment gap has widened for disadvantaged children and recommended that the Department for Education (DfE) and the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) should combine their energies to addressing long terms educational inequality (Social mobility commission, 2019). However, it has been suggested that a key factor to this underachievement is that the working class are consistently in a position of disadvantage as they are the markers against which middle class success is generated (Lucey and Reay, 2002). Large scale studies have proven that lower socio-economic groups have the same level of aspirations, for example lack of engagement in higher education is mainly based upon school attainment and not low levels of aspiration on behalf of parents and young people from lower socio-economic groups (Harrison and Waller, 2018).

Background and rationale to the study

Within the field of social theory and education, this thesis investigates the perception of parents in relation to their identity, parenting practices and projected future for children. It is argued that examining parental expectations in terms of futurity, including educational and occupational trajectories, has the potential to expose changes in social formation and reproduction in the contemporary landscape. With class belonging aligned to lifestyles, and seen by parents as an adopted set of practices (Giddens, 1991), identity is now underpinned by 'culture, subjectivity and power' (Gillies, 2007: 19) and seen as a process rather than a static rank or position underpinned by stratification (Reay and Ball, 1998).

The principal aim of this thesis is to examine parental aspirations regarding children's futurity, how they relate to parenting styles and to what extent their sense of elective belonging to their chosen neighbourhood might be underpinned by values, personal biography, cultural practices and family socialisation (Savage et al, 2005). Examination of parental aspirations in relation to preferred higher educational and occupational trajectories for children appraised the connection between parental aspirations and the longer term futurity of children. The word 'futurity' was first coined by Prout (1999) to describe life mapping by parents, and has been defined by Vincent and Ball as, 'planning ahead to surround children with class hopes and education' (2006: 150). Within the context of inner city community change and the middle class colonisation of former working class schools, study explores the potential impact of the cultivation of an urban village environment on families, including those from differing socio-economic contexts and argues that the twenty-first century has seen a pronounced transformation in economic and social life within inner city demographics, illustrated by a changed urban spatial environment (Butler and Robson, 2003; 2001). Although the term urban village implies space and diversity, it has previously been defined as a city area which appeals to the aesthetics and consumption practices of the middle classes and can facilitate inner city living whilst living apart from differing social groups (Butler, 2003; Keddie, 2014). An urban village can be seen as facilitating a 'café culture community' in being a comfortable space for consumption which is particularly represented by having pleasing cafes and shops (Barnes et al, 2006). Butler and Robson (2003) utilised the metropolitan habitus of London as a mapping device, not only in regarding differences across groups but also in identifying united attitudes, beliefs and feelings within gentrified groups. The following research questions based on the literature review were constructed in order to fulfil the aim of this research, with key terms defined within this chapter:

1. What are the aspirations of middle-class parents across contrasting locales and how are they mediated through elective belonging to neighbourhood and school choice?
2. In what way do middle class parenting practices transmit advantage and does emphasis shift at times of educational transition?
3. What is the connection between long term aspirations of middle class parents and higher educational or occupational trajectories?

The contexts of employment, housing, consumption and education are particularly examined in this thesis, with emphasis given to informal social interaction and individuals' reported connections with everyday experiences (Butler and Robson, 2003, 2001). These contexts are of particular significance when seen as sites of conflict, where advantage is exercised by dominant groups through social reproduction. This dominance is based upon locational identity of middle class factions who choose to live in an urban village neighbourhood with 'people like us' (Butler and Robson, 2003: 1792). Research by Savage (2010) has called for investigation into links between narrative, learning and social patterns, particularly in narratives and patterns connected to class, ethnicity, location and region. Comparing parenting practices and aspirations between contexts illuminates parental perceptions related to the act of reproduction both in short and long term educational trajectories and transitions to ensure children are continually advantaged in terms of positioning and futurity (Vincent and Ball, 2006).

Looking within the family and at family practices (Vincent and Ball, 2006), as well as the interplay of personal and locational habitus between institution, school and community, this thesis investigated how middle class parenting practices provide short and longer term advantage to children. Data analysis considered the ‘unacknowledged normality’ of the middle classes as a dominant group (Savage, 2003: 536), which signifies a growing emphasis on a more fluid approach to parenting and representing a bolder and more open approach in terms of achieving aspirations for children and maximising options (Reay et al, 2011). This approach has been identified as ‘proactive parenting’, with parents making appropriate choices, taking the initiative and embracing opportunities in the quest to ensure children’s smooth transitions, educational trajectories and life choices (Riddell, 2010: 16). This study argues that with the family seen as a vehicle for social reproduction, parental biographies are a pivotal tool in more multifaceted dimensions between community and society (Power et al, 2018). Informed by Bengtsen, this study advocates that examining parenting practices at the microsocial level provides the opportunity to view the family as,

> *The context for negotiating the problems of continuity and change, of individuality and integration, between and within generations in ways that allow the continuous re-creation of society* (Bengtson et al, 2002: 168).

The definition of aspirations and life mapping

In order to conceptualise this study, it is relevant to consider our interpretation of aspirations of parents and how they might relate to parents planning for the futurity of their children through life mapping. Aspiration is commonly defined as a strong hope or wish for achievement or success and in a basic form can be identified as 'what an individual hopes will happen in the future' (Gorard et al, 2012: 6). Ritchie et al suggested aspirations are 'the big picture' transcending parental expectations, whilst including goals which 'are likely to lead to social inclusion and societal cohesion', and echoes other research in calling for further clarification into how they are defined (Ritchie et al, 2005: 2). In relation to social science they have been described by terms as 'planful competence' (Schoon, 2006: 123), yet Ritchie et al's study professed that the most crucial element has been that they 'are instrumental in charting a life course and in focusing time and energy' (2005: 2). Aspirations are traditionally linked to success whether in relation to a society or individual attainment (Flouri, 2006).
As proposed by Ritchie et al (2005) we need to understand what we mean by success, which can be argued as absolutely context dependent. Life mapping by parents for their children can be seen as 'horizon' (Butler and Robson, 2003: 141) or what Prout calls futurity (1999), and has been described as the planning for future trajectories which are based upon class related values and education (Vincent and Ball, 2006). The notion that planning for these imagined futures, and mitigating risk, is implanted within middle class habitus and embedded in class-based processes of reproduction is embedded in the framework of this thesis which is outlined in the following section.

Defining the theoretical framework

This section will situate the research in the context of the relevant theoretical concepts, which particularly draw upon Bourdieu's conceptual framework. In the following section I explore the justification for these theoretical principles and reflect upon how the framing of them was developed throughout the research process.

Bourdieu's conception of knowledge

This study considers how families help to reproduce social advantage and disadvantage through the perspective of Bourdieu's conceptual framework regarding social and cultural reproduction, which sees the family as a 'habitus generating institution' (Reay, 1998: 56; Bourdieu, 1984; Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992) and the education system as a site for social reproduction (Grenfell and James, 1998). This thesis draws heavily upon how capital is transmitted through the family, and the part that education plays in reproducing social structure through the legitimisation of the transmission of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986). However, as argued by Grenfell (2009), this study explicitly recognises that the concept of capitals can only be recognised as the wider part of Bourdieu's field theory whereby each form has a symbolic effect when it is implicitly recognised as being valuable and recognised within that field.

Reinforced by the work of Vincent (2017), the stance I adopt in this thesis recognises how parental habitus and the accompanying acquisition and mobilisation of capitals reproduce the dominant middle class position. It is argued that it is still the case that values and attitudes reproduced in many middle class families are the dominant views in what is not only valued in society, but in the education system (Bourdieu, 1986; Wheeler, 2017).

Without habitus, reproduced as a 'socialized subjectivity', the concept of capital and field is meaningless (Bourdieu and Waquant, 1992: 126). The habitus of the family is reinforced in education providing ‘added value’ in terms of embedded dispositions sanctioned through the education system (Bourdieu, 1986: 2). Bourdieu also highlighted how cultural capital is transmitted through the family, through spending and usable time, to ensure transmission where entry into the labour market is delayed through extended schooling, for example, and university entrance (Bourdieu, 1986).

There has been some criticism of Bourdieu’s conception of knowledge as being too deterministic in making simplistic assumptions regarding the homogeneity of the working and middle class experiences (Irwin and Elley, 2011). This is partly due to Bourdieu having a perceived focus on the extensiveness of struggles over social dominance and suppression. Lawler (2004) defined this as more symptomatic of the pessimism of Bourdieu, rather than based upon determinism. However, the alternative view held by other academics is that the concept of habitus provides an opposing stance to determinism, and interpret his framework as attempting to overcome key contradictions, for example micro vs. macro and freedom vs. determinism (Higlers, 2009).

The perception of locational habitus

This section continues to engage with the notion of habitus, and particularly how for many middle class urban families locational habitus is intertwined with narratives of belonging and connection through identification to neighbourhood. Former research has proposed that parents are using ‘narratives of connectivity and global ties’ whereby they have a sense of ‘elective belonging’ (Savage et al, 2005: 15) to their residential area. This powerful sense of community felt by parents is based on far more than geographical location, but within a strong identity of belonging connected to ‘face to face interaction, shared normative understanding and a sense of homogeneity and solidarity’ (Savage et al, 2001: 120). Previous study has outlined the overwhelming role of territorial differentiation, which exists at the core of urban contemporary change (Savage, 2010; Waquant, 2008). A project commissioned by the Centre for Research on Socio-Cultural Change (CRESC) has been examining trajectories of participation and equality in terms of space, place and locality, establishing links between social inequality and community engagement by building on the cultural capital and social exclusion project (Bennett et al, 2009) whilst developing theoretical frameworks regarding urban network social networks and processes.

The recognition of 'elective belonging', a term coined to explain how middle class newcomers claimed neighbourhood affinity through making residential selection based upon their choice as consumers, offers the opportunity to redefine our perceptions of local belonging (Savage, 2010; Jackson and Butler, 2015). What is significant about this concept is the way that middle class people have moved into a neighbourhood where they have claimed 'moral rights' through their ability to move to an inhabited space which exhibits significant symbolicalism and not just instrumentality of value (Savage et al, 2010: 116). This thesis engages with the concept of locational habitus on the premise that through elective belonging 'urban space is a situating framework and an active process in trajectories of social reproduction' (Boterman and Bridge, 2015: 249).

Playing out their lives within a café culture 'urban village' lifestyle, middle class parents establish themselves within a community which is a specific place not just functionally and demographically important to them but also symbolically significant as legitimate and recognised (Butler and Robson, 2003: 176; Bourdieu 1987). This raises implications of the marginalisation of others through the process of doxa, and whether those whose lifestyles are at odds with the café culture, urban village community are excluded. Doxa was defined by Bourdieu as 'a state of immediate adherence that is established in practice between a habitus and the field to which it is attuned in an unchallenged acceptance of the world' (Bourdieu, 1990: 68, Bourdieu and Waquant, 1992).

With habitus defined as, ‘an open systems of dispositions’ that is constantly influenced by personal experience in a social context (Bourdieu and Waquant, 1992: 1330) it is argued that habitus is underpinned by emotional meaning within ‘personal and social dimensions situated in time, space and place’(Gillies, 2007: 36). Habitus, with its dependence on human memory and history, is ‘a process of socialisation whereby the dominant models of thought and experience inherent in the social and physical world are internalized by social agents’ (Robbins, 1991:84). Research conducted in the United States by Dumais (2006) proposed that, within the theory of reproduction, habitus plays a crucial role, whereby the beliefs, attitudes and behaviours that are portrayed by family members are reproduced in the attitudes and values of their children, possibly resulting in self-fulfilling prophecies, whereby these narratives are subsequently recognised as ‘part of their destiny, their self-futures’ (Riddell, 2010: 52). An overarching feature of the concept of habitus, and upon which the process of reproduction depends, is the access of parents to both social and material resources (Gillies, 2007). Data analysis from the research by Savage et al suggests that parents wish to create a community underpinned by their particular values, biography, aspirations and resources, substituting their sense of ‘place based rootedness in their domestic and residential lives’ and establishing a process of locational habitus (2005: 5).

Against a background of social interaction organised around different fields (Bourdieu, 1977, 1992; Bourdieu and Waquant, 1992), investigation regarding the links between spatial attachment and identity contextualises forms of expressed belonging, posing questions regarding the fluid nature of contemporary change (Savage, 2010). The exploration into how these characteristics interact with each other has implications regarding managed models of school policy and pedagogy and how they will need to take into account these processes (Fernstein, 2004). With the connection between neighbourhood, education and social networks embedded within middle class habitus, the following section considers not only the spatialisation of class but also how class has been redefined, not as a collective class awareness characterised by fixed tastes, but now reflective and dynamic and with a recognition of the interconnections between the individual, family, class and the market (Savage, 2003).

The perception of class

Informed by this theoretical framework, the understanding of class in this thesis is underpinned by Bourdieusian class theory. It is argued that Bourdieu's field analysis provides an effective vehicle for understanding the connection between 'class structure as a multi-dimensional social space, with an emphasis upon consumption, viewed in an arena of social life' (Weininger, 2005: 107).

Implicit within this theory is that class background is defined by intergenerational stocks of the three primary forms of capital; economic capital, social capital and cultural capital (Friedman and Laurison, 2019: 14). These forms of capital are inherited, although are hugely influential in structuring childhoods (Freidman and Laurison, 2019). Economic and social capitals provide advantage through the acquisition of financial assets and social networks. However, the acquisition of embodied cultural capital is of particular significance in reproducing class privilege in that it provides children with a set of dispositions which are recognised as providing authenticity in social life (Friedman and Laurison, 2019). Through habitus these embodied dispositions provide symbolic mastery in terms of taste, lifestyle, values and opinions which are a valuable currency as providing cultural distinction (Bourdieu, 1984). Although habitus can be seen working within particular fields as 'the internalized form of class condition and of the conditioning it entails', this thesis does not propose that individuals are not able to adapt and change according to experience and different circumstances (Bennett et al, 2009: 95). However, it is underpinned by the principle that the effects of class origin is persistent and life affecting, and a significant force whereby classes are consistently attempting to enforce their own perception of the world which is in line with their own interests and security (Bourdeau and Waquant, 1992).

> *'class remains a central factor in the structuring of contemporary cultural practices in Britiain: class matters. Whatever social advantage might arise from heavy engagement in cultural activities will accrue to those who are highly educated, who occupy higher occupational class positions, and who have backgrounds within higher social classes' (Bennett et al, 2009: 52)*

Class framing and neighbourhood

Theoretical investigation questions whether class identities have been re-made through 'individualized, emotional frames' (Savage et al, 2010: 117) whereby class perception and rebranding of class is now seen according to cultural tastes and preferences (Skeggs, 2004) and if so, whether research data will shed light on any of these differing articulations. It is argued that the study by Savage et al identifies key features of this re-making process which illustrate that the middle class is no longer emergent, but now fully formed and established (1992). Savage's previous research on the 'spatialisation of class' illustrated how significant territorial attachment to residence is both symbolically and culturally significant for many middle class families inhabiting urban areas (Savage et al, 2010; Savage et al, 2005).

Class values remade through these frames, particularly in relation to parenting and lifestyle, will subsequently involve the exclusion of those people whose values are contradictory to those beliefs. This is corroborated by the work of Skeggs (2011) which highlighted how the middle classes maintain their interests by legitimisation both through exclusionary activities and marking out of symbolic borders, and decreasing access to others in terms of institutionalised fields such as education. This will be signified by the 'sense of one's place' in terms of the doxa within the field, with the habitus of those groups of parents potentially delegitimising the views and practices of other groups (Bourdieu 1984; Bourdieu and Eagleton, 1992). This has implications both in terms of position within the social space and setting limits on mobility for those whose lifestyles are at odds with the café culture style community (Butler and Robson, 2003).

The interplay of social capital and networks

In order to explain the power of social capital, it is perceived as a tactical device, employed by parents through social networks to facilitate coordination and cooperation and employed as a strategy to steer children's life course (Putnam, 2000; Riddell, 2010). Employing social capital at key transitions or significant decision making times is seen as especially powerful in enabling a smooth navigation of children's trajectories (Power et al, 2003; Riddell, 2010). The power of 'weak ties' in establishing interpersonal networks enable parents to draw upon information and advice, as well as support formulation of aspirations and negotiate obstacles, providing the most productive micro, meso and macro conduit between large and small scale associations and networks (Granovetter, 1973). These terms can locate research analysis by engaging with the interconnection between the micro in smaller levels of interaction, with the meso in terms of groups and the macro level related to large scale interactions on national and global level (Barbour, 2017). It has been argued that the bridging and connecting of social capital across all these levels has significant impact on both aspiration and attainment of children (Halpern, 2005).

Putman (2002) outlined the significant power of social capital on society, where coordination and cooperation is facilitated for mutual benefit through features of social organisation such as norms, network and social trust and metaphorically describing bonding social capital as a 'sociological superglue' (23), both having the potential as a vehicle of inclusion and exclusion. This thesis illustrates how social capital within urban contexts intersects with the 'socially rich' nature of neighbourhoods within gentrified areas, and highlights its relationship to parental identity as well as the interplay of these powerful networks accompanying this in relation to family, consumption and education (Butler and Robson, 2003).

The notion of gentrification was defined by Hackworth as ‘the re-creation of space for progressively more affluent users’ (2002:1) and was seen by Butler and Robson (2003) as a structuring element of strategic activity for urban middle class families. Investigating why fixed locations are important to advantaged groups this research looks beyond this notion of gentrification, examining any connections to elective belonging within parental narratives, as well as relationships between class related cultural tastes and participation (Skeggs, 2004; Savage, 2010). Guided by the concept that ‘people’s sense of the future is a telling indicator of their relationship to place, rather than past’ (Savage, 2010: 133), has potential to illuminate the workings of social structure during points of transition (Riddell, 2010; Ball et al, 1995; Power et al, 2003). This contributes to understanding the meaning, nature and challenges of concepts of spatial identity, and whether the structuring dispositions of parents related to locational and elective belonging are transferrable, particularly at key transition points within the educational system. I argue that the notion of spatial belonging is now a feature of the established middle class, with parental identity now more closely aligned to locational and lifestyle habitus than traditional class perceptions based on generational family stratification.

Significance of the study

This thesis argues that through empirical research there is value in exposing and unpicking the ‘normality of the middle class’ in terms of class identities in order to illuminate the ‘fluid nature of contemporary change’ (Savage, 2003: 536). Examining the personal aspirations and experiences of individuals illuminates the micro-macro linkage, from personal experience to larger scale implications for the workings of social structure and contemporary change (Granovetter, 1973). With family seen as a vehicle for social reproduction it is argued that parental profiles biographies are a pivotal tool analytically (Power et al, 2004(Savage, 2016).From analysis of the qualitative data, three key themes have arisen in relation to the research questions:

- Elective belonging of middle class families
- Parenting practices and desirable dispositions
- Parental perceptions regarding higher education and futurity

Elective belonging of middle class families

Examining parental perceptions to elective belonging in three school catchment areas was valuable in uncovering intricate middle class differences according to neighbourhood, biography of parents and intergenerational experiences. For many parents, the strong sense of belonging they felt to living in an urban village was based upon far more than consumption. What was particularly powerful was how elective belonging to neighbourhood empowered parents in surrounding their children in 'cultural tools' as embodied cultural capital reproduced through behaviours, practices, dispositions and cultural pursuits (Friedman and Laurison, 2019: 155). In this thesis it is argued that locational habitus can be seen as a structuring device, mediated through embodied capital within education, cultural practices and family socialisation. However, there was some indication that some parents did not see themselves as living within the same café culture community, with those from differing socio-economic contexts feeling ill at ease with their habitus not reflecting that of the dominant group (Savage et al, 2005). Although many parents cited the diversity of the urban area as a positive factor in inhabiting that area, some seeing this as an asset in developing the multi-cultural competency of their children, this was sometimes seen as living against a background of social diversity as opposed to true social mixing. Whilst parents favour the notion of social diversity as a concept, they particularly embrace neighbours with similar values and lifestyles. It was noticeable that in the findings related to the suburban context, parental narratives also alluded to living alongside neighbours with similar values and lifestyles, although their connection to neighbourhoods was much more based upon instrumental elective belonging.

Parenting practices and desirable dispositions

An original contribution arising from this research is the identification of attitudes to learning as personality traits being actively cultivated within children by parents. The study argues that by facilitating the development of these ‘soft skills’ or ‘masterful learning dispositions’ (Siraj-Blatchford, 2010), parents are preparing young people for future ‘occupational competencies’ (Vincent and Ball, 2006: 164). Previous research in this field has identified parental skills and family background as the most important influencing factors on the development of socio emotional or non-cognitive skills (Gutman and Schoon, 2013; Anger and Schnitzlein, 2016).

Within the increasingly globalised and competitive world in which these young people will be seeking employment, behavioural capabilities such as empathy, initiative, choice making, problem solving and resilience are likely to be increasingly valued by employers (Brown et al, 2008). In addition to enhancing university and career trajectories, these personality traits may also advantage young people in terms of establishing valuable networks and maximising life chances and choices. Young (1997) proposed the impact of a family’s cultivation of particular dispositions in relation to social engagement, and in turn this impact of intergenerational transmission of self-esteem and self-confidence and the role of these attributes in civil society engagement (Power et al, 2018). It is significant that parental narratives suggest that these dispositions are transformative and fluid, particularly at pivotal points of transition, and this thesis argues that they provide a structuring framework for children and young people mastering competencies which provide advantage in terms of futurity, and particularly in providing mastering behavioural codes to support occupational trajectories.

Parental perceptions regarding higher education and futurity

Data analysis engages with parental perceptions regarding both university and subject choice in terms of a first degree. This is against a background of the challenge for university graduates in ensuring they have a reward upon their higher educational investment, both in terms of quality of working life and career trajectories, as well as tangible benefits in terms of salaries and pensions. A high skilled and low wage global economy, with an accompanying global auction of graduates, may well threaten middle class aspirations and accentuate 'positional competition' within the middle classes (Brown et al, 2008: 17). Research findings suggest changing perceptions of parents regarding the purpose of university attendance, with rising stakes played out in the field of higher education. No longer seen as purely securing educational advantage based upon the value of a 'good degree', parental rationale for university attendance is more explicitly linked to the accumulation of personal capital to maximise employability in terms of 'constructing the employable self' (Bathmaker et al, 2013:740, Brown et al, 2011).This raises implications regarding social inclusion policies within higher education institutions if practices are to be truly equitable for all students and signify a 'just imaginary' (Gale and Hodge, 2014: 701). Although many parents are still seeking university credentials for their children, in order to secure distinction these need to be accompanied by personal capital gained through cultural capital provision, for example experiential and enrichment activities, social networking and positioning.

Outline of thesis

This chapter explained the background underpinning my engagement with parental practices and aspirations for children, and introduced the theoretical stance used as a foundation for the thesis. Chapter two introduces the theoretical framework underpinning the study and justifies the choice of theoretical concepts. Chapter three seeks to conceptualize contemporary family practices by reviewing existing research and identifying dominant themes surrounding the topic of parenting. Chapter four outlines the methodological approaches adopted within this research and justifies the choice of epistemological and philosophical positions. Chapters five, six and seven present the analysis of the empirical data from this research, firstly revealing parental attitudes towards belonging and community, subsequently comparing narratives in terms of parenting and family practices, and finally examining the aspirations of parents regarding higher education and employment trajectories of children. Chapter eight is the conclusion which outlines the key findings of the thesis, engages with the limitations of the study and highlights implications and recommendations in terms of policy, practice and research.

Chapter Two - Theorising parenting and family practices

This chapter outlines the framework underpinning this thesis, and explains how the chosen theoretical concepts relate to parenting and family practices. Through the lens of Bourdieusian theory, and with family seen as a habitus generating institution, the notion of locational habitus is examined in order to illuminate the working of social structure within and across communities. Exploring the power of social and emotional capital reveals how mobilisation of capitals reproduces advantage in terms of children's futurity.

Bourdieu's conceptual framework

This research is set within Bourdieu's conceptual framework regarding social and cultural reproduction. It is utilised as a conceptual tool within this study, not only in exploring social practices in terms of middle class identities but also looking within the family, at family practices, and considering how families reproduce social advantage and disadvantage. Bourdieu's approach is sometimes described as 'relational', in being as much about relationships and social practices as it is about than elements of people themselves (James, 2011), where social activity can be seen as 'a game' within a field site (Grenfell and James, 1998). The field is seen as an active social space, and has been defined as 'a structured system of social relations at a micro and macro level' (Grenfell and James, 1998: 16; Friedman and Laurison, 2019).

Individuals are legitimised to enter the field by the possession of specific active properties which operate within it, which Bourdieu defined as 'specific capital' (Bourdieu and Waquant, 1992: 108). This specific capital is exhibited as three types; although Bourdieu proposed they all had sub-types, these fundamental varieties are economic capital, cultural capital and social capital. To these three fundamental capitals Bourdieu added the dimension of symbolic capital which is the form that one of these capitals takes 'when it is grasped through categories of perception that recognize its specific logic or, if you prefer, misrecognize the arbitrariness of its possession and accumulation' (Bourdieu and Waquant, 1992: 119). Consequently, the efficiency of symbolic capital is dependent upon authentic communication practices, where it is symbolically given value by its recognition by social agents (Bourdieu, 1986; Siisiäinen, 2000). As people travel through these social spaces, they encounter opportunities to expand their overall value through the acquisition, formation and composition of capitals (Skeggs, 2011). The structure of the field is defined by the allocation of the specific capital which is active within it, and players must recognize its operation in order to construct it,

> *To say the structure of the field is defined by the structure of the distribution of the specific forms of capital that are active in it means that when my knowledge of forms of capital is sound I can differentiate everything there is to differentiate. (Bourdieu and Waquant, 1992: 108).*

It is argued in this thesis that Bourdieu offers a robust framework in terms of contemporary socio-cultural issues, particularly when aiming to illuminate the changing face of social structure and relationships between social, family and cultural practices (Bennett et al, 2009). In line with the work of Butler and Robson (2003), analysis of the interplay between the forms of capital is effective in illuminating both social and economic outcomes in urban areas. This model provides insight into how middle class families, amidst an increasingly competitive climate, are consolidating their prosperity and strategies of cultural reproduction by maintaining distinction spatially through their neighbourhood belonging (Butler and Robson, 2003). This framework is additionally suited to this form of research in terms of its identity as reflexive sociology, whereby the researcher is implicated within the study as much as the matter being investigated (James, 2011).

Bourdieu developed a highly specific set of conceptual terms within his theory of reproduction, which he called 'thinking tools', specified through particular terms and concepts such as field, habitus, capital and doxa (Grenfell, 2009: 31). Contemporary researchers have explored Bourdieusian theory in terms of providing a set of ideas from which to illuminate social and educational phenomena, such as cultural capital, with some concepts addressed as a 'stand-alone concept' such as 'Bourdieu's Social Capital Theory' (Grenfell, 2009: 18). However, in line with the work of Grenfell, it is proposed that these concepts are best understood when seen as integral and inter-related with the 'field theory' in its entirety (2009). The activity of forces within the field define the type of capital and 'a capital does not exist or function except in relation to a field' (Bourdieu and Waquant, 1992: 101). Similarly, without habitus, the axioms of capital and field will have no interpretation (Bourdieu, 1977). The process of habitus connects practice, or agency, to capital and field where it is actualised (Quaye, 2014).

This thesis engages extensively with Bourdieu's field theory in the belief that it particularly provides a discrete way of analysing the relationship between territory and inequality (Savage, 2010). This theoretical framework engages with some key arguments in terms of Bourdieu's theory of reproduction, particularly in relation to the following concepts: the significance of habitus; the family as a habitus generating institution; the power of social capital in reproducing advantage; the interplay of family, locational and institutional habitus. It is important to note that by drawing on the emerging data and interpretation of findings, this research attempts to build on these concepts by not only identifying them but considering new categories and the effectiveness of concepts in contemporary urban contexts (Bennett et al, 2009). It explicitly engages with the notion that the family is positioned as 'the heartland of the formation of classed subjects' (Vincent and Ball, 2006: 68) where class action is seen as reproduction as opposed to transformation (Reay, 2006). The Bourdieu- inspired new sociology of class (Savage, 2003) provides opportunity to explore routine practices which underpin perceptions, values and motivations of parents and enabling a greater insight into the interplay and acquisition of habitus within the family context (Bourdieu, 2000; Aarseth, 2017).

Habitus as a concept

The notion of habitus, defined as a set of 'durable, transposable dispositions' (Bourdieu, 1997: 72), is viewed in this thesis as a dynamic concept when investigating parental identity, and particularly the links between belonging and locational identity (Reay et al, 2011). Reay et al utilised the concept of habitus to 'understand how sets of habits, attitudes, assumptions, expectations and practices come to the surface in families and considering the types of behaviours and responses in families which it might initiate' (2011: 26). Habitus is therefore a model of embodied capitals, accumulated over time, which is 'habitually lived and displayed by the body' (Skeggs, 20011: 501). A critical feature of habitus is its application across varying fields and the transference across groups in order to produce a united set of attitudes (Bennett et al, 2011). Bourdieu's 'economic metaphor model' sees value accrual as a strategic element of 'playing the game', where the habitus is organised as a structuring element, and developed from birth through access and inclusion to and from fields of exchange as a vehicle for accumulating value (Skeggs, 2011: 501). As a result of legitimisation, middle class formation acts to protect class interests (Skeggs, 2011).

It is important to remember when analysing and interpreting the data in this research that habitus is instrumental in framing and interpreting new experiences, as though it is 'social structure in the head', by working in and through individual's values and beliefs, and not on them (Riddell, 2010:5; Ball, 2003). Through 'symbolic boundary marking', presented through inclusionary and exclusionary practices, this model and analysis of 'subject of value' is an effective way of charting middle class parenting and family practices (Skeggs, 2011: 501). In order to consider theoretical insights related to habitus it is essential to not just map across them searching for differences but also consider synergies across them (Longhurst and Savage (1996). However, 'the concept of value is contingent and situational', situated on people and in practices on how value can come into existence and be legitimised (Skeggs, 2011: 509). The middle class 'subject of value', marked by entitlement and assumption, occupies a remarkably different space than the time, space and value routes of the working class and that different material circumstances offer alternative options for value (Skeggs, 2011).

Family as a habitus generating institution

Underpinning much research in the field of parental aspiration and the intergenerational transfer of advantage and disadvantage is the perception of the family as a 'habitus generating institution' (Reay, 1998: 56; Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992) whose intergenerational biographies echo not just through individual lives but through generations (Reay at al, 2011; Reay, 1998; Bennett et al, 2010). In addressing the contradictory role of the family in civil society research, Power et al (2018) identifies the family as inhabiting a pivotal role in social, cultural and biological reproduction and as 'the fulcrum balancing change and continuity over time in human society' (Bengtson, 2002: 167).

> *Parents are seeking to achieve some narrative coherence, linking and making consistent the lives of their children with their own. They are also reproducing through their children their tastes, distinctions and world view. (Ball, 2003: 165)*

By fostering talents, providing opportunities and encouraging family discussion of feelings and opinions, children develop a sense of entitlement and the ability to 'learn cultural codes and styles that facilitate their successful integration into social institutions' (Bodivski and Farkas, 2008: 906; Lareau, 2003). Examining the notion that the family is central to any insight into cultural reproduction, this study follows up on the notion that dispositions can be activated into capital and examines the possible familial role in this. However, 'family functioning across recent generations cannot be understood separate from its wider cultural and sociohistorical context' (Bengtsen et al, 2002: 154).

In the current century, the impact of the intergenerational transmission of 'achievement orientations' as personal attributes is more influential than ever due to a variety of factors (Bengtsen et al, 2002: 6). Increased expectancy in the human lifespan, alongside the decline in 'lifelong careers', and accompanying concern regarding job insecurity, has heightened the value placed by middle class parent upon 'transportable credentials' (Power et al, 2003: 117). Although entry to elite higher educational institutions are seen as markers of these credentials, the significance of the 'class slipper' concept emphasises the importance of self-expression, authenticity and personal attributes, over historical notions of consistency and self-discipline, in negotiating entry and success within particular occupations (Friedman and Laurison, 2019). The perception of who will 'fit in' to a particular organisation or occupation will subsequently have impact upon who will have a successful trajectory within a chosen career. Hence, skills acquisition plays an influential role upon determining life chances, with family context and culture influencing the disposition to learn (Hoskins and Barker, 2014). Although Bourdieu recognised that the reproduction of class relations through education has become problematical in a context of credential inflation, Power et al (2003) suggest that he did not acknowledge the impact of changing relationship between education and the middle classes, particularly in alternative contexts from France in for example the UK, and anticipate the broader attributes that employers will be seeking in their recruits. Against a backdrop of credential inflation within the UK market, recent research calls for increased academic engagement into how through the vehicle of 'habitus' is transmuted into 'personal capital' (Brown et al, 2016). With credentials no longer holding their previous currency value in terms of their scarcity, there is greater emphasis on an individual's own personal qualities in addition to academic qualifications when seeking entry into the labour market (Brown et al, 2016).

Cultural practices produce cultural capacity in the form of skills and capabilities, which in turn supports the generation of an individual's development of cultural competencies (Bennett et al, 2009). 'Intergenerational solidarity and parental affirmation' have a huge influence upon positive outcomes for children, with particular impact on higher self-esteem, and educational and occupational aspirations (Bengtsen et al, 2002: 153). Through individuals and families, intergenerational transferral, particularly in terms of values, aspirations and self-esteem, is intrinsically related to family background and the social context which the middle class child develops from birth until adulthood (Bengtsen et al, 2002),

> *These elements of 'cultural competency' are rooted in middle class socialisation and inculculated disproportionally via a privileged family milieu. In turn, those outside this white, middle class 'norm' must 'devote particularly high levels of energy to deciphering and navigating these quite complex codes, which may detract for their ability to perform at the highest level* (Friedman and Laurison, 2019: 126).

Within the social space inhabited, in families over generations, and through the transmission of capitals over time, varying amounts of capital assets are accessible and acquired (Skeggs, 1997). Social, economic, cultural and emotional capital, drawn upon as a range of resources to provide advantage are aligned by social connectedness, whether financial or material, attitudes and values, alongside vast amounts of emotional investment in children (Gillies, 2008). A substantial body of evidence demonstrates how significant families are in passing down these capitals, which are in turn important assets for all types of social engagement (Power et al, 2018; Ball, 2003; Vincent and Ball, 2006). Bengtson et al (2002) propose that there may well be an increasing significance regarding the intergenerational influence on how young people perceive themselves, for example the transmission of self-esteem. However, prior research has called for increased engagement with how middle class families who share similar resources and aspirations, alongside comparable family biographies and educational trajectories, reach alternative outcomes (Power et al, 2003).

Parental rank, connected intrinsically to educational level and occupational experiences, and those parents whose occupations reward dispositions such as autonomy, risk taking and innovation have been proven to cultivate those same attributes in their children (Bengtson et al, 2002). Evidence from research suggests that parents, both mothers and fathers, make a huge impact upon children's occupational aspirations. This is not only by providing the cultural, social and emotional resources for aspirations to be achieved, but also through the role modelling processes within families and parental socialisation (Bengtsen et al, 2002).

Parents are demonstrating reflexivity in terms of a project of the self, with the individual seen as a socially constructed project (Giddens, 1991) yet being shaped, and in turn dependent on, habitus (Bourdieu, 1977, 1993; Bourdieu and Waquant, 1992). Futurity for their children is seen as 'flexible futures, a landscape of possibilities rather than discrete and rigid paths' (Beck-Gernsheim, 1996: 153). New middle class families, defined as those involved in the circulation of symbolic knowledge as opposed to the old middle class who are engaged in the distribution of material goods and services, are individual centred in emphasis (Power and Whitty, 2002; Bernstein, 2003). This result in a focus on the self being directed more towards 'ambiguous personal identity and flexible role performances' (Power et al, 2003: 34).

Parents have the ability and opportunity to not only to duplicate 're-creations' of aspects of their own lives, and those of their own parentage, habitus can be utilised as 'reactions' in avoiding intergenerational aspects and features of schooling and parenting which are not deemed as desirable, or advantageous (Reay et al, 2013).

In short: we find that contemporary families have not lost their vitality and functionality, despite changes in structure; that families continue to influence and transmit to their children *the achievement orientations children need to effectively function in society*. (Bengtsen et al, 2002: 154)

The value of cultural capital

Bourdieu proposed that cultural capital exists in three forms, the embodied state, the objectified state and the institutionalised state (Bourdieu, 1986, Bourdieu and Waquant, 1992). The embodied or incorporated form alludes to long lasting dispositions habits and knowledge obtained through family socialisation and upbringing, with the objectified state referring to material cultural possessions such as books, pictures and machines, and the institutionalised state being officially recognised educational qualifications (Bourdieu, 1986; Serre and Wagner, 2015). Incorporated cultural capital is based upon attributes related to social ease and networks rather than academic performance. In its symbolic form, cultural capital is mutually recognised by others within the same group and underpinned by narratives of belonging and social integration. Out of the three forms, the incorporated or embodied state is seen to be the most fundamental in not only enabling class reproduction, but because the acquisition of institutionalized capital and objectified capital is to some extent dependent upon the possession of dispositions which are founded upon embodied capital (Bourdieu, 1986; Friedman and Laurison, 2019). Skeggs (2004) suggested that in the employment climate of the current century, acquisition of particular forms of cultural capital are more significant than qualifications alone in enabling employers to demarcate personal suitability that is recognised as being compatible with their organisation. This is corroborated by Friedman and Laurison (2019) proposing that embodied, or incorporated, capital in providing a class slipper effect is the most substantial vehicle in the perpetuation of the class ceiling in the UK's top occupations and elite organisations.

Cultural capital is more aligned to reflective orientation and, whilst understood to be a significant resource, it is now perceived as having more subtle parameters, part of a range of cultural products, as opposed to being a prescriptive domination of legitimate culture (Bennett et al, 2009). Significantly, Bourdieu (1986: 17) defined cultural capital in particular as being 'the best hidden and socially most determinant educational investment'. The replication of values has certainly been identified as an overarching feature of intergenerational transmission, particularly in relation to individualism and materialism (Bengtsen et al, 2002). Facilitating cultural pursuits, such as museum visits, alongside extra-curricular activities, for example music lessons and ballet, can be seen at face value as supporting personal development and morally good activities for children to follow (Skeggs, 2004). However, the most impactful element is the value of the exchange later in life in terms of employability and social networking (Skeggs, 2004).

The power of social capital, causal pathways and outcomes

This thesis theoretically engages with the notion of social capital, considering how the power of social capital and these connections may provide a cohesive connective framework within and amongst groups and provide instrumental trajectories which contribute to advantageous outcomes (Halpern, 2005). Bourdieu proposed that social capital is:

> *the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition*. (Bourdieu and Waquant, 1992: 119)

Certainly, there has been much debate surrounding the meaning of social capital, and boundaries in its definition, although the simple concept can be seen as connections between individuals, within webs of association and shared understandings of behavioural conventions (Halpern, 2005). Social capital must be seen in theoretical terms in being part of the conceptualisation of 'capital' in being deployed as a result of activity which is recognised within a field, as opposed to purely a capital commodity, and 'buying position' as a search for recognition (Grenfell, 2009: 20). Bourdieu identified social capital as being controlled by the 'logic of knowledge', so as such always performs as symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1986: 257).

However, social capital is only symbolic to the extent to which social networking is valued by 'categories of perceptions' within that particular field (Grenfell, 2009: 24).

With the notion of social capital as 'part of social structure not neutral descriptions' (Riddell, 2010: 25), they exist as powerful networks, not just in the capacity to provide emotional and personal support (Gillies, 2007; 2008). Social capital is drawn upon 'in a selective and highly instrumental way' as an individual and not collectively, with discrepancies between the social networks and social resources drawn upon (Gillies, 2008: 74, Lareau, 1987). An accompanying feature of social capital is that it is interchangeable in that it can be converted into another form, such as economic or cultural (Grenfell, 2009).

There are strategic personal and parental advantages in socially networking in the locational context inhabited, for example in parents joining the school governing body or parent-teacher association (PTA). Social capital has become a widely used term and is seen a modern day phenomenon, yet this can lead to some variations in terms of interpretation (Grenfell, 2009). Bourdieu did not profess to have conceived the term social capital, and when applying this concept to his theoretical framework it is imperative to consider its authenticity in definition in that it cannot stand alone from Bourdieu's field theory (Grenfell, 2009). Giddens definition of social capital as networks and groups based on trust is in direct contradiction to the social capital reproduced of Bourdieu's field theory where the game is based upon competition (Giddens, 1991; Bourdieu, 1997; 2000; Bourdieu and Waquant, 1992). In order to be activated within the field, it is not enough for solely to engage in group membership and social networks, as in order to become operational the social capital needs to acquire symbolic meaning which is based upon mutual understanding and recognition amongst players or groups (Siisiäinen n, 2000). This symbolic recognition is built upon social reproduction, and the dynamic interplay of symbolic power and exchange (Lareau, 1987, Siisiäinen, 2000).

Theoretically examining the networks of individuals regarding social capital illuminates the linkage of workings of social structure within and across communities from a micro to a macro scale, with the deployment of social capital coming into the fore when played out at key transition points in the education system (Power et al, 2003). These established social networks, or ‘weak ties’ (Granovetter, 1973), reinforce and generate views and concerns of parents, fundamentally impacting upon what the accepted view might be in terms of ‘getting it right and doing the right thing’ (Ball, 2003: 162). In this way, the parents are ‘moral subjects’, in generating behaviours and opinions which are accepted by others within the same class context and by those with similar lifestyles and tastes (Ball, 2003: 162). Mastering codes of behaviour is certainly a fundamental requirement of successfully negotiating and navigating successful entry into all professions (Friedman and Laurison, 2019). These codes are not measures of ability or competence, but more related to being perceived as the ‘right type’ of person who fits in with firmly embedded and institutionalised (Friedman and Laurison, 2019). Consequently, lifestyle is perceived by the middle classes as an ‘integrated set of practices’, which are intrinsically connected to parental self-identity and trajectories for children (Power, 2018:1). Yet whilst this model of parenting might be accepted as the norm amongst parents in groups advantaged by their accrued social, economic, cultural and symbolic capitals, there are implications to those parents, and indeed a vast amount of the populace, who do not have access to the capitals which are necessary to conform to these parenting practices. Parents from differing socio-economic contexts may not have the experience, knowledge or social networks and their social networks to support achievement of aspirations (Menzies, 2013).

The prevailing class employ the conceptual tools presented by themselves, as the dominant class, to legitimise their social situation (Savage et al, 2010b). This expression of symbolic power explains the resulting symbolic violence subsequently committed on those who do not have the capacity to activate those resources or choices (Collette Sabe and Tort, 2015; Conway 1997). These expressed class values of parenting and the good life results in the capacity to delegitimise the views of others through the interplay of ‘doxa’ which is underpinned by individual’s influences, through both their social circumstances and their imagined place in the world (Gale and Parker, 2015). So, in terms of parenting styles and educational choices, doxa can be seen as ‘implicit assumption’ or understanding held by that group as to what is valued within the field (Davey, 2012: 510). Taylor (2005) explains that the practice is both factual and normative and employs the term ‘social imaginary’ to explain this process which:

> *Incorporates a sense of normal expectations we have of each other, the kind of common understanding that enables us to carry out the collective practices that make up our social life. This incorporates some sense of how we fit together in carrying out the common practice.* (Taylor, 2005: 24)

Emotional capital: the role of the primary care giver

There has been limited recent academic engagement and the implications arising from the emotional dynamics involved in middle class ideas, values and perceptions and more generally it has been espoused that the concept of ‘emotional capital’ has been under theorised within the sociology of emotion (Cottingham, 2016). With the majority of participants in this study being female, theoretical concepts are explored in relation to the subjective aspects of capital from the perspective of women, their involvement in children’s schooling, including evidence of class-based concerted cultivation (Lareau, 2003) or gendered reproduction (Skeggs, 2004) with class specific complexities revealed through parental, particularly maternal, involvement in ‘emotional capital’ (Reay, 2004). Although theoretical concepts related to emotional dynamics can be associated with the primary care giver whether male or female, research suggests that parenting is frequently gender defined with the primary care giver in reality usually being the mother (Vincent, 2017; Ball, 2003).

Ball suggested that mothers are normally more significant in both initiating and maintaining social networks, actively engaged in the educational process, in addition to negotiation and relationship building with school gatekeepers (Ball, 2003: 177).

Even though Bourdieu's social theory had limited comment regarding gender, his conceptual framework is seen as relevant to contemporary feminist theory, and indeed this study, by offering a vehicle to explain contemporary feminist issues through tools such as, phenomenology and constructive structuralism (Fowler, 2000). Bourdieu did acknowledge the preserve of the woman in maintaining relationships (Bourdieu, 1996), although it is only in the fairly recent past that sociologists have drawn upon his framework to develop the concept of 'emotional capital' (Reay, 1998). Nowotny expounded the notion of 'emotional capital' as a form of social capital defined as:

> *Knowledge, contacts and relations as well as access to emotionally valued skills and assets, which hold within any social network characterised at least partly by effective ties. (1981: 148)*

This definition has been extended to reveal how 'emotional capital' is interconnected with the transmission of privilege, and as an interpersonal asset which can be managed to promote social advantage (Froyum, 2010; Cottingham, 2016). Even though there is some intersection between the two concepts, it must be noted that emotional investment is not interchangeable with and does not necessarily manufacture emotional capital (Reay, 1998). In alignment with proactive parenting where 'every parental act has a consequence for the child's future' (Vincent, 2012: 7), the deployment of emotional capital through 'intensive mothering' (Hays, 1996) is underpinned by parenting responsibilities which are all-embracing and continuous (Vincent, 2012). With the contemporary idealised view of mothering closely affiliated with individualised and class coding, research has proposed mothers from differing socio-economic groups are excluded, particularly where their communities are based upon normative independence and working class mothers are seen lacking in the reflexivity to support the emergence of a ‘normal self-interested individual’ (Gillies, 2008: 1086). Gillies suggests that individualism is a precarious strategy for working class parents, as it jeopardizes interpersonal relationships and support networks whilst also potentially excluding and revealing an inability to fabricate themselves as having legitimate identities (Gillies, 2008).

Even so, it is over simplistic to identify middle class mothers as the main factor in the generation of inequality, particularly in a climate where there has been a recent demonization in terms of the middle class mother being responsible for social and educational inequity (Power, 2006). For example, Ball portrays middle class mothers as the ‘new engine of inequality’ within the ‘neo-liberal risk management regime’ (Ball, 2003: 177). Within social research mothers are more likely to be respondents but this does not necessarily mean that they are the dominant parent in educational issues (Power, 2006). Research often cites views of parents, where the emphasis and overt headlines signpost the mothers’ perspective and it can be seen as a useful distraction to focus blame upon mothers, as opposed to considering the role of educational policy, the state and educational institutions in perpetuating inequality (Power, 2006). A simplistic view demonstrates limited perspective regarding the process of reproduction and illuminates more about the lens through which academics are viewing social processes where less emphasis is given to the public domains, such as qualities and culture of schools, and more to the power of influence from the private arena of ‘domestic decision making’ (Power, 2006: 176). Consequently, it is argued that this can be seen as a one dimensional view is a result of the focus upon ‘choice’ in government educational policy and current research must avoid simplistic assumptions regarding public and private when analysing contemporary familial relationships and social change (Power, 2006: 183).

Narratives of belonging and locational habitus

> *It is people's sense of the future which is a telling indicator of their relationship to place, rather than that of the past. (Savage, 2010: 133)*

Research suggests that a characteristic of middle class urbanisation is accompanying territorial differentiation, and that residential space is a significant field in which to demarcate social position (Savage et al, 2005). With the spatial turn seen as 'a vital existential force shaping lives' an increasing amount of research is being viewed through the perspective of space and place (Wyse et al, 2012: 1018; Soja, 2001). The place-related identity of parents within an institution and locality offers a way to understand the impact of habitus on notions of space, identity and belonging on people's lives. 'we can see the importance of place in constructing identity, and marking oneself off from others […] the sense of social mix within schools, which is, in inverse, a representation of exclusivity or closure, is located within an experiential awareness of local demography' (Ball, 2003: 62-63).

Although this has generally been attributed to the erection of boundaries both geographically and symbolically, it is proposed that a characteristic of contemporary inner-city community territorial differentiation has been the increased significance of boundaries erected symbolically and within white (sic) middle class enclaves (Reay et al, 2011).

> *One's residence is a crucial, possibly the crucial, identifier of who you are. The sorting process by which people choose to live in certain places and others leave is at the heart of contemporary battles over social distinction. Rather than seeing wider social identities as arising out of the field of employment it would be more promising to examine their relation to social location (Savage et al, 2005: 207).*

The perception of place can be framed in terms of having its own particular locational habitus, and within the concept of habitus as the property of individual agents, the habitus of individuals and groups is mediated. Through the process of gentrification, a characteristic of inner-city community change has been through the process the reproduction of a habitus reflecting a café culture, 'urban village' lifestyle (Butler and Robson, 2003: 176).

Gentrification involves the transition of inner-city neighbourhoods from a status of relative poverty and limited property investment to a state of commodification and reinvestment (Ley, 2003). Through elective belonging people put down roots, and this is implicit in the formation of identities and biographies, so intrinsically related to the concept of 'self-identity' and surroundings (Savage et al, 2005).

Savage has explored the relationship to place of 'elective belongers' and 'gentrifiers' and the tensions between belonging and not belonging. Through elective belonging, a locational habitus is reproduced whereby inhabitants develop 'narratives of connectivity' and a 'sense of place which based on social connection is fundamentally class positioned' (Savage et al, 2005: 59). It has been argued that this positioning is contradictory to previous findings where cosmopolitan incomers are perceived as seeking out engagement with each other (Savage, 2010). 'Elective belonging' is based on fluidity in terms of areas being 'sites for performing identities' and is more linked to identity where newcomers connect their residence to their own personal narratives and biographies (Savage et al, 2005: 30). The term was coined to emphasise the powerful attachment to contemporary place felt by people who choose to move to an area, and is theoretically underpinned by Bourdieu (Savage, 2008). It is not an uncontrolled act by the consumer but more aligned to intentionally selecting and investing on our social destiny (Savage, 2008).

What is significant is that in perceiving their locational identity as being intrinsically connected to living alongside those sharing the same values and lifestyle choices, gentrifiers do not necessarily see themselves as integrating with the community at large. Butler and Robson acknowledged the emphasis placed by gentrifiers upon the 'building of an urban village', where middle class inhabitants displayed an intense feeling of belonging (2003: 189). These 'hipsters at the gate' live in areas previously working class neighbourhoods, and embrace economic, social, cultural and urban transfiguration (Guilluy, 2019: 12).

This type of gentrification is based upon a very particular type of cosmopolitanism, whereby the newly arrived middle classes are seen as 'local' as opposed to the white working class. (Butler and Robson, 2003). Savage contrasts this type of 'elective belonging' which is symbolically situated and underpinned by being based upon the middle-class claiming moral rights from their ability to move to a particular area of choice, against 'local affiliation' of the working classes which is based upon 'nostalgia and dwelling' (Savage, 2010: 116). Guilluy cites the new term emerged from the French context, 'bourgeois bohemian', in explanation of the emerging class relation between newcomers from the intellectual classes and the traditional working class and argues that this new bourgeoisie, 'boboized' class, symbolise the nonchalant type of dominance of the twenty first century (2019: 12).

A sense of belonging is central to the meaning of place, underpinned by class based habitus, and provides meaning to residence and community (Savage et al, 2005). Previous study has suggested that the 'local', longer established residents of gentrified areas displayed a feeling of familiarity, 'based upon upbringing and routine', as opposed to the forceful perception of belonging held by middle class newcomers (Savage et al, 2005: 47). Working class identification to place is shaped by strong family history, class culture and family connection (Allen, 2014). It has been proposed that urban dwelling working class communities do not necessarily have the option of simply existing in familiar areas, when they are ousted with their locations re-developed and has been defined by 'a struggle for survival rather than a struggle for position' (Allen, 2008: 61). Some established residents displayed disillusionment towards the transformation of the area, and a sense of feeling comfortable and familiar was not sufficient to prevent several 'locals' feeling 'an outsider' and others experiencing a general sense of disconnectedness from the café culture lifestyle surrounding them (Savage et al, 2005: 47- 48).

In research from the 1990's Butler and Robson (2001, 2003) used the metaphor of social tectonics in describing how differing groups live alongside each other but where differing groups moved past each other like tectonic plates below the planet Earth, with limited contact. Later research conducted by Jackson and Butler (2015), whilst findings social tectonics a useful metaphor, advised caution in basing analysis simplistically by comparing differing habitus across the field, but should acknowledge the interplay between neighbourhood dynamics in terms of subtle and ambiguous everyday processes.

However, the notion of working class relationships to neighbourhood identified by social researchers has not been without criticism, advocating that contemporary sociologists have based their perception on middle class formation, not on the working class and ignore working class agency (Paton, 2014). Allen (2008) suggested that working class respondents in research conducted in gentrified areas of Glasgow displayed a robust perception of elective belonging, but weak elective fixity, as they had limited agency compared to middle class residents and limited control over regeneration of their neighbourhood. Jeffery proposed that 'locals' have limited choice regarding their location or neighbourhood rejuvenation, accompanied by both physical and spatial exclusion, so 'it may be more useful to talk about 'unelective' or 'prescribed belonging' and instead of simplistically describing and comparing 'elective belonging' between the middle and working class critically examine:

> *The ways in which the forms of belonging articulated by the middle class, and the modes of urbanism (gentrification) designed to satisfy those desires, actively circumscribe the 'agency' available to the working classes. Most starkly, one person's coffee house, wine bar or 'designer apartment' is another's eviction notice or compulsory purchase order.* (Jeffery, 2018:18-19)

It has been argued that spatial and locational identity and belonging is crucial to not only middle class identity formation, but also to the perception of identity as a parent (Reay et al, 2011). In order to operate within the 21st century world marked by complexity and diversity, the locational identity of middle class parents is significant in not only creating advantage through metropolitan habitus and accruing cultural capital, but from the outcome of escalating house prices within desirable school catchments and the raising of the status of local schools which become subsequently oversubscribed (Reay et al, 2011). Even so, it is essential to acknowledge the shifting and transformational aspect to locational habitus, where significantly, just as parenting practices may be modified as children age, so parents acknowledge that relationships related to child rearing practices, networks and schooling can be transitory and shifting in emphasis (Savage et al, 2005).

This strong sense of belonging, where a location can provide support and safety, is fundamental to parental identity (Savage, 2010). With a clear correlation between locality choice and how parents wish to construct their lives, many parents cited their desire to live in a community with a significant social and cultural mix in terms of diversity, although it has been proposed that this can be misleading if interpreted as a 'mix' as opposed to a social backdrop; that is the nature of the place without the realisation or actualisation of the space (Savage, 2010; De Certeau, 1984). Recent research has provided evidence of convincing rhetoric displayed by parents within middle class groupings in terms of equality of opportunity and value for their children in encountering diversity, both culturally and socially, yet within firm boundaries of engagement and social groupings (Reay, 2017). The goal is to 'resource the self' as opposed to integrate as equals (Reay et al, 2008: 245). Butler and Robson (2003) highlighted the exclusionary practices of non-integrating middle class parents in gentrified areas of London, identifying their practices as isolationist.

Perhaps it is more connected to parents supporting children with the 'concerted cultivation' in 'working on the self' in order to maximise employability (Lareau, 2011; Bathmaker et al, 2013), but not just in terms of extra-curricular activities and internships, but also but also in terms of life experiences and competency development, including global and intercultural literacy (Deardoff, 2009; Berado and Deardoff, 2012). Whilst the cultural and diverse attributes are acknowledged in terms of living in an urban village, research has proposed that only particular networks are at play here (Savage et al, 2005: 59). These middle class groups often consist of ‘networks of university graduates, who are a major source of friendship between both parents and their children (Butler and Robson, 2005: 131).

Previous research suggests that the sense of elective belonging expressed by these urban gentrifiers differs significantly to that expressed by suburban city living parents, where a core feature of suburban life is based more upon personal value to the individual than a fixed elected community (Savage et al, 2005). Parents emphasise the importance of networks than community, alongside convenience of location. Notions of belonging exist, but within a respectful distance and where you can see yourself as an ‘outsider’. Locality is seen more as part of the package which one buys into when selecting a residential area, which includes ‘not living in others pockets’ and where you have no ownership over who will be your neighbour (Savage et al, 2005: 83).

Butler and Robson (2003) noted a division in some areas of gentrification in London, where residents existed in ‘gated communities’ excluded from those inhabitants from differing socio-economic and cultural groups. These gated communities are not in the sense of physical polarisation of the new rich ‘locking themselves in’ and ‘others out’ as in the new metropolis Docklands, but as unembodied and abstract concepts realised through social relationships and social networking as a basis of middle class habitus (Butler and Robson, 2003: 64). However, securing residency in these locations does mean that inhabitants need to be equipped with the appropriate economic capital to live within preferred and oversubscribed state school catchments, characterised by escalating house prices, and desirable neighbourhood locations and amenities (Reay et al, 2013).

The interplay of locational habitus, social capital and school choice

The activity of parenting is committed to the engagement with schools and schooling and particularly within the social networks surrounding it. For many middle class parents their chosen locality is closely connected to primary school choice, which Vincent and Ball suggested led to a 'relatively homogenous educational environment- a form of social closure' (2006: 152). Subsequently there is a bounded relationship between house purchase and school selection with strategic practices by middle class parents in urban educational markets an overarching feature of contemporary middle class formation in urban areas (Robson with Butler, 2001; Vincent and Ball, 2003).

In the comparative study by Savage et al, it was in the 'more cultured' middle class areas that children's schools and schooling were at the root of feelings of well-being felt by parents living in that area, particularly mothers, with child-rearing central to locational identity (2005: 62). This is underpinned by social reproduction within the family and profoundly draws upon the emotional labour of parents (Savage, 2003).

The emotional, social and material deployment, and interplay of capitals, particularly come into play at times of choice-making by parents in terms of their children's educational trajectories (Ball, 2003) with the generative linkage between locational habitus and social capital, both in terms of demographics and mobility, having powerful micro implications related to the actions and choices of parents. Activation of social capital is particularly productive within urban areas where families are selecting primary state schooling through the circuits of schooling identified by Ball et al (1995), which are based upon social networks. This can be an especially powerful strategic link between habitus and practice in areas where primary school colonisation, gentrification and community have developed in tandem (Butler and Robson, 2003). In terms of transition to secondary education, with an increasing number of middle class parents choosing state comprehensive options, social capital comes into play in being transformed into cultural capital and deployed within social networks to enhance and equate cultural capital within family households (Butler and Robson, 2003). The understood habitus within groups is underpinned by a dialogue of equity and equality of opportunities (Butler and Robson, 2003).

With the educational system a site for social reproduction (Grenfell and James, 1998), the choice of school is an essential feature of minimising the accompanying risks (Ball, 2003). Parents are constructing an educational project for their children, explained by the term 'parent managerialism' by Reay et al (2013: 71), of which educational choice may be only one component, although is the most important ingredient. Clear advantage to be gained to children where home and locational habitus reflect the dominant culture of the school and accompanying implications for those whose lifestyles and values are at odds with the institution in terms of exclusion or isolation (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992; Riddell, 2010). The structure of the housing market has resulted in many middle class families residing near schools which already have a catchment of predominantly middle class children, and where the association between class and educational success will maintain the school's reputation (Reay et al, 2013). It is suggested that successive government educational policies in the UK, based on choice, have benefited middle class parents in avoiding state educational institutions connected with lower status (Tomlinson, 2005).

With research in the 1990's identifying class specific 'circuits of schooling' in the London context in terms of school choice (Ball et al, 1995), and Savage proposing that schools are strategically 'the focal points of social networks around children and becomes important in achieving a sense of belonging and community' (Savage et al, 2005: 58), this literature review argues that the connection between choice, elective belonging and school habitus is fundamentally interconnected. Certainly, previous research has categorically identified the explicit connection between locational choice and the ‘micro-neighbourhood’ of the primary school catchment area (Butler and Robson, 2003: 159). Reay et al (2013) concluded that whilst some parents acknowledged the connection between choice of location and schools, acknowledging how choosing location and school is intrinsically linked to finding ‘a nice area to live’, other parents described the linkage in more simplistic terms in ‘being lucky’ that there was a desirable school within their home catchment (67). Whilst parents might suggest that choice of school is based on perceptions of the benefits of a ‘local school’, the reality is much more complex and previous research has suggested much more underpinned by location, particularly in choosing a primary school which is in the right place and populated by those similar to themselves (Reay et al, 2013). The resulting implications relate also to the mobilisation of capitals, particularly in terms of the ‘economic’ where shifting catchments are a feature of school demographics. Working the market comes much more into play in respect of secondary schools, especially in contexts where there are fewer ‘acceptable’ state school alternatives, and some academy admission policies based on lottery selection (Reay et al, 2013). Indeed, secondary school has emerged as a critical and risk loaded transition point, particularly in ensuring a smooth trajectory to select universities and graduate occupations (Reay and Lucey, 2004). It is at this secondary school transition that although the wider sub area of the core city comes into play, this is inter-dependent upon the parental spatial engagement with the primary school (Butler and Robson, 2003).

It has been proposed that secondary school choice reinforces social exclusion through middle class exclusionary practices (Reay and Lucey, 2004). Whilst many parents with high levels of cultural capital holding socialist or liberal political inclinations select state comprehensives as their default choice for secondary school, this is wholly conditional in that it must still guarantee educational attainment and success (Reay et al, 2008). If a place is sought within the catchment of a high performing school in a more distant location, middle class parents will employ additional strategies such as moving house, re-initiating religious affiliations or developing a strong case for appeal (Reay et al, 2013). Parental choice has resulted in only half of secondary school children attending their nearest school (Reay, 2018). Whilst parents engage with these strategies through 'choice by mortgage' in house moves or buying additional properties, they can also use their knowledge of the 'rules of the educational game' through appeal procedures, as well as exit and self-exclusion justified through narratives of the 'clever child' needing to go to selective schools (Reay and Lucey, 2004: 44). However, self-exclusion is mainly utilised by the minority of middle class parents, as it is only an option for those families who are rich in both cultural and economic capital (Reay and Lucey, 2004; Lucey and Reay, 2002). These exclusionary practices raise serious questions regarding secondary transitions and school choice for working class families and the wider impact upon working class communities, where children are eliminated from attending desirable schools in more distant locations and have no choice but to select 'demonized schools' (Reay and Lucey, 2004: 36).

Engagement with the school community through PTA's and governing bodies is predominantly seen as a way of accessing 'insider knowledge' as a form of cultural capital in addition to managing the risks associated with state schooling, rather than being based upon civic responsibility (Reay et al, 2008: 248). As well as providing admission to social networks, 'doing the PTA' is instrumental in obtaining the correct capital to 'belong' as it provides access to networks of parents who are 'like-minded' and share a comparable habitus (Savage et al, 2005: 74). However, there is a danger is assuming that this is a standard practice amongst all parents, with Savage et al proposing that for those not engaging with these practices, justification is given through factors such as 'time' in 'narratives of legitimisation' (Savage et al, 2005: 75).

Choice of these inner city state schools and the accompanying rhetoric surrounding an egalitarian society is not necessarily reflective of previous normative practices of isolationist middle class families who choose the ‘best’ private schools for their children. These parents do truly wish for a more egalitarian society, and have chosen community state schools for their children although alongside ‘personal cultivation of distinction through social distancing’ (Reay et al, 2008: 251). In line with parental views surrounding global and intercultural skills as competencies, although rhetoric is based on the value of social mixing, the reality is that investment in state schools by middle class parents are more based upon self-interest with ‘lines to be drawn within social diversity and there are limits to social and community mixing’ (Ball, 2003:142).

Certainly, the marketisation of education has resulted in a deepening of social class divisions and marked by exclusionary class practices in ‘putting your child first’ with Reay and Lucey concluding that policy based upon choice and individualistic practices ‘add up to a powerful collective class action, condemning the children of less privileged parents to segregated, socially polarised state schooling (2004: 49). The culture of ‘excellence in school’ in policy promoted by successive UK governments, suggests that educational attainment is only good, although many of these policies depend upon class exclusion and differentiation (Lucey and Reay, 2002). Theoretically excellence can be perceived in the same way as taste as class specific in being worthiness to some but not all (Bourdieu, 1984). Reay suggests that choice of school to working class parents is predominantly discovering what you can’t have, or results in self-exclusionary practices in the belief that high status schools are ‘not for people like us’ (Reay, 2017: 189). The resulting distinction resulting from this educational exclusiveness has resulted in working class pupils under constant pressure to achieve even the basic minimum official level of expected attainment and anxiety for those middle class families whose children who do not achieve the very top awards and accolades (Lucey and

Reay, 2002). Whilst this chapter has outlined the theoretical framework underpinning the thesis and its relationship to elective belonging, social networks and family, the following chapter contextualises the interplay between reproduction, futurity for children and classed-based parenting practices.

Chapter Three: Re-contextualising contemporary parenting

This chapter examines parenting practices in the UK, investigating how the typology of parenting has been re-conceptualised in contemporary times. Parenting practices are examined through the exploration of classed based proactive parenting and the impact on those parents from differing socio-economic contexts. These concepts are synthesised in relation to aspirations of parents in terms of futurity of children, the re-branding of class and how the cultivation of personal dispositions and employment competencies might promote advantage within the global climate in which young people will be seeking employment.

The characteristics of a new parenting culture

A significant characteristic of contemporary times is the emerging of a 'new politics of parenting' (Gillies, 2008: 1080; Simpson et al, 2015), which perceives parenting through a dissimilar lens than the historic concept of child rearing. The new 'parenting culture', observed particularly in the UK and USA is significantly different to child-rearing and is characterised by the view that children need particular care and attention, with the role of parenting of significant importance in equipping children with character traits necessary for a life of success (Furedi, 2002).

The activity of 'being a good parent' is no longer 'what parents do' but emotionally loaded with accompanying implications on the role of both mothers and fathers in negotiating parental culture, whereby being 'architects of the family' the child is represented as the 'core subject' (Faircloth et al, 2013: 943). These issues have far reaching implications not only in terms of middle class parents parenting practices but also in relation to and parental perceptions of self, whereby mothering and fathering is an 'identity' which can 'worked upon' and refined (Arendell, 2000). This form of parenting requires a set of skills not only regarding parental identity but also in terms of relationships amongst and between other parents employing the same or differing parental practices. Based on the classed and normative model of good parenting, a parent is morally and ethically accountable to educate their children and ensure successful and advantageous trajectories (Ball, 2003). What is not articulated is that the parenting model underpinned by individualisation and self-agency requires access to economic, social, cultural and economic capital. Those parents who do not have access to these capitals are subsequently positioned as 'the other' and consequently reaffirming the dominance and individuality of middle class parents (Gillies, 2007: 76).

This process requires reflexivity in terms of parental identity, values and social relationships and can be seen as 'a form of politics within the domain of the contemporary family' (Faircloth et al, 2013: 285). This perception of risk is particularly present for parents in the field of education and reinforced by a sense of responsibility felt by parents in doing their best for their children with the family as the central priority (Ball, 2003). This is supported by Beck's theory on individualization, where a reflexive, yet elective biography is constructed by individuals in order to lessen levels of risk within a community that is connected by 'reciprocal individualization', as opposed to traditional class practices (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002: 5; Beck, 1992). The work of Giddens (1998) also plays a key function in risk society theory, where he saw that now existing in an individualised risk climate, it is necessary for individuals to focus upon the developmental self and invent their own narratives or biographies (Ball, 2003).

Although the insecurity of middle class parents encourages reflexivity and subsequently facilitates an ability to navigate the educational market effectively (Ball, 2003; Power et al, 2003) the accompanying process of making autonomous decisions is accompanied by anxiety (Shirani, Henwood and Coltart, 2011). Within parenting which is flexible and proactive, coined 'parenting mania' by Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, there is an endless tension between risk and control, with giving your child advantage over others seen as a commonly recognised feature of being a good parent (Ball, 2003; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995). It has already been documented how planning for futurity is being established by parents and families much earlier, for example in the deployment of experiences and ensuring access to state resources (Ball, 2003). However, the intense reflexivity which is a feature of late modernity, parental concepts of the future are not solely based upon future expectations, but based upon ‘an orientation to the future’ (Giddens 1991: 29). Future trajectories of children are based not just upon future expectations of events to yet happen, but within an organised reflexivity of the present in terms of both risk assessment and appraisal (Giddens, 1991). Paradoxically, the market which advantages middle-class families intensifies the risk and uncertainty, where the wealth of choices subsequently increases the likelihood of making one that is disadvantageous in that:

> *Risk is an inherent characteristic of the market form, an essential part of its dynamic, a quality that is celebrated and set over and against the conservatism of bureaucratic systems. The market form rests on responsibility, skills and resourcefulness and an absence of certainty. (Ball, 2003: 151)*

With the process of social reproduction fraught with risk, (Ball, 2003), Ehrenreich proposed that particularly middle class professionals are in constant ‘fear of falling’ from their place in society, due to their assets being more based on education, where the traditional middle class assets were based on economic prosperity and property accumulation (1989: 15). As responsible individuals parents are required to take personal responsibility for making choices in terms of their children’s futurity and the array of choices within an individualised and market driven environment means that there is always the potential for pursuing alternative and better choices (Ball, 2003). School choice is a particular area where the danger of making the wrong choice must be reduced, and where diligent and meticulous attention must be displayed in order to reduce the risks surrounding social reproduction. Ball suggests that this is displayed clearly in the ‘choice narratives’ of middle class parents, where choice not only has a ‘history’ with families but also critically with a focus on, and intrinsically joined to, the imagined futures of their children (2003:163). Parents are seeking to provide linkage between their own and their children's lives, related to 'a set of flexible futures, a landscape of possibilities rather than discrete and rigid paths' (Beck-Gernsheim:1996: 153).

The politicisation of parenting

Discourse surrounding the issue of parenting in the UK has been redefined since the era of Thatcherism with 'good parenting' viewed as the means to solve a wide range of social problems (Montgomery, 2013; Simpson et al, 2015). Given a high level of political significance, the concept of parenting has expanded from a cultural and historically situated activity to a multi-dimensional practice underpinned by moral contexts and the idea of 'good parenting' (Simpson et al, 2015; Faircloth et al, 2013). Characterised by a child centred and resource approach, parenting does not solely refer to childrearing from an anthropological perspective, but requires a 're examination of the goals, resources and relationships that constitute an emerging global set of parameters for framing parenthood in contemporary times' (Faircloth et al, 2013: 277).

This has been exacerbated by government policy focus on the culture of excellence, outlined in chapter 1, with a pivotal focus on educational attainment. However, this is dependent upon the failure of some pupils, where the reality is that many children from lower socio-economic contexts are deemed failing to achieve, middle class families are beset by anxiety that their children will not achieve the A* grades to ensure the reproduction of their social and economic context as explained by Lucey and Reay,

> *Excellence, no less than intellect and intelligence is highly class specific, mapping out a landscape that the middle classes inhabit and from which the working classes are excluded.* (Lucey and Reay, 2002: 334)

This was reiterated by the work of Ehrenreich who proposed that only by valuing education as an 'exercise of the mind' and downplaying competition would be the one way of promoting an egalitarian future, and a means of terminating education as a mechanism of class reproduction (1989: 263).

Embodied by the trend towards 'intensive' or 'intentional' parenting practices by middle class parents (Fairclough, 2010; Arendell, 2001), effective parenting is seen as the answer to solving a range of social problems. Parents and families are increasingly held accountable for both social mobility and success or failure (Simpson et al, 2015). Moulded by the politicisation of parenting, it is a core responsibility of the 'good parent' to ensure that the home and educational settings will offer the best for children in terms of advantage and futurity (Vincent, 2017). With parenting practices firmly located in the public as well as the private arena, some traditional values regarding family life are challenged (Vincent, 2000).

Embedded firmly within political agenda an emphasis on the quality of parenting is located in policy as the explicit way to maximise children's success, with parents seen in national policy as responsible for a child's development whether emotionally, educationally, socially or physically (Vincent, 2017). In place of realigning the labour market, successive reviews have presented the structural problems related to poverty and opportunity are passed as family focused, with Field arguing, 'we imperil the country's future if we forget that it is the aspirations and actions of parents which are critical to how well children prosper' (Field, 2010:11; Allen, 2011).

Certainly, politicians continue to make links between aspiration, parenting, values, behaviour and society, with Tony Blair (2005) professing that, in order to break patterns of social exclusion it is crucial to discover how young people's life ambitions relate to parent's and other's expectations of them, and Milliband (2011) advocating that in response to the 2011 urban riots in England, issues needed to be investigated regarding parenting, aspiration and prospects for people.

> *How much talent that could flourish is lost through a poverty of aspiration? The greater failure is not the child who doesn't reach the stars, but the child who has no stars that they feel they are reaching for.* (Gordon Brown, 2007)

It has been suggested that this viewpoint can be seen as a new political move away from the policy of expectation towards a government agenda of aspirational politics. Through the emphasis on individual and family aspiration, deficiency in aspiration can be viewed as an explanation of social inequality (Raco, 2009). Raco proposes a link between aspirational politics and citizenship, with yardsticks implemented accordingly and individuals, communities and institutions subsequently measured (Rorty, 1999). Within this new policy, the development of individual narratives is encouraged (Goodson et al, 2010; Riddell, 2010; Giddens, 1991), which alongside aspirations related to 'self', provides a connection between the preferred government agenda of materialism and competition, the reduction of expectations from outside agencies and the promotion of policy initiatives related to a materialistic view of identity (Raco, 2009). It has been argued that the emphasis on competition regarding educational outcomes, in addition to capital accumulation, intensifies social inequalities rather than decreasing them (Hoskins and Barker, 2014).

Research by Siraj-Blatchford, presented the view that if aspiration is seen as cultural capacity, in place of disassembling capitalist structures (Gerwitz, 2001), we should recognise the value of state policies which endeavour to raise aspiration and 'support many individual and working class students in succeeding against the odds' (Siraj-Blatchford, 2010: 478). Strand and Winston suggested that, if the ability to aspire is a cultural capacity, 'schools will need to re-assess themselves and connect their normative values of aspiration with the lived in curriculum of their pupils' (2008: 24).

Government ministers have increasingly embraced the idea that the concept of 'cultural capital' or 'cultural capacity' is something which can be facilitated by schools, with the Rt Hon Michael Gove , currently Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster on 24 July 2019 and Secretary of State for Education from May 2010 until July 2014, asserting that the accumulation of cultural capital – the acquisition of knowledge – is a key requisite to social mobility' (Guardian, 2013). As a result OFSTED, the regulating body which by law must inspect schools to promote improvement, stipulates in its Inspection Handbook that educational institutions will be judged upon how much they support children's accumulation of 'cultural capital' (OFSTED, 2019). This crude definition has met with fierce resistance from educationists and academics both in terms of the crude interpretation of cultural capital as well as the implication that schools can singlehandedly facilitate social change. Diane Reay, for example, argues that, 'This new requirement is a crude, reductionist model of learning, both authoritarian and elitist. The key elements of cultural capital are entwined with privileged lifestyles rather than qualities you can separate off and then teach the poor and working classes' (Mansell, 2019).

School choice and transition

Power et al (2003) questioned the assumption that the close relationship between middle class parents and education ensured the academic success of children. There is a complex interplay between matching of parental aspiration, school choice and school values, and the critical connection made by families regarding the link between educational and occupational achievements (Power et al, 2003). In choosing the 'right school' parents want children to be happy and succeed, but within the context of the state school context display a level of anxiety accompanying choices made, particularly regarding choice of secondary schools (Power et al, 2003: 19). Certainly future happiness can be seen as explicitly linked with academic success, particularly for professional parents, and a moral duty for many (Reay and

Lucey, 2000; Ball, 2003). Parents are investing in long term educational futures for their children, and aim to choose educational institutions which will provide fun and enjoyment, the opportunity to develop social skills and relationships, as well as ensure educational success (Vincent and Ball, 2006).

Previous research has identified how parents' powerful narratives of entitlement reflect their perception of their children's need to be challenged and achieve. This sense of entitlement is interconnected to the notion of the 'bright child', where the children as life projects are perceived as innately intelligent and talented (Riddell, 2010). It is imperative that these aspirations for children are realised and enhanced through the choice of schools which ensure the children are surrounded by peers who are 'children like them' (Riddell, 115: 2010).

The transition to secondary school for many parents is fraught with uncertainty, with a changed landscape from many of their own school trajectories. As cited by Vincent and Ball (2006), the changing context of school selection means that parents cannot rely upon their own educational experiences to determine priorities and choices for their children. Education policy underpinned by market forces and choice has meant that there is now increased scope to gain admission to state secondary options in locations further afield than the local area (Power et al, 2013). It has been previously documented that for many middle class parents obtaining admission for their offspring to a suitable secondary school is seen as critical to educational achievement (Power et al, 2003). However, research led by Power et al (2003) found that there was no straightforward correlation between social-economic situation and school context horizontal categories, which was illuminated between comparison between factions of new and old middle class parents. Research findings suggested that there were marked differences in the school criteria for some middle class factions, with old middle class parents seeking an emphasis on structure and hierarchy and new middle class seeking a more egalitarian and diverse school ethos (Power et al, 2003). It has been also proposed that new middle class parents respond more than old middle classes to their children's preferences (Power et al, 2003). However, middle class parents are more likely to 'guide' the child into supporting them in selecting the correct choice from a framework of options, as opposed to the practices of working class parents who give precedence to the child's preference (Lucey and Reay, 2002).

In their choice of school, particularly secondary transition, middle class parents exhibit exclusionary practices which are pursued through the ownership of economic, cultural and social capital which is generated by middle class habitus (Reay and Lucey, 2002). This habitus can be explained as the conduit between the decisions made by individuals with the wider structural organisation of society, which has been explained as the contradiction between 'subject/object and structure/agency' (Butler and Robson, 2003: 37; Jenkins, 1992). Certainly, examination of middle class negotiation regarding school choice offers a level of understanding into the production and preservation of inequalities in education (Vincent and Ball, 2006). Jordan et al (1994), identified, four chief strategies which middle class parents apply when faced with school choice and 'doing the best for their child': influencing collective decisions; living in an area where state schools offer what they seek for their child; children passing exams and entrance tests (exit); private school entry (self-exclusion). Whilst acknowledging the 'moral agenda of putting your child first', Reay and Lucey call for these strategic actions to be not at the detriment of other children whose parents do not have access to the same amount of capitals and whose doxa is at odds with those middle class parents (Reay and Lucey, 2004: 18).

Certainly, an awareness of the rules surrounding the 'educational game' provides clear advantage both in terms of school selection and children's educational success. Riddell (2003) noted how parental understanding of the educational system can advantage children in terms of educational success, and be perceived as a form of cultural capital, which can be in turn invested ‘for a return of educational capital’ (Ball et al, 1995: 176). Butler and Robson, concurred with Ball’s research regarding ‘circuits of schooling’ which are the results of both local and explicit school market structures (Ball, 1995, Butler and Robson, 2003). The role played through ‘weak ties’, or ‘grapevine knowledge’, is pivotal in school selection and seeking out people similar to themselves (Ball, 2003: 63). Ball suggested that intrinsic to school choice is what Parisian schools call the ‘search for guarantees’ (Ball, 2003: 64). Middle class parents seek out information to inform them regarding school choice from multiple sources, and are certainly advantaged by the skills, or cultural capital, they possess, for example in successfully navigating relationships with educational gatekeepers, as well as negotiating direct communication with schools, particularly headteachers (Butler and Robson, 2003). Formal documents, prospectus and open evenings are seen as less reliable than informal, ‘hot knowledge’ based on trusted social networks (Ball, 2003: 100).

This research has also identified how parents perceived a wider social mix as advantageous in their choice of secondary state schools (Ball, 2003; Reay et al, 2011), seeing value in the wider social mix of comprehensive schools in developing attributes which cannot be provided within the family environment (Reay et al, 2008). Citizenship literacy, and accompanying attributes such as tolerance, is seen by parents as essential within the global world in which they will be seeking employment (Reay et al, 2008). However, this is sometimes at odds with the beliefs and values held by middle class parents in relation to their views on how to reproduce academic success and there are clearly present ambivalent feelings amongst parents regarding too close a relationship of their children with the working class other (Reay et al, 2008; Reay et al, 2011). For parents, the climate of intensified marketisation has resulted in some tensions in terms of egalitarian beliefs of tolerance and multiculturalism (Reay et al, 2011). Whilst valuing the social and cultural diversity ideologically, parents are anxious that their children may not be challenged enough academically, mix with the ‘wrong crowd’ or be branded as being too clever (Power et al, 2003: 51).

‘Proactive parenting’ and ‘concerted cultivation’

‘Proactive parenting’ was a term coined by Riddell (2010) as an appropriate description of these intensive parenting practices, which is characterised by taking initiative, making appropriate choices and embracing opportunities in order to advantage children’s futurity.

The shift to proactive parenting, also labelled ‘intensive’ (Hays, 1996) ‘paranoid’ (Furedi, 2002), or ‘parenting mania’ (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995), has led to the normalisation of a parenting strategy which emerged from the concept labelled by Lareau (2003) as ‘concerted cultivation’. This range of practices are perceived as ‘normal’, ‘good, or ‘appropriate’, as opposed to an individual’s place in social groups based on stratification and family status (Savage, 2003). Within this intensive and normalised approach parental duties are widened and maximised, as the child becomes ‘an educational project’ which can be continually refined and improved (Beck and Beck-Gernshein, 1995: 139; Vincent, 2000). The child as a ‘life project’ is to be developed, where the child continually acquires a range of talents and skills and emerging as ‘self-sufficient and regulating children who achieve in a range of academic and non-academic areas’ (Vincent, 2017: 544). The child as a life project is something to be continually developed, necessitating a continuous engagement with future planning as something which can be consistently improved and not just something that is a lived in experience (Vincent, 2000). Variations in the ‘cultural logic of childrearing’ equip middle class children with the personality dispositions needed to navigate a successful life course (Lareau, 2003: 772). Young people develop a range of advantageous personal skills, particularly in relation to reasoning and negotiating (Gillies, 2007). In engineering for their children’s ‘horizons’ (Butler and Robson, 2003:141) and ensuring their children achieve their future trajectories are underpinned by a wish to socially reproduce their family (Reay et al, 2011).

Through such an approach children develop their own aspirational identity, whereby they not only develop the desirable dispositions of confidence and resilience to support futurity, particularly entry into higher education, but also a sense of normality in terms of those aspirations shared through engagement with similar people from family, social networks and neighbourhood (Ridell, 2010). Being immersed in similar narratives regarding all aspects of their lives, and particularly taken from individuals in socially approved contexts is central the 'managed model of social reproduction' process identified by Riddell, and how habitus develops and is mediated (2010: 51).

Lareau (2003, 2006) found that there are significant differences in childrearing practices between working and middle class parents, with working class parents following contrasting parenting practices where children achieve 'natural growth' distinguished by less active participation of parents in daily activities of discussion, recreation and life experiences. Recent research has suggested that 'concerted cultivation' is not underpinned by anxiety, but through a quest by parents to promote a 'natural' parenting stance, where taking part in cultural activities and pursuits are seen as part of the making up of the middle class (Aarseth 2018; Irwin and Elley, 2011).

Lareau (2003) argued that in 'concerted cultivation' children are seen as a developmental project, with parents actively promoting children's talents, views and abilities through engagement in discussion and questioning, ensuring children partake in a wide range of activities, both curricular and ex-curricular. The monitoring of these activities and the accompanying focus on a child's personal and individual development means children gain a sense of entitlement which particularly provides an advantage in educational institutions.

Children learn to engage with adults with ease, questioning and conversing with adults as equals and displaying a clear belief in their own talents and skills, comfortable in negotiating with people in authority:

> *Displaying an emerging sense of entitlement by urging adults to permit a customized accommodation of institutional processes to suit their preferences*. (Lareau, 2003: 768)

Children become multi accomplished educational projects, with their academic and attainment self-concepts reinforcing each other so they become a multi accomplished 'renaissance child' (Vincent and Ball, 2007: 1068; Vincent and Ball, 2006). Previous research has proven the intense focus many professional parents display regarding their children's interests and activities with the importance parents put upon children being emotionally engaged with pursuits described by Aarseth as the 'cult of passion' (2017: 1092).

This childrearing practice then becomes synonymous with 'good parenting' with the accompanying cultivating approach deemed the norm in terms of being the preferred and desirable way to approach childrearing (Gillies, 2007). These assumed practices involve the continuous working on the child to create an individual with the appropriate capitals to accumulate and mobilise in order to succeed in life (Lareau, 2011). Affluent middle class parents in the USA context promoted what was identified by Kusserow as a 'soft individualism' with an emphasis on 'the delicacy of the child's self, the extreme care, resources, wide canvas and gentle touch needed in helping this unique self to "flower" and open up to its full potential' (2004, 171). Vincent suggests that a primary theme within contemporary parenting discourse, is the concept of families as 'individual autonomous units' (Vincent, 2000: 23).

With the concept of the 'bright child' firmly embedded (Lucey and Reay, 2002; Skeggs, 2004) the middle class seen as 'the ideal normative class within state education' and the middle class child is perceived as the model of an ideal learner (Reay, 2017:131). To play the game to full advantage, children are encouraged to be involved in a variety of extra-curricular activities throughout their academic career, engaging with clubs, societies and sports activities in schools (Ball, 2003), and subsequently assuming prominent roles of responsibility in higher education, for example leading committees, as well as engagement in internships and work experience (Bathmaker et al, 2013). From babyhood and nursery onwards, enrichment activities frame the development of a curriculum vitae and, in terms of planning ahead, subsequently support the child in securing educational and life success not just in terms of the intellectual, but also in creative and physical abilities (Vincent and Ball, 2000). Through the process of 'cultural transmission', involvement in extra-curricular and enrichments activities have far reaching impact of school trajectories by instilling 'legitimate taste' in terms of the belonged social group (Vincent and Ball, 2006:159), which permeates through to employment opportunity in embedding cultural codes and the 'social magic' in terms of cultural symmetry with and between a particular group (Ingram and Allen, 2018).

Earlier work by Lareau (2003) suggests that there are differing experiences within the home environment based on social class, for example in the amount of activities, autonomy of children and dominance of children's activities over family life, financial burdens and the speed and constraints of family life. The Effective Provision of Pre-School, Primary and Secondary Education (EPPSE 3-16) longitudinal study identified the concept of 'active cultivation', where parents who were from differing socio-economic contexts without the accumulated capital in terms of 'concerted cultivation' although still provided significant support for their children through the child's educational life in a similar way to 'concerted cultivation' (Siraj-Blatchford et al, 2011). 'Active cultivation' is characterised by parents being proactively involved in the learning process, with children's cognitive and social skills nurtured within a home environment which features regularly discussion of school activities, sharing books, having access to computers and educational games, and jointly engaging in experiential activities such as cooking together (Siraj-Blatchford, 2010). Through 'active cultivation' parents proactively maximise the benefits from education and facilitate positive learning dispositions, particularly in terms of the child's development of self-efficacy in terms of belief in their own ability (Siraj Blatchford et al, 2011).

The cultivation of desirable dispositions

In the preceding sections of this chapter we have already seen that, within the new politics of parenting, middle-classness is underpinned by individualism based upon a sense of entitlement. 'Concerted cultivation' facilitates the development of these advantageous embedded dispositions which can be seen as a 'range of virtues and positive attributes such as entitlement, educational excellence, confidence, competitiveness, hard work and deferred gratification' (Reay, Crozier and James, 2011:12).

Proactive parenting ensures that young people develop as flexible, resourceful, self-confident learners, with an accompanying 'epistemic identity' which includes essential traits for academic and occupational success within the 21st century (Filer and Pollard, 2000). These traits translate into 'masterful learning dispositions' within the school institution, identified by the EPPSE study (Siraj-Blatchford et al, 2011). We have already seen in the preceding section how through mastery orientation children develop the resilience to 'focus on effort and strategies instead of worrying that they are incompetent' and engage in problem solving (Siraj-Blatchford, 2004:11). This is reflected by the work of Dweck conducted on how self-theories, in terms of an individual's self-belief, are pivotal to meaning systems and their relationship to patterns of behaviour and outcome (1999, 2004). This research evidences how a person's academic self-concept, or self-belief, and academic achievement is mutually reinforcing. With a strong correlation to academic achievement, the 'masterful learning' dispositions' operate as a strategy for social, cultural and economic reproduction (Siraj-Blatchford et al, 2010). The EPPSE project identified how children with masterful learning dispositions not only were supported in developing cognitive skills, but how a positive self-image was consistently reinforced by family, teachers, peers and other significant adults in their lives (Siraj-Blatchford et al, 2010). A considerable connection was identified between home and school in the EPPSE study, with the home identified as a pivotal proximal context, which gives rise to clear implications for policy interventions aiming to improves outcomes for children (Siraj-Blatchford et al, 2011). It was significant that parents from lower socio-economic backgrounds facilitating active cultivation, supported the development of these masterful learning dispositions through even in times of children's difficulty in learning, being consistent and tenacious (Siraj-Blatchford et al, 2011).

These non-cognitive skills (NCS) can be seen as human capital (Lundberg, 2015) and are more connected to personality traits than flexible skills (Gutman and Schoon, 2013). Dweck et al, identified these NCS as academic tenacity, which supports long terms learning and achievement (2014). Previous research in relation to NCS has identified that the most influential factors in their development is parental skills and with family background implicitly aligned to cognitive and non-cognitive skill formation (Anger and Schnitzlein, 2016: 19). Previous research had identified eight particular NCS characteristics, with the attribute of 'grit' most aligned to positive outcomes (Gutman and Schoon, 2013). Academic tenacity was identified as being intrinsically connected to school belonging, relevant to young people's futures, and the ability to develop resilience in the face of difficulties and embracing challenge (Dweck et al, 2014). This finding is supported by the link between parents who inculcate 'learning readiness' through emphasis on the development of the personal character traits of persistence, resilience and confidence (Vincent, 2012).

By facilitating the development of these NCS, or ‘soft skills’, parents are preparing young people for future ‘occupational competencies’ such as empathy, initiative, choice making, problem solving, communication, adaptability and resilience which will be increasingly valued by employers (Brown et al, 2008). Citing the superfluity of educational qualifications, employers within the UK context are increasingly looking to a wide range of competencies when recruiting staff, arguing that within the contemporary context the criteria for selection has changed and that formal qualifications alone do not form enough of a basis for selection of candidates (Bathmaker et al, 2016; Brown et al, 2008). This has resulted in employers identifying these soft skills such as key factors within selection processes, alongside the ‘hard’ currencies such academic qualifications, work experience and internships, alongside extra-curricular credentials, for example music and sports achievements (Brown et al, 2016). These soft skills and cultural competency equip young people with the behaviour codes which previous research has explicitly linked to gaining admission to elite organisations and professions (Friedman and Laurison, 2019). These behaviour codes will be potentially recognised by gatekeepers within those organisations as signifying a person’s ability to ‘fit into’ their organisation, although is not usually related to an individual’s ability to carry out the job effectively (Freidman and Laurison, 2019: 124). This has been named the ‘class slipper’ effect, which will be expanded upon later in this chapter in relation to employment, and has clear implications for those candidates from lower socio-economic backgrounds in not being familiar to these workplace cultures.

Trajectories to Higher Education

Embedded within government educational policy, higher educational qualifications, namely university degrees, have been promoted as essential to economic prosperity, and the gateway to success within the labour market (Tomlinson, 2008). Successive UK governments have endorsed higher education as being significant, not only for individuals in terms of transition into employment, but to guarantee national prosperity and economic development within the high stakes, skilled knowledge economy (Bathmaker et al, 2013; Tomlinson et al, 2008).

However, the ‘commodification’ of the globalised higher education market, characterised by altered funding procedures and higher tuition fees, is now seen by undergraduates as congested and an environment which will not necessarily directly lead to success in the labour market or reap rewards in terms of occupational trajectories (Tomlinson et al, 2008). Commodification can be defined as ‘a process where items such as goods and services are transformed into objects for sale’ (Plante, 2015: 2). At a simplistic level the concept of commodification of culture can be explained as where social activities which were previously purely undertaken for personal fulfilment are now connected to the market forces. This means that the value of activities is now assessed as to how much they can be converted into financial reward or commodities (Shumar, 1997). Residing in not only a market economy, but a market society, has resulted in an emphasis on universities supplying merchandisable skills or products, with students seen as customers or consumers (Plante, 2015; Shumar, 1997).

Historic research situated in the New Zealand context highlighted the global trend which has accompanied commodification where universities must measure against performance levels (Roberts, 1998). It is argued that this has also been reflected in the UK context, with successive governments unwilling to engage in any programmes to maximise equality of opportunity in higher education, unless they are in line with this market driven policy. Bok (2003), on writing about the increased marketisation of universities in the USA, suggested that the presidents of universities are now expected to perform their task more in line with CEO’s, and called for more universities to focus upon academic values with higher education being too fundamental to society to allow it to be purely underpinned by market forces. When considering social inclusion within higher education policy practices should be spearheaded by social rather than economic factors, with recent research concluding that although current widening participation policies look potentially effective superficially, elite institutions still do not fail to adequately recruit and integrate students from working-class backgrounds into their settings and therefore have limited effect in addressing equalities both in participation in HE and outcomes for graduates (Bathmaker et al, 2013; Bowers Brown and Stahl, 2017).

Gale and Hodge (2014) called upon the notion of the social imaginary conceived by Taylor (2005) in the way individuals perceive their social existence to explain how a new social imaginary globally has been created in shifting from the importance of an industrial economy to a knowledge economy which the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries (OECD) deem themselves to excel at. They propose 'the equation is relatively simple, if not simplistic: to be competitive in the global knowledge economy requires more knowledge workers and, particularly, more with higher levels of qualification (a proxy for more and superior knowledge)' (Gale and Hodge, 2014: 689).

One of the results of global commodification where students are seen as customers, with accompanying higher university fees and altered funding arrangements applicable to the UK, is that the student experience is now perceived as being pivotal to the success of a higher educational institution (Bowers-Brown et al, 2017). Accompanied by an increased emphasis by universities upon the 'student experience' (Bowers Browns et al, 2017), middle class undergraduates are increasingly seeking ways to promote themselves as having individual credentials, or occupational competencies, which will give advantage within the current labour market. The continuing emphasis on 'soft credentials', initiated from early childhood, are now transformed into what prospective employers would see as 'live attributes' and 'human capital' which add to their marketability and ensure a return upon their own and their families investment (Tomlinson et al, 2008: 58). These behavioural competencies demonstrate the capacity for graduates to 'deploy a wider range of range of personal, performative and organizational abilities to employers' (Tomlinson et al, 2008: 51).

Engagement by middle class undergraduates in extra-curricular activities, internships and work experience opportunities has been explained as ‘having a feel for the game’ (Bourdieu, 1990) in constructing this employable self, and maintaining capital acquisition and maximising ‘curriculum vitae (CV) building’ (Bathmaker et el, 2013: 725).

Prior research suggests a shift in thinking amongst undergraduate students, moving away from the idea of a degree as instrumental in achieving a ‘job for life’ (Power et al, 2003:136), with higher education now seen as not just a gateway into a career, but as a ‘door opener’ in terms of future occupational trajectories and life chances (Bathmaker, 2013).

The accompanying result is the emergence of a UK higher education market which might be more accessible to students from lower social economic groups, but which does not necessarily promote equality of opportunity. The status of the university attended, based on class values in terms of perceived worth, ensures that HE and life trajectories are still class bounded and socially enacted (Bathmaker et al, 2011). Qualifications from an elite higher educational institution are potentially seen by employees as a mark of general ability and valued personality attributes (Power et al, 2003: 117). Middle class parents expect that their children would gain access to higher education if they wish, although expectations are that it would be a traditional subject at a reputable university which will be seen to also gauge inherent ability and transferable personality traits (Power et al, 2003).

Class based behaviour codes and employment

Mastering behavioural codes has been identified in instrumental in terms of employability within particular professions, with Friedman and Laurison identifying the notion of the best ‘fit’ giving advantage to those who are a ‘natural fit’ and being an uncomfortable environment for those whose cultural codes are at odd with cultures of the workplace (2019: 124). This notion is built upon the ‘class slipper’ metaphor whereby those who are successful in employment within certain organisations and professions have personal character traits which render them a 'good fit', based upon personal attributes and not necessarily connected to the ability to effectively carry out the job (Ashcroft, 2013). Ashley (2011) engaged with this notion within the UK context and argued that this 'cultural competency' is rooted in middle class socialisation whereby children and young people seeking employment are equipped with complex codes recognisable by others in that group. These cultural codes were identified as a form of social magic by Ingram and Allen,

> *Social magic generates the belief that the person possesses capacities that are unrelated to the social world in which they developed. It casts a magical veil so that embodied forms of cultural capital become naturalised and the structures in which they were generated are denied existence.* (Ingram and Allen, 2018: 729)

Lawler and Payne (2017) propose that social magic works in a way to obscure the social relations on which it is based and instead attributing the dispositions to people as inherent characteristics. It is a form of institutional habitus where the symmetry of culture is a structuring mechanism which is recognised and valued in the institution or work environment, in a similar way to the using the same metaphor of that utilised historically by Bourdieu in terms of being naturally 'a fish in water' (Bourdieu and Waquant, 1992: 127; Friedman and Laurison, 2019: 124; Ingram and Allen, 2018). These cultural competencies are given symbolic value by institutions as a structured form of cultural capital, with long terms construction and mobilisation of dispositions embedded and mediated through family habitus.

Mastering accepted behavioural codes not only implants that 'social magic', for example fluently reading cultural codes in interviews, but embeds competences which will an assured advantage in long term occupational trajectories (Friedman and Laurison, 2019). However, there has been some re-definition in terms of the perception of middle class career trajectories. Based on their own normative experiences, parents are engaged with increasing notions of career shifting, with the emphasis on change no longer based on the notion of a 'career for life' (Power et al, 2003: 136).

The re-branding of class: study perspectives

Historically the definition of class has been centred on models of social stratification situated in a class based society, whereby individuals are placed into a set of hierarchical social groups. However, concepts related to class can be seen as one of the most contentious and contested debates in sociological theory (Wright, 2003). Whilst this thesis draws heavily upon the class theory of Bourdieu, it is relevant to examine this interpretation in relation to the context of current debates surrounding the definition of class in order to explain how class theory is anchored to this study.

Although class is seen as an economic relationship based upon the social organisation of production, exchange, distribution and consumption, this thesis proposes that contemporary class identity also needs to be examined through a wider perspective of social relationships (Bradley, 2016). Framed by the significance of different forms of economic, cultural and social capital, class belonging is perceived as intrinsically and symbolically related to consumption as well as production (Bathmaker et al, 2011). This thesis views class as a dynamic system of social structures which can be conceptualised through the wider lens of parenting practices, educational experiences and models of residency. Viewing class as a process which impacts upon many aspects of contemporary life provides opportunity to examine personal experiences in order to illuminate the diverse nature of middle class factions, including material structures of identity and inequalities (Bradley, 2016; Bathmaker et al, 2011).

Adopting Bourdieu's field theory provides opportunity to understand class from 'a much more expansive concept in order to engage with all inequalities in life chances that can be accredited to socially determined inequalities in resources' (Wright, 2002: 4). This theoretical stance is framed by a conception and realization of class, whereby class relations are enacted through social fields of competition within the micro level of our daily life experiences.

> *'class is not a membership of a category or the simple possession of of certain capital or assets. It is an activation of resources and social identities, or rather the interplay of such identities, in specific locations from particular ends. Thus 'class assets define the terrain on which class collectives form, rather than specify the nature of social class per se' (Ball, 2003: 176).*

Thus, this study is heavily influenced by the work of Butler and Robson in seeing that spatial aspects are key factors in the understanding middle class formation in urban areas of gentrification (2001). These spatial components are perceived as an influential factor in identity construction, particularly mediated within households containing school-age children through the education market and accompanying necessity to construct credible strategies (Butler and Robson, 2001; Butler with Robson, 2003). This supports the view that that 'education markets are now rivalling those in housing and employment as determinants of the nature, extent and stability of middle-class gentrification of inner-city localities' (Ball et al, 1995: 84). In mapping these social spatial divisions within middle class factions, this thesis sheds light upon how these educational circuits are operated by parents within urban areas of gentrification.

Traditionally, there was a consensus amongst sociologists that class was a central concept in ordering social relations. However, it has been suggested that in current times the concept of social class has changed (Savage, 2001; Butler with Robson, 2003). Whilst some sociologists argue that class is a powerful structuring force (Devine, 1998; Newby et al, 1998), others provide critiques that there has been an end to class (Giddens, 1990; Beck, 1992). Subsequently, Savage (2001) developed what Butler with Robson calls 'a third way position' in arguing that individuals more frequently use class to explain society around them, but now do not necessarily wish to identify themselves as being part of class structure (2003: 16). This is corroborated by the work of Bradley (2016), in class belonging now a more passive identity, due to a general reluctance in contemporary society to discuss issues in class terms. This thesis therefore accepts the notion that in contemporary times class is ‘a benchmark against which individual position and progress but does not define their lives’ (Butler with Robson, 2003: 17; Savage, 2000). Although class can no more be perceived as an established collective structure, in terms of class identities that does not mean that class is positioned through solely individualised class frames (Savage et al, 2000). The pitching of individual identity in direct opposition to traditional collective class culture fails ‘to capture the complex interweaving of class and individual identity’ (Savage et al, 2000: 101). It has been suggested that individualisation theories of class are no more than ‘projects for intellectual grandizement’ which have resulted in increased inequality, with class inequality even more powerfully reproduced (Skeggs, 2004: 54). More recent re-classifications of class by Savage, have proposed that more focus should be given to forms of capital as being central to class divisions, with cultural and social processes underpinning class differentiation. He calls for a ‘cultural politics of class’ in order to truly understand how class boundaries are fluid and no longer rigid structures, and proposes that in UK contemporary society there are seven non-hierarchical categories of stratification (Savage, 2015: 404). These classifications were based upon differentiation between economic, social and cultural capital and were classified in 7 categories as Elite, Established Middle Class, Technical Middle Class, New Affluent Workers, Traditional Working Class, Emergent Service Workers and Precariat arguing for more multi-dimensional approaches such as this to uncover contemporary class formation (Savage et al, 2015). Although this research does give an alternative way of conceptualising class, it has received some criticism in being overly simplistic and flawed both theoretically and methodologically (Mills, 2014).

In the light of recent government policies, middle class habitus is even more firmly entrenched and institutionalised in government dogma (Skeggs, 2004; Bauman, 1998). There has been an accompanying reversal from traditional perceptions of class, with the middle class now 'the moral identifier', a role displaced from the traditional working class (Butler and Robson, 2003:17). Skeggs (2011) recognises that the inherent danger inherit liberal legacies of individualism which not only determines the working class as deficit in value, but also legitimises that deficit in terms of the person:

> *If we only focus our theoretical gaze on abstractions from the bourgeois model of the singular self we will never be able to imagine or understand how value is produced and lived beyond the dominant symbol and will repeatedly misrecognise, wilfully ignore and de-grade other forms of value practices, person-value and personhood…* (Skeggs, 2011: 509)

'Individualisation theories' have now focused more upon a view of class differentiation in terms of personal qualities. This is in line with the re-branding of class, whereby class identity and belonging is based upon consumption and class-related tastes and participation (Skeggs, 2004; Savage, 2010). Class belonging and transmission is not just about collective grouping and action in a physical sense of entering a class group, but is permeated and transmitted on a day to day personal basis, underpinned by our positioning, attitudes and judgements, and with class struggle implemented culturally and where worth and value is constantly contested (Skeggs, 2004). Butler with Robson identified the connection between socio-spatial formation associated with mass consumption and mass production, with the emergence of the middle class as the defining group of a gentrified area, both culturally and economically (2003: 21). With cultural consumption a defining feature of class, Bourdieu highlighted how aesthetic dispositions are a product of social conditioning and a key characteristic of cultural privilege. Through an emphasis upon the mode of consumption as opposed to the means, the aesthetic sense becomes powerful in forming 'the sense of distinction' (Bourdieu, 1984: 49; Johnson et al, 2019).

Over recent years debate has persisted in terms of whether sociologists can declare that the class system has come to a final close. However, research conducted by sociologists from that time until now propose arguments which suggest that the class system still permeates society as a central structuring element in UK society. The work of Goldthorpe (Erikson and Goldthorpe, 1992) was particularly instrumental in the formulation of the National Statistics Socio-economic classification (NSEC), which provided a class schema made distinct by the identification and grading of a professional, intermediate and working class. Although this today still provides an effective tool in class categorisation, it does not address the dynamic and fluid relationship between class, identity and inequality which underpins social and cultural transformation in contemporary society (Savage, 2003).

With class perceived as a process not a position (Reay 1998) it is argued that there has emerged a re-framing or re-working of class, as opposed to a complete eradication, with class perceived as a mechanism to construct identity (Savage, 2003; Savage et al, 2001). Influenced by Bourdieu's theory of reproduction, this contemporary class analysis has argued that the re-branding of class has been based upon individualised identities which are based on middle class norms, lifestyles and omnivorousness (Skeggs, 2004: 141). This has given rise to a different kind of 'class paradigm' which is underpinned by the interplay between markets, classes and individuals (Savage, 2003).

This 'new sociology of class' is underpinned by the belief that middle class parents have responded to the increased insecurity and risk by intensifying positional competition in the effort to achieve positional advantage for their children (Ball, 2003) with class identification being more based upon identity and lifestyle choices than traditional socio-economic classification (Dowling, 2009).).

Skeggs argues that class formation is activated within all concrete and abstract formations of daily life, and that 'living class is very much part of how class is made' (Skeggs, 2004: 173). Class action must be perceived as reproduction, not transformation (Reay, 2017: 150). Although there are variables in middle class lifestyles, aspirations and values, with the link sometimes appearing faint, the seeming weakness of class can be seen as evidence of its 'profound yet invisible power' (Savage et al, 2000: 152; Vincent and Ball, 2006).

> *We need to reinvigorate class analysis and deal with the contemporary shifts in neo-liberal governance and transnational flexible capitalism. We require an understanding that goes beyond the 'economic' and exchange to understand the consequences of class struggle and how this is part of new marketization, new attributions of value, new forms of appropriation, exploitation and governance and new selves. (Skeggs, 2004: 186).*

Chapter Four: Methodology

This chapter begins by outlining the methodological approaches adopted within this research. Firstly, it justifies the epistemological and philosophical positions considered the most apt for answering the research questions and how they are underpinned by my own ontological viewpoint of social reality. It then explains the reasoning behind the choice of the research locations as potentially informative settings in terms of investigating local belonging and urban change and provides contextual and factual information regarding the respondents and their chosen neighbourhood. Finally, I have situated myself within the research in terms of my personal and occupational identity and how this might have impacted upon my interpretation and analysis of data (Vincent and Ball, 2006).

Aims

Within the field of social theory and education, this thesis has investigated the inter-generational transfer of advantage and disadvantage, particularly regarding potential links between aspirations, children's life chances and educational attainment. A principal aim was to examine parental aspirations regarding children's futurity and how they relate to the articulation of parental narratives and how they might be underpinned by shared location, identity, values, biography and resources. By empirically examining specific locations and communities, this local study has the potential to provide valuable insight into the nature of contemporary social change. In order to explain how the methodological approach supports the aim of this thesis I return to the research questions identified in Chapter 1:

Research questions

1. What are the aspirations of middle-class parents across contrasting locales and how are they mediated through elective belonging to neighbourhood and school choice?

2. In what way do middle class parenting practices transmit advantage and does emphasis shift at times of educational transition?
3. What is the connection between long term aspirations of middle class parents and higher educational or occupational trajectories?

Ontological and epistemological stance

Methodological theory is categorised by the exploration of 'what lies behind the approaches and methods of inquiry used in a piece of research' (Punch, 2014: 14). As proposed by Skeggs, 'methodology is in itself theory', in being the theoretical stance regarding the methods and tools utilised to investigate who, what and how to study chosen issues as well as decisions regarding approaches to writing (1997: 17). These decisions locate methodology within certain paradigms, disciplines and theoretical argument (Skeggs, 1997). All research is based upon assumptions in terms of reality and what 'constitutes knowledge' of this reality and 'these assumptions constitute the essential idea of what is meant by the term 'paradigm' in research methodology and philosophy of science literature' (Punch, 204: 14). Punch suggests that in simple terms paradigms inform us of the essence of reality, with the epistemology seen as the relationship between the researcher and the reality. The ontology, in terms of the perspectives of the researcher, inevitably influences any claims made arising from the research. Conceptualised within a constructivist paradigm, this study is ontologically relativist and epistemically subjectivist perspective and is based on the worldview that, as values are socially constructed, it is imperative to examine these situations from an individual's perspective in the context of real life situations in everyday lives (Mills et al, 2006; Hammersley 1990). The methodology selected is those methods chosen which are best suited to that particular reality and best answering the phenomena being studied (Punch, 2014). Therefore, the epistemological position of this research is made explicit by the adoption of a socio-cultural perspective within an interpretivist paradigm, and is conceptualised within the theoretical standpoint of social constructionism whereby social reality is formed through individual and collective actions with perception of self, society and reality constructed through interaction (Charmaz, 2014).

> *In many ways qualitative research is what we all do in everyday life. We have continually to solve problems about how we should behave with other people in a wide range of settings.* (Holliday, 2007: 10)

It is often standard practice to associate positivism with quantitative and qualitative research with interpretivism and constructivism (Punch, 2014: 17). However, the complexities of social research suggest that it is dangerous to oversimplify these distinctions into hard categories as ‘qualitative research will always involve quantitative elements and vice versa’ (Holliday, 2007: 2).

Based upon the aims and research questions it was decided at an early stage that this study should therefore incorporate a more pragmatic and ‘embedded design’ whereby the qualitative data from semi structured interviews was correlated with independent variables such as parental qualifications, income, settings and year groups (Punch, 2014; Timonen, 2018). Engaging with biographical data in comparison to qualitative data provided an anthropological feature of the research in considering demographics of the chosen second tier city, whilst allowing me to comprehend the range of participants and contexts. The justification for this approach was provide an in-depth and rich contextual picture to support development of analytic categories and make comparisons in order to generate theory to illuminate and explain any interdependent social processes or variable relationships based upon these correlations (Charmez, 2014: 33).

Socio-constructivist perspective: parental aspiration, identity and advantage

A clear methodological focus was to question how to best illuminate and situate concrete processes which are embedded in core social fields (Bourdieu and Waquant, 2007). Within the view that 'behaviour and data are socially situated, context-related, context dependent and context-rich' (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007: 167), qualitative methodology was utilised to examine social and cultural dimensions in the context of real life situations (Murchinson, 2010; Street, 2001). A key feature was to investigate the 'normative and relational differences between middle class factions' (Vincent and Ball, 2006: 11).

Due to the emphasis on social networks and location I was particularly influenced by previous research by both Butler and Robson and Vincent and Ball (2003; 2006), in that a theoretical-interpretivist approach would best illuminate 'patterns of middle class 'asset' deployment and cultural reproduction across the four fields of housing, employment, consumption and education within inner city London' (Butler and Robson, 2003: 33). In a similar way to Vincent and Ball, I attempted to create an empirical foundation through the investigation of bounded social practices within the actualisation of spatial areas and social reproduction in that the aura of place:

> *It follows that in a mobile global environment, location in fixed physical space may be of increasing relative significance in the generation of social distinction.* (Savage et al, 2005: 12)

Butler and Robson (2003) previously reflected that households with dependent children have previously been neglected in research investigating social processes in global cities, even though education was a pivotal factor in choice of location role for many middle class families within contemporary urban locations. Therefore, then by focusing more upon this element would more aptly uncover the causes and mechanisms of social processes and strategies employed my middle class parents not only in terms of education trajectories of children, but also by class, social awareness, the individual, family and place (Butler and Robson (2003). Within this study these ‘sub-contexts':

> *... provide a heuristic framework of comparison and are given different emphasis and played out differently in different class factions, in different localities. (*Ball and Vincent, 2007: 1177)

This process additionally uncovers the dynamics of school choice at points of transition, and the interactions of parents with the education market (Vincent and Ball, 2006). As much as possible this research has engaged with ‘situating social agency in the dimension of inter-generational time’ through engaging with processes of family habitus, particularly in relation to aspirations and educational trajectories for children (Butler and Robson (2003: 33).

Subjectivity and reflexivity: the implicit role of the researcher

Epistemologically this qualitative study is underpinned by relativity and subjectivity, with ‘research acknowledged as a construction which occurs under specific conditions- of which we may not be aware and which may not be our choosing’ (Charmaz, 2014: 13). Social research is seen as a dynamic process, in which world narratives are a result of the researchers own ‘selective observation and theoretical interpretation’ (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007: 16; Cohen et al, 2007). Irrespective of methodological positioning, it is essential that qualitative researchers are reflexive in acknowledging the influence of personal biographies and their own place in the social world they are interpreting (Mills and Birks, 2004; Cohen et al, 2007).This emphasis on reflexivity means that this study explicitly acknowledges the pivotal relationship between researcher and respondents and ‘fully implicates the researcher in generating data and theory’ (Timonen et al, 2018: 3).

Therefore, adopting an ‘inductive, comparative, emergent and open-ended approach of the original statement in its discovery’ (Charmaz, 2014: 12), the key feature underpinning this qualitative research is that explanation of data is contextually presented within recognition that the researcher is intrinsic and fundamental within the research process (Birks, and Mills, 2014). In this way, whilst acknowledging the valid construction of knowledge, it is seen as being conducted under particular contexts and conditions by which it can be shaped (Charmaz, 2014). My adopting this approach within this study, meant that I was able to not only acknowledge how my preconceptions impacted upon my analysis, but even more to recognise how my own experiences and values, whether conscious or unconscious, influenced the facts and themes I identified,

> *Qualitative writing becomes very much an unfolding story in which the writer gradually makes sense, not only of her data, but of the total experience of which it is an artefact. This is an interactive process in which she tries to untangle and make reflexive sense of her own presence and role in the research. The written study thus becomes a complex train of thought within which her voice and her image of others are interwoven. (Holliday, 2007:122)*

Middle class stratification: methodological implications

It has been well documented that research engaging with class identity can be problematic in terms of methodological implications (Ball, 2003). As exposed by previous class identity research individuals do not adhere to the class categories they are allocated in a simplistic and distinct way (Vincent and Ball, 2006). It was therefore a deliberate act that parents were not asked to make a claim on class identification even though many of them could be considered middle class (Ball, 2003). Influenced by the rationale of Ball, this study views class as 'relational, emergent, contextual, dynamic, localized and eventualized', seeing class relations played out within social fields (Ball, 2003: 175). In order to answer the research questions in this study, it was much more important to consider the social processes which occur within families and are mediated through neighbourhood, social engagement and educational institutions (Vincent and Ball, 2006). The focus on the family practices, replicating the approach taken by Vincent and Ball (2006), has provided a lens in this research to examine the family as a habitus generating institution.

An additional area which can prove challenging in class identity research is that broad class categories regarding the middle and working class are not homogenous (Ball, 2003). Previous research has explored these factions both horizontally and vertically, scrutinising demarcation factors such as lifestyle, values, occupational contexts or place of residence (Vincent and Ball, 2006).

As a result, this study has wrestled at times with ensuring methodological authenticity in negotiating the normality of the middle class as a group with the complex arena of middle class factions. This has been an aspect which was continually reviewed throughout the coding and analysis of data. Given that the research settings were situated in three separate school catchments, it was logical to follow the approach taken by Butler and Robson (2003) by examining class factions in respect of places of residence and neighbourhood. With elective belonging to neighbourhood and gentrification central to research questions, lifestyle, social interaction and patterns of consumption were illuminative within comparative data analysis (Savage et al, 2005; Vincent and Ball, 2006). This study did attempt in the initial stages to categorise parental occupational contexts according to old and new middle class as utilised by Power et al (2003), although the respondent's occupational contexts did not fit easily into this demarcation system. Employing biographical data of respondents in terms of socio-economic background through National Statistics Socio-economic Classification (N-SEC) categories, occupational status and highest qualifications supported comparative analysis of factions.

However, as data analysis progressed it was clear that there were many synergies across factions, not just differences. As a result, this study equally engaged with the normative nature of middle class values and practices within the belief that exclusive patterns amongst middle class divisions are intrinsically interwoven with the normative characteristics of the middle class group as a whole (Vincent and Ball, 2006).

Researching the neighbourhood: a leading European city context

In recent times academics have given prominence to researching the social structure and demographics of 'global cities', for example London and New York, and it is argued that this study is valuable in the examination of the social spaces in the context of one of the 'second tier' cities situated in the south west of the UK. Second tier cities in the UK vary considerably, exemplified by cities such as Leeds and Liverpool in the North, although they are the centre of urban structure as defined by Parkinson et al (2012),

> *Those cities outside the capital whose economic and social performance is sufficiently important to affect the potential performance of the national economy. (2012: 9)*

According to the most recent published statistical data, whilst there have been increases in population across the board in over the last decade, there has been an exceptional increase of 70% in the central area of the chosen second tier city (Strategic Planning Office, 2019). This increase in population, particularly in central areas, has been mirrored in other second tier cities such as Manchester and Nottingham. A qualitative approach was an effective way to investigate the demographics of this second tier city's neighbourhood contexts, being constructed from people's lived-in experiences and particularly suited to studying social issues in multidimensional structural contexts, (Walsh, 2017; Punch, 2014; Jones and Alony, 2011).

In order to fully investigate social and cultural divisions, I selected primary school settings situated in three contrasting areas of the city. Wood Rise and Rose Hill, which have been anonymised, are urban schools situated in neighbouring inner city areas of gentrification, and Pine Grove is situated on the outskirts of the north side of the city historically being one of Europe's largest new towns, built with private investment in the late 1980's. The three settings were particularly selected of interest as contrasting areas, with location influenced by

Vincent and Balls previous research, in being attractive to differing sections of the middle class (2007). All chosen three school settings within this chosen second tier city are larger than average primary schools. According to the 2016 Education Performance Report the proportion of schools in this city graded at good or outstanding by latest Ofsted figures was 92% for primary and 95% for secondary, which was significantly above the national average (City Council, 2016).

Schools and Localities

Wood Rise: Primary school and neighbourhood

Wood Rise is a federation consisting of one infant and one junior school on the same site. The junior school has a mixed community status, caters from ages 7-11 years and has 295 pupils on roll. The overall effectiveness was graded as 'Good' by the latest full school inspection, and with this grade maintained in the more recent short inspection (OFSTED, 2013; 2017). A lower proportion of pupils than average receive support from the Pupil Premium. The mixed community infant school caters for pupils aged 3-7 years has a total of 258 pupils on roll, with 139 of those pupils in government funded education for children aged three until the end of the early years foundation stage (EYFS) at aged five years. The overall effectiveness of the infant school was graded as 'Outstanding' by the latest full school inspection (OFSTED, 2008). The school development plan places emphasis on the staff and children as individuals, with everyone discovering their passions and talents (School Development Plans 2017-21).

Although situated within an area inhabited by diverse 'socio-demographic characteristics' such as, bourgeois gentrifiers, bohemians and multi-ethnic and white working class (Butler, 2002: 17, Savage et al, 1992), the catchment for Wood Rise is made up of a high proportion of 'townhouse cosmopolitans' who are identified as 'city sophisticates' with rising prosperity

(ACORN, 2017; 2019). According to ACORN attributes of households corresponding to postcodes, these families inhabit expensive terraced properties, with particularly desirable housing being adjacent to the park in the centre of the area. The age group tends to be mixed, although at a younger range than some areas as many older people move away after retirement. Most inhabitants earn more than the national average and are in professional or managerial occupations. A high proportion of residents hold university degrees.

Wood Rise is seen as a feeder primary school to several state secondary schools although, of the 8 parents interviewed from Wood Rise, one of the following schools had been chosen for their Year 6 child, with admission confirmed at the time of the interviews, as outlined below:

Chapelle Carlton Academy (CCA) – 4/8 children

CCA is a single sex academy sponsor led secondary school, catering for girls from 11-18 years. It is situated towards the centre of the city, although close to the main shopping area of the Wood Rise area. It is a language specialist school with an expanding intake, having 532 pupils on roll at the last Ofsted inspection in 2010, when it achieved a judgement of 'Outstanding', and 889 currently on roll (2019 local authority website). The mission statement of the school is based upon aspiration, achievement, community and responsibility. The amount of special educational needs (SEN) pupils on roll is below the national average, with half the pupils of ethnic origin, with an under average number of children with SEND (Ofsted, 2010). The application procedure allocates a number of places for children with special educational needs (SEN; 5 children 2017), looked after children (LAC; 3 children 2017), foreign language scholars (16 children 2017), siblings (47 children, 2017), staff offspring (1 child, 2017) and then by random allocation for the remaining places (96 children 2017). Random allocation takes the form of 'a fair banding method' of selecting an equal number of pupils across the five bands based on the score from the Granada Learning (GL) Non Verbal Reasoning assessment.

Coombe Gardens (CG) – 2/8 children

CG is a mixed secondary comprehensive school, catering from ages 11-18 years, which specialises in performing arts, maths and computing. It is a larger than average school with 1,503 on roll, and in the latest Ofsted inspection was rated as 'Good' (Ofsted, 2018). Its mission statement values the education of 'the whole child as a future citizen'. When oversubscribed, its application procedure gives priority to LAC, siblings and staff offspring, with any remaining places allotted according to geography in terms of proximity to the school. CG has a higher than average number of pupils eligible both for the Pupil Premium, and with English as an additional language (EAL). It is located 2.4 km walking distance from Wood Rise, within a leafy Victorian area north of the city, with the farthest pupil in 2017 living a distance of 1.665 km from the school.

Radley Grove (RG) – 2/8 children

RG is a mixed secondary academy converter, catering from ages 11-18 years, which specialises in science. It promotes respect, ambition and responsibility and adheres to a house system to promote allegiance and collaboration. It became an academy in 2012. It is a large than average school with 1, 383 on roll, and in the latest Ofsted inspection was rated as 'Outstanding' (Ofsted, 2016). Its mission statement values the education of 'the whole child as a future citizen'. The pupils are mainly white British, with below average number of pupils with SEN or eligible for the Pupil Premium. RG works in partnership to CG in sharing the post 16 provision as a post 16 centre. In a similar way to CG school, when oversubscribed its application procedure gives priority to LAC, siblings and staff offspring, with any remaining places allotted according to geography in terms of proximity to the school. It is also located

2.4 km from Wood Rise Primary, within a leafy Victorian area north of the city, with the farthest pupil in 2017 living a distance of 1.668 km from the school.

Rose Hill: Primary school and neighbourhood

Rose Hill is a mixed primary school catering for ages 5-11 years. It is a maintained primary school, with 417 pupils currently on roll. The overall effectiveness of the school was graded as ‘Good’ by the latest OFSTED school inspection (OFSTED, 2019). Pupils’ attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 is above the national average, and the proportion of pupils receiving support from the Pupil Premium is below the national average. The school is part of a hard federation with another local Primary School. In explanation, a hard federation is where two or more maintained schools join together under one governing body, and a soft federation is where two or more maintained schools join with a joint committee of both governing bodies (DFCSF, 2009). Each of the schools has a separate headteacher, with an overarching executive teacher, and one governing body over both schools. The school prospectus states that the school follows a broad and balanced curriculum, in accordance with the national curriculum, with a key feature being the discreet teaching of core learning skills across all subjects (School prospectus, 2018-19).

Rose Hill is located demographically in a more mixed patchwork of an area than Wood Rise, with a catchment which includes ‘townhouse cosmopolitans’, as well as ‘educated families with young children’, living in a ‘comfortable community’ context (ACORN, 2017; 2019). According to ACORN attributes of households corresponding to postcodes, the ‘townhouse cosmopolitans’ live adjacent to ‘educated families in terraces’ who similarly are university graduates working in managerial or professional occupations with higher than average earnings, but often in the earlier stages of their career.

The one parent interviewed with a year 6 child at Rose Hill had chosen the local secondary comprehensive, outlined below:

Fiveacres (F)

F is a smaller than average mixed secondary high school catering for ages 11-16, with 687 pupils on roll. At the last Ofsted inspection it was graded as ‘Good’ and maintained this grade in the more recent short inspection (Ofsted, 2013; 2017). Its mission statement promotes achieving excellence in an environment where everyone is valued for what they are what they can become (school prospectus, 2018). Its application procedure guarantees a place for those children with SEN, and then giving priority to LAC and siblings with any remaining places allotted according to geography in terms of proximity to the school and then staff offspring. It is a smaller than average secondary school, with 687 pupils on roll in 2013 (Ofsted, 2013). F has double the national average of students eligible for the Pupil Premium, and three times the national average of children with EAL. It is located 1.2 km from Rose Hill primary school.

(NB: Wood Rise was historically seen as a feeder school for this local comprehensive secondary school, located 1.6 km away, although had not been chosen by any of the 8 Wood Rise respondents).

Pine Grove: Primary school and neighbourhood

Pine Grove is a mixed primary school catering for ages 4- 11 years. It is an Academy sponsor-led school with 438 pupils on roll. The overall effectiveness of the school was graded as ‘Requires Improvement’ by the latest OFSTED school inspection (OFSTED, 2017). The proportion of pupils supported by the Pupil Premium is below the national average. The school prospectus states that an enquiry based active curriculum supports pupils in applying their skills and knowledge across all subjects in the curriculum (School Prospectus, 2017-18).

The suburban Pine Grove catchment consists of detached, semi-detached and terraced housing, and this area is mainly populated by financially comfortable families, categorised as ‘affluent achievers’ who have executive wealth (ACORN, 2017). According to ACORN attributes of households corresponding to postcodes, the area houses well off working families who live on modern estates. Many of these families have school age children. A large proportion of the residents are commuters who are employed in professional or managerial occupations, with household incomes above the national average.

All Year 6 respondents had made the choice to enrol their child for the local community comprehensive school:

Bury Park Community Comprehensive (BPCC)

BPCC is an all through mixed community school catering for ages 4-18, which is an academy converter. Converter academies were introduced by the Coalition of 2010 as an extension of the academy programme and are successful schools which desire to covert to an academy to benefit from the increased autonomy it provides. At the last Ofsted inspection it had 1146 pupils on roll, although none in key stage 2. BPCC values lifelong learning and achieving potential, with an emphasis on inspiration, self-belief and achievement for all (School Prospectus, 2018). It has well below the average number of children eligible for Pupil Premium, and a below average number of students with SEN. Its application procedure gives precedence to looked after children (LAC), and if oversubscribed then gives order of priority to local siblings and then geography in terms of proximity to the school (Academy Trust Admissions criteria, 2019). It is located 0.6 km from Pine Grove primary school.

Implementing the research project

I gained access to school settings by approaching headteachers, informing them of the proposed research and gaining their agreement to be part of the study. Respondents were approached through a letter brought home by the children, with permission gained from headteachers and access granted to class lists of Reception and Year 6 classes. Information regarding the study was also advertised, noting the schools agreed involvement, in termly newsletters outlining the potential benefits and worth of the research (Cohen et al, 2007). Only parents who had children in Reception or Year 6 classes were approached. These age groups were specifically chosen in order to compare parental aspiration and identity at key transition points, and potentially identify whether the structuring dispositions of parents are transferrable at key transition points, particularly in relation to locational and elective belonging. An original contribution to this study is the evidence that parental aspirations shift and with changing emphasis evident as children get older and navigate educational trajectories.

Respondents

The research involved semi structured interviews with a total respondent group of 27 parents, made up of 25 mothers and 2 fathers. The participants are described further in the attached 'Pen Portraits' and grid of biographical data (see Appendix 1 and 2). It was essential that I reflectively acknowledged that respondents were mostly mothers, and on reflection it might have been more apt to follow up with second interviews, interviewing fathers alone or as part of a re-interview jointly with partners (Vincent with Ball (2007).

The respondents were recruited through letter (see Appendix 3). All parents had at least one child in Reception or one child in Year 6 at the time of the interviews. The study was approved in each educational setting by the executive headteachers, who provided recommendation to parents in school newsletters, as well as practical support in room space provision and access to Reception and Year 6 class lists.

I interviewed most parents in their own homes, although a small number chose to be interviewed in a private room within the infant or primary school setting. All interviews were semi structured in format and lasted between 30 minutes and 1.5 hours (see Appendix 4). The interviews were recorded and subsequently transcribed. Overall the parents were very open and communicative, although sensitivity was required in a few instances when some topics proved emotive. This was particularly noticeable when some Wood Rise parents were discussing how they had negotiated and secured places at a chosen secondary school, particularly where appeals procedures were involved or their decision making in terms of wanting the 'best for their children' were at odds with their liberal beliefs.

The Reception respondent parents were aged between 35-45 years, with the average ages in Wood Rise and Rose Hill being 39 years and Pine Grove 36 years. The Year 6 respondent parents were aged from 42-55 years, with the average age in Wood Rise and Pine Grove being 49 and 51 years respectively. The only one Year 6 parent interviewed at Rose Hill was 44 years old.

The biographical data of respondents revealed that in all 3 settings, and across both age groups, a high proportion of those choosing to take part in the study were of graduate status or above in terms of qualifications, with 87% of parents in Wood Rise and 80% of parents in both Pine Grove and Rose Hill holding qualifications at university degree level or above (see Appendix 5). Of those graduate parents, 80% at Rose Hill, 44% at Wood Rise and 33% at Pine Grove had a qualification at masters' level or above. This is in line with the demographic make-up of both catchment areas according to ACORN post code classifications (ACORN, 2019).

In terms of household income, where disclosed, the household incomes at £60K and above as compared by locations were Rose Hill 80%, Pine Grove 80% and Wood Rise 29% (See Appendix 6). Of those parents interviewed with a household income of £100-150k+, 40% were from Rose Hill, 40% from Pine Grove and 14% from Wood Rise. In relation to N-SEC categories of social class based on occupation, in all three settings the majority of respondents were in categories 1.2 or 2 (see Appendix 7 and 8). As reflected in other statistical data from respondents, Wood Rise portrayed a wider spread across categories. Although N-SEC categories were useful in giving a comparative overview against national statistical data, it was utilised with caution as in some households mothers and fathers were in different categories. Additionally, in some instances parents had made short or long terms career changes due to parental status and context so had differing categories historically. For this reason, parental narratives from the interviews were more enlightening both in terms of occupational status and intergenerational trajectories in terms of education and career, as well as highlighting class based values and identification. To facilitate triangulation between qualitative data from interviews and biographical information, the respondents were the primary focus of intergenerational N-SEC categories. As the majority of the respondents were mothers this was mostly through the maternal line. Although there was a limited number of respondents identified from differing socio-economic groupings, investigation followed up upon any feelings of exclusion by parents where possible from interviews and parental narrative.

Looking at the biographical data, Rose Hill and Pine Grove parents at face value seem to be generally in higher groupings than Wood Rise. This is also reflected in the spread of highest qualifications held and N-SEC categories. However, this is not necessarily reflective in terms of demographics as proportionally there were a larger number of respondents interviewed from Wood Rise. It must be acknowledged that some parents and staff at Wood Rise knew the researcher from her previous role in the school, so this may have positively influenced the take up of respondents both in terms of numbers and also resulted in a wider spread of respondents.

Research Methods

In the following section I summarise the research methods implemented throughout this research, the theoretical frameworks that underpin them, and provide reflections on their practical application within the fieldwork. I then outline the approaches taken in collection, coding and analysis of data.

Intensive interviewing

In line with many contemporary qualitative research projects, 'intensive interviewing' was utilised as a primary method in gathering qualitative data (Charmaz, 2014). It was felt that this tool particularly fitted the interpretive paradigm underpinning the research, with interviews seeing 'the centrality of human interaction for knowledge production, and emphasises the social situatedness of research data' (Cohen et al, 2007: 349). It is proposed that interviews in this research were the most meaningful way of eliciting the perceptions, and interpretations of real life experiences and constructive realities of parents (Punch, 2014).

It is true that a large percentage of qualitative research utilises interviews as the major source of data collection, although particular care needed be taken in the way the interviews were conducted in order to generate theory (Birks and Mills, 2014). I felt that utilising a form of 'intensive interviewing' was best placed to generate a richness of data in this particular study, as 'a gently-guided, one-sided conversation that explores research participants' perspective on their personal experience with the research topic' (Charmaz, 2014: 56). Within 'intensive interviews' the interview conversation is 'co-constructed' between interviewer and participant, with the main features being the use of open ended questions, with an aim of facilitating comprehensive responses in order to gain the full perspective of a topic based on the participants own perspectives in relation to their experiences (Charmaz, 2014: 56). The main characteristics of ‘intensive interviewing’ which suited this study was the way that this approach allowed for flexibility for issues to emerge freely, yet within a structured and controlled way, whilst allowing me as interviewer to follow up on salient emerging themes within individual and subsequent interviews (Charmaz, 2014). Although the interviews provided an opportunity for an exchange of views between two people, with the semi structured feature giving opportunity for dual interaction, it was more directed than an everyday conversation or social encounter in that it was ‘constructed’, although with questions posed by the interviewer with a purpose in mind (Cohen et al, 2007: 349). These in-depth interviews took the form of a private and extended conversation between researcher and respondent, and were seen as:

> *… a way of understanding the complex behaviour of people without imposing any a prior categorisation which might limit the field of enquiry. It is also used to explore people's interpretations and meanings of events and situations, and their symbolic and cultural significance.* (Punch, 2014: 147)

Within the semi-structured interviews the role of myself as the interviewer was seen as the ‘co-ordinator’ of the resulting differing conversations (Birks and Mills, 2011: 75), with individual responses compared with previous data and changing, similar and emerging patterns within particular groups integrated and scrutinized. With saturation utilised as a guiding principle during the compilation of data (Mason, 2010) these interviews were the primary and preferred data collection method, with the setting, scene and participant observations coded alongside interview transcriptions (Charmaz, 2014). Inductive interviews incorporated initial, intermediate and ending questions in order to elicit parental expectations from the general to the specific (Charmaz, 2006), with parallel interviews conducted with headteachers. However, in line with a qualitative approach, the interviews allowed for unstructured responses and were end loaded, in being as open ended and responsive as possible, with additional questions posed as salient themes began to emerge (Cohen et al, 2007). Although this style of interviewing allowed for freedom for respondents, a disadvantage of this method is that the data is more complex to code and quantify (Cohen et al, 2007). However, it allowed for salient themes to emerge which had not been anticipated, for example Reception parental attitudes to higher education. In place of assessing class groupings through self-identification by parents, I decided that validity was increased by asking what respondents and their partners do, and have done, for a living and engagement with intergenerational narratives of parents as a primary data source, and supported by NSEC classification.

Triangulation through biographical data

ACORN postcode classification was compared with data arising from the research in order to increase reliability in respect of the present socio-economic positioning of parents and children (see Appendix 9). Comparative analysis also considered household income and the highest qualification of respondents. NSEC categories were also calculated, and although informative regarding the overall spread of respondents across categories, were of limited use in making assumptions regarding family professional status due to the varying nature between mothers and fathers within the same household. In this respect parental narratives proved more illuminating, particularly where career trajectories had been adapted by parents in the light of balancing family duties according to ages of children and present contexts, for example short term flexible working, career breaks and working from home.

Coding and analysis

The three stages of the analytical process were firstly to collect and interpret data, secondly, to detect theoretical meaning and thirdly, to combine and categorise the concepts in order to formulate theory (Goulding, 1999). The interviews were initiated with 4 pilot interviews conducted in November and December 2014, and the main body of the interviews conducted from February 2015 to March 2016 (see Appendix 10). The interviews were recorded and then transcribed as accurately as possible, which although a time consuming task, 'not only preserved detail but also gained understanding about the construction of interview content' (Charmaz, 2014: 92). From the initial interview transcriptions, I separated, sorted and synthesised the emerging data through qualitative coding (Charmaz, 2014: 4).

The full interview transcriptions were initially coded line-by-line, by hand, in order to frame codes as well as produce an advanced level of understanding, with codes utilised to assist and hone analysis yet not enforced as a forced framework (Charmaz, 2014). All coding from initial to theory generation endeavoured to focus upon processes as opposed to naming factual categories, and I found it particularly useful to follow Charmaz's advice in utilising gerunds as a grammatical form to support me in identifying parental experiences (Charmaz, 2014).). Appendix 11 provides an extract from a transcript of an interview with a parent, and illustrates how the first level of coding progressed.

Initial or open coding was utilised as the first aspect of data analysis in identifying these processes, as well as key words or phrases in the data and then labelling them accordingly. These key phrases or words are known as 'in vivo' codes, a phrase translated from Latin as 'within the living', which consist of explicit words or groups of words, usually from respondent direct quotes, in terms of their own words, which can be labelled (Holloway, 2008: 90).

As a reflexive researcher, I also systematically tried to uncover what the respondents did not say, as well as what they did say (Mills and Birks, 2014). In order to connect the data with any emerging theoretical ideas at this early stage, I saved each complete transcription as a WORD document and used the comments software as a tool to assess each line of the data. This continued throughout the interview phase and, although a time consuming task, I found the simultaneous process of interviewing and initial analysis not only supported my active engagement and emersion as researcher and opportunity to follow up on emerging salient themes, but more importantly in providing authenticity to the voice of participants (Bryant, 2017; Charmez, 2014).

The coding process was composed of key phases where the line-by-line open coding was followed by a selective, focused phase using axial coding to relate categories to sub-categories, alongside selective coding to compare developing theoretical framework to empirical authenticity (Charmaz, 2014, Cohen et al, 2007). Although I had attended NVivo doctoral training workshops, the majority of the analysis took the form of hand coding although NVivo software analysis was utilised at particular times to follow up upon particular themes, for example salient phrases and/or common actions between and within groups. Emerging patterns were identified, and saved within MS Word tables, as grids of salient themes as related codes, core categories and properties, with the four stages of coding, memo writing and further coding, identification of patterns through delimitation and theory writing allowing for triangulation (Cohen et al, 2007). In Appendix 12 an extract from a Word table demonstrates how the axial coding proceeded.

Focused free writing in the form of a research journal (see Appendix 13), supported the analysis of emerging themes in the light of theory (Charmaz, 2014). Clustering provided a visual image of emerging themes and facilitated the identification of emerging patterns amongst comparative categories (Charmaz, 2014). Displaying these themes pictorially supported me in reviewing these core categories, so at this stage I drew these themes and sub themes as a mind map on 8 pages of A1 (see Appendix 14). Colour codes of themes were used for each setting and year group, and pseudonyms attributed to individual responses within those themes, which proved invaluable in identifying clusters around theoretical concepts within and across groups (Bryant, 2017). Continuing to add to the diagram as coding advanced enabled me to see how the coding began to develop into a more theoretical and conceptual analysis (Birks and Mills, 2015: 100). This was utilised as a form of 'diagramming' not only to support adduction, but also in identifying any potential disparities to direct further sampling (Birks and Mills, 2015).

Memo writing was employed as 'the pivotal intermediate step between data collection and writing drafts of papers', prompting early data analysis and coding (Charmaz, 2014: 72). Memos have been portrayed as 'intellectual capital in the bank', and these, alongside the research journal, provided for me a valuable written internal dialogue in terms of my thought processes (Clarke, 2005: 85). My memos were seen as 'dynamic' and remained 'active' from interview commencement through to the final theoretical analysis and written thesis completion (Birks and Mills, 2013: 43). This ensured that all theoretical routes were open, could be built or disregarded as coding progressed, whist also supporting quality and reflexivity in terms of 'maintaining an audit trail' of research outcomes (Birks and Mills, 2014: 52).

Data was scrutinised for evidence of connection between parental aspirations and values, metaphysical and metaphorical locality, particularly questioning how the spaces we inhabit shape life trajectories and identity (Prieur and Savage, 2011). The fields of employment, income, and education were examined, with emphasis given to informal social interaction and individuals' connections with everyday experiences (Butler and Robson, 2003, 2002) as well as intergenerational reactions and recreations (Reay et al, 2011). To support triangulation and pursue any themes reflective from both parents and school aspirations, the data gathered from parental semi-structured interviews was compared with aims and expectations of the headteachers. For this phase of coding, I continued to use Word grids as comparative analysis, with salient themes compared to profile data given by respondents through a quantitative questionnaire (see Appendix 15). As identified by Birks and Mills (2015), these developed into more structured tables as my coding advanced. I also found this invaluable in allowing me to visually see any clusters surrounding concepts that permeated, or did not permeate, within or across groups (Gamage, in Bryant 2017: 379).

Data analysis continued until saturation, which is when the results ceased to produce new salient themes. In many ways, the most challenging element of data analysis in qualitative research design is making connections and moving from advanced coding to theoretical integration and generation (Charmaz, 2014). Generating theory is the final element of conceptual analysis within a qualitative research approach, when these advanced codes were integrated with existing theory (Mills and Birks, 2014). This ultimate product of qualitative research is the development of an integrated and comprehensive theory that is the 'conceptual abstraction of data' which has been aptly described as requiring the researcher to make 'a final analytical leap' (Birks and Mills, 2014: 174; Saldana, 2013).

Researchers utilising qualitative research methods have recognised that accountability needs to be explicit within research design (Clarke, 2005). From the recruitment of the respondents through to interview questions and parental responses, and the whole course of the research, consideration was given to the challenges, practicalities and procedures regarding reflexivity. This involved not only engaging with the researcher's perspective in the light of their own experiences and influences, but also how she conducts the research from the respondents' perspective, through interactions and their representation in the written findings (Charmaz, 2014). The acknowledgement of self was a fundamental element of the research process (Vincent and Ball, 2006), within the premise that the researcher is influenced by their own biography, lifestyles and values.

Ethical implications within this study

As interviews concern personal interaction and are underpinned by a human dimension in terms of personal actions and conditions, the ethical components were explicitly acknowledged from inception to conclusion of the research (Cohen et al, 2007).

Before carrying out the study I applied for, and was granted, ethical approval by University of Bath Spa Ethics Committee. The research was strictly conducted according to the British Education Research Association (BERA) Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research (2011). The major areas of ethical consideration in conducting interviews are issues related to informed consent, confidentiality and the effects of the interviews (Cohen et al, 2007), which are outlined in more detail in the following paragraphs.

Informed consent

A letter was sent to all respondents at their initial point of interest, outlining the aims and focus of the research. Informed consent was obtained both in writing and orally before interviews took place, and respondents were reminded that they were able to withdraw from the research at any point. The acknowledgement of the autonomy of participants means that choice is a fundamental right of respondents engaging in the research process (Punch, 2014) and the principle of informed consent has been defined as:

> *The procedures in which individuals choose whether to participate in an investigation after being informed of facts that would likely to influence their decisions.* (Diener and Crandall, 1978: 57)

This definition proposes that this definition should be accompanied by four key features: '*competence'* that rationale and mature individuals will make appropriate decisions if they are given full information; '*voluntarism'* in making certain that respondents can choose to freely take part or not in the research; '*full information'* in that the consent is assumed to enable the respondent to be fully informed; *'comprehension'* in that respondents have clearly understood what the study involves (Cohen et al, 2007: 52). In order to safeguard the rights of the participants, it was ensured that these four elements were present from respondents' expression of interest through to all stages of the research process (Cohen et al, 2007).

Confidentiality

Confidentiality and anonymity was guaranteed for respondents, with participant's identities disguised by the use of pseudonyms for all locations, respondent names and school settings. All interview recordings were held on a secure, encrypted computer and labelling not attached to any traceable names or personal details. The level of confidentiality was maintained throughout and after data collection, in order to make sure that participant rights were not contravened (Punch, 2014). Only the researcher had access to the initial recordings, and respondents were informed that the results would form the basis of a doctoral thesis and might be published in the future. The respondents were also informed that findings would be made available to respondents, school leaders and governors as an executive summary, in line with the guarantee of confidentiality and anonymity.

Ethics and mothers

A fundamental awareness that I had in planning and conducting the interviews as the primary data collection method, and underpinned by a qualitative research approach, was my implicit role as the researcher. In line with constructivist perspectives in relation to interviewing, I endeavoured to create an interview context which was defined by a non-hierarchical relationship between myself and respondents as 'co-creators of data' supported by the conversational approach taken (Punch, 2014: 148). A feature throughout engagement with parents was the transparency and 'self-disclosure' regarding my path and context as interviewer, mother and teacher which had led us to meet and discuss contemporary issues which were biographically relevant to us both and founded upon trust (Punch, 2014: 148). Although class matching does not automatically form connectivity between researcher and mothers as a middle class mother interviewing middle class mothers, the transcripts did show that in the majority of cases there seemed to be a rapport established, not only with respondents already known to me from Wood Rise (Vincent and Ball, 2006).

Acknowledging that the majority of the respondents in the study being middle class women, I strongly believe it is necessary to engage fully with the causal elements of any social processes and behaviours against the backdrop of educational policy. As a result of marketised educational policy initiatives underlined by choice, as well as how women have been characterised not only in the media but in previous research, has resulted in 'the blame for social and educational inequalities can now be laid at the door of women' (Power, 2006: 175). I was anxious to avoid interpreting data with a lack of sympathy in its critique, which I believe is clearly an ethical necessity but also part of the 'duty of care' to respondents when they have shared fundamental and personal elements of their lives (Vincent and Ball, 2006: 23). Throughout this thesis I consistently refer to 'parents', but am explicit that on most occasions the narratives I refer to are those of mothers. This is not an easy task, although I have endeavoured to avoid making simplistic assumptions regarding parental practices and motives, and the use of descriptive language which simplistically categorise the concepts of 'public' and 'private':

> *Unless we acknowledge their contingent, multifaceted and gendered dimensions, as well as their ideological loading and political persuasiveness, we are in danger of reducing complexity to simple undertheorized oppositions.* (Power, 2006: 187).

Familiarity and identification: researcher and respondent relationships

It must be acknowledged that there was an explicit relationship with the Wood Rise headteacher, staff and parents, as I had some years ago held a senior leadership role within the setting and had a previous connection with many respondent Year 6 parents. This was transparently admitted, and with ethics of consent adhered to, was more seen as an advantage in that it resulted in a larger take up by parents, a wider socio-economic spread and a noticeable openness in discussion which was based upon the trust which was already in place from our previous relationships and association. I was also able to bring some ‘insider’ knowledge into the study regarding the research context, as I had not only worked in the area but had previously lived in the school catchment for seven years or more. This prior understanding gave me the opportunity to bring even more richness to the study, particularly through my knowledge of ‘social, cultural and micro-political aspects’ (Punch, 2009: 44). It was understood that this insider status might also disadvantaged the study if it impacted upon the subjectivity and bias of the data. Although the awareness and discussion of these possibilities hoped to minimise this eventuality, the philosophical constructivist position underpinning this study ensured that connections were identified between my personal stance and relationship with the respondents and that resulting theory was dependent upon these relationships (Birks and Mills, 2014).

Chapter Five: Neighbourhood and school choice

In this chapter I introduce the findings of the study, examining parental perceptions towards their choice of neighbourhood and how elective belonging is mediated through education, cultural practices and family socialisation. Comparative analysis between neighbourhoods suggest middle class parental aspiration, elective belonging to neighbourhood and school choice are intrinsically connected, particularly for middle class parents in gentrified urban areas. Location and schooling is characterised by a strong and emotional sense of elective belonging where residential space is a key sphere for parents. Social mix in schools is located within living in a demographic area, with choice of primary school and neighbourhood interchangeable. Findings suggested that respondents living in a suburban context also demonstrated a strong sense of elective belonging, although one which is more connected to instrumental attachment to place. School choice in this area is pragmatically combined with proximity, credentials in relation to Ofsted results in addition to social networks. Drawing upon the same fields of housing, consumption, education and employment explored by Butler and Robson (2003) salient themes are explored through parental narratives and presented in relation to each other. The extracts from the interviews are representative examples used to 'provide a sense of things' in terms of what they transmit and illustrate (Ball, 1995: 159). Pseudonyms are assigned to interviewees in order to comply with the agreement between the researcher and participants regarding anonymity and confidentiality.

Living in an urban village: Wood Rise and Rose Hill

Both Wood Rise and Rose Hill respondents valued the urban village atmosphere of their adjacent areas, although nearly every one of the Wood Rise reception parents emphasised this repeatedly. Butler and Robson (2003) cited this as a repetitive theme within their research upon the sociology of London, and this was certainly a strong and recurring theme within parents’ narratives across both schools and year groups. Particularly in Wood Rise, there was a core of Reception parents who had moved from London and had chosen this area to replicate their experiences of living in a similar global urban village. This is significant in Wood Rise having the highest house prices and demographics of the three locations, in being inhabited by Townhouse Cosmopolitans who have the economic capital to purchase the expensive Victorian houses adjacent to the local park. Accounts by these parents display a strong feeling of belonging and pride in the way they have replicated the positives of living in the London metropolis, and the accompanying objectified and incorporated embodied capital (Savage et al, 2005).

> *It was the area and the school, we were moving from London and we wanted to move somewhere that was a bit Londonish.* Genevieve (Rec. WR)
>
> *It’s got all the advantages of London, a good mix of independent shops, lots going on and it’s got a lot of green space. You can also get out of (the city) really quickly and you can walk into the city centre… ‘So it had the similar (feel), there’s a huge number (of parents) that come here from London.* Lucy (Rec WR)

The presence of local shops and a unique feel to the main thoroughfare was seen as advantageous for families, and parents particularly noted the advantages in being part of this urban village community.

> *We feel part of the community but that’s due to having children. Walking to shops, butchers, fishmongers, its village-like, you bump into people you know.* William (Yr 6. WR)

Parental emphasis on the benefits of the independent shops and wine bars can be further theorised in that the employment of economic capital required for engagement in consumption is also heavily dependent upon accompanying levels of cultural capital to provide access, particularly in the symbolic form which is mutually recognised by others within the same group and underpinned by narratives of belonging and social integration. These configurations of consumption are also significant not only in how they frame social interactions but also in discerning how these processes are symbolically shaped (Butler and

Robson, 2003). The resemblance between Wood Rise and Rose Hill parental narratives are significant in reflecting these same values with the following excerpts illustrating the interdependence between location, community and children,

> *It's a close community and very friendly, although it's not dissimilar to the place we lived in London, it's so much friendlier that you have a really close network of people, so the kids have an incredible social life. It feels like a very small market town but in a big city. Gracefield Street is like having a high street and people buy locally so you see people round and we have the park, a social centre for the children.* Carmen (Rec. WR)

> *We just love this area generally so it wasn't just the school. We wanted to be near Gracefield Street where we could walk to restaurants and bars and baby groups and, you know, we just … So it was a combination of the two. We really liked the area, but the school was a major, major draw for us.* Elizabeth (Rec. RH)

The choice of location was intrinsically linked to educational and social networks which were often established through toddler groups, visits to wine bars, restaurants and informal gatherings linked to class based and exclusive patterns lifestyle choices (Butler and Robson, 2003). These informal social interactions are significant not only in terms of middle class formation but for the symbolic meaning they bring to these processes (Butler and Robson, 2003). Parental narratives demonstrate the interaction between subjectivity and the real world environment, replicating the fluid notion of 'elective belonging' where spatial attachment is connected to social position and sites of social identity formation (Savage et al, 2005: 29). In summation, the gentrification described by both Wood Rise and Rose Hill parents can very much be seen as being reproduced through 'collective action' in terms of parental beliefs and identities with the area in which they reside the result of 'socio-spatial interaction' underpinned by choice (Butler, 2002: 2).

The narratives portray the way that these urban parents reflexively legitimise their local identification with their homes situated within their chosen neighbourhood (Savage, 2010b). This is especially true of the Wood Rise respondents who highly valued the location to which they claimed affiliation which is accompanied by symbolic significance (Savage et al, 2010). The strong sense of belonging they feel, with habitus being 'at home' in the field it exists, is both social and spatial from both collective encounters and the physical situation of location (Bourdieu and Waquant, 1992: 128; Savage et al, 2005). This can be further theorised in that social reality is twofold, explained by Bourdieu as 'in things and minds, in fields and habitus and outside and inside of agents' (Bourdieu and Waquant, 1992: 127). The way that these parents have established themselves in a chosen area is not only functional but more importantly, these middle class parents are highly engaged culturally in their location in the form of their 'elective belonging' which is symbolically significant in being 'valuable to that particular individual' (Savage et al, 2005: 80; 2010).

An urban village with a 'heart': gentrification outside the metropolitan habitus

It is significant that the emphasis upon the material and cultural infrastructure of the area was intertwined with the importance placed upon the development of strong social networks which can be seen as to some extent conflicting themes. Drawing upon the work of Butler and Robson (2003), Wood Rise and Rose Hill parents perceive the areas as rich in social capital. Whilst narratives of belonging illustrate the perceived abundance of social capital, often mediated through children, what was often unspoken by parents was how parents also need to have accompanying stocks of both economic and cultural capital in order to fully enter that particular community (Butler, 2002). With this cultural and symbolic capital pivotal to the desirability of living in these areas, these networks are seen as strengthening and expanding over time (Butler and Robson, 2003: 79):

> *Because it's such an active area for baby clubs and classes whatever and second time round I've continued to meet people through that. So I'd say probably most of the people we've met round here is through the kids aside from our immediate neighbours but not necessarily the school. We already knew quite a few people before school started and then it's just become even more, it's just expanded, yeah exactly. But then you know I went to a baby group yesterday and met three new people who live in this*

> *neighbourhood that I've kind of seen before and so it's all through kids basically.* Elizabeth (Rec. RH)

> *Gracefield Street still has lots of local retailers and it's not just a clone of other high streets, it has heart. (The city) has cultural capital, today Zara is on a school trip to the City Zoo with reception.* Anna (Rec. WR)

These examples illustrate how these parents are mobilising cultural capital in an incorporated embodied form through family socialisation in this urban village, accompanied by a large accumulation of symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1986; Serre and Wagner, 2015). These are orientated through leisure activities and cultural practices, through which recognised values and aesthetic principles are legitimised in conveying the nature and resources of the habitus (Bourdieu, 1984; Butler and Robson, 2003).

With urban gentrification underpinned by similar phenomena to London's 'cosmopolitan metropolis', parental narratives seem to correspond with the transformation of the inner city, inhabited by middle class urbanites, and the accompanying 'locational habitus' built upon the interaction between cultural consumption and the gentrified residential areas which make up the catchments of Wood Rise and Rose Hill schools (Butler, 1997).

Earlier work by Butler (2002) proposed that the gentrification of London, as a global city, was built upon very different cultural foundations than on-going gentrification in other UK second tier cities. However, parental narratives suggest that gentrification in this second tier city has now developed in a way which is much more reflective of the gentrification of London. In contradiction to Butler's previous findings, urban gentrification within this core city seems now to much more correspond with what was previously described as the 'pull' of the metropolitan habitus in being founded upon living within a global city reinforced by cultural associations (Butler, 2002: 1). This is evidenced by the socially rich reputation and accompanying networks, particularly in respect of Wood Rise, underpinned by attributes of culture and consumption. It is striking in resemblance to those of the residents of Barnsbury, being London's first area of gentrification, with social structure now playing out in a similar way to the metropolitan habitus of London (Williams, 1976).

A village school belonging to an urban village

> *It feels like a village school but we are in the middle of the city. It really does feel like a village school and I think that has huge advantages.* Tina (Rec. WR)

The interconnection between the elective belonging of parents and school choice was clear, with a pivotal feature of living in the urban village was that their local school was seen as replicating characteristics of a 'village school'. A significant feature of Rose Hill and Wood Rise reception parents was how the choice of primary school and neighbourhood seem interchangeable in parental expressions of elective belonging. The following quotations illustrate how the interconnection was so absolute that parents found it impossible to separate the narratives about the chosen neighbourhood from those related to school choice, demonstrating the significance of territoriality to social relationships,

> *The way it's been described to me is a village school in the city and I really, now we are there I can really feel that and I don't know if it's because the catchment's so small that you do suddenly know everyone around you, and you bump into them in all the shops and it's, it's lovely.* Elizabeth (Rec. RH).

> *He was 15 - 16 months when we moved here. I probably hadn't starting thinking too much about schools but primarily it was for shop location, secondarily we heard it was a good school.* Carmen (Rec WR).

Parents perceived that a feature of the 'village school' in the city was the safety and security provided by mixing with known social networks, based on trust between parents who shared similar values and lifestyles.

> *At the summer fayre the children went off on their own and said "dad, I'm gonna be fine, we gonna know like 97% of the people there…it feels like a village school but we are in the middle of the city.* Tina (Rec, WR)

Social networks were often seen in emotional terms and particularly by some Reception parents at Wood Rise and Rose Hill as replacement families:

> *I travel a lot for work and our network of support is people in the community and from the school and also our friends that we knew in the area before, and that is kind of our family replacement, I guess. A lot of them are in the same boat so it's quid pro quo, it's swings and roundabouts whatever you want to call it, so we have all created our own new support family network, kind of, which works very well.* Elizabeth (Rec, RH)

> *There's lots of busy working parents like us and so we support each other. Social media helps us inside the school and people communicate in and around the area. We have a good support network, the kids go to different schools, most people don't have their families here and we're all kind of doing it together. One girl comes from single parent family, she has a big job and she often drops her daughter her for me to look after and give her that time.* Georgina (Rec, WR)

Particularly for Wood Rise parents, a large amount of social participation was focused upon the school, for example informally organised through *'a night in the pub with the mums'* (Lucy, WR) or more formally through the parent teacher association or events within the school calendar, such as the Summer Fair. It was evident that the interconnection between parent teacher associations, school and social events demonstrated how, in choosing state education, parents saw their role as actively intervening by involvement, as opposed to economic capital expenditure (Savage et al, 2005). These social networks continued for many parents through the school, up to and beyond transition to secondary school.

> *I still feel established in this community. A lot of my friends I knew from Wood Rise and so we still tend to meet up on a Friday and go to the Amberley for a drink and the kids will go off to the park now and play football and come back and have their tea with us and stuff. I'm still part of the same community. That class actually there is still email communication between a group of parents in that class because they were, well as so lovely. Camping trips every year, it's nice to keep that, especially when they all go off to different schools.* Amanda (Yr 6, WR)

It is evident that elective belonging to place described by these parents corresponds with the work of Ball in how the social mix within schools is absolutely located within the experiences of living within that particular demographic area (Ball, 2003).

The relationship to social capital and location is fundamental to the construction of parental identity of these middle class parents, with boundaries erected symbolically (Reay et al, 2013). These urbanite parents provide for social advantage, through a shared understanding of their existence through what has been termed by Taylor as ‘social imaginaries’ both in terms of relationships with others and the more profound norms and images which underpin outlooks (2004: 23).

Diversity and lifestyle in an urban village

All Wood Rise and Rose Hill Reception parents valued the ethnic diversity of living in an inner city context, particularly in providing opportunity for children to mix with families from other cultural ethnic backgrounds and, reinforced by the research by Reay et al (2013), the following quotations demonstrate the highly emotional engagement of parents with their children engaging with the notion of difference.

> *At the moment it just feels like a very warm, nurturing community where there is a lot of diversity, which again I liked because it’s in a city, you know, I didn’t want everyone to be very homogenous and my daughter’s new best friend is, is Somalian, you know, which is fabulous. It’s tiny so to have a heterogeneous group within this area is quite unusual, I think, I think it’s great.* Elizabeth (Rec. RH)

> *I really like it here, I think the community aspect of the school is important, its more diverse than I was expecting, its ethnically more diverse, languages spoken in her reception is incredible. Social housing and the relatively rich people mix together. Emily has really benefited from that and has found it interesting.* Grace (Rec. WR)

Although these views reflect many of the parents’ liberal, egalitarian views, it is also evident that these highly educated liberal parents see a multicultural education and social diversity as benefitting their children in terms of being exposed to a range of backgrounds in order to advantage, or ‘benefit them’, in their futurity as global citizens and in their occupational trajectories (Reay et al, 2013).

In a similar way to the ideas promoted more recently by sociologists, this can be seen as part of the middle class self-formation in terms of cultural ‘omnivorousness’, a term first coined by Peterson and Kern (1996: 904). Actively engaging with difference is described as an experience which is deemed hugely valuable in equipping their children with ‘social and cultural fluency' as a form of capital (Reay et al, 2013: 85). The use of the term 'interesting' by Grace could be more viewed as interacting with 'the other' in a 'social mix' as opposed to 'social mixing' (Reay et al, 2009: 3).

Juxtaposed against this view is the quotation from Susan, when explaining her mixed feelings to her child's previous nursery school in a different area, and illustrates how parents are attempting to balance the benefits of social and ethnic diversity against concerns for their child's achievement and progress and achieving 'the best' for their child (Reay et al, 2013).

> *It is interesting as we went to Framlington Avenue pre-school and that was quite a shock, the staff at the pre-school are excellent but I know my son really struggled there and I think that some of the issues, and I think this is horribly snobby and middle class but was down to catchment area, his language is very advanced, he is very bright, his early friendships with children were with other children who could also speak. We went to a school where 50% of the children spoke English as their second language and it was very multicultural, I think it is good to have a mixture but you can go too far to the other extreme.* Susan (Rec, RH).

Alongside the engagement of children with classmates and families from other cultural and socio-economic groups, respondents welcomed the social mixing with 'locals', although some of them saw this more as living against a backdrop of social diversity but not necessarily interacting within the space. This seems to correspond with previous study, whereby the locational identity of gentrifiers is perceived as living within boundaries erected symbolically and interacting with those who replicate the same values but not necessarily integrating fully within the local community, identified in early work by Robson and Butler as 'social tectonics' (2001: 77).

> *So if we see the butcher in the restaurant he will say, "hi", because he's our butcher so we don't hang out, we don't see him socially obviously.* Elizabeth (Rec, RH)

However, the above quotation illustrates how those from other perceived class contexts may not be interacted with socially, but are explicitly acknowledged within the social framework of living in the urban village. As reinforced by the later work of Jackson and Butler (2015), it is proposed that in this way the social mixing within the urban village may be more subtle regarding middle class formation and social interaction.

Wood Rise: 'the other side of the road'

Some Wood Rise parents with children in Year 6, and one Reception parent who already had other children in the school, discussed the exclusivity of being part of the social network surrounding the school. Trudy who was a single parent living in local authority housing near to the school, but on the 'other side of the road', explained that she does not socialise with most other parents explaining,

> *I don't really interact with the parents much in this school, there's a few, because we're on the same wavelength. A lot of the parents here, it's like were on completely different planets. They won't associate with me at all, they won't talk to me, they don't want me to go to drinks with them. Some do and I think I'd feel a bit uncomfortable.*

It is evident that Trudy felt that she had limited agency regarding her location compared to middle class parents, and constantly felt she experienced both physical and spatial exclusion. It is significant that Trudy was the only Reception parent at Wood Rise who did not allude to the positives of living in an urban village with its accompanying café culture society. Her descriptions of exclusion at Wood Rise reflect the 'tectonic' metaphor used by Robson and Butler (2001: 84) to describe the social structure whereby, based upon class relationships, urban village inhabitants negotiate other residents with contrasting lifestyles and values in a similar way to plates gliding across the earth (Butler and Robson, 2003). In corroboration with Jeffery (2018), perhaps we should pay attention to these local, working class descriptions as 'unelective' or 'prescribed belonging' to area, as opposed to simplistically comparing their narratives to elective belonging.

Mia, a Year 6 mother, a graduate working as a graphic designer but originally from a multi-ethnic working class background, had integrated successfully into social groups but was empathetic when reflecting upon the challenges facing those parents from other socio-economic backgrounds,

> *I think some of the parents forget also, you know, they're very confident, they're very educated, they're used to working in offices, and they forget I think, what it's like for other people who are not in that environment to sort of join in… people here do want to mix with other people just like them.*

The perception of Wood Rise middle class parents only wanting to mix with those who replicate the same lifestyle and values is corroborated by Florence's narrative from previous research conducted by this author as part of a masters dissertation in the same educational context (Bullough, 2011),

> *We are not institutional. A lot of parents went to public school and they are very confident and bullish. And then you have the ne'er-do-wells and misfits hugging the fences. We would have been the ones smoking the fags... we live an unconventional life. We find it difficult to fit in with the conventions of the school.*

Trudy also felt that she was being judged by other parents in terms of her lack of economic and social capital, and clearly felt disconnected from the café culture lifestyle surrounding her (Savage et al, 2005).

> *We think things have moved on since class/racial divides, but just because it doesn't come to the surface as often, it's not as noted. They said years ago there's no such thing as a class system, but there is, oh yes. There's a class system with parents here. Can I have an email? No because we have nothing in common, except our kids being in the same class. It's about what you have and haven't got, what car you're driving, where you live –that's the big thing. Especially if some of the parents see where I live.*

Most of the parents from differing socio-economic groups lived in social housing on the 'other side' of the arterial road adjacent to the school. Physical segregation between private and public housing areas has been a topical debate in the media recently, with the public disclosure of housing segregation regarding play areas in London (Mohdin and Grant , 2019). However, although this has made uncomfortable reading for many people as a salient reminder of how many people's lives are differentiated in terms of opportunity, it has been suggested by Mulrenan (2019) that council tenants have faced segregation over decades not just in terms of physical barriers.

Joanna, although herself living within what is called the 'safety zone' by parents, voiced concerns regarding successful admission procedures for both primary and secondary school entry. She mentioned the lottery system adopted by the most desirable secondary school in particularly benefiting those who knew not only the rules, but how to 'play the market' (Reay et al, 2013:52), as well as the exclusivity from escalating house prices in roads adjacent to desirable schools.

> *Here there is so much choice and so much unfairness with the lottery system and house prices. It's hard for people not to feel resentful of each other about it. (It's) two communities on either side of the road.* Joanna (Yr 6, WR)

Grace also recognised the unfairness of parents using their capital to promote advantage, for example in parents providing extra-curricular activities or coaching. This can be seen as part of these parents continual pursuit for educational advantage for their children, where the educational excellence of their offspring is often cultivated and highly invested both economically and culturally (Reay, 2017). Georgina also alluded to the navigation of 'pushy parents' whose practices are legitimised by others within the group, which she believed was not an accurate representation of the city.

> *The down side of it is because it's an affluent well educated population there's a more subtle comparison or competition, like who's getting coaching for SATs, that I think you might not get so much at other schools.* Grace (Yr 6, WR).
>
> *I went out to South Africa and showed her how dire the living conditions some people live in. When we go to Eltham there are deprived areas there and there are little pockets. She goes to a middle class school and it's not an accurate representation of (the city). They have pushy parents pushing them up the ladder.* Georgina (Rec, WR)

The quotations expressing feelings of exclusion describe the way that the power of 'doxa', in legitimising the assumed way of being reproduced by the dominant middle class parents subsequently has negative impact upon those parents from other socio-economic groups.

Residents feeling ‘at home in an increasingly turbulent world’ are dependent upon their shared habitus and capital, which can then leave other residents from differing socio-economic contexts feeling ‘uncomfortable’ when their habitus does not reflect that of the dominant group (Savage et al, 2005: 12). This corresponds with the work of Collette Sabe and Tort (2015), whereby the symbolic power of the dominant group results in a form of symbolic violence upon those who do not have the ability to activate the same economic, social or cultural capital.

Living in a suburban context: Pine Grove

In many ways, the locational identity of Pine Grove parents contrast significantly with Wood Rise and Rose Hill. Parents living in the suburban catchment of Pine Grove did value their community and living near to ‘people like us’ but their reasoning regarding choice of location was much more based upon amenities, leisure centre, playing outside with other children from the local primary school, and all going to the same secondary school. Maureen (Yr 6, PG) reflected how much it was *‘a nice place to live’* and there were *‘always things going on’* with the local leisure centre providing a valuable focus for children’s activities.

Reflecting their ages and career trajectories, all respondents from Pine Grove were established home owners and expressed a clear sense of elective belonging. However, for most parents their sense of belonging was based upon the area being a desirable place to live rather than a fixed community where neighbours were viewed as part of the package of choosing a place to live, but to be kept at a ‘respectful distance’ (Savage et al, 2005: 79).

> *Loads of kids from Pine Grove on our road, and that’s why we wouldn't move though I have no ties with the area as you can’t choose your neighbours.* Helen *(Rec, Pine Grove)*

Pine Grove parents displayed a less emotional and a more practical view towards their sense of belonging. They acknowledged not being able to choose your neighbours, with a distinction made between neighbours and friends, and some acknowledgment of a more fragmented aspect due to different age groups of residents in their road who are at different stages of their lives with Stephanie explaining, *'we are in a small road with only 8 houses and we are all at different life stages'* Stephanie (Rec, PG)

The narratives of Pine Grove parents were much less emotive than the urban contexts, and they did not so seamlessly connect the school and location in terms of work, family, lifestyle and social engagement, with Janet explaining:

> *We've lived here 10 years. It's not much of a community, we don't get involved much. We live here as it's close to the motorway, his dad's nearby. We like to travel around, Patrick's children are based in Cheltenham. He has a PhD based in business. That was our reasons really. I think we share similar attitude with people on the road, more reflectors than doers.* Janet (Yr6, PG)

The above quotation describes how, whilst committed to the neighbourhood, there is an emphasis on the instrumental attachment to the place rather than the emotional (Savage et al, 2005). Living in close proximity to people with similar values and lifestyles took much more a form of quiet endorsement, rather than the active and intense interaction displayed by new professional middle class residents in the urban villages (Savage et al, 2005). Alan (Yr 6, PG) explained how he had *'gained a foothold'* in the area but questioned *'do we up sticks or stay here?'* in the neighbourhood as the children completed their education. He felt that the area had become more mature and established, with residents more ethnically mixed and middle class over time. However, the 'collective social action' (Butler, 2002: 2) form of gentrification selected by Wood Rise and Rose Hill parents was not Alan's favoured model of housing consumption, as he explains,

> *We've been here 10 - 13 years, the demographic has changed slightly. There's no more building, everywhere has been built on. Certainly it's got more diverse; families coming are more diverse…nowhere like St. Patricks though. It's very white and middle class, but there are some eastern European, Somali, Pakistani. They are generally ethnic middle class families still….the house price forces up who can buy, your income has to be so much to buy. It looks a bit established.* Alan (Yr6, PG)

Alan welcomed the balanced middle class diversity of the changed demographics within a more established housing estate, but did not seek the cosmopolitanism of urban areas citing St. Patrick's, an inner city area renowned for a gritty landscape and diverse population (Watts, 2009). The changing demographics Alan mentions are representative of the shifting composition in the outer boroughs of London identified by Butler and Hamnett (2011), which in a similar way has seen a noticeable increase in middle class minority ethnic populations.

Getting into the 'right' primary school

Not surprisingly, in line with seminal research led by Stephen Ball information discovered 'through the grapevine' through social capital was of primary importance for reception parents from all three schools (Ball, 2003: 63). It is well documented that parents employ social capital in the form of information or advice through 'weak ties', particularly families and personal contacts, in order to negotiate children's educational trajectories at times of transition (Riddell, 2010; Power et al, 2003). This information, drawn upon social networks, was a valued and critical instrument in informing school choice for parents with transition into reception for Wood Rise and Rose Hill parents (Power et al, 2003; Granovetter, 1973). It is evident that this ability to confidently converse and question, alongside sustaining collective identity, is a social competence which can be seen as cultural capital (Ball, 2003). Many parents reflected that they had first heard of the reputation for 'creativity' in terms of Wood Rise, or a 'village school in the city' through these trusted social networks, and made their choices on that basis.

> *If we had to choose without knowing for Zara, Wood Rise would have come out on top, just from hearing from other parents along the grapevine.* Anna (Rec, WR)

Although parents had usually accessed OFSTED reports and school documentation, there were many examples of parents using social capital in this way and placing high significance upon this information (Riddell, 2010). In the following quotations the 'we' is intrinsically connected to the parents' lived in sphere of shared meanings, understandings and practices (Ball, 2003),

> *Well, we were very, very passionate about the school; we actually moved to this area for the school. So, we were in an area further out, we had a much bigger house but the school was not as good and a lot of our friends were based over here and, you know, I know a lot of people whose kids were older, at that school, who had been in it for a few years and who were due to go in the same year as my daughter and yeah, we were just, everything we heard about it we really loved.* Elizabeth (Rec, RH)

> *Friends that we knew had children we knew here and it seemed like a nice school…there's an element to it of me being a middle class parent and there's a kind of similar children with similar backgrounds, if I'm brutally honest there's that aspect, is kind of similar, you feel like your children will be safe there, they will mix with similar children. It's an awful thing to say.* Genevieve (Rec, WR)

There was clear evidence that Pine Grove Reception parents had also accessed and recognised the importance of information accessed through weak ties in terms of the choice of primary school, with Helen from Pine Grove explaining by *'talking to the families we already knew we heard it was a good school and a good family network'*. However, there was a pragmatic sense also permeating from some Year 6 parents when discussing their choice of school, with Alan reflecting that, *'we bought the house when it was being built and knew we would have a choice of 2,3,4 schools in walking distance'.*

For at least one parent at Rose Hill, forward planning took into account the access to a chosen school and location before children were conceived.

> *We chose the school because we live opposite the school, we live opposite the school because we wanted our kids to go to the school. It didn't exist yet when we bought the house, but we bought the house so that any children we planned to have could go to that school… it's academic, small and nurturing.* Carole (Rec, RH)

Purchasing a property adjacent or within a very short distance to the local and chosen school was often strategically planned. It was deemed important that the house purchased was within the desirable area with Anna (Rec, WR), feeling '*we are lucky in because we have so much available to us'*. Even so, it was essential that house purchase was also within what was repeatedly called by Rose Hill and Wood Rise parents as the *'safety zone'* or *'right side of the* *line'*. This was identified as 'lucky' within narratives, but had been very much in the forefront of a parent's mind when moving into the area. The following exchange illustrates how 'feeling lucky' is partly due to parental relief in being able to access these schools given the fickle nature of the shifting catchment zone and illustrates how it is at times difficult to classify actions into 'conscious decisions' or 'lucky outcomes' (Reay et al, 2013: 55).

> *We were also very lucky as catchment area wasn't an issue, we would have chosen it anyway, but catchment is such a big deal and is a big stress on everybody, the previous year we were 50 meters away from the safety zone which is nothing, perhaps a few doors and we wouldn't have got in which is ridiculous.* Susan (Rec, RH).

Informed by the previous research by led Power and Brown the reference to 'luck' is not purely coincidental, and reveals an individualised stance regarding the inequality of school admission procedures but without engaging with the factors underpinning advantage and disadvantage of the system (Power et al, 2016; Brown et al, 2016). It is also evident that for many Wood Rise and Rose Hill respondents the 'lucky' proximity of the school is interlocked with house purchase and school quality (Reay et al, 2013). Attending a school situated at the 'right side of the line' is linked with perceived advanced educational attainment in the following extract,

> *By the end of the first year they would be able to read and would enjoy reading. That's it really. I have an NCT friend who fell the other side of the line and I saw them after a few months and was like 'wow they can practically read.* Lucy (Rec, WR)

The narratives of Wood Rise and Rose Hill parents emphasise the importance put upon 'making the right choice' in terms of school selection, particularly by middle class professionals. This corresponds with the work of Ehenreich (1989: 15) in terms of middle class professionals 'fear of falling', with their assets underpinned by education as opposed to the more traditional middle class assets based upon prosperity and property accumulation. School choice is an area where, within a marketised and individualised sector, there is always an alternative or potentially better option (Ball, 2003). In terms of making choices for children's future, huge attention is given to making the correct choice in order to reduce the risks surrounding social reproduction.

It is revealing how moral and aesthetic values were also defined by Wood Rise parents in the narratives below through the symbolic form of cultural capital as well as incorporated, for example by lifestyle and consumption (Butler and Robson, 2003).

> *A creative artistic set of parents which is great but at the same time there's a lot of them also have very high expectations academically.* Amanda (Yr 6, WR)
>
> *At all the schools Wood Rise was number 1 for creativity. It was a lovely place. The only other comparable school is Cosham the private school, it just seemed like a nice school with nice kids. With me because I'm creative, I worked at* (Activa animation) *there so many creative parents, it's like a hub.* Georgina (Rec, WR)

In these perceptions of creativity, seen as a norm at Wood Rise, parents cited this school being selected over Rose Hill in having a reputation for attracting creative parents with high expectations. The above exchanges illustrate how the habitus of these mutually understood dynamics and norms are understood and expressed (Butler and Robson, 2003).

Secondary school transition: 'the best education available'

There was some ambiguity, and indeed reluctance, for Wood Rise parents in choosing their most local inner city comprehensive, Fiveacres. However, in contradiction to parents living in similar established gentrified areas in London identified by Butler and Robson (2003), all Year 6 respondents in their identified urban villages had chosen state secondary education as opposed to selective schooling, although not admission to their local secondary school. For the majority of parents, selective schooling was seen at odds with their egalitarian beliefs, with Amanda at Wood Rise proclaiming, *'even if I had a million pounds wouldn't send any of my children privately'*.

Of the parents interviewed, only a minority of reception parents from Rose Hill and Pine Grove, and none from Wood Rise, expressed the possibility that they would self-exclude from state education at secondary transition. These exchanges from the three parents who were keeping the option of selective schooling open illustrate how independent school choice would be chosen more on the basis of providing personalised learning and benefiting a young person's self-belief or dispositions for learning rather than academic outcomes. However, it was noticeable these respondents made up three out of the six parents in the highest income band, and would therefore be potentially in a position to deploy economic capital to make these aspirations achievable (Harrison and Waller, 2018). It was assumed that high attainment would follow from the young person's natural brightness if he was nurtured in the correct way.

> *Friends children I see who have gone to private school have a lot more confidence and they feel part of the world, they can partake in the world, some they own the world. I don't know that you get the same ethos at a state school.. you have a lot of children with things going on, not just m/c parents putting themselves into the school. I want him to feel the world is his oyster but don't think he will fit in there. That's why I want him to stay to KS2, and if he does well I'll send him somewhere to give him that self-assurance.* Josephine (Rec, RH)

> *He's a bit of a leader and ambassador, Joseph will make it regardless but I'd like to think I put things in his way…He's got some inbuilt skills somehow, not sure how …it's not from school. If at 13 it's not going well we will raise the money and try public schooling. We could afford it but it's about what else we couldn't do. He may do just fine anywhere, if they knock that spirit out of him, with normalizing and punishing. I might just be being alarmed and you just have to see where it goes. …He loves public speaking and its being appreciated more in independent schools and less so in BPCC, unfortunately because they are a bit more about control I think there.* Janet (Yr6, PG).

> *….and I want the best for my kids at whatever cost really. If we had the money I would send them to private school, I want them to be able to do everything at school. My husband is against it but for me education, happiness and health are the most important. Shouldn't we if we can give them the best, I don't know, what do you think?* Georgina (Rec, WR)

Janet, an academic working in higher education, was particularly concerned about her son maintaining self-belief and confidence, and that the 'spirit' in terms of individuality, confidence might be crushed within the ethos of secondary state education. It has already been documented that many parents' opinions regarding the benefits of a selective school education are based upon the notion that individuality and personal effort will bring a reward of academic success (Power et al, 2003). It was significant that Janet's ambiguity regarding state education was also based upon her own experiences of friends who were still advantaged in maximising opportunity which she felt was maximised by attending selective schools, as she explained,

> *I went to comprehensive…It was full of council house children, I was only 1 step away. I had friends who were better off and went to better schools. I wanted to go, was keen on learning, but parents couldn't afford it. They are (now) academics, different to me, they have confidence and willingness to debate. When it got to uni I still didn't have that grounding. I don't like lectures, I do it, but I'm not comfortable when some of my colleagues are. I feel our children are limited but not having those opportunities. You want your children to have that advantage, they might not get the opportunities.*

Even if not accessing selective education through the deployment of economic capital, some Reception parents at Wood Rise were already *'entering the secondary school debate'* at this early stage through house purchasing 'on the right side of the line' for access to desirable secondary schools as well as primary school, as admitted by Anna, *'it was about ensuring our children have the best education available and now we also have access to Combe Gardens secondary'.* This tactic employed by many Rose Hill and Wood Rise parents avoids having to 'vote with the feet', in terms of moving house to another area at secondary school transition (Reay and Lucey, 2004: 41). However, it was clear that all the Wood Rise parents were active 'choosers', whether that was calculating the distance from home, living on the 'right side of the line' from primary school onwards, or 'playing the market' in terms of awareness of league tables and admission procedures (Reay et al, 2013: 52). In line with the work of Butler and Robson (2003), the educational trajectories for these parents in terms of their children were long term and educationally explicit. Travel and distance was more connected to complying with admission regulations and not a determining factor (Ball et al, 2005).

> *We are all looking for high academic achieving schools. We are also going to be looking for schools that nurture our children and be nice and happy places to be. But*

> *Chapelle Carlton Academy has got that sort of reputation along with the other schools that other people around here are putting on their forms. So we have that in common with them. Other people around here will also be applying for it next year.* Caroline (Yr6, WR)

Pine Grove parents were secure in the knowledge that the majority of children would follow on to the local secondary, with children's friendships maintained, with Maureen noting:

> *I think most of his friends will go too, he's got a firm set of friends, there's 4 of them who've been together most of primary. He is quite secure with it if he was separated…We are happy with the secondary school, we knew it was going to be built. We knew it would be there in time for when they left from year 6.*

It is significant that the emphasis placed by Maureen on her son 'being secure and not separated' was influenced by her own experiences of the trauma of her having to *'move* (city) *when I was 9'*, stating emphatically that as a result she would react against the same situation for her own son and was *'determined that my kids would not move school'* (Reay et al, 2013). In line with the findings by Power et al (2003) there was evidence that the middle class parents at Wood Rise did give agency to children in their choice of secondary school, although this was often with limitations, as explained by Sonia as, '*we explained to him that if we wouldn't give him free choice with schools we weren't happy with. We were happy with either of those and he chose Radley Grove'.* This echoes the responses by middle class respondents in the study by Reay and Ball (1998) where parents guided their children into making the correct decision.

Patience, the only parent interviewed from Rose Hill with a child in Year 6, had decided not to enter into the 'secondary school debate', choosing the local school 'Fiveacres' based upon the 'local', explaining:

> *I think having a local school, an easy journey in the morning, having all that stress taken away from them, having local friends that they can walk to their house and have that independence is really important to me. It would have to be something pretty bad for me to give that up or it was would have to be something pretty amazing at another school, that made it worth travelling for.*

Patience's engagement with the positives of the local comprehensive was not expressed by any of the Wood Rise respondents. It is interesting that the perception of the marginality of 'Fiveacres' is not based upon it being a failing school. It was actually awarded the same 'good' rating at the latest inspection as the more desirable 'Coombe Gardens', and it appears that myth of it being an undesirable school is perpetuated by the majority of middle class parents actively not choosing it as acceptable.

The cumulative power of social networks

Mirroring the significance given to 'weak ties' by Reception parents regarding school choice, parents whose children were about to engage in transition to secondary school put a huge emphasis upon social networks in informing their choice. This form of capital was seen as a valuable resource, actual and potential, being continually mobilised through access to those social networks, thus mediated through elective belonging to that particular community based upon the same habitus in terms of parental lifestyle and identity (Butler, 2002). Even though it was generally acknowledged that there would be more of a distance between school and community, it was evident that networks and elective belonging still intrinsically connected to choice.

> *A lot of kids filter from Wood Rise to Combe Gardens, what's nice about that is all the kids in the higher years that they recognise. It does feel like a lot of local kids, so there is a community feel to it.* Mia (Yr6, WR)

Permeating most discussion was the assumption that their child would be surrounded by other children and families who had similar attitudes to learning, with Joanna from Wood Rise confident that, '*we'll be around people who value education'.* In the following narrative, Caroline contended that middle class, professional parents were now sending their children to desirable urban secondary schools, especially if they had several children, due to the escalating cost of the private sector,

> *When there was a big squeeze on, a lot more people were saying similar professional classes sending their children to local schools as a consequence (high cost of private) …I am more confident to send my child to a local state school because I know the parents who have done it 5 years before me and I like them and I respect them. I love their children and I am happy for my child to follow on where their child has gone.* Caroline (Yr 6, WR).

What is pivotal to this shared understanding, is that even though on the surface parents explain how these social networks are based upon trust with those who share the same values, in actuality it is only operational through symbolic meaning based upon mutual comprehension and recognition within the field (Bourdieu and Waquant, 1992; Siisainen, 2000). The reflection by Caroline is very representative of the significance put by Wood Rise parents upon advice and modelling by other parents they can trust, who perceive their children's futurity in a similar way and are seeking a 'community of aspirations' (Ball, 2003: 64). Wood Rise parents are in a 'search of guarantees' of the presence of a quality learning environment, thus disregarding Fiveacres in favour of the other four secondary choices, on the basis that the quality of the school's students is a reflection upon the quality of the school (Broccolichi andVan Zanten, 2000: 56).

Pine Grove parents were particularly confident in sending their child to the local secondary school, BPCC, which other parents from established social networks had also chosen as desirable as explained by Alan,

> *We know lots of people who will be going to the school, don't know how many in his class. I think it was oversubscribed three times last year. I know houses don't take long to sell here, even in the current climate. We knew years back it would be good for the area, it wouldn't harm the price of your house. You know from life experience.* (Yr6, PG)

This was again based upon a more pragmatic combination of 'outstanding OFSTED report' cited by Maureen, as well as the reputation from social networks. Alan had also anticipated that being in the catchment of an outstanding secondary school had the additional attraction of establishing the area 'in the space of positions' and as a middle class housing market commodity (Allen, 2008: 78).

Shifting narratives: secondary school choice, Wood Rise

> *When everyone was panicking I went local and did well academically. The school I went to is a lot rougher than Fiveacres so I knew it was an easier decision. It can go wrong anywhere and it can go right anywhere.*

The above quotation is a reflection of Patience's reasoning in choosing the local secondary school for her daughter. It is interesting that Patience, having attended what she described as a 'rough' secondary school, used this experience as a benchmark to not be concerned regarding social diversity and a reason to recreate the experience for her daughter. However, this was not reflected in the narratives of the majority of Wood Rise parents and this sense of choosing a secondary school on the basis of the 'local', alongside ease of proximity was not a belief shared by other parents.

Genevieve, having an older child at primary school in key stage 2, as well as a child in Reception, had already reflected upon secondary school choice in the light of her own experiences. She was keen not to recreate the same context which she herself had endured in attending the local comprehensive school, and concerned that her daughter might *'get in with the wrong crowd and not do well'*

> *It was horrible, the other children were really different to me, I just stuck out like a sore thumb. I was bullied quite a lot at school for being posh because I didn't speak with an accent, I had a very different upbringing and it was like a cultural desert. It was really frowned upon to be interested in anything that wasn't McDonalds. I had a really horrible time, it wasn't until I left school, I wish someone had told me life get better after school, that you can hang around with people you like after school and you don't have to hang around with these horrible people all the time. You will find people who are like you.*

I have already alluded to how, whilst positively embracing the diversity of the city, some Reception parents mentioned their need for a ‘balance’ and limitations with engagement However, for Wood Rise parents who were anticipating the transition to secondary school, this ambiguity was even more marked with huge ambivalence with mixing with children from alternative socio-economic groups which was morally clearly at odds with their egalitarian beliefs (Reay et al, 2011). Many parents had to examine their conscience and for some this clearly had been an emotionally charged decision, which had challenged their liberal views and perceptions of a socially equitable society. The challenges of real social mixing was certainly problematic, and corresponds with the work of Savage et al (2005) in the challenges faced by parents when their sense of elective belonging to place is challenged by the educational dilemma of secondary school choice. Several parents spoke in very emotional terms within their narratives, and this had been an upsetting time for them with many engaging every strategy they could in order to ensure the ‘best fit’ for their children in terms of secondary education. This replicates the findings of Reay et al (2013), in parents balancing the benefits of ethnic and social diversity against children’s performance and attainment in terms of examination results.

Joanna was explicit about the influence of her own secondary school experiences, which she was making a conscious effort to not replicate, and as a deliberate reaction against her own experience as outlined in her narrative below,

> *I went to a school that was worse than Fiveacres, I grew up in Australia, in a working class industrial town. I went to a school where it wasn’t conceived to be the done thing at all to achieve anything. I suffered quite a lot from that because I was interested in achieving things academically, maybe that was a bit of an influence. Chappelle Carlton is so different from the school I went to….it’s so completely different and I hated my school so much, I think I wanted something different for her.*

Caroline's rationale for school choice was also based upon the fact that a school with a substantial make up of middle class children would ultimately benefit all pupils, as she went on to describe,

> *It's said parents are cheating if they move house or hop into an area but actually I see it as a really motivated caring and involved parent actually makes a school as well..if they send their child to that school, the more likely I am to send my child to that school and then you do see the results going up. This isn't saying people who are poor don't care, of course they do, it's just that if I've got more money and I've got more time and all these different resources and I'm plying that into my child who is then doing really well in their exams well that is going to help the school isn't it.*

Caroline's statement promotes the traditional view that the benefits of social mixing will emanate only in one direction, permeating from the middle class to the working or ethnic other. Although this view was challenged in the previous section regarding primary school choice, with Reception middle class parents actively seeking diversity in order to provide real life experiences to equip their children as global citizens, it was not replicated in the narratives of Wood Rise parents in terms of secondary transition (Reay et al, 2013). In response to the argument promoted by Caroline in that middle class parents provide a valuable resource to state schools, in line with prior research led by Reay, parental narratives did not provide any evidence of wider involvement in school life to support this (2013).

This also led to some divisive feelings between groups of parents who were making their secondary school choice against different criteria. Parents cited their unease with being perceived exclusive, and often emphasised the need to 'put their child first'. This view can be seen as a result of the regime of choice and competition and the intensified marketisation of education that has resulted from government educational policies (Ball, 2003; Power et al, 2003). Common concerns permeated interviews with Wood Rise parents, which was cited as '*too multicultural'*, *'too far in the extreme'*, *'get in with a bad crowd'*, *'a keener perceived as a bad thing'*, *'being distracted'* and '*my child is not a social experiment'.*

The following quotations evidence the strength of feeling in avoiding the mixed intake that this local school would offer.

> *How much a risk you are taking with their education by going for more of an unknown quantity ., lower results and more mixed sort of social intake and some people go you don't need to worry about that , but others…but I did. I have no problem with multi-cultural but I am concerned about results and discipline and that kind of thing so it's got nothing to do with a school having more multi-cultural than another ..I'm looking at them going whose educating the best.* Caroline (Yr6, WR)
>
> *… and I don't like to think too much about why I did that because I suspect it is things like just the results and the proportion of middle class white kids compared with other kids, and I can't really explain it to myself but for some reason I put it* (Fiveacres) *down second. I want her to be able to show that she is interested in things and I want her to be able to focus on the lessons without getting distracted by other people messing about, not frowned upon for being keen.* Joanna (Yr6, WR)

In a similar way to the findings by Ball (2003) the ambivalences surrounding state secondary school choice are clear, with choice accompanied by emotion and anxiety. The difference here is that all these parents are committed to state education, not selective schooling, so amongst the mixing and diversity they still want to ensure children are 'different but the same', exemplified by reflections such as 'not frowned upon for being keen' (Ball, 2003: 67). In line with the previous research by Reay et al (2013), at the core of these parental narratives is the focus on shared values, and signifies a causal relationship in which multi ethnic or working class children need to share in the same values in order to be of value and those who do not are seen as non-desirable. Furthermore, whilst embracing the diversity of cultural and social otherness, in narratives parents seem to only want to engage with acceptable or 'respectable', more in line with Skeggs' work aspects of working class culture (2004).

Taking it to the 'next round': playing the market

Two of the four parents from Wood Rise who had gained successful entry to Chapelle Carlton Academy had been initially unsuccessful in their first application through the banding lottery system. They had subsequently been granted entry for their daughters on appeal, and given allocated places which were designated in the regulations as being exempt from the lottery process. This was on the basis of one child having special educational needs, in being dyslexic, and the other being musically able so eligible for a 'gifted and talented' place as explained in the following quotations,

> *Actually it wasn't just luck, this is confidential because I don't want Christine to know it, but I appealed actually to get her into Chapelle Carlton Academy partly on the basis of her dyslexia and partly because she also has a medical condition.* (Joanna, WR)

> *We did feel anxious about Fiveacres as Esme was given that in the first round and it really chrysalises your emotions about what you want for your child when you don't get given a school that you put on your form. It's really hard because you feel quite isolated when that happens because so many people say that if you don't like Fiveacres you are not giving your local school a chance, you are being racist.* (Caroline, WR).

This was a clear example of how parents were 'playing the market' as 'active choosers', from activating damage limitations in terms of the banded entrance tests, through to negotiating the 'next round', familiarisation with admissions criteria and insider knowledge of how best to achieve a successful outcome at the appeal stage (Reay et al, 2013: 52).

Conclusions

This chapter has documented the findings of this study in uncovering the interconnection between location and schooling for Wood Rise and Rose Hill parents, characterised by a strong and emotional sense of elective belonging, where residential space is a key sphere to which parents demarcate their social status. Findings identify interplay between location, community and children for parents in urban gentrified contexts, with school choice and neighbourhood interchangeable. These parents place a strong emphasis upon material and cultural infrastructures within strong social networks which expand and strengthen over time. With cultural consumption symbolically framing social interactions, it is proposed that parental narratives signify that gentrification in these urban areas is now reinforced by cultural associations in a similar way to London. This is contradictory to previous research advocating that core cities differ from London in being based upon a 24/7 night time economy or consumption culture (Butler, 2002).

For many of these parents attachment to residential space in terms of their neighbourhood is highly emotive and the most critical indicator of personal and parental identity, providing access to other cultural fields, most powerfully education. This is in contrast to elective belonging described by Pine Grove parents which is instrumentally based.

Social capital for Wood Rise and Rose Hill parents is pivotal to the reproduction of lifestyle and values, and underpinning choice making in terms of educational trajectories. It is vital to acknowledge the powerful nature of social capital as 'part of social structure not neutral descriptions' (Riddell, 2010: 25), employed much more than the support structure described by parents, but used individually by parents in a substantially instrumental way whilst interchangeable with other forms of capital. However, schools are assessed by parents not just through instrumental assessments but in terms of the social demography of the school in regarding embodied social and cultural orientations based upon class identification and of the symbolic recognition of others like us 'class attributive judgement' (Bourdieu, 1986: 473). For suburban parents, school choice is also informed by social networks, although also pragmatically connected to commuter networks, amenities and more formal sources of knowledge such as Ofsted reports.

What was marked for all professional middle class parents in all locations, was how they were engaging with their own educational trajectories and experiences not only to recreate their own positive educational experiences, but also as a reaction against habitus to avoid negative intergenerational features of their schooling for their own children, echoed by the work of Reay et al (2013). Although it is important to be wary of 'over-individualizing' personal biographies (Power et al, 2003:4), viewing them in the light of a wider perspective indicates choice is connected to future trajectories for children, what was called 'choice narratives' by Ball (2003: 163). In this way, parents own educational biographies are intrinsically connected to the imagined futures of their children. Within the climate of risk assessment, providing a series of options in terms of reflexivity to navigate the educational market and provide flexible future options is of paramount importance.

The dilemmas facing middle class parents which surround secondary school choice seems to reinforce social exclusion, replicating the arguments of Reay and Lucey (2004). As already documented, the marketisation of education has resulted in an anxiety, demonstrated by Wood Rise parents, which has made them even more diligent in facilitating social and economic reproduction in their children. In conclusion, parental narratives evidence the perceived role of a good parent in securing the best educational trajectories for children to maintain distinction. However, actions are based upon wanting the best for children and many parents acknowledge the tensions which arise from putting their children first, particularly when these choices are contradictory to liberal values and their responsibility to promote a diverse and equitable society.

Chapter Six: Parenting practices and family

In the last chapter, parental perceptions towards neighbourhood and elective belonging were discussed in relation to salient themes arising from the data. Comparative analysis between locations revealed middle class symmetries as well as divergences across urban and suburban areas. This chapter looks within the family, with a spotlight on parenting practices, with comparative analysis additionally engaging with horizontal differences based on occupational, educational and intergenerational profiles of respondents.

With parental aspirations for their children orientated to the future, key findings identified the key role parents in all three settings placed upon children acquiring desirable dispositions which will provide advantage, particularly in ensuring young people are equipped with these worthy transferable assets to ensure educational and occupational success. What is significant is that these desirable dispositions are transformative and fluid, particularly at key points of educational transition. On initial entry to formal education, the emphasis is focused upon those desirable dispositions related to attitudes to learning and socialisation. At transition to secondary education, parents placed more importance upon dispositions orientated towards obtaining academic credentials and providing navigational skills in terms of higher education and occupational trajectories. Parents are maximising choice and opportunity by equipping their children with the cultural capacity for entry to elite universities and organisations.

Characterisation of new parenting culture: ‘the world as her oyster’

All parents interviewed had strong aspirations for their children and were engaged in their lives. However, some parents viewed their role as pivotal to the ‘making up’ of the child in opportunity provision, choice making, and development of recognised cultural attributes in order to facilitate advantageous outcomes in terms of futurity (Vincent and Ball, 2007: 1062;

Riddell, 2010). Stephanie (Rec, RH) explained that her aspiration was for her child to *'see the world as an oyster',* with Janet (Yr6, PG) expressed how she did not want any limitations to opportunity for her son in terms of him *'seeing the wider world rather than my little world, you can do anything, anywhere in the world'*. It was significant that these aspirations were orientated to the future but flexible and open-ended to maximise choice and opportunity,

> *They can do anything they want to because they've got the right educational background, they are able to be clever enough to create those networks and opportunities themselves.* Lucy (Rec, WR)

Previous research has identified how middle class parents viewed the child as a 'life project' which required continuous monitoring and planning to ensure success and maximise every opportunity (Vincent, 2017: 545). Seeing *'the world as your oyster'*, illustrated how these parents are similarly focusing upon future orientations which are open to a multitude of possibilities. Drawing upon the work of Beck this can be further theorised in that parents are demonstrating reflexivity in terms of the child as the 'core subject', needing to be consistently maintained and reviewed, with the individual seen as a socially constructed project (Faircloth et al. 2013: 943; Beck, 1992; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2001). A parent is morally and ethically responsible for ensuring advantageous trajectories for children (Ball, 2003). This was explained by Helen as 'being natural' behaviour, where parental identity is something to be continually refined and worked upon (Arendell, 2000).

> *To support and challenge, it's natural for parents to just extend and support and make them realise they do have to work if they want to get somewhere and you can't always rest on your laurels.* Helen (Rec, PG)

Parents across all settings voiced that they wanted children to be happy, although this was particularly emphasised by Wood Rise reception parents with Georgina explaining *'I think that's all I wanted is for them to be confident and happy in their skin',* and '*happiness as an aspiration'* expanded upon by Lucy in the following extract, *I'd like them to be happy. Happiness is an aspiration, that's the most important thing. That they have enough money but they do something they feel passionate about and they enjoy. That they feel they are making some sort of positive contribution to the world, that's what I try to do. I'd hate them to be limited by not having had a good enough education, and to feel like that had to do a job just in order to be rich.* Lucy (medical journalist: Rec, WR)

Carole from Rose Hill also wished for happiness for her daughter, although this was more embedded in realism,

I was going to say a happy one, but I don't think I agree with that. I think a fulfilled one. You can't be happy all the time, that's not life. Picking the thing that suits you and your good at because it makes you then feel contented with what you're doing every day. You don't need to earn that much money to have that sense of peace and contentment with what you do. No specific thing, just that they will find the things in life that suit them. Carole (PhD student: Rec, RH)

It is noteworthy that the views of these parents, in N-SEC categories 1 and 2, are in line with previous research by Collette-Sabe and Tort (2015), where professional parents' aspirations were underpinned by the wish for happiness for their children. In corroboration with their conclusion it is suggested that happiness is based on having utmost choice, freedom and independence in the assumption that the child will be happy if successful and that unhappiness should be prevented under any circumstances (Collette-Sabe and Tort, 2015).

Experiential provision: a culture of concerted cultivation

For Wood Rise and Rose Hill reception parents in particular, provision of 'real life experiences' for children was seen as having particular value and significance. Parenting practices were underpinned by daily cultural activities of discussion, recreation and experiential learning. It has been well documented that within the ideology of intensive parenting it is the norm for parents to perceive themselves as the designers of the family in which the child is the principal subject (Faircloth et al, 2013). These were perceived as normal family activities and particularly by Wood Rise parents were underpinned by family negotiation and joint participation, *I also feel my role is to and I'm sure my husband would agree with this, is to enable the kids to be exposed to a lot of different experiences as well, to travel and go out and see, touch and do things and hear things and meet different people that they might not be able to do at school. Things like going to the beach, going out to the countryside, walks, going skiing.* Georgina, (media journalist: Rec, WR)

The above exchange corresponds with the seminal work of Lareau, in that parents are practicing 'concerted cultivation' by nurturing children's talents, views and skills and entering into dialogue and reasoning with children (2003; 2007). This parenting style is accompanied by an ethos of individualism and emphasis on performance and outcomes, and dependent upon the necessary deployment of cultural and economic capital. The provision of experiences and extra-curricular activities dominate family life for many Wood Rise parents (Lareau, 2003), under the notion that they not only broaden the child's worldview in terms of cultural capacity but also intrinsically related to educational success as explained by Lucy,

It's all well and good telling a child to read this book and imagine you're on a ship, but if they've been on a ship it makes this whole experience much more real. If they have been exposed to lots of different environments then they are kind of learning about at school, they have a point of reference rather than it being this abstract thing. Lucy, (science journalist: Rec, WR).

Alongside the provision of cultural pursuits, was how facilitating extra-curricular activities was seen as supporting and nurturing a child's potential, '*she does ballet and gymnastics outside of school, not extra tuition',* as explained by Carole (scientist: Rec, RH). This can be further theorised as the 'making up' of the middle class child as a strategic response to many parents' perception of their responsibility to develop the multi skilled unique and individual child (Vincent and Ball, 2007: 1062; Aarseth, 2018; Irwin and Elley, 2011). Enrolling children for extra-curricular pursuits is another feature of concerted cultivation which were seen as pivotal for the following parents at Rose Hill and Wood Rise (Lareau 2003; 2007), as illustrated by the quotations below,

> *He does gymnastics and football which he loves, he does one thing and get tired, the other can do 5 things a day and want to do more. . He is happy on computer games and that's fine I don't mind.* Georgina, (media journalist: Rec, WR)

> *I think that I will go with what they really want so, so they've all had various music lessons and you know, climbing lessons and this, that and the other, David is absolutely passionate about football so we take him to football and stuff. I think Paul used to do more things, he finds secondary exhausting so he stopped everything really when he went there…And I do think that parents make their children do too many things.* Amanda, (teacher: Yr6, WR)

> *I'd like her to do extra-curricular stuff because I think that gives you a broader experience you know or whatever it is she wants to do.* Elizabeth, (psychologist: Rec, RH)

It is already well documented that the process of concerted cultivation is predominant amongst the middle classes, of which paying for extra-curricular classes and opportunities is part of the strategic 'making up' of the child (Lareau, 2003; Vincent, 2007: 1062). Through concerted cultivation the process of socialisation includes children visiting theatres, museums and art galleries and having the confidence to talk with adults about cultural topics at home and with other families pursuing similar lifestyles that legitimise the same the same tastes and values (Lareau, 2003; Friedman and Laurison, 2019). With a focus upon the individual sense of the self, middle class children develop an emerging self-perception of entitlement (Laureau, 2003). It is of note that the parents in the above narratives is supported by previous research documenting that professional parents are the group most likely to be dependent upon cultural assets in passing on advantage to their children (Power et al, 2003).

The provision of experiences can be further theorised by the parents pursuing their children as multi-accomplished 'renaissance child', who acquire cultural competency and the 'naturally embedded' behaviour codes which provide advantage in higher educational and career trajectories (Vincent and Ball, 2007: 1068; Friedman and Laurison, 2019. This corresponds with Bourdieusian theory in that middle classes immerse their children in valuable 'cultural tools' as cultural capital which in an incorporated embodied state is reproduced through behaviours, knowledge and cultural dispositions acquired through family socialisation and upbringing (Friedman and Laurison, 2019: 155). Tina from Wood Rise went further in the conceptualisation of capital in being deployed and recognised within the field, through embedded and unspoken family habitus (Grenfell, 2009) saying, *'Well it's almost, sort of, that cultural capital you are given I guess, by your parents that you just absolutely take for granted'*, which was echoed by William saying, *'I suppose we were both academic parents, we have unstated academic expectations. It's a very bookish household, I still read to them 4 nights out of the week'.*

Year 6 Wood Rise parents particularly described the engagement of young people in discussion regarding their school work, where another feature of concerted cultivation is reinforced through modelling a conversational approach between adults and children as equals, and reasoning with young people and keeping children's engagement with educational institutions under surveillance (Lareau, 2003),

> *I see it as my role, even if I'm not in, to just call in and say 'have you got any homework' just to prompt as part of a bigger chat.* Sonia (building regulator architecture: Yr6, WR)

> *Encouraging, advising, monitor things carefully, media use, TV that sort of thing. We will have to find an hour she doesn't have to find at the moment for academic study and we will discuss that as a family*. William (teacher: Yr6, WR)

The following dialogue demonstrates the perception that education is a shared venture between home and school. This reflects the findings of Lareau (1987), with graduate parents such as Carole being actively engaged in monitoring and supplementing education and seeing this as much more of a shared responsibility than something handed over to teachers as professionals.

> *From a support point of view, psychologically for them I think it's really important. Knowing what she learns at school, you can carry it on a bit at home. If you know they have been doing Antarctica recently, you can get enthused with them and talk about it. Parents play a massively important part of their children education. I feel like we do with Bryony, in terms of how we are with her at home in family-time but also supporting her with what she does at school. So that is becomes part and parcel*

of the whole thing. I don't see education as being the schools responsibility, not part of our remit or whatever, I think we're all part of the same thing. Carole (scientist: Rec, RH)

Parents were also open to activating economic and cultural capital in providing extra tuition if necessary, with Josephine (marketing executive: Rec, RH) explaining that *'we will have to throw money at the problem and get some tutors and stuff around it'* and Sonia (building regulator architecture: Yr6, WR) reflecting upon her son's positive experience where,

He did some extra maths in year 5 with Harold. He's a maths lecturer or was, but is retired, he did all sorts of stuff with them. He had them talking about how the ancient Britons made armour and he came home wanting to put salt in cotton. He loved Maths after that.

Pine Grove parents also utilised cultural capital through engagement with extra-curricular and social activities, with Helen explaining,

Other parents in the area have similar backgrounds, both parents working part time or full, trying to get them to have an all-round educational environment. Social, extra-curricular and sports, a lot of them do extra tuition outside of school. Both parents working, but they need to give that over and above support, but they don't have time due to work so they need to offer extra tuition. The level of guilt with the working mum, I think in general you have patience with everyone else kids than you do with your own so sometimes this is good.

Whilst Helen's response alludes to the deployment of cultural and economic capital, differing from the traditional view of suburbanites in only holding modest cultural capital (Watt, 2009: 8), this is reproduced in a very different way from those parents at Wood Rise and Rose Hill. Calling upon the work of Bourdieu, Helen's description alludes to the utilisation of economic and cultural capital to facilitate experiences, particularly in the form of organised and formal extra-curricular pursuits and tutoring. Comparatively, parents at Wood Rise and Rose Hill are more significantly mobilising cultural capital in its incorporated and inherited form in their families through every aspect of children's daily lives and upbringing, with family activities explicitly reproducing behaviours, knowledge and cultural traits (Serre and Wagner, 2015).

Helen's quotation also describes the level of emotional investment which parents are putting into the development of their child. Although emotional involvement is not necessarily synonymous with emotional capital, Helen's narrative illustrates how the expenditure of time, care and concern are emotionally valued assets which can be seen as emotional capital. Notwotny's hypothesis (1981) suggested that only positive emotion reaps rewards for families although, as theoretically reinforced by the work of Reay (1998), Helen's account suggests that the anxiety she feels results in the intense involvement in her child's schooling and experiential activities is of worth, likely to secure advantage, and not necessarily ineffective.

Alongside these parental narratives, there were clear implications for parents who could not draw upon and activate the economic, social and cultural capital necessary to provide these experiences and extra-curricular activities, as explained by Trudy (Teaching assistant: Rec, WR),

> *Also where a lot of children do a lot of extra clubs, I feel pressured even though I can't afford it, I take Marisa to basketball else she'll get excluded. I think schools should provide these things for kids, this school paid for a Friday club for 3 of mine.*

The above reflection by Trudy, suggests that whilst she also values the opportunities provided by extra-curricular activities provided by the school, it is the lack of resources which prevents her offering more of these opportunities from children from poorer families are more probably going to be excluded (Vincent, 2017). This is also reflective of the findings of Bennett et al (2012) where lack of opportunity is more often related to structural aspects of class rather than class culture.

In summation, the majority of parents were engaged in 'proactive parenting', which is far more than taking an interest in their children's educational lives, but involves active engagement to ensure every opportunity is taken, every initiative pursued in order to secure successful trajectories for their children (Riddell, 2010: 16). It is noticeable how vigorous the family schedules were where the home becomes a holding space for brief pauses between work, leisure and educational activities, within what Lareau terms a ‘frenetic family’ context (2007: F2). This requires the accompanying access to cultural and social and capitals, including activation of emotional capital on the part of the primary care giver. In line with the work of Vincent (2016), this is fortified by economic resources and the accompanying non-reliance upon state provision. Although parental narratives describe this approach to parenting as based upon a process active choice, learning and opportunity, in the reality of their social contexts these young people develop an aspirational and epistemic identity which is the mechanism fundamental to the process of social reproduction (Riddell, 2010). Intensive mothering is certainly made more possible if these economic resources are also accompanied by a level of autonomy in work practices and spacious residential contexts, and access to childcare, called ‘privatized mothering’ by Elliot et al (2015). It was noticeable that in the Rose Hill context all mothers who chose to be respondents had been able to negotiate or adapt their occupational context to allow them to be the main caregiver, with 2 out of 3 at Pine Grove, in comparison to 67% within the Wood Rise context.

A positive attitude to learning: following your passion

Wood Rise reception parents particularly saw their role as instilling a sense of ‘passion’ into their children towards schooling, and voiced their role in creating a positive attitude to education. In a similar way, Aarseth (2018) uncovered what she called ‘the cult of passion’ in her study, where professional parents supported children in pursuing activities they liked the most, although the overarching emphasis was the need to be passionate about something. This is likely to lead to advantage in children having individualised and ‘personalised passions’, becoming engaged and enthusiastic about school learning (Aarseth, 2018: 1094).

A priority particularly amongst Wood Rise reception parents was that the Reception year should see the child set up a positive attitude to learning, which would be embedded for the future, as evidenced by the quotations below which demonstrate the emotional engagement of mother's in passionate engagement (Aarseth, 2018),

> *Encouraging children to follow their passion and their heart, to have a dream and a passion, especially primary school. When you love something you do, you get rewards from what you do.* Trudy (Rec, WR)

> *Following the things you find interesting and experimenting, getting a passion for everything that's out there.* Genevieve (Rec, WR)

This was also influenced by intergenerational experiences of parents, with Carmen explaining,

> *My main concern is, I enjoyed school I went to an awful village primary but I enjoyed learning. My biggest hope was they enjoyed school, if you had a negative experience it's hard to break from. My parents provided stuff outside my school. I wanted them to engage in the social setting and develop a positive attitude to learning.* (Rec, WR)

Susan at Rose Hill, in the excerpt below, saw it as her role to maintain that passion, and keeping children interested and challenged. The taken for granted assumption of their child's brightness with unlimited potential has clear implications both in terms of the expectations from educational institutions, and the role of parents in ensuring potential is nurtured (Riddell, 2010).

> *On the academic side I would want them to keep nurturing the passion he has got, I wouldn't want things to become boring or mainstream, I know kids can get bored when they find things too easy. I would like them to keep him interested.*

It is suggested that this parental focus upon passion towards learning is linked to facilitating positive advancement in terms of cultural competency, educational trajectories and employment. This corresponds with the findings of Brown, Power et al (2016), which revealed how Oxford students deemed that dispositions such as 'strength of character' and 'passion', alongside academic credentials, would provide positive trajectories in terms of attending elite higher educational institutions and securing advantage in gaining employment.

The emotive emphasis upon passion was not replicated emphatically by parents at Pine Grove, and perhaps reflected the instrumental elective belonging parents had also used regarding their feeling towards their neighbourhood. The two non-graduates at Pine Grove, whilst having high expectations, were more pragmatic and measured in their expectations, for example with Maureen, Alan and Helen from Pine Grove '*not having to excel'* (MB, 6, Maureen), *'doesn't have to be the next prime minister'* (MB, 6, Alan) or more focused on them *'being comfortable'*. Maureen was clear in her pragmatic and balanced approach to parenting,

> *That's a tricky one, make him do his homework. Make sure he has equipment and pay for lessons. He does guitar at school and drums outside of school. I don't want to push him, I want him to enjoy it, he did an exam I didn't want him to do it, but he was keen. He is with another kid with serious targets. I would like him to do fun music, not syllabus.*

It was essential for Reception parents in all three settings that children should set up a good association with school in general, so that all their learning from now onwards can be built on that schools a great place to be,

> *I love school.' 'I love learning, because that is what we do at school'. That's what I would want from reception year and that is what they are doing. Making school seem like a great place, rather than a place you come to do really difficult things. (*Carole, Rec, RH)

> *So they feel happy, settled and positive about going to school and not that it's a scary place that's hard work and not boring.* Lucy (Rec, WR)

> *To like learning .. to enjoy the process of putting things on paper*. Clare (Rec, PG)

It was noticeable that positive attitudes to school and learning was instilled in children by parents not only in modelling but how learning was intrinsically connected to lifestyle activities and not just something connected to work and school. Tina (Rec, WR) also emphasised the importance of loving school *'begin to love school, that's it and everything else sort of comes, just start to develop a love of learning'*, and Grace (Rec, WR) explained how parents were crucial in setting the expectations towards school saying, '*We install school and learning is a good, exciting and liberating thing'*.

Tina went on to describe her view of the family as lifelong learners, explaining how her husband and herself had engaged in postgraduate studies later in life and modelled this as best they could to their children,

> *I think if the kids can take again that love of education and that love of lifelong learning even just to the point where, like, just the kids are so funny because they will be just like, "Mummy what are you, like Mummy, what are you reading, you are always, like sort of, especially the twins because they don't read for pleasure yet, my oldest does. What are you reading, like, you never just sit down and watch the TV do you" And it's like no like no, no really, we watch the news when you go to bed other than that no we do like, mum and dad enjoy reading.*

This modelling can be seen as a form of habitus in social, cultural and biological reproduction (Bengtsen, 2002) where parents are making a narrative coherence between their children's lives with their own, 'reproducing through their children their tastes, distinctions and world view' (Ball, 2003: 165). It was noticeable how literacy activities were seen as the 'norm' within families, with academic work viewed as a pleasurable leisure activity and not as a chore. *She loves books so it's never difficult to sit down and read and explore with her.* Anna (WR, Rec)

Most parents perceived learning and education as their responsibility, in collaboration with school. Lucy at Wood Rise saw the attitudes to learning as predominantly class based, with the family context, particularly in terms of the educational class,

> *There's a gap between those from educated households and those from non-educated households and that's the whole summer holidays thing. In highly educated households the parents are still encouraging kids to read and do work and think about school.*

There was an explicit connection made by parents between learning at school and home, which is theoretically reinforced by previous findings in how social class and family life is intrinsically connected to parental participation in educational pursuits. Vincent (2017) suggested that monitoring and engagement in school life may be a way that parents minimise the risk that children's potentials are not realised. It is significant that monitoring children's engagement with schooling was identified by Lareau (1987) as part of the process of concerted cultivation,

> *I think it's our role to support the learning in school, we will always hear Esme read, write in her book, practice her words, whatever is sent home. I don't do as much as I'd like because I'm working. We will always go on parents evening, I haven't helped on a trip which I feel guilty about.* Grace (Rec, WR)
>
> *I try to maintain the fact they need to be respectful towards the teachers and the stuff they are being taught. I try to keep the positive kind of thing, that schools important, its an important thing you're doing and you need to try to be positive about going to school. Genevieve (Rec, WR)*
>
> *It's really useful if they are talking about something at school and we know they are talking about it, to follow it up. It's really handy, it gives you an in. Sonia (Yr6, WR)*
>
> *Support the development and growing within the school. The pure and simple parent role is supporting what they have done at school so they can keep that going. Helen Rec, PG*

This seems to correspond with William's view in his narrative below in terms of preparation for life, the parental role in the development of attitudes to learning and of his belief that these personality traits and attitudes to learning mediated between the home and school environment.

> *Every school seems to be talking about a growth mindset, I obviously believe it. There's a danger of mantras, you want these desirable qualities and no matter how much it's encouraged its's hard to embed them as attitudes. The question is how much value does a school add? A report in the guardian that linked to education, (a percentage) of a child's attainment can be attributed to the school they go to, everything else they bring from home.*

The above quotation demonstrates the responsibility felt by parents in terms of the home and family influence upon positive outcomes for children. Our contemporary age of 'intensive' or 'paranoid' parenting, accompanied by market driven educational policy and focus upon parenting has contributed to William's overarching view of the influence parents have regarding outcomes of children, and the resulting obligation to manage and shape the lives of their children (Faircloth and Murray, 2014: 1120).

Alongside these unstated expectations, was evidence of parents proactively modelling attitudes to learning whereby work and play were intrinsically blurred, hard work as exemplified by William reflecting,

> *I do work in the evenings when they are in bed and one hopes modelling that sort of thing will have an effect. Getting the idea that it's useful but if you do it as early as possible you're free.*

Some parents saw themselves as role models in demonstrating the connection between a favourable and desired lifestyle and hard work. It was particularly important to some Wood Rise Year 6 parents that a connection was explicitly made between effort and family lifestyle with achievement and choice,

> *The kids see that we've done well, I've had to work hard for the holidays and nice trainers. Nothing comes for free. I don't give them things like pocket money unless they do chores. I would install if you do want nice things you do have to work for them. That feels important, I want them to do something they want to do.* Mia (Yr6, WR)

Through this modelling Isabel saw that she had a pivotal responsibility in supporting her children reach their potential in order to achieve,

> *We want you to recognise the potential in yourself and support you to achieve that….I think we harp on a lot about how you can't live in a house like this, go on holiday or go out for tea if you don't have a good job because this is how it works. We are trying to install that ethos that you can do what you like, achieve whatever you want to and we will help you do that. Though you could argue that makes (dad) who he is now, we don't want to see our girls working in a factory.* Isabel (Yr6, WR)

In conclusion, this type of middle class parenting, accompanied by risk and anxiety, is seen as resulting from individual and autonomous choices with the child as an entrepreneurial subject (Vincent, 2017; Lazarrato, 2009). These families put huge emphasis on deploying capitals as strategically as possible to minimise risk, particularly the transmission of cultural capital

(Ball, 2003). Within the arena of choice and individualism, and accompanied by the pivotal notion of responsibility of parents, putting family first is seen as central to life (Ball, 2003).

The notion of the 'bright child' and intergenerational entitlement

Emphasis upon positive attitudes to learning and assumed academic success was accompanied by a strong sense of entitlement for parents at Wood Rise and Rose Hill. Risk to achievement was mitigated by ensuring that they as parents provided the 'right conditions' existed to support this innate ability of children, with Susan suggesting *'given the right climate it's not going to be an issue*' as she explained below,

> *I have to say that I do not really have any expectations on the academic side, partly because he is so bright and given the right climate it is not going to be an issue. Me and my husband were pretty bright and in my upbringing academic learning was always forced upon us. Even if he has a bunch of pretty rubbish teachers he is going to come out good and be able to read and write and count. Susan (Rec, RH)*

Family habitus for some parents was firmly embedded in family functioning across generations and the accompanying assumed entitlement for their children, not only through activation of capitals but through role modelling processes (Bengtsen et al, 2002). The following quotations by Tina and Elizabeth (Rec, WR) illustrate clear intergenerational links across generations, embedded in family habitus, whereby parental narratives drawing upon intergenerational habitus of achievement,

> *We are a family of dorks. And um…yeah, and I have, I have…and actually it's interesting because, because like I said my younger, my older daughter and my son are just very academically able.* Tina (Rec, WR)
>
> *My husband and I both achieved academically, we have parents who achieved academically. We weren't pushed at all really but it's just, it was always* [assumed]. Elizabeth (Rec, RH)

The quotations above demonstrate how individuals maintain and reproduce values, self-identity and self-concepts through influence and transferral generationally (Bengtson et al, 2002). Self-narratives mediated between the culture and identities of parents is mutually reinforcing in the formation of aspirational identity (Riddell, 2010). Through a managed model of social reproduction these parents are passing on the narratives and assumed trajectories for their children, who in term will potentially replicate their own self narratives in developing their own epistemic identity (Pollard with Filer, 1996; Riddell, 2002). This illuminates the critical feature of habitus, in practices, attitudes and values being applied not only within groups, but across groups (Bennett et al, 2011). Narratives demonstrated how parents are connecting their own lives to those of their children, and reproducing through their offspring their own values and view of the world with clear investment in the anticipated future for children (Ball, 2003).

The cultivation of desirable dispositions: a life of success

> *It's fundamentally about relationships and attitudes and values, isn't it, and I think that you, you can teach lots of things in lots of different ways. And if you don't care about those things, the relationships and things, it doesn't…it's probably not going to work. What's most important it's that people are happy and safe and well and motivated and listened to and that you can only build the other stuff on top of that.* Amanda (Rec, RH)

The emphasis parents in all three settings placed upon children acquiring certain personality traits to advantage them in both academic and non-academic areas was striking. When Lucy, in the above quotation, referred to an educational background it was implicit that children need to become 'multi accomplished educational projects' (Vincent and Ball, 2006:11), which was not only based upon academic qualifications. It can be seen that being able to *'create those networks and opportunities'* demands, as previously cited by Lucy, *'a cleverness'* which requires the acquisition of unspoken cultural competences and personal attributes in addition to academic qualifications. These personality traits in this research are termed 'desirable dispositions' and were seen as essential attributes to be developed from Reception entry onwards, and viewed as a foundation for positive attitudes to learning which would act as 'transportable credentials' to ensure success in young people's trajectories through to higher education and employment (Power et al, 2003: 117).

Stephanie from Pine Grove explained how these attributes would support her daughter to *'make choices that are right for her'*. These dispositions or soft skills, although forming a strong foundation for the future development of academic skills, were a priority for Reception parents although explicitly voiced as essential components to be embedded as a priority for Wood Rise parents with confidence and social skills explicitly mentioned by the following parents,

> *I think that's all I wanted is for them to be confident and happy in their skin and be able to make eye contact, for me it's the social skills that are key, then the academic stuff, I think that will come.* Georgina (Rec, WR)

> *If you've got confidence and a dream and you believe in that dream, you can do anything you want!' All those life skills will help them through their life.* Trudy (Rec, WR)

> *What's really important to me, is that my children are happy, they understand their abilities and have encouragement readily available to them. I think without the confidence; they can't go on to do whatever learning is required. Feeling able to explore and learn for themselves, knowing encouragement is there when they need it.* Anna (Rec, WR)

There was some evidence that school choice of Wood Rise was explicitly linked to the acquisition of attitudes to learning and dispositions in being particularly valued for its emphasis on the individual child,

> *Wood Rise won hands down on the focus on the individual child, giving them the best start, getting them confident in a school environment and understanding themselves. Without that foundation, they can't go on with achieving in writing, handwriting and all the rest of it.* Anna (Rec)

Tina described part of this attribute acquisition is developing *'your own chutzpah to get you through'*. In corroboration to this, recent publications highlight the importance of not only acquiring entrepreneurial traits as essential ingredients of career success in the fast moving globalised world to which we belong, but also that their activation is linked to 'making an impression' in terms of chutzpah (Ziegler, 2012; Ariieli, 2019). These entrepreneurial attributes are also mentioned by Mia (Yr6, WR), as valued by global employers, whereby *'Industries like google where you work differently and you can express yourself. No idea is a* *bad idea… learning real life skills'*. There is a strong correlation to this activation of 'chutzpah' and risk taking needed for success in our global world. Prior research has identified parental rank, particularly occupation and educational level in line with these parents profiles instrumental to the development in certain attributes, particularly autonomy, risk taking and innovation (Bengtsen et al, 2002). Josephine from Rose Hill predicted,

> *Yes, the job market is going to change… If I had a choice do I want my choice of 4 A* a levels or a competent person who can fit into society let's face it I'd choose that and get him to enjoy life…you want independent thought, you want people to think independently.*

The disposition 'commitment and determination', and resilience, was clearly valued by Stephanie, mentioned by all groups with reception aged children,

> *I just want them to work hard and enjoy it and be enthusiastic. I want them to be happy and I want them to be good at what they do. I don't want them aimlessly floating through life and never becoming their own. If they want to be a hairdresser, that's brilliant as long as they are a really good one. I want them to be interesting, resilient and kind people.* Grace (Rec, WR

It is clear that learning readiness is based upon personal desirable dispositions of persistence, resilience and confidence (Vincent, 2012). These reflections can be further theorised in calling upon recent research where it was found that the skill of 'grit', activated as human capital, was seen the non-cognitive skill most connected to positive outcomes as a personality trait rather than a flexible skill (Gutman and Schoon, 2013: 2). Some parents explicitly connected their modelling of determination to intergenerational influences,

> *My mum was a carer and worked her way up in the industry and with a car and respectable salary. I want that conviction and determination in Susan.* Stephanie (Rec, PG)
>
> *I want my kids to know they have to work, being a single parent shows the boys how hard I have to work for what we have. Our holidays are my work and that's my money they know.* Mia (Yr6, WR)

It was not surprising that social skills came very high upon the list of desirable dispositions in Reception parents from all three settings and was particularly explained by Stephanie as not just being able to share, but more importantly *'understanding the basics of social understanding'*. For some parents at Wood Rise the play-based and child-centred ethos has been instrumental in their school choice in fostering this trait,

> *I love the social aspect of school for them, I think it's really important. I like the high scope idea, just using everything in order to learn, I think reading and writing can wait… think it should be about playing, exploring and experimenting.* Genevieve

Pine Grove parents particularly saw sport activities as a vehicle for embedding desirable dispositions of collaboration, drive and determination, and was explicitly connected to occupational competencies by Helen in the following narrative,

> *My kids do sport and swimming which we view as a core skill and will stay. Find a niche..it's a balance.. I'm the least able with my hockey but I bring reliability and I help pull the team together. For team sports you have to rely on other people. Running is solo and you're not going to get anywhere unless you push yourself. It's learning skills for working, you will need to work in a team, you will need to work for yourself, you will need to have a level of drive.*

Pine Grove Reception parents were additionally the only ones to allude to the need for children to understand that there are parameters and boundaries to life, with Stephanie stating that *'it's important to learn socialising and different boundaries and rules'*, with Helen further explaining that *'we need those boundaries and have that choice within the boundaries'.*

Following on from the parental narratives in the previous chapter regarding the beneficial elements of multicultural educational and social diversity, it was not surprising that 'social and cultural fluency' was again identified by Wood Rise parents as an important disposition to acquire as a form of capital to support both educational and occupational trajectories (Reay et al, 2013: 85).

> *Being educated in an environment where they are coming into contact with different kids from different backgrounds, countries, culture, religions, that's important to us actually. Small town US background* (is) *not the real world'..'kids, your grandmothers couldn't tell you anything about Ramadan.* Tina (Rec, WR)

> *We want her to be in a community feel, learn about other people's lives and experiences and so on.* William (Yr6, WR)

The development of desirable dispositions was not only at the forefront of parents minds in terms of school choices, but very much connected to middle class lifestyles, for example, in line with cosmopolitan middle classes travel was seen as a cultural capacity in terms of providing *'a database of the world'* (Alan, Yr6 PG). The interconnection between the experiential and extra-curricular activities parents sought to provide is unequivocal amongst Wood Rise parents within the subsequent quotations,

> *Getting children involved in things that are healthy and give them social contact in a way that is different from sitting next to each other in a classroom. Ours do that outside school, but it's different they are with the same group of kids generally in football team, cricket club, it's the same gang. Anything that gives them that contact with other kids and girls as well. Some sports are a bit boys exclusive and they don't meet many girls in those areas.* Sonia (Yr6, WR)

> *I think you do get benefits from doing those kinds of physical things, that's why we do it. Climbing and stuff is about solving problems and also about having personal challenges and thinking I can't do this long walk I just want to sit indoors. It's also about obesity and having a fit and active lifestyle.* Lucy (Rec, WR)

There were also clear intergenerational links with parental 'choice narratives' reflecting lifestyle and class based choices with skill acquisition re-enforcing the futures of their children (Ball, 2003: 163). Parents were consistently 'linking and making coherence' between their own lives and those of their children with own lives' (Ball 2003: 165), as illustrated in the following exchange,

> *Music is a social thing and it's ton of fun, they get a bit from me. Everybody plays music, now Frankie is having lessons in year 2, she does ballet and swimming and stuff at reception age it's less structured lesson. I love doing sporting things, they are outdoorsy and love walking. It's a lifestyle, it's about not seeing these engaging things as achievement targets. Imposing SATS (tests) on them makes it feel like you're the government. My parents weren't academic but they were cultured and interested in culture and music. I was lucky enough that when opportunities came up. It was very much part of my social life, county youth orchestra. If you want to have an interesting child, all those things are part of it.* Carmen (Rec, WR)

The above quotations illustrate how part of the making up of the 'renaissance child' is creating an *'interesting'* individual through reproducing the habitus of middle class families within lifestyle and particularly the connection between cultural pursuits and social networks (Vincent, 2017: 544; Vincent and Ball, 2007). The connection made by Carmen between 'opportunity' and 'lucky' is significant, and reflects the study led by Brown and Power where advantage is seen as embracing and maximising opportunities which may not be so readily available for others who do not have a cultured background (Brown et al, 2016). Underpinned by parental emphasis upon extra-curricular activities and experiential encounters outlined earlier in the chapter, this embodied incorporated cultural capital is reproduced in not only introducing children to 'legitimate culture' but more importantly as a capacity and disposition, to confidently enter into discourses and articulations surrounding high culture both socially and to provide advantage when engaging with like-minded others in future occupational contexts (Friedman and Laurison, 2019: 154). The acquisition of these desirable dispositions, seen by middle class parents as middle class norm, ensures young people develop an 'epistemic identity' where they are equipped for educational and occupational success (Filer with Pollard, 2001).

Out of the three main forms of cultural capital, the incorporated 'embodied' type is considered to be the most vital form, and the one which is most connected to 'the dispositions that constitutes cultural capital' in class reproduction (Friedman and Laurison, 2019: 199). This corresponds with the theoretical perspective of Bourdieu, that incorporated embodied capital is reproduced more through immersion over a long period of time, within particular socio-economic circumstances (Bourdieu, 1977; Friedman and Laurison, 2019). Access to these emotionally valued skills and assets which are all encompassing, provide access to the accompanying knowledge contacts and relations by which these dominant middle class networks are characterised (Vincent, 2012; Nowotny, 1981). The importance placed by parents upon these desirable dispositions seems to correspond with the findings of Friedman and Laurison (2019) in that they are equipping young people with the cultural capacity to fit effectively into an organisation replicating these values and providing a clear indication of this to future employers.

Transformative development of desirable dispositions

> *If you haven't got those basic skills in the box by year 7 something isn't right , not enough has been done at home or school, to allow you then to get on with the business of learning.* Alan (Yr6, PG)

It was striking that for Year 6 parents that desirable dispositions were often linked more explicitly to academic attainment, as explained by Alan in the above quotation, or to occupational competencies. It is proposed that parental narratives provide evidence that desirable dispositions are transformative and fluid, with parents cultivating development of particular traits at key transitional points in order to maximise advantage (See Appendix 16). The passion mentioned by reception parents was still a valued trait, although often credential orientated, as explained by William, *'We would like her to be passionate about something, at least some of her academic. Get some of the GCSE's she's capable of.'* The aspiration regarding *'a passion for learning'* was now more mediated and intertwined with the academic. Caroline provided an example of channelling of passion into occupational competencies in the following exchange regarding her passion for music, for which her daughter had achieved a year 7 gifted and talented place at the sought after Chapelle Carlton Academy,

> *The other day we were listening to the radio and there was a guy on who analyses music for legal cases to see how similar two pieces of music are, to see if someone has copied someone else. I said to Esme, if you did music you could do that as a job (*where*) you are like a music analyst.*

This was reaffirmed by Mia in the following exchange,

> *You're creative but engineering or product design is great, I want to open their minds to something they might enjoy rather than concentrate on their passion which might be music, they could be a music engineer or involve in it a different way. They need to play to their strengths.*

Caroline later in the interview voiced her concern that her daughter should have financial security, which may have played some part in the above dialogues, and in a similar way Patience from Rose Hill reflected upon her son's passion for football, balanced against financial security and the need to keep options open,

> *If they had something they were passionate about that didn't involve going to university, but I'm more for an easy life and getting an education makes your life easier. You can get a nice job, sitting in a nice office or in a nice hospital or spending time in nice schools. My son would like to be a pro footballer, well you could put all your eggs in one basket, you 've got a one in a million chance of being famous. Or you could be an engineer, have a decent job, never be unemployed, have a nice job and do something nice and interesting. The odd one is going to make it, have a friend who is a concert violinist, practised daily from the age of four.*

It is salient that parents are transforming desirable dispositions into more tangible occupational competencies and network formation, to give career advantage and support appropriate subject and university selection and thus maximise choice and opportunity. It was significant that the desirable dispositions which were valued attributes for children to develop in Reception were more connected to attitudes to learning, which was seen as pivotal in underpinning an advantageous and successful futurity, with emphasis more orientated towards attainment of academic credentials. These desirable dispositions can be seen as worthy transferable cultural assets, which provide powerful navigational skills to children and young people in terms of higher education and occupational trajectories.

Year 6 parents across all schools spoke of young people developing confidence and ability in public speaking, with Janet from Pine Grove expounding, *'we want our children to have those advantages, eloquent … not intimidated, as otherwise might not have opportunities'*. Caroline suggested that her choice of secondary school had been influenced by the emphasis on public speaking as part of the mission statement,

> *The school codes say they want pupils to take on leadership and be good public speakers - that is one of their big things. I used to hate that thing when I was young and actually if I had a school that was constantly, subtly giving me opportunities to*

> *speak out so that it became the normal that is definitely one thing I thought about it. One of the things I thought about it is, if my child could just come out standing up in from a group of 50 people and not even blinking at doing this, that an amazing outcome ..anything you do in life.*

It is significant that Caroline reflected upon things she wished she had been better at, which she perceived would secure future advantage for her child. This had impacted upon secondary school choice, in favouring the secondary school most likely to facilitate these dispositions. Social fluency and confidence being seen by parents as attributes required for professional accomplishment in our global economy, is echoed by the findings of Reay et al (2013: 99).

The emphasis on public speaking was also amplified by Janet and Maureen respectively from Pine Grove, with public speaking ability and individuality clearly linked to leadership potential,

> *I think they should be honoured for who they are and their individuality. He's a logical, strategist, leader, you can see it all, he' s like an expert….He loves public speaking.*
>
> *If you can talk confidently, express yourself and put into words you will get there in the end ... more important than capital letter and full stop.*

It was noticeable that many narratives related to desirable dispositions took more the form of developing soft skills through organised activities, such as sport, in William proposing, '*working together at something and working as a team. It will have long term health benefits, but will set them up in good habits for their 20's and 30's meeting other people.* Maureen also explicitly connected desirable dispositions to extra-curricular opportunities and occupational competencies, explaining *'I don't want them to look back and say they didn't make use of all the opportunities' and* expanding upon her justification in her narrative below,

> *I think the extra circular stuff is important for the social life and your self-esteem, for building relationships also. They are very important, it's the enjoyment of life, it's not doing algebra is it. That's what you need to get a good job, which is important and finding one you enjoy is maybe more so. The pleasure you get from joining a band or something.*

Amanda and Gerda from Wood Rise cited the disposition of independence, although for Amanda it was more defined as the trait of organisation and taking personal responsibility '*to get on and do the work, and if they don't I expect them to take the consequences'.* Sonia alluded to final independence, again where the child at secondary school would learn to take on more personal accountability, *'I think it is really different because it is more encouraging them to be responsible for their own stuff. It's different (from primary school) to help them move away and them be responsible for themselves'*. This personal responsibility was also connected to the desirable dispositions of self-belief, with Janet adding that as well as having confidence and self-belief, it was about young people *'being your own judge with self-esteem* and *self-worth'*.

It is significant that these transformed desirable dispositions which are pivotal to Year 6 parents are interconnected to the type of autonomous happiness as defined by respondents in the study by Collett and Tort, in parents pursuit of 'education for happiness' through children setting their own goals, having infinite choice notions independence and freedom alongside being able to be true to themselves (2015: 245). They appear to be more reflective of 'achievement orientations' identified by Bengtsen et al, as being a 'constellation of educational and career aspirations, prosocial values, and self-esteem' (2002: 3). The emphasis by parents on their offspring acquiring these desirable dispositions seems to correspond with the recent research by Friedman and Laurison (2019) in the power of adopting and utilising class based and dominant behavioural codes in providing advantage within elite occupations. These behavioural codes are pivotal to getting on and, although not necessarily reliable indicators of ability, often are seen as representative of the 'class slipper' in perceptions of employers in who might have the appropriate requisites for fitting into a particular profession (Ashcroft, 2013).

Conclusions

This chapter has identified the parenting practices of a proactive parenting culture, which is focused on the child achieving their potential, alongside an evolving sense of entitlement (Lareau, 2007). My findings show how this is promoted through concerted cultivation, which is mediated through experiential provision, extra-curricular activities, and children confidently engaging in discussion and dialogue with adults. Differing from the traditional view of suburbanites only holding modest cultural capital, Pine Grove parents are similarly utilising cultural and economic capital to facilitate experiential activities, particularly in the form of organised activities and tutoring. However, this is in contrast to parents in the two urban areas of gentrification who are more significantly mobilising cultural capital in its incorporated and symbolic form. Through habitus generated from birth, values and practices are legitimised and protected through 'symbolic boundary-marking', for example through exclusionary practices of high culture, and further validated through educational institutions (Skeggs, 2011: 501). However, in order to mitigate risk navigation regarding futurity is through flexible pathways, with parental responsibility reinforced by the market driven regime of the educational market and policy and the accompanying emphasis on the responsibility of the parent (Ball, 2003).

The focus by parents upon acquisition of desirable dispositions can be viewed as the individual qualities which prepare young people in the soft currencies of employability in terms of dispositions, in addition to the hard store of academic qualifications, sport and music achievements, as reinforced by Brown et al (2016). These desirable dispositions are far more than advantageous personality traits, but provide navigational skills for higher education and occupational trajectories as an instrument of social reproduction. This thesis contends that these desirable dispositions are far more than mastery orientations, but cultural competencies which significantly act as a structuring mechanism for social, cultural and economic reproduction to provide distinction. The transformation of these desirable dispositions at times of transition to secondary school is significant in being more aligned to achievement orientations in preparation for academic attainment and employability. It is argued that promoting these qualities is instrumental in gaining advantage within the labour market, providing the social magic identified by Lawler and Payne (2017), with these credentials particularly recognised by elite organisations and professions.

Chapter Seven: Higher education, employment and futurity

The preceding chapter identified the proactive parenting practices implemented by many respondents, and outlined the influence of transformative desirable dispositions to support children's advantage. This chapter examines the attitudes of parents towards higher education and employment with comparative analysis across and within groups in relation to education, occupation and parental biography. It investigates data connected to the long term aspirations of parents for their children, and parental perceptions regarding the impact of class based behaviour codes and dispositions upon career trajectories. This proved a complicated arena to navigate, with many parents knowing what they do not wish to reproduce, although not confident to take a leap to a different approach which do not include university credentials. Within an anticipated future characterised by a constantly changing landscape parents are maintaining fluidity in terms of keeping options open, yet unwilling to contemplate compromises. With an emphasis upon opportunity provision, many parents in the urban areas of gentrification particularly place emphasis upon young people acquiring cultural competency in class based behaviour codes which will be recognised as a marker of ability by employers. This can be seen as the operational development of the desirable dispositions identified in the previous chapter, with cultural capital mostly valued in its embodied as opposed to institutionalised state. Although admission to higher education is seen by graduate parents in all three settings as normalised, many parents are now seeing stand-alone undergraduate credentials as insufficient to provide distinction.

Aspirations and futurity

It was unsurprising that many parents believed future happiness was dependent upon having the appropriate life chances and making successful life choices. Within the premise that aspiration is an individual stance, the following parental narratives drew upon concepts such as happiness, comfort or security when discussing futurity of children.

> *We want them to be happy and feel confident. To be settled, and confident in themselves. Have high self-esteem and to have a settled home life and the opportunities to go out and explore the world in the ways that they want to. Part of that is financial security.* Anna (Rec, WR)

> *I have family values, I want them to be healthy and happy. I want them to be educated. I want them to be successful in whatever they want them to do. I want them to live a nice life of their choice and I want them to travel. I don't want them to have no money. Family and friends should be important. As long as they are doing what they want to do and are happy.* Georgina (Rec, WR)

These individualised destiny narratives are dependent upon specific educational, social and occupational expectations, likely to prepare children for successful long term trajectories and subsequently influencing their developing aspirational identity (Riddell, 2010; Harrison and Waller, 2018).

Long term future happiness, as explained by Anna, was underpinned by having desirable dispositions of self-esteem and confidence, and the ability to maximise choice and opportunity. Georgina explained that her aspirations were based upon clear values embedded in the family, with a similar emphasis upon both choice and financial security. This reflects the findings of Ball (2003) in that 'happiness in adulthood' for these parents is now very dependent upon economic security and success in obtaining academic credentials (Ball, 2003: 55). The emphasis upon choice as a disposition and subsequently flexible future actions to mitigate risk, identified by both Anna and Georgina, illustrates how the present and future are intrinsically joined to the imagined, destinies of children (Ball, 2003; Beck-Gernsheim, 1996; 2002).

These narratives seem to correspond with the work of Irwin and Elley (2011), reflecting parental emphasis upon opportunity and their pivotal role in facilitating this. There is a clear acknowledgment that reproducing similar family lifestyles for children will require the material collateral necessary to reproduce across generations which is more rooted in social structure than based upon class anxiety (Irwin and Elley, 2011). Some parents voiced an awareness of the changing job market and the implications of this on the futurity of their children. This was particularly emphasised by Reception parents, as illustrated in the quotations below,

> *I've got that split understanding the importance of doing what you want to do, he will have the right qualifications to be a gardener, but keep everything open. My neighbour read a statistic that the jobs that will be available to our kids in Reception don't exist yet.* Stephanie (Rec, PG)

> *If I had a choice do I want my choice of 4 A* a levels or a competent person who can fit into society? The job market is going to change, I'm not naive, I totally understand that. What is more important? Why do we have to compete with China? Who knows where people will be in the future.* Josephine (Rec, RH)

It was of interest that Josephine, a marketing manager in the highest income band, particularly mentioned the world-wide competition for professional jobs encountered by the educated middle class which may impact upon her son's future occupational prospects. This has been termed by Brown et al as part of the 'global auction' where bidders operate globally to obtain the best quality services at the lowest price (2011: 6). Josephine particularly referred to the global competition from countries such as China who will continue to export professionals, for example doctors and architects, prepared to work for western corporations for less salary (Robertson et al, 2011).

Carole, in the following quotation, highlighted the changing and insecure context of the labour market which had moved away from the notion of *'a job for life'*.

> *I can see how you would want your kids to do well, do a reliable steady job, not wanting them to have a chaotic life but to be so prescriptive to the exact kind of job. Maybe they were in a time where there were less choices and job stability was more important or highly valued - I don't know. I guess people don't assume they are going to have a job for life, you need to be adaptable.* Carole (Rec, RH)

This is in part connected to the insecurity of the changing occupational contexts and job security outlined in the previous paragraph. However, Carole went on to explain that she had been unfulfilled as a scientist so *'post-children'* was now undertaking a PhD in social research to facilitate her own career change. She also highlighted that her brother, *'became a doctor but is going to give it up because he doesn't like it, he did that under pressure becoming a doctor under family pressure'.* In the light of this, it may be that this particular narrative additionally demonstrates how aspirations for children are being reacted upon (Reay et al, 2013) by personal biographies, intergenerational recreations and the way parents are dynamically constructing their own careers (Power et al, 2003; Reay et al, 2013). Certainly, a proportion of respondents in this study did see their own career trajectory as a 'life project' in an individualised rather than hierarchical sense (Power et al, 2003).

Cultural competency in an uncertain world

In voicing their awareness of the changing structure of a job market, the following postgraduate professional parents at Wood Rise acknowledged the importance for their offspring to develop cultural competency within the global arena:

> *So many jobs require a degree, but I think that will change over time. I feel very strongly that we shouldn't limit the kids because of what our experience was. It used to be that you had to have a degree and it had to be based on blah blah, a piece of paper. I think the world's changing massively and you might not need any of that. There's big companies talking about not even taking CV's, not looking at CV's. They want face to face contact and they are interested in the person, their aptitudes and communication, so it might not be like that in 10 years' time.* Sonia (Yr6, WR: Building Inspector, MA)

> *The world is changing all the time and I think if you, I don't want them to become narrowly academic and find out there's no place for them when they come out of whatever institution they have left.* Amanda, (Yr6, WR: PGCE)

Whilst valuing the importance of academic credentials, Caroline particularly spoke of the importance of an all-round development of young people in life skills, again through acquisition of attitudes and dispositions,

> *I suppose overall we live in the world we live in and if you want to have options in life you need some qualifications so whist I think education itself is far more than about just results it's about teaching people to think and function in lots of ways ..that is the ideal.* Caroline (Yr6, WR: PhD Healthcare Researcher/Author)

These reflections reflected the importance placed by parents upon the operational development of desirable dispositions identified in the previous chapter. Parents seem to be talking about a focused move from cultural capital in the institutionalised state towards the value of cultural capital in the embodied state. In the longer term it is proposed they are intrinsically connected to the structuring of behavioural codes as cultural competency, recognised as providing suitability for a profession or organisation by employers (Friedman and Laurison, 2019). In order to mitigate risk in an uncertain world, postgraduate Wood Rise parents also saw their children as needing these additional attributes. Georgina (Rec), Sonia (Yr6) and Amanda (Yr6), singled out the dispositions of creativity, innovation and risk as those which would be transformed long term to positively influence higher education and career trajectories,

> *I would like them to go university, I'd rather they became entrepreneurs and had their own business. Getting them creative and innovative and understanding copyright at a young age. These skills are more vital than a degree unless you're a lawyer or something.* Georgina

> *Adventurous…you can do what you like sort of thing. I don't know. Selfishly you want them close, but you kind of, yes, you want them to be adventurous.* Sonia

> *I think the thing that I really hope they have as they develop into adults is to be able to go into situations with hope really an enjoy it. I don't want them to be frightened of doing new things and meeting new and different people. The world is changing all the time and I think if you, I don't want them to become narrowly academic and find out there's no place for them when they come out of whatever institution they have left.* Amanda

The emphasis upon the further transformation of desirable dispositions, illustrates how middle class parents are embedding class-based advantage which their young children have internalised through pre-university social environments and which potentially continue to be built upon through undergraduate study unconsciously (Bathmaker et al, 2013).

There was still some emphasis upon choice and opportunity, also linked to multicultural competency, perhaps now through gap years or working overseas, as explained by Year 6 parents Alan and Patience,

> *I want them to go and see and experience what life is like in other cultures. It kind of forms layers of knowledge and the source and database of the world. Alan (Pine Grove)*
>
> *I think having choices is really important to me, my education allowed me to go to Ethiopia for 2 years. It might to be everyone's choice of door to go through but it was my door and my choice. I could have made other choices, which makes it a genuine choice. That is freedom, that is power, being able to do the things that you want, to have to confidence and the options.* Patience (Yr6, WR)

These experiences may well support longer term acquisition of cultural competency and coaching young people in the skills of being a 21st century cosmopolitan citizen (Reay et al, 2013). This study argues that this can be mobilised as a form of cultural capital, in being effectively purchased for their offspring by providing the economic capital necessary to delay university and employment. Informed by Beck, cosmopolitanism is seen as 'globalization from within', with internalized cosmopolitanism of the local and the global intrinsically connected (Beck and Sznaider, 2006: 9). It has already been proposed that student exchanges and cross cultural experiences are deemed to support cosmopolitan identity formation as well as the development of other dispositions such as self-confidence and reflection (Papastephanou, 2013; Caruana, 2014).

Although Genevieve (Rec, WR), a designer whose partner was a sculptor, mentioned pursuing *'something you are passionate about'* at college purely based on interest, it was noticeable that when discussing long terms trajectories several parents focused upon children turning their 'passions' into more lucrative options in terms of career trajectories at the higher educational stage with passion was now seen connected to something 'of value' in terms of middle class distinctions,

> *I hope she gets good qualifications they are valuable but I would like her to be someone that loves something, like the Arts are important. It might be science, but I want her to have a passion for something. William*

It is noteworthy that respondents in the study by Brown et al strongly believed that within the congested job market employers now seek to engage recruits who are not only well qualified but also who could 'demonstrate passion, energy and resilience' (2016: 205). Mia specifically linked turning passion to pursuing careers of value which were financially worthwhile,

> *I think jobs like architect and engineer… Joseph (ex-husband) is at Dyson now and says the engineers have such a fascinating job, you can kind of influence them, by saying your creative but how do you turn that into money. This sounds awful now. If they were an artist that would be great but they are never going to make any money out of it, they will have to have a job they might hate to do the art they end up resenting.*

Some parents recognised the importance of their role in supporting young people both in terms of their knowledge of the educational game and what is called 'the know-how of university educated parents (Ball et al, 2002: 66). This is informed by the study by Bennett et al (2018), where those from higher socio-economic groups are more likely to be able to provide practical and role modelling in negotiating higher educational and career trajectories.

> *We will know how to help them fill out forms for the universities. My parents didn't know how to do that and I relied on my Guidance Counsellor.* Tina (Rec, WR)

> *I think it is really important. I would take it on as an obligation to help Esme discover as wide a range of possible careers. Before she has to make choices and I think that is really important.* Caroline (Yr6, WR)

In summation, narratives suggest that parents are consciously or unconsciously embedding these cultural codes to provide advantage, providing what Ingram and Allen (2018) termed 'social magic', not only in interviews but also in longer terms occupational trajectories. This is reinforced by the work of Ashley (2011), in that the basic ingredients of these cultural competencies are ingrained in middle class socialisation. These are part of the 'elite practices' which provide mutually understood reference points, not just by replication but by exhibiting individual originality and, what Savage terms, 'knowingness' (2015: 329). It is suggested that, in line with the findings of Friedman and Laurison (2019), for these parents this is has become even more influential due to occupational emphasis upon expressiveness, personal attributes and authenticity. These dominant behaviour codes emanate what Friedman and Laurison call ‘a kind of cultural symmetry’ which signals that candidate possesses the characteristics required and recognised as valued by potential employers (2019: 126). In turn they provide a social magic, theorised by Ashcroft through the glass slipper metaphor, whereby the habitus of an individual is in alignment to the structure of elite institutions (Ashcroft, 2013; Ingram and Allen, 2018).

Controlling your own destiny

Independence was particularly cited by several Year 6 parents in terms of long term aspirations, although was strongly linked to economic capital acquisition in terms of financial security. Amanda (Yr6, WR) explained, *‘I want them to be able to work and support themselves and I want them to have somewhere to live that they like’*. Having the financial capability to become a home owner was additionally mentioned by Caroline (Yr6, WR),

> *You want them to be able to look after themselves financially in the future. That definitely underlies…I don’t want them to have to be worrying and it’s going to be hard enough I think in coming years…if you look at house prices and I am thinking are they ever going to be able to afford their own house. Caroline .WR*

It is suggested that the will to mitigate risk, in what is perceived as an uncertain world, underpinned attitudes towards university offering not only entry to valued professions and occupations, but also providing advantage and security to maintain family habitus, based upon lifestyle and values.

Helen from Pine Grove (Yr6) displayed a pragmatic approach in balancing opportunity with security and risk,

> *I’d like them to be comfortable, not struggling. I think a lot of us are working class now. It depends on what their values are really. As long as they are happy in their relative level of comfort. They have what they need a roof over their head, if they need*

> *a car they have it, enough to provide for them and their family. It's about weighing up their experiences…*

Genevieve, a part time exhibition designer married to a sculptor and one of the parents at the lower end of the disclosed incomes, particularly wanted more financial security for her children, saying *'I want them to do something that makes them happy and have enough money… I just want them to have a fulfilled life, and escape the perils that we've had'*.

In particular, some postgraduate mothers with daughters placed clear emphasis upon their children having independence and reproducing the family dynamic, with Helen proposing, *'If they see me having my own life as a working mum, I become a role model that I would want them to have. It's teaching them the family dynamic'.* Elizabeth (Rec), a psychologist with a PhD, particularly expressed her wish for her daughter to be independent and career orientated, linking her own professional and personal biography to gender implications,

> *Yeah, I'd like her to be independent. As a woman I'd like her to have financial independence and I, you know, I find that very critical and adds a lot to my sort of sense of self-worth, you know, and my job… Yeah, it's, it's important, I think. Well it's important for everybody. But I think women are still at a little bit of a disadvantage sometimes and I have a lot of friends who, you know, had careers, well they weren't careers, they were jobs and they gave them up when they had kids and they are not particularly keen to get back to them and it's just, you know…Whereas I love what I do, I'm so lucky to do a job that I adore, that I'm able to do because of my husband's flexibility in his work, and I'm just so lucky and I want, I would love for Lillian to have that experience in her life so I would like her, yeah, to be happy and to do a job that gave her that much satisfaction would be…you can't ask for more than that, really.*

In the above exchange Elizabeth explained how, in a similar way to her own parents, she had always worked full time and was committed to her career, wishing to replicate personal, professional and financial autonomy for her daughter. Verified by prior research, her views regarding female financial autonomy alongside strong professional ambitions are reflective of other mothers with a similar non-traditional family habitus (Lupi et al, 2017). It is significant that again 'lucky' is used to describe how career opportunities are exploited. It is implicit in the dialogue that the luckiness is underpinned by effort, as corroborated by Brown et al

(2016), with Elizabeth making clear distinctions between a job and a career and comparing herself to other mothers from other advantaged backgrounds who may not have the same level of drive. Joanna (Yr6), reflected upon her own professional context where she balanced earning power with working from home in order to spend time with the children, and reflected that she wished for her children to also have autonomy over their own lives,

> *I was interested in finding ways that I could earn enough money to have fun and then later enough money to be at home with the children most of the time. I work when I want, people ask me "can you please do this" and I say "yes" or "no" and to me that's the ultimate goal, really, rather than earning a lot of money it's having that control over your time…I would like them to be, you know, powerful women.*

Joanna had not replicated the same trajectory of her own mother, although had reproduced the gendered division of labour as the primary care giver. In this way, habitus can be transformative with Joanna reflexively shaping primary habitus through reflexivity to seek the financial and personal autonomy she desires (Lupi et al, 2017).

In these narratives mothers expose how the imagined futurity of children is based not so much on the basis of gender, but on replicating or re-structuring the habitus of their own lives (Lupi et al, 2017). Through reflexivity parents are able shape and alter habitus through 'rational choice' (Bourdieu and Waquant, 1992: 131). It is significant that these exchanges not only outline the type of future these parents wish to replicate, but more significantly emanate from unconscious embodied dispositions in terms of what a good mother might be (Lupi et al, 2017). Through intergenerational habitus children will potentially mirror, consciously and unconsciously, their parents as role models (Dekas and Baker, 2014).

Higher education trajectories

In line with the research by Bathmaker et al (2013), some parents saw a degree experience as a door opener in terms of futurity, and not just a passport to advantage in terms of an academic stand-alone credential,

> *What changes is that you go to university, as education is a doorway to mixing with different people. It isn't so much that you want to mix with people of a different class to you, but it's just which class may offer the best ... it's classes mixed up with money. So if I say I want my children to be financially stable I don't care what class they are, I care where they can have the most opportunities and make themselves the most secure and that will be inevitably be going to university.* Caroline (Yr6, WR)

Based upon her own experiences, it was seen by Grace as a time of transition into adulthood and beneficial in terms of widening your world perspective and maximising opportunity,

> *I know their options will be open, it was a lovely transformation of time for me, but it broadens your horizons if you do go. Grace WR Rec*

As endorsed by Bathmaker et al (2013), it is suggested that parental focus on opportunity and experiences, already internalised through the experiential and extra-curricular activities outlined in the previous chapter, provides advantage in offspring at the pre-university stage which can then be translated into personal capital. This potentially allows young people to subsequently combine different forms of capital concurrently, including cultural capital in terms of 'what they know' and 'who they know', provides advantage throughout higher education and leading to employment by elite institutions. (Bathmaker et al, 2013: 726). However, it can be argued that middle-class are constantly attempting to verify their position due to the challenges in translating their cultural capital into valuable credentials within the congested globally competitive current job market (Brown et al, 2016).

Ambiguity regarding higher education

What was striking, and unexpected, was an ambiguity of some graduate parents regarding the value of the degree in ensuring advantage in life chances and specifically in maximising long term occupational prospects. Clare (Rec, PG) who described herself as a homemaker having previously been a biomedical scientist, maintained,

> *It's more about a coming of age than excelling in something nowadays. It's sad as I think we have devalued the idea of getting a job and working our way through it. I think that because everyone went to university it sort of devalues and increases the divide between top universities. Clare*

This was echoed by Carmen (Rec, WR), a graduate music producer, and Susan (Rec, RH), a graduate campaigns manager,

> *There's an assumption that everyone has to get a degree and we've lost sight of the pleasure of learning about things. We've turned it into a prescriptive, pleasureless thing. There was an expectation of mine that I had to go, the aspiring middle classes. A degree costs and I wonder if they are slightly devalued. What does it mean now, I depend what it's in, where it's from. We see people who are successful joiner, electrician and say what would a degree help with. I'd rather they find what they can do well and enjoy.*

> *We have some friends who are bright and educated and he has been a postman for many years because it makes him happy. I really don't mind what he does. I wouldn't want him to be vegetating in the flat playing computer games and not having some sense of anything. On the fantasy side I love his creativity, if he became a DJ or actor or writer that would be amazing as I know he would take to it well. I would like him to not do the same as my husband who is a software engineer. It wouldn't worry me if Frankie said he didn't want to go to university and do a degree.* Susan (Rec, RH)

These parents perceive the symbolic value of a degree as being diminished as they no longer provide an exclusive status as a stand-alone academic credential (Tomlinson, 2008). This is informed theoretically by the work of Bourdieu, in demonstrating a shifting in the symbolic markers of distinction in terms of cultural capital in order for the middle classes to maintain their position in terms of class structure by 'preserving the relative scarcity of their qualifications' within a global and commodified labour market (Bourdieu and Boltanski, 1979: 220). It has already been well documented in previous research (Bathmaker et al, 2013) that a degree is no longer perceived as a passport to success, and that to gain strategic advantage graduates need to activate additional capitals acquired. However, this requires more than making strategic actions but is dependent upon parents, or young people, being able to mobilise additional capital to support this (Bathmaker et al, 2013: 731).

Stephanie, a graduate brand manager, and Anna, school administrator who was previously an advertising manager, had also been discouraged of the benefits of higher education based upon their own occupational experiences within the advertising profession. Stephanie's view was also informed by her non-graduate partner's successful career trajectory and family experiences, and voiced her misgivings about the value of a degree unless it was vocational. Stephanie and Anna, both graduates from managerial backgrounds working for large employers in financial services, were unsure whether a degree had been beneficial to their career trajectories.

> *My husband didn't do the standard route but has been very successful. I think I would still have got work through the industrial route. I think things like accountancy are important, if she wanted to do that it would be okay…my sister has a law degree, never got her foot in the door, now works in a pub.* Stephanie (Rec, PG)

> *Did it help having a degree, I'm not sure? For children now, going into university, they come out with a high debt, unemployment in young people is very high. I don't know if it's as an appealing option as it was when it was my choice. If there's..was…an easier path that doesn't get you into debt.* Anna (Rec, WR)

This seems to correspond with the work of Tomlinson (2008), where students considered that the commodified and congested HE context does not necessarily lead to success in the labour market or reap rewards in terms of occupational trajectories. This emphasis on the value of a degree being dependent upon how much it offers a gateway to a valued profession or occupation is further evidenced by Stephanie qualifying her ambiguity by saying, *'I'd love him to go into academia, be an architect, or go into horticulture'.* This view was particularly prevalent amongst Rose Hill reception parents, with higher education, career trajectories and lifestyle intrinsically connected in being, as explained by Elizabeth, *'something that brought her some stability but we definitely hope she would go to university'*. Parents display an assumed successful trajectory to higher education if desired but are also thinking strategically regarding the connection between higher education and occupational trajectories (Irwin and Elley, 2011). There is no doubt that these parents are not just assessing the limitations of a degree in its own right, but in line with the research of Bathmaker et al, demonstrating a 'feel for the game' of children constructing employable selves (2013:740).

The connection between a *'good education'* and *'good at university'* in the following narrative, is in line with previous research by Ball (2003) in illustrating how parents are scaffolding future trajectories by assessing routes and preparing for the next stage or transition.

> *They need to do computer science or tech that will bode them well, speaking other languages will help them. They need an overall good education will need to do something good at university…It's a hard tough world out there.* Georgina (Rec, WR)

It was noticeable that non-graduates were the most positive regarding the benefits that higher education could bring, with Josephine (Rec, RH) admitting, '*I didn't go to uni and I'm biased to want him to go'.* Isobel (Yr6, WR), a successful glass artist, in a reaction to her own trajectory (Reay et al, 2013) reflected upon her husband's success as a celebrated music producer which she saw as an exception, calling upon his experiences in trying to make his way and that none of the rest of the family had achieved success.

> *It's the exceptions like Chris that looked around and said I want more, his siblings haven't been able to achieve that. Neither of us went to university but really wished we did, we accept we got there. Chris in particular did a string of terrible dirty, menial jobs, he could have had a much nicer time on the other road. Though you could argue that makes him who he is now, we don't want to see our girls working in a factory.*

As a result of her own biographical history, whilst aware that graduate families she knew were giving mixed messages about the value of university, Isobel had taken a very assured stance towards the benefits of higher education, and her role as a parent in supporting this. Although she had an awareness of its connection to career pathways, she saw its benefits as more as experience and opportunity. Her view was also informed by a reaction (Reay et al, 2013) against intergenerational biographies of both her and her husband, in having had a lack of support from their own families in supporting attitudes and trajectories to education,

> *Chris and I both come from working class backgrounds. Chris had nothing at all, his parents had no interest in his education and he feels let down…why weren't you* (parents) *wondering where I was, here's your revision timetable etc. A lot of our friends are saying if you don't want to go to university that's fine and you must do what you like, we are not saying that…we are a bit different in that way, we have said to the girls we would really like you to go to university because we would like you to*

> *have that experience. If you work in a Coop, you're not going to have something to comparable to what you grew up with, too we want to support them to achieve that.*

Patience (Yr6, RH), a MSc software engineer reflected upon the reasoning she provided to her son, whose passion was to be a professional footballer. She explained how having a degree can provide choices in potentially supporting you in pursuing more precarious options whilst still offering some future security:

> *You can get a degree in science and engineering and you will have well paid work, quite easily without having to do anything too dramatic…. With plan A being a pro footballer your plan b is pretty poor. If your plan A is medicine and you get the grades your plan b is more promising, you've got back up.*

Although the recurring theme of choice within parental narratives is heavily dependent upon individual perceptions, as informed by Ball et al (2002), it is suggested that choice and higher education is a pivotal arena of tension surrounding social reproduction through which middle class families attempt to maintain their social status and lifestyles. Parents understand that navigating the future labour market successfully for their children will be much more complex than sole possession of university credentials (Tomlinson, 2008).

The right university and the right degree

Accessing a Russell Group university to maintain access to lifestyle and salary within a shifting job market and global perspective was high on the agenda, particularly by parents with postgraduate qualifications with Grace (Rec, WR) proposing, '*Most employers just want to know you have a good degree from a good uni. They like it for the creativity'.* This view is corroborated by research suggesting that with the uncertainty and congestion of the labour market, qualifications from elite universities act as occupational competence and a sign of overall ability, subsequently acting as 'transportable credentials' which can be passed from one employer to another (Power et al, 2003: 117). Elizabeth (Rec, RH), a psychologist with a doctorate from a family context where both maternal and paternal fathers were university professors, explained her perspective informed by her insider knowledge in working for a prestigious university.

> *So…and you work in a Russell Group university where they are, you know, they are valuing the degrees for foreign, for overseas students, you know, and there is an inherent value based on what you are then equipped to do and earn and it will be which university, so yeah, a Russell Group university.*

It was not surprising, in line with previous research, that university preferences were class aligned with parents who particularly voiced preferences for Russell Group universities all in N-SEC categories 1.1 or 1.2 (Ball et al, 2002). The implications of attending a 'good university' was reinforced by research by Ball (2002), where high paying law firms still gave preference to those graduates with 'good' degrees from 'good universities' and middle class parents are not eager for their offspring to attend a university which was an ex-polytechnic (Bowers-Brown et al, 2017). Interestingly, previous literature illustrated how prestige rankings matched those students with families who had previously 'used' universities (Power et al, 2003: 87). It is significant that recent research by Friedman and Laurison (2019) suggested that even when working class students attend leading universities and achieve the highest grades, they still are not recruited to elite occupations.

What was noteworthy was the additional emphasis upon the choice of a *'valuable subject'* placed by parents. This was clearly a strongly held point of view within Elizabeth's family, with Elizabeth adding that they would have to *'negotiate'* if her daughter chose a subject *'not as valuable'*. However, alongside these clear preferences, higher educational trajectories were certainly within normalised family expectations (Irwin and Elley, 2010).

> *I think we both hope, I mean we both have a PhD, we've both kind of done that. And we value education as a…something. I certainly hope she would choose to go to university just because it's fun, more than anything. But after that I mean I don't particularly have aspirations for her to be, to do postgraduate work or one thing and another, of course I would be thrilled if she ended up as a lawyer or a doctor or some, you know…career.*

Elizabeth's partner, Colin, also with a PhD in medical research, interjected into the conversation at this point emphatically stating,

> *No it's not just your….statistics are…you know, a couple of years ago coming out and saying people aren't getting jobs in certain degrees whereas if you do Physics or something then it's hot you know. There is an inherent value and if we are paying for it, to be perfectly harsh about it, I don't want to piss money up the wall is the phrase. Get value for money and the value for money is that she's going to get a good job at the end of it.*

Colin's response can be further theorised as a result of the 'commodification' of the higher education market, with the associated tuition fees and altered funding processes, where graduates might struggle to reap a reward on their parents' investment, and the overarching factor of higher education being *'good value'* and *'a door opener'* was again echoed by Elizabeth later in the exchange (Brown et al, 2008; Tomlinson et al, 2008).

Although recent research has documented how the status of the university attended is universally important to middle class parents (Bathmaker et al, 2011), a proportion of parents equally stressed the importance of the course studied. Reception parents in Pine Grove were particularly scornful of the status of some degrees, which they felt had devalued the qualification, *'it's not what it was now you can get a degree in wine tasting'.*

Clare, biomedical scientist, reflected on how her own choice of university subject was underpinned totally by career orientations and not subject interest. She expressed doubt about the value of a degree unless it was career orientated,

> *I think because I didn't want to go to uni to do a degree that wasn't job related or had no purpose. I would have done a geography degree but couldn't see where that would lead. I'm not sure uni is the only way forward, I'd be surprised if they didn't both go though and make me bankrupt!*

In the quotations below, Elizabeth and Tina were particularly pessimistic about the worth of sociology as a degree subject choice. Tina, a fundraiser with an MSc, recalled her mother's comments related to the choice of sociology as a subject. It is of interest that the perceived low value of sociology voiced by these parents is contradictory to its inclusion by Ehenreich (1989) as one of the familiar middle class scientific disciplines, with the subject now perceived as giving weak financial return and limited entry to elite occupations.

> *If she came to me and said 'I want to do a degree in sociology', like ok, great but have you thought about the future? There is an inherent value in what you are then equipped to do and earn.* Elizabeth (Rec, RH)

> *… and my mother just went, "Oh God, not one of those ologies, that means you won't be able to get a job at the end". And do you know, she wasn't necessarily wrong because it's not like, I'm not a sociologist….Whereas my husband is probably, because he came from a private school background that was more driven at specific, he would probably rather say doctor, lawyer you know…Do this and have this so that, but meaning so that I know you will be OK. Yeah, so we, but, well it remains to be seen how that will pan out.* Tina (Rec, WR)

What is significant in the findings of this thesis is how most parents are still very keen for their children to undertake a university education, even though many admit that it may not provide the taken for granted advantage they hoped for their child, as explained by Elizabeth,

> *It's a door opener and just such a fantastic experience so I'd like her to go and get good value out of it.*

In the above quotation it is significant that the tensions created by the diminished value of the degree are reconciled by a focus upon the value of opportunities and advantages it may bring through social positioning. It is interesting that this view is reflected in the current rhetoric of university policy where, with the student as the consumer, the student experience is a central concern in higher education institutions and deemed pivotal to an institution's success.

In summary, the parental viewpoints particularly espoused by parents with post graduate parents from high status NSEC categories, corresponds with prior research which linked highly defined aspirations towards higher education more to socio-economic status from cultural than organisational factors (Power et al, 2003). This is theoretically informed by the study led by Ball which proposed that higher educational choices are based upon diverse biographies and relationships between personal and institutional habitus, attainment and positions which are situated within distinctive structures of opportunity (Ball et al, 2002). These narratives signify that, for these parents, occupational trajectories need to be not only based upon worth or professional reward, but equally aligned to the financial rewards they might bring. This trend was first identified by Ehenreich (1989), who predicted a growing dependence of the middle classes upon financial reward within occupations, as a cost of heightened consumption and commodification.

Higher education and entitlement

In spite of the suspicion of some parents regarding new universities and some contemporary subjects, easy access to a good university was mostly assumed, with some evidence that children were already reflecting these aspirations and values in their own narratives. For some parents, these positive attitudes to learning and expectations were embedded implicitly within their family habitus to such an extent that they existed as an unspoken understanding between parents and children, with Janet and Alan, both working in the educational field, explaining respectively *'it's in our DNA'* and *'we have unstated academic expectations'*. This insight is reinforced by Caroline and Clare, Year 6 and Reception parents at Rose Hill and Wood Rise respectively, explaining, *'I come from a background educationally where it's something you are working towards'* and *'we place high emphasis on education , my grandfather went to Cambridge on a scholarship'.* Amanda (Yr6, WR) explained the influence of her own family context in terms of inter-generational expectations,

> *It's like the opposite of families where you are the first person to go, you know. Like, my father is a university, well he is retired, but he was like a professor and my uncle was a university lecturer and my other uncle is, so we are a very…my grandfather was a headteacher.*

Reinforced theoretically by the findings of Irwin and Elley (2010), intergenerational educational trajectories are normalised as routine within these families. Caroline (Yr6, WR) reflected upon how their own family influences had impacted upon this assumption which they had passed down to their own children,

> *I don't even remember questioning if I was going to university. My mum didn't and said she would have liked to do more study but couldn't. My dad did and he was ..he came from not a really poor background but quite a poor background and he was obviously bright. He then paid for us to go to private school and we did well and there was always an assumption in that school that you would go onto university. It was just assumed. I think I pass that onto my children. I assume that you will go ..apply to university…unless there is something else that so obviously seems to be what they need to do instead or if they said I really don't feel I can cope with it of course I would not force them to. Definitely mine and Desmond's background makes a big assumption you will do some A levels and pop off to university.* Caroline (PhD: Yr6, WR)

Tina and Joanna, Wood Rise first generation graduates, explained how it was an assumption that their children would pursue higher education,

> *We've had this conversation. It's quite funny because I came from a working class background where my parents didn't go to university and I was out of both sides of my family the first of my generation to go to university and it was never, for me it was never a question, it was just an assumption that actually education didn't end until you finish university. It was just a given that I was going to go on and do that. And if you ask my husband he would say without question our 3 children are going to university, there is no question about that. And I think coming from our home, it, it, yeah, it will be just sort of fed into their sort of consciousness that it's just, it's an assumption that actually education doesn't end at 18. I mean we, we didn't.* Tina

> *I mean, I am the first person and still one of the only people in my extended family to go to university, it's just not what we do. And I mean even that is strange because even though I was the first person to go to university I find it quite hard to imagine a different path through life for her now, than go to university.* Joanna

For these parents the transition to higher education is seen as a natural and expected rite of passage (Power et al, 2003). Drawing upon the work of Harrison and Waller (2018), it is significant that these narratives of assumed higher educational entry are very much based upon expectations which are aligned with and internalised and externalised by parents as achievable, not just anticipated future aspirations. It is evident that the aspirational identities of these young people, illustrated in the excerpts below, are also grounded in realistic expectations and moulded by the normative and taken for granted expectations of adults they engage with (Harrison and Waller, 2018)

> *She (child) expects herself to go to university and has for years. She sounds a bit grandiose if you ask her what she wants to be when she grows up, she will say a world famous neuroscientist. So she, she's been desperate to go to university forever just because she thinks that's what you do.* Joanna (Yr6, WR)

> *We have both got master degrees. Both our parents went to university. I want them to do whatever makes them happy, but there's an inbuilt assumption that they will go. I talk about it without asking them about what they want to do. They have never challenged it.* Grace (Rec, WR)

The reinforcement over time of family habitus, mutually understood unconsciously as explained by Grace, results in an 'evolved academic identity' whereby children identify with a future which is underpinned by a trajectory to higher education (Winterton and Irwin, 2012: 864). Trudy, a teaching assistant and single parent, had equally high aspirations for her children and felt strongly in supporting them in following their long term futures as illustrated in the excerpt below,

> *You've got the rest of your life to learn whatever you want to, just because you haven't achieved what you want to do now doesn't mean you won't later. If you've got confidence and a dream and you believe in that dream, you can do anything you want! I failed all my GCSE's like Theo (Trudy's oldest son). I told him it's not a problem, I'm not going to think less of you, you're going to shine in another area, you may not be academic but you might be great at something else. (You need to) encourage them with whatever else they are going to shine at, not what you want them to do, other parents push their regret onto their children.*

Trudy's emphasis upon resilience and stamina reflects the findings of Gillies (2008), in that families from lower socio-economic contexts aim to pass on skills of endurance rather than advantage and a feeling of entitlement. The emphasis Trudy places upon aspiration and achievement replicates the findings of recent studies where attainment, and not low aspiration, was the major factor in lack of higher educational participation amongst lower social economic groups (Harrison and Waller, 2018; Menzies, 2013). In fact, research has suggested that aspirations alone play a limited role alone in predicting life outcomes (Green et al, 2018). As she explains, Trudy does not have normative family narrative to call upon regarding educational attainment. Even though she might wish for her children to achieve academically, her own biography has resulted in what has been described as a ‘weak familial framing of educational expectations’ (Winterton and Irwin, 2012: 872).

A few postgraduate Reception parents felt they had been pressurised into university entrance so were planning for change, with Susan (Rec, RH) explaining *‘because my dad was so hot on academia and everything I am rebelling a little bit later for it’*. Some Reception parents were also actively planning for change as a reaction to their own experiences of pressure put upon them in terms of academic trajectories, especially subject choice at university, as exemplified by Carole and Stephanie’s reflections,

> *Inevitably it has a massive role. I took traditional subjects under quite a lot of pressure from my dad, despite wanting to do other subjects. That’s probably what’s driven me to say my children can do whatever subjects they like and I'm not going to pressurise them. Maybe it will push me too far in the other direction and I’ll let them blunder into silly choices. I don't know. No, I think my dad really wanted me to go into science. He was a professor of Virology, that’s what he wanted.* Carole (Rec, RH)

> *I think it’s just up to her and what she wants to do. Despite having 10 million degrees I think there’s not any point in going down that route unless the end job is what you want and what suits you. There are plenty of careers out there that don't need a degree and if that’s what you want or where your talent lies I wouldn’t get a degree. They are expensive now. I don't have a set aspiration of university and this kind of career or job, you have to follow what you are good at. My parents were all about university, academic subjects and just get a job and you can do the things you like in your spare time. I think that’s a terrible way to choose what you’re going to do.* Stephanie (Rec, PG)

Josephine, whose father had forced her to seek employment at an early age in order to maintain independence, was also planning reacting (Reay et al, 2013) against her own family experiences and already setting up an account for her son in order to support him financially at university,

> *My dad was quite extreme. My dad made me get a job at 15 but it was all relative…My dad was a company director, self-made man, probably dyslexic past 11 plus but he was a barrel boy and became a company director. My mum was a hairdresser but was adamant we didn't follow into that and education was important to her. Had I been a boy I think there would of been more of a pull as of what of been best for us. My dad pushed us out the nest to gain our independence, our mum wanted*

us to stay in education and do more. I want Simon to be able to have that. I don't want him to have to deal with that. Josephine (Rec, RH)

The above quotations illustrate how some parents expressed their desire to avoid certain features of their own upbringing in terms of higher educational and career routes, which is corroborated by Reay et al (2013) whose study also underlined how respondents were actively reacting against their own family habitus. The role of internalised emotion was apparent within parental narratives, demonstrating the affect upon habitus when it is challenged the light of graduated negative personal and family experiences, as echoed by Reay et al (2013). This corresponds theoretically with Bourdieu in that habitus, whilst reflecting the social position in which it was formed, can be either reinforced or modified as a result of experiences and act as a creative and innovative catalyst for new and original ways of transforming the social circumstances in which it was created (Bourdieu and Waquant, 1992). Bourdieu saw habitus as purely 'one modality of action' and it is proposed that parents are reflexively assessing shortcomings and advantages and transforming intergenerational habitus through 'rational choice' (Bourdieu and Waquant, 1992: 131).

Conclusions

In summation, the findings of this thesis have illuminated the fluid positioning of parents in their defensive stance towards higher education where, although university entrance is assumed in terms of access for their children if required, there is a diminished perception of the value of a degree as a pathway to a financially rewarding elite occupation. Amidst increasing competition between graduates for elite jobs, nationally and internationally, parents are attempting to keep ahead of the game and pursue the best options at the time, and 'know how to read the system' (Power et al, 2003: 83). Many parents are still alluding to a university education in seeing it as securing distinction through cultural capital acquisition, for example through opportunity provision, enrichment activities, social networking and positioning. Postgraduate parents in higher social groupings particularly place emphasis upon both subject and status of a university, with vocational degrees seen as a preferred option by Pine Grove parents. However, long term aspirations are influenced by parental past and present contexts, with parents reacting towards or recreating children's potential trajectories as a result of their own personal biographies (Reay et al, 2013). It is evident that navigating entry to higher education and elite occupations requires not only large amounts of social capital, but mobilisation of large stocks of both economic and cultural capital. It is proposed that through the model of proactive parenting, the operational development of desirable dispositions is built upon from early years through to undergraduate and occupational trajectories to provide young people with a cultural competency widely recognised by employers and elite organisations as a marker of value and of distinction.

University academic credentials need to be accompanied by cultural competence in mastering recognised behavioural codes valued by elite professions and organisations and the mobilisation of additional personal capital. The transformative desirable dispositions explicitly referred to by both Reception and Year 6 parents provide a structural foundation for these competencies in terms of habitus, featuring an implied shift in the doxa of schooling away from the knowledge economy.

Chapter Eight: Conclusions

In this final chapter I return to the research questions which underpin this research and outline the key findings. I discuss key issues emerging from the qualitative data, and draw upon theoretical and methodological aspects of the research. Finally, I address implications for policy development and practice and make recommendations for development of research emerging from the findings of this thesis.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to engage with parents with children at points of transmission within primary education in order to examine their aspirations regarding children's futurity, and how they might relate to their own biographies, parenting practices and elective belonging to neighbourhood. The study was premised on the belief that the family is a habitus generating institution so therefore parents are best placed to offer a unique and valuable insight into the current workings of social structure and the fluid nature of contemporary change (Savage, 2003; Butler and Robson, 2003).

The fieldwork for this study was conducted over a course of two years within three primary school settings in a second tier city located in the south west of England. The research was theoretically underpinned by Bourdieu's conception of knowledge, with a particular focus on the fields of employment, housing, consumption and education.

The research questions addressed in this study were:

1. What are the aspirations of middle-class parents across contrasting locales and how are they mediated through elective belonging to neighbourhood and school choice?
2. In what way do middle class parenting practices transmit advantage and does emphasis shift at times of educational transition?

3. What is the connection between long term aspirations of middle class parents and higher educational or occupational trajectories?

Contribution to knowledge

Within this section I seek to elicit and discuss the contribution I believe this empirical study makes to knowledge in the field. This thesis makes a particular contribution to knowledge in the following three areas which were identified in the introduction to this thesis:

Elective belonging of middle class families

The findings of this thesis has documented the interconnection between location and schooling for Wood Rise and Rose Hill parents, characterised by a strong and emotional sense of elective belonging where residential space is a key sphere to which parents demarcate their social status. The previous discussion chapters have highlighted how choice of housing, elective belonging to neighbourhood and school choice is intrinsically connected to the emotional attachment to place for many parents, particularly those living within the Wood Rise catchment. It is claimed that the powerful sense of community felt by these parents is based on far more than geographical location, but within a strong identity of belonging connected to social networks, shared values and understanding. Configurations of consumption through social and spatial interactions are symbolically framed. This corroborates with the previous research in terms of perceptions of homogeneity (Savage et al, 2001). Parents wish to create a community underpinned by their particular values, biography, aspirations and resources, with parenting seen as a social practice, validated by other social group members within the community holding familiar embedded parenting beliefs.

It was significant that Pine Grove parent's perceptions of elective belonging highlighted clear contrasts between urban and suburban neighbourhoods. Pine Grove respondents, although recognising neighbours were at differing stages of their lives, still cited the benefits of living in an area with similar middle class inhabitants. However, in contradiction to urban respondents they had considered an amalgamation of criteria when selecting the neighbourhood, and within narratives these features included both instrumental factors and symbolic reference alluded to also by Savage et al (2003).

Many of the respondents living in urban areas of gentrification welcomed the social mix in the neighbourhood and school which was seen as providing cultural competence to children and key skills required within the global world. There was evidence that middle class parents in Wood Rise and Rose Hill engaged with the idea of inclusion and engaging with other cultural and socio-economic groups although this was not always actualised in reality with some parental narratives suggesting limited social mixing with those from lower socio-economic groups, such as tradespeople. Diversity of school catchment areas and commitment to comprehensive schools is much more complicated for Wood Rise parents, in agreement with previous research, in that they find their search for the best for their children at odds with their egalitarian beliefs (Reay et al, 2008). Even though secondary school transition was conducted over a wider geographical area, it was significant that choice of school relied upon the knowledge gained from social capital acquired through elective belonging in that particular location. In resonance with other research, there is significant social positioning demonstrated by parents in buying a house in a desirable neighbourhood which also provides catchment to desirable primary and secondary schools, in some cases well before children are born. It is significant that territoriality is explicitly connected to social relationships and living in a demographic area marked by symbolic boundaries, with locational habitus functioning as a structuring devise mediated through parenting practices, educational institutions and family socialisation.

Through deconstructing discourses of parents from urban areas it was noticeable that although many cited active engagement with school associations and activities with other parents, these were centred on activities pursued by other middle class parents, such as socials in wine bars, with little evidence of parents deploying resources to benefit the neighbourhood in a wider sense (Butler and Robson, 2003). Social capital in the form of social networks within the neighbourhood provide support for parents, evidenced through narratives regarding substitute family, although it is also drawn upon more explicitly during points of transmission such as the first point of entry to primary school and secondary school entrance, as corroborated by previous research by Power et al (2003).

These findings help to explain how interconnection between school and home results in an abundance of social capital which is often mediated through children. It is clear that the template for happiness which some parents at Wood Rise and Rose Hill outline for their children requires not only copious social capital, but large stocks of both economic and cultural capital to both provide entry and for the subsequent navigation of higher educational and career trajectories. However, this accepted form of parenting excludes those who do not have access the economic, cultural and symbolic capital to practice this form of childrearing. This can be seen as a form of symbolic violence, also reflected by professional parents in the Spanish context (Collette-Sabe and Tort, 2015), when parents cannot mobilise the economic, cultural and social capital on which the model of proactive parenting is dependent.

Previous research has primarily focused on the perceptions of middle classes and their identity formation in terms of gentrification and social tectonics in urban areas (Butler and Robson, 2001, 2003; Jackson and Butler, 2014). Even though there were limited respondents from lower socio-economic and cultural groups within this study, for those parents living ‘on the other side of the road’ in Wood Rise there was some indication of feelings of spatial exclusion felt by those whose habitus did not reflect those of the dominant middle class group. With limited engagement between the dominant habitus and field, these parents were also excluded from the dominant cultural and social pursuits, instead inhabiting and triangulating those fields in which they felt more comfortable. The doxa of the dominant middle class groups in perpetuating an ‘uncontested acceptance of the lifeworld’ (Butler and Waquant, 1992: 73) results in segregation both socially and spatially of those parents from alternative family contexts.

Finally, this study suggests that the process of gentrification in this core city is underpinned by differing features to those identified in earlier research (Butler, 2002). Butler contended that urban gentrification of second tier cities was based upon either a 24/7 night time economy or consumption culture in a significantly different way than London. This thesis contends that parental narratives of elective belonging suggest this is no longer the case and that parental narratives provide evidence of how gentrification in these urban areas is now founded upon its development as a middle class global city, reinforced by cultural associations in a similar way to London (Butler, 2002).

Parenting practices and desirable dispositions

A significant outcome in this study was the importance put by parents on the acquisition of desirable dispositions. It is already well documented that non-cognitive skills (NCS) can be seen as human capital and a variety of studies have highlighted how proactive parenting facilitates the development of children as flexible, resourceful and self-confident learners. Previous research has already highlighted how having a mastery disposition to learning is advantageous to educational attainment and the EPPSE study has already identified key ‘masterful learning dispositions’, such as resilience and self-regulation, which are pivotal to children’s academic attainment (Siraj-Blatchford et al, 2011: 7; Siraj-Blatchford et al, 2004; Dweck, 1999). However, this thesis contends that the reproduction of desirable dispositions identified in this study is more than developing mastery orientation in terms of effort and strategy, but act as structuring dispositions and a mechanism for social, cultural and economic reproduction (Gutman and Schoon, 2013). By being transformative, parents can facilitate development of particular dispositions to provide advantage not only at key points of transition in schooling, but which can be continually revised and reformed to provide advantage in higher educational and occupational trajectories

This is a model of managed reproduction where parents are negotiating constantly those skills which might be most advantageous within the changing landscape and thus maintain distinction in relation to cultural practices (Riddell, 2010). This research contends that, as consistent with Ball's findings, even though middle class families seem advantaged there is an acknowledgement of the necessity for proactive yet flexible parenting and 'a constant interplay between risk and control' (Ball, 2003: 266). Using a 'reflexive' or 'do it yourself' biography ensures success, in that long term planning for children's futures can be adapted and utilised as a preventative strategy to minimise levels of risk (Beck-Gernsheim, 1996: 25). Parental emphasis on the development of these desirable dispositions, where the individual is seen as the 'centre of action', demonstrates the process of individualisation within social groupings with, as consistent with the conclusion of this research, this interpretation of self intrinsically connected to and advantaged by capital, resources, elective belonging, class and group identity (Beck, 1992: 135).

For many parents in the study, the development of desirable dispositions is interconnected with social networks and elective belonging to neighbourhood where those social attributes are validated by other social group members holding familiar embedded parenting beliefs, who employ parenting practices which are based on knowledge gained from these familiar experiences and values (Giddens, 1984). This habitus consists of a set of learnt dispositions, which act as a 'structuring mechanism' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992:18), formed through social experiences in family, community and work place, where behaviours and aspirations are normalised and reinforced by similar narratives used by people similar to themselves in mutually recognised social situations (Riddell, 2010).

This research contends that through the concerted cultivation of these desirable dispositions, children and young people may well have clear advantage in ‘making yourself different’, publicising their numerous talents and developing the ability to perceive themselves as a subject, with the ability to sustain and develop this individual narrative (Ball, 2004:153; Giddens, 1991; Raco, 2009). This will provide young people with cultural competencies to provide advantage within the increasingly globalised and competitive world in which they will be seeking future employment, and where performance based behaviour competencies such as empathy, initiative, problem solving and resilience are valued (Brown et al, 2008; Friedman and Laurison, 2019; Vincent and Ball, 2006). This in turn will equip them with the ‘social magic’ based upon values, tastes, language and behaviours most likely to be recognised as a marker of ability and talent to provide entry to elite organisations (Ingram and Allen, 2018; Friedman and Laurison, 2019).

Parental perceptions regarding higher education and futurity

Significantly, parental responses endorse a changing perception of middle class and graduate families towards further education and career trajectories from that advocated by Ball (1995), with fewer parents assuming that university credentials alone will ensure advantaged trajectories to employment and futurity. This ambiguity is accentuated by high tuition fees, student loans and uncertainty arising from the economic recession in the UK, Europe and US (Devine, 2004; Ward and Eden, 2009). The expansion and marketisation of higher education means that it is no longer automatic to maintain class position through the distinction of a first university degree. It is almost certain that the newly elected Conservative government of 2019 will endorse a continued commitment to market competition in higher education. The importance demonstrated by Wood Rise and Rose Hill parents in both entry to Russell Group universities and the usefulness of subject choice in securing a return in investments is likely to intensify inequality. This outcome has already been forecast in the findings of the Paired Peers project (Bathmaker et al, 2013), with Bowers-Brown et al (2017) also predicting a hierarchical future for higher education depicted by an over representation of middle class students at elite universities.

The 'implied homogeneity' and sense of entitlement of assumed university entrance, if required, of the majority of parents is consistent with previous findings by Power et al (2003:81). Although parents show ambiguity towards the value of a first degree itself, few of the parents are prepared to take 'a leap of faith' in terms of negotiating a different trajectory to university entrance. My findings illustrate that many parents recognise that university entrance is no longer going to be enough (Power et al, 2003: 96), and are seeking additional and accompanying assets which will provide distinction. The Paired Peers project illustrated that, in the knowledge that a degree will no longer be enough, university students are already engaged in mobilising additional capitals beyond the formal curriculum, for example through extra-curricular activities and internships (Bathmaker et al, 2013). However, it is contended in this thesis that through the provision of extra-curricular and experiential activities many parents are constructing their children's employable self in terms of personal capital acquisition long before university entry with the relationship between social networks, elective belonging and desirable dispositions powerfully interconnected.

In conclusion, whilst many parents are clear about what they do not wish to reproduce, they are aware that financial models of reproduction alone, based on economic capital, are failing. In mitigating risk in an unknown future parents are planning ahead in a reflexive way, continuously monitoring children's lives, in both circumstances and activities, within a cycle of thought and action (Giddens, 1991; 1990; Amosford, 2002). A feature of individualisation is constantly reflecting upon the variables and choices within the environment, and this is just what many parents are doing in order to maximise options to secure the advantageous course of action at the time given the uncertainty of higher education, the labour market and entry to elite professions (Beck with Beck-Gernsheim, 1995; Amosford, 2002). Although university entrance is normalized as routine, this is dependent upon large stocks of symbolic capital to navigate higher educational and occupational trajectories. This will continue to have negative impact upon those from lower socio-economic groups unable to mobilise the capitals upon which proactive parenting is dependant, and where the expansion of university education reflects a higher educational model of individualism dependent upon market forces.

Theoretical Implications

The theoretical framework for this study drew heavily upon Bourdieu’s theory of reproduction in order to understand and critique parental narratives and examine family practices. Although parental narratives and explanations were made up of individual experiences and values, it was through comparative analysis that the workings of social reproduction were revealed. The interplay between family and locational habitus was significant, in connecting parenting practices to capital and the field in which it is realised (Quaye, 2014). Bourdieu’s conceptual framework particularly provided a useful tool in uncovering the nature of distinction, whereby some parent groups, in realising the diminishing distinctive power of a university degree as a stand-alone credential, alongside the uncertainty of the future labour market, were pursuing other ways of utilising the same goods to maintain distinction (Bourdieu, 1984).

The power of social capital has been revealed in the way it is intrinsically connected to locational habitus where values and attitudes are embodied, in being recognised and activated symbolically by others within the same middle class group within the spatial field. In being recognised as valuable within the urban village community, it is the recognition of the value and potential for exchange within the field that perpetuates the doxa of accepted values and norms recognised as an acceptance (Bourdieu, 1987). It is important to view how the mobilisation of cultural capital in an incorporated embodied form by many middle class parents in the urban village, through social and leisure pursuits centred upon the children and school, becomes powerful within its symbolic form (Bourdieu, 1986; Serre and Wagner, 2015). These embodied capitals are gathered over time, are thus recognised and displayed as the structuring habitus (Bourdieu and Waquant, 1992). The active and fluid engagement of parents in terms of parenting practices, school choice and attitudes to higher education reflect how the education system underpins a managed model of cultural and social class reproduction (Riddell, 2010).

The majority of respondents in this study were mothers and it is significant that parental narratives contain much reference to emotional investment in the responsibility to love and care for their children (Obrien, 2008). However, what is critical to the consideration of emotional capital mobilised by many respondents is how the activation of emotional capital is connected to the economic, social and cultural fields with capitals intertwined in terms the transfer of advantage (Reay, 1998; Allatt, 1993). Respondents who in the findings of this study have a level of autonomy in their occupation and residential contexts, described as privatised mothering by Elliot et al (2015), have an abundance of capitals to not only care for their own children but also maintain their own emotional energies (Obrien, 2008).

In conclusion, the use of Bourdieu’s theoretical framework in comparison with previous study regarding elective belonging and gentrification in the London metropolis was a pivotal tool in structuring this research (Butler and Robson, 2003; Savage et al, 2005). It was particularly useful in acknowledging the impact of habitus on notions of space, identity and belonging on people’s lives and the interplay of locational, social and family habitus.

Methodological Issues

This study represents only one of a series of studies related to parental parenting, aspiration and elective belonging. However, in being compatible with previous qualitative research on gentrification and elective belonging (Savage et al, 2005; Butler and Robson, 2003), it is proposed that it can build upon and offer additional insight to the area of study.

This research utilised a qualitative approach, mainly through semi structure interviews and with biographical data employed to provide a contextual perspective and triangulation. It may be that the fact that the researcher was already known to year 6 Wood Rise parents positively impacted upon the richness of the data, particularly in terms of the honest and open discussion regarding secondary school choice. However, it must be acknowledged that this research is contextually specific. Although the evidence from findings allows me to make the case for factors in relation to parenting styles and advantage within a second tier city, as the data relates to a small group of parents within specific locations and schools within one city I cannot make generalised claims beyond the evidence from this thesis (Friedman and Laurison, 2019). However, as Charmaz concludes,

> *Claims of value neutrality may mask the implications of the knowledge we produce, whether significant or trivial. Knowledge is not neutral, nor are we separate from its production or the world.* (2014: 340).

Whilst parents were recruited through letter sanctioned by the school, the respondents were from similar socio-economic and cultural contexts. In engaging with future research I would need to review the ways parents were approached, reassess the best types of recruitment methods in order to gain a wider spread, particularly in engaging the voices of parents from different contexts. Within the parameters of this research I have also not engaged with the migration of working class populations within the gentrified areas studied and the factors which might underpin this demographic change (Butler and Robson, 2003).

Although the researcher is aligned to socio constructivist methodology and has been duly acknowledged, it is important to note that this has resulted in the analysis and dissemination of research data is through my own interpretations (Charmaz, 2014).
Although as far as possible I have been led by the voices of parents interviewed, I also acknowledge the ethical dilemma of interpreting narratives theoretically for academic dissemination and debate. Following the advice of Charmaz (2014), I have tried to avoid over generalisations through a continual process of re-thinking, revising and referring back to the data from inception through to completion of the thesis and thus keeping my qualitative analysis pragmatic, fluid and open-ended and avoid making face value assumptions.

Implications for Practice

The need for a change of policies and to a more equitable system has been well-documented, and within this thesis it is essential to acknowledge the role that educational policy, the state and schools play in perpetuating inequality and social exclusion. The marketisation which underpins educational policies has meant that middle class parents are even more diligent in mitigating risk for their children and managed models of social reproduction to mobilise social, cultural and economic capital. There were clear factors related to inequality arising from the findings and I have outlined some areas for policy and practice development. Some of these areas have already been documented, although I hope my findings will re-inforce the need for change and bring a new perspective to the debate:

- Curriculum
- Extra-curricular activities
- Aspiration and parents

Curriculum

There are clear implications to these findings in terms of the curriculum of the future which we should be implementing for all children (Partovi, 2018). Some secondary schools are already engaging young people in discussion related to skills which might be useful to them in their future lives, although there needs to be explicit focus on the whole child and the acquisition of non-cognitive skills in schools, for example the dispositions of problem-solving, creative thinking and collaboration (Partovi, 2018; Garcia, 2014; Gutman and Schoon, 2013).

As illustrated by the findings of this study, the development of soft skills is dynamic, and investment needs to be made in their acquisition from early years onwards (Waller and Harrison, 2018). Recent government initiatives and the revisions in the English national curriculum have promoted a didactic two tier curriculum, where spoken language and dialogic learning is undervalued (Alexander, 2012). Many middle class parents within this study highlighted how their parenting practices was marked by concerted cultivation, accompanied by the feature of children not only entering in continual discourse within their family life, but engaged in dialogue with adults as equals (Lareau, 2003, 2006, 2007). We need to acknowledge the advantage that concerted cultivation gives to children within our current education system and address how recent initiatives in schools, such as the current trend for no-speaking policies in order to maintain discipline, might impact negatively in perpetuating an education system for some of the children in state schools but not all of them (Alexander, 2012; Parkinson, 2018). Perhaps we need to embrace initiatives similar to those trialed in the USA in respect of equipping students with the mindset of academic tenacity, whereby students are encouraged to make links between their own learning, consider what their future self might look like to engage in long terms goals, with belonging to school promoted and students supported to reflect upon their life skill development (Dweck et al, 2014). With many recent curriculum innovations linked to a prescriptive curriculum, pedagogy needs to embrace autonomy of students as communities of learners in order to promote resilience, opportunity and personal challenge which is meaningful.

Extra-curricular activities

With the normalisation of childrearing practices based upon proactive parenting, it is evident from parental narratives in this study how parents are supporting their children to achieve in a range of areas by providing not only academic but non-academic areas, such as experiential activities and paying for extra-curricular lessons as a strategic response to making up of the child as a life project (Vincent and Ball, 2007). Within parental narratives Trudy was explicit in wanting her children to engage in extra-curricular activities and it was clear that lack of participation was due to structural aspects and not class culture (Bennett et al, 2012). Research situated in the USA has documented the positive impact of schools providing free and low cost activities to support closing the gap in activity participation (Bennett et al, 2013). Evidence of this provision in the UK has already been demonstrated in previous national gifted and talented policies (Riddell, 2010), but also on a local level with cluster group schools collaborating to share specialist expertise and facilities, providing enrichment activities for gifted and talented children. This proposal is in line with the findings of the EPPSE study, which suggested that children would benefit if parents were able to more fully engage in 'active cultivation' through non-formal learning activities through 'active cultivation' if they had the resources (Siraj-Blatchford et al, 2011: ii). Certainly, there is huge potential for schools to set up embedded initiatives providing a wide range of extra-curricular experiences, although to achieve this on a wider and more sustained scale will require the bravery to 'restructure institutional systems of education' (Brice-Heath, 1983: 359). This will require more than inspecting schools against how they support cultural capital acquisition through provision of museum and theatre trips (OFSTED, 2019; Mansell, 2019).

There are also clearly missed opportunities in going beyond schools in collaborating with local community organisations in the provision of enrichment activities. It is surprising how few teachers in primary and secondary schools are aware of children attending supplementary schools regularly, often on a daily basis. Although there are some initiatives initiated by The National Resource Centre for Supplementary Education (NRCSE), particularly in London, this seems a particularly underdeveloped resource (2014).

Aspiration and parents

For many years there has been a succession of research studies indicating that schools need to re-evaluate their interpretation of aspiration, and ensure that it is relevant to the lives of children in all socio-economic groups (Strand and Winston, 2008, Brice-Heath, 1983). It was noticeable how some parent had circumnavigated admission regulations by taking advantage of the particular regulations related to gifted and talented children. Whilst acknowledging that those children may well be equipped with those particular abilities, in order to ensure equity of opportunity policy needs to engage with the identification of talent, and avoid privilege being legitimised as a sign of merit when linked to opportunity provision and class based behaviours and codes (Laurison and Friedman, 2019).

It was significant that Tina, educated in the USA, absolutely credited her trajectory to higher education as being part included within a gifted and talented programme, saying,

> *I was incredibly fortunate in the States in that I was identified early on at the age of 5 and put into a gifted talented programme so I was still like in a state, like a regular school, like a state school or a comprehensive school but I was sort of sectioned off into gifted and talented so I was protected and just absolutely thrived. My high school offered like advanced placement classes so you could take university classes in high school. So the local, the local community college offered the classes and stuff. My parents didn't know how to fill out university forms and I relied on my Guidance Counsellor. My parents didn't know how to do that in terms of, especially in America, like the whole financial aid programmes and things like that.*

Whilst not advocating a segregated gifted and talented regime, this research suggests there is a lesson here in how we should be supporting young people and their families in navigating the educational system and engaging with the particular skills and attributes of the whole child form school entry onwards. Menzies (2013) has already called for increased parental engagement within schools, not just through parent evenings, for example suggesting that schools provide information to parents even before GCSE choice in terms of the implicit expectations of higher education institutions. Although it is acknowledged that many primary schools plan activities which relate to children's lives and parents' interests, and hold informal information evenings (Menzies, 2013), there is still much more that could be done by schools to not only engage parents in true partnership but also support them and their children in navigate the expectations and requirements to activate aspirations into reality.

Contribution to study in the field and future work

This thesis has made a contribution to the field of research related to aspiration and intergenerational entitlement. It has particularly engaged with the interplay between locational habitus, school, family and parenting practices. This was a growing area of research in the earlier part of the 20th century, and this qualitative research makes an original contribution in exposing and unpicking the normal practices of the middle class in order to illuminate the flexible character of on-going change in a time of complex and accelerated contemporary social transformation (Savage et al, 2003). Examining the personal aspirations and experiences of individuals illuminates the micro-macro linkage, from personal experience to larger scale implications for the workings of social structure and contemporary change ((Bengtson et al, 2002: 168; Granovetter, 1973). It is argued that within this study the exploration of the field regarding parental senses of place (Reay, 2004), particularly in terms of locational and parental habitus, provides theoretical insight in examining parental perceptions and articulations of identity and aspiration (Butler and Robson, 2003: 185; Longhurst and Savage, 1996). Situating the fieldwork in both urban and suburban contexts allowed for analysis of subtle differentiations between horizontal middle class categories of parents (Reay et al, 2013). It is argued that utilising a qualitative research approach has been well suited for this task, particularly in providing an open ended pragmatic approach which has allowed the engagement with new salient themes which had not been anticipated at the inception of the research.

This work has begun to address some issues related to inequality in opportunity, identifying some key areas in which middle class parents are securing advantage for their children and suggesting areas for development within schools and policy developments. Findings have already been disseminated at national conferences and to school governors within the school settings (See Appendix 17). It would be beneficial to build upon this research by engaging more fully with regard to the aspirations of stakeholders within schools in terms of children's trajectories, whether the habitus of the institution is relevant to all children's lives and how this might compare to those of parents. Although this study has gone some way to address the relationship of parents to schools, in corroboration with Vincent (2017), there are gains to be made into further exploration into family life in terms of parents' involvement with schools.

Final Summary

This study has put forward how some middle class parents are securing distinction for their children and the interconnection between the mobilisation of social capital, elective belonging and family habitus which will support advantage within educational institutions and through to higher education and employment. It has also shed light on how government policy initiatives, underpinned by market forces, have acted as a catalyst for proactive parental practices. Findings verified the overwhelming role of territorial differentiation which is at the core of urban contemporary change, and how gentrification is underpinned by middle class formation and identity. Key findings identified changes of parental perceptions regarding higher education and futurity, and how parents are supporting children in acquiring cultural competencies to support successful navigation into elite occupations and advantageous futures. I conclude by proposing that work of this nature is valuable not only in highlighting the workings of social structure in contemporary times, but for us as educationalists to reflect upon ways to provide more equitable pedagogies and environments for children and young people.

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Appendix 1: Pen Portraits of Respondents

Wood Rise Primary School

Reception respondents

1. *Trudy*

Trudy is a single white British 38 year old mother with 4 children, two boys and two girls. Her youngest daughter Reception class and has special needs. Trudy holds an NVQ qualification and works as a teaching assistant and lunchtime assistant at Wood Rise, and lives in local authority housing adjacent to the school. Lucy's parents were brought up in orphanages and were married for 42 years. Lucy's father left school at 15 and pursued a career in the Royal Marines, completing an apprenticeship.

2. *Genevieve*

Genevieve is a white British 43 year old mother of two children. She works part-time as a freelance exhibition designer and has a BA (Hons). Her partner is an artist and sculptor who attended Art College to study 3D design, and rents his own workshop in the Wood Rise area. They live in a rented apartment and have been building their own house on a plot of land in the area for 7 years. Genevieve grew up in Berkshire.

3. *Tina*

Tina is a white American 37 year old mother of three children, a 6 year old girl and a boy and girl who are 4 year old twins. Tina is a part-time fundraising director and has an MSc in sociology. Her husband is a deputy head at an urban secondary school, but originally worked in the city before qualifying as a teacher. Tina describes herself as working class and her parents were factory workers in the USA. Tina was identified as academically able at 5 years old, and was educated from Years 7-9 in a gifted and talented class in the USA. Taylor previously lived in London and came to the south west of England to undertake her master's degree.

4. *Georgina*

Georgina is a white British 35 year old mother of two children, a boy and a girl aged 6 and 4 years. She has a first class BA in Journalism and is a journalist, mainly working in children's media. Georgina's father was a lecturer and her mother was a social worker. Her husband also works in the media industry and has a media degree. He was the son of an MP, and attended state school.

5. Carmen

Carmen is a white British 42 year old married mother of two children, a boy of 6 and a girl of 4 years. She works almost full-time as a music producer and has a BA (Hons) Music degree. Her husband was previously a graduate engineer, but has recently changed career to become a wine merchant. Carmen and her husband previously lived in London. Her father was a joiner and her mother worked as a clerical assistant.

6. Lucy

Lucy is a white British 37 year old mother of two children, a boy and girl aged 3 and 5 years, who had moved from London after having children. Lucy has a BSc (Hons) and is a part-time freelance science and medical journalist. Her husband is also a science journalist. Both of Lucy's parents held MSc's and were geologists, although her father subsequently became a sales director.

7. Anna

Anna is a white British married 45 year old mother of two children, a girl and boy aged 4 and 8 years respectively. Anna holds a BA (Hons), and is currently a member of staff at Wood Rise working part-time as an office administrator. Anna previously worked as an advertising and recruitment manager. Her father was the owner of the family printing firm and her mother was a secretary and then a homemaker after having children.

8. Grace

Grace is a white British 36 year old mother of two children, aged 4 and 6 years. Her husband is an accountant. Grace holds an MSc and is currently UK Head of Student recruitment at a large university. She was previously a schools liaison officer at the same university. She is a serving governor at Wood Rise School. Both of Grace's parents were teachers, her father in a secondary school and her mother in a primary school.

Year 6 respondents

9. Sonia

Sonia is a white British 48 year old married mother of two boys, aged 11 years and 13 years. Her husband is an architect. Sonia has a degree in architecture but currently works as a self-employed building inspector. She attended an independent girl's school, and met her husband at university. Sonia's father became an engineer through a practical apprenticeship and her mother was a nurse. Sonia recounted how even though her mother had left school at 14 years old, she had taken her O and A levels at night school and then an Open University degree whilst working full time and caring for the family. Her son in year 6 will be attending Radley Grove Academy.

10. Caroline

Caroline is a privately educated 42 year old mother of two children, a girl and a boy. She has a PhD in health research, was previously a healthcare researcher and now works as a homemaker and author. Caroline met her husband at university, who has a degree in engineering and is a company director of an IT company. Her father was a maths and physics graduate and her mother was a secretary. Her daughter will be attending Chapelle Carlton Academy.

11. Amanda

Amanda is a white British 51 year old married mother of four children, two older daughters, the oldest being 21 years, and two sons, with the youngest in year 6. She works part-time as a teacher. Amanda moved to the area to work at a local school when she was a single parent with two daughters. Her mother was a teacher and her father a lecturer. Amanda was educated in Canada until she was 7 years old. Amanda’s husband is a graduate who works in the health service. They have both always worked in the public sector. Her husband grew up on his family farm which had been in the family for generations. Her son will be attending Coombe Gardens comprehensive school.

12. Isabel

Isabel is a white British 45 year old mother of three children, one boy and 2 girls. Her oldest child has special needs so she balances her time between caring for the family and working as a self-employed glass artist as part of an arts collective. Her husband and father of the three children is a self-employed music producer, who manages a well-known music band. Her father was an agricultural worker and her mother was a seamstress of soft furnishings. Isabel described both herself and her husband as coming from working class backgrounds. Her daughter will be attending Radley Grove Academy.

13. Joanna

Joanna is a 47 year old white Australian mother of two girls aged 11 years and 9 years. She is married, has a degree in politics and history and worked in the Australian civil service. She currently works as a freelance examiner. Joanna was brought up in a working class family in an Australian industrial town, and immigrated to the UK 20 years ago. Her father was a storeman and her mother was a nursery assistant. She is a graduate and taught English as a foreign language (TEFL) for 15 years, and became a freelance examiner working from home when her children were born. Her husband is a software engineer. Her daughter will be attending Chapelle Carlton Academy.

14. William

William is a white British 53 year old father of 2 children aged 11 and 9 years. He has a BA (Hons) works full time as a secondary school teacher at an all-girls school in the private sector.

William is married to a museum curator who is head of the Asian arts department of the city arts museum. He attended an all-boys grammar school and his wife attended a comprehensive school in Camden, London. His daughter will be attending Chapelle Carlton Academy.

15. Mia

Mia is a divorced 50 year old mother of two boys, aged 11 and 13 years. She is of Asian ethnicity and originally lived in the West Midlands. Mia is an arts graduate who works as a freelance graphic designer. The boys' father is a graduate engineer working for a large manufacturing company in the South West. Her son will be attending Coombe Gardens comprehensive school.

16. Gerda

Gerda is a white German 53 year old mother of one child in year 6, a girl aged 10 years. She has an MSc in political science and works as a project manager. Her husband has a higher degree in material science. She met her husband whilst he was working in Munich, but he is originally from London. Her daughter will be attending Chapelle Carlton Academy.

Rose Hill Primary School

Reception respondents

17. Elizabeth

Elizabeth is a white 35 year old married mother of two children. She has a PhD and works part-time as a psychologist. Her father was a professor of economics and her mother was a teacher. Her husband holds a PhD in asthma research and now works in IT. Her father was a university professor of economics and her mother was a teacher. The father of her husband was also a university professor. Elizabeth was educated in an American independent school until 5th grade and then moved to an international school, repeating the year in a French school, and completing her education equivalent to 'A' levels in an American independent school.

18. Susan

Susan is a 45 year old white British mother of two children aged 5 years and one year and works as a part-time campaigns manager. Her husband and father of the two children is a software engineer in the oil and gas industry. She initially qualified as a primary school teacher and has a BA (Hons) and a PGCE. Susan's mother was a teacher and counsellor and her father was a probation officer.

19. Josephine

Josephine is a 42 year old white, British married mother of 1 child. She holds a BTEC HND, and is currently on maternity leave having recently adopted her 3 year old son. She worked in advertising in London, *'starting at the bottom'* and is now a marketing manager for a large banking institution. Her husband holds a masters level degree and works in computer software. Josephine previously lived in London. Her father was a London *'barrow boy'* who became a company director and her mother was a hairdresser.

20. Carole

Carole is a white British 34 year old mother of two children aged 2 and 4 years. She is a science graduate and nearing completion of her PhD. She is married to a primary school teacher. She was previously a scientist. Her father was a university professor and her mother was a school teacher. Carole was previously a scientist but is now pursuing her doctorate in social science and 'sidestepping' her way out of science and engineering.

Year 6 respondents

21. Patience

Patience is a white British 44 year old married mother of two children, a boy and a girl aged 11 and 14 respectively. She holds an MSc in Physics and is a part time software engineer. Her husband studied as a mature student as an engineer. Patience's husband is of Black Ethiopian heritage. Patience's father was a professor of Physics and her mother was a teacher working a special needs school. Patience's son will be attending Fiveacres, where her daughter is already a pupil.

Pine Grove Primary School

Reception respondents

22. Helen

Helen is a 39 year old white South African mother of two children, a boy and girl aged 11 and 14 years respectively. She work part-time as a dietician and has a BSc and a post graduate qualification in Dietetics. Her husband is a graduate in sociology, although works in IT and database administration. Her father was a chemical engineer and her mother was a teacher and then headmistress.

23. Stephanie

Stephanie is a white British 33 year old married mother of two children, a boy and a girl aged 6 months and 4 years respectively. She is currently on maternity leave but works full-time as a brand and marketing manager for a large banking group. Stephanie holds a BA (Hons) and professional diploma in Marketing. Her husband works on a self-employed basis in the software development industry, and took his masters whilst working full time in the IT industry. Her father was a police constable and her mother was a care manager.

24. Clare

Clare is a white British 34 year old mother of two children, a girl and a boy aged 8 and 4 years respectively. She attended a grammar school, has a BSc in biomedical science, and currently is a homemaker. She is married to a parish vicar who was privately educated and has a degree in Theology. Clare is a school governor at Pine Grove. Her father was a Scientific Officer and her mother was a bio-medical scientist.

Year 6 respondents

25. Alan

Alan is a white British 55 year old father with two children from his second marriage, aged 14 years and 10 years. He works part-time as a police officer. He attended a comprehensive school and left school with GCSE ‘A’ levels. His wife attended a grammar school, studied pharmacy at university and works full-time as a pharmacist. Alan’s father was an engineer, his mother a teacher, and his grandfather was a police officer. His wife’s father was a mathematics teacher. Alan’s son will be attending the local community comprehensive school, BPCC.

26. Maureen

Maureen is a white British 48 year old mother of two sons. She left school after achieving GCSE O levels and worked in information technology in the civil service for 10 years. She then worked for an American multinational information technology company for 10 years, which is where her husband currently works. Maureen is now employed at Bury Park Community Comprehensive as a part time teaching assistant. Her father was a civil servant and her mother was a secretary. Maureen’s son will be attending the local community comprehensive school, BPCC.

27. Janet

Janet is a white British 50 year old mother of two children. She has a grown up daughter and a son of 11 years who is due to enter Bury Park Community Comprehensive. Her husband is not the father of her children, and he has two grown up children of his own living in a city an hour away from Pine Grove. Both Janet and her husband hold doctorates, her husband in business and herself in education. Janet’s father was an engineer and her mother was a housewife. Janet’s son will be attending the local community comprehensive school, BPCC.

NB- the main body of the information in the pen portraits, including ethnicity, was self-identified by the respondents in the completed profile questionnaires.

Appendix 2: Biographical data of respondents

		Resp.	Age`	Respondent occupation	Previous occupation	Resp. N-SEC	Part. N-SEC	Partner: occupation	Highest qual. of Respondent	N-SEC GF (M)	N-SEC GM (M)
1	WR R	Trudy		Teaching assistant SEN **PT**		6			NVQ	3	
2	WR R	Genevieve	43	Exhibition designer **PT**		3	2	Sculptor	BA(Hons)		
3	WR R	Tina	37	Fundraising director **PT**	Fundraiser **PT**	1.1	2	Secondary teacher	**MSC**	7	7
4	WR R	Georgina	35	Media Company Director **FT**	Marketing Director **PT**	2	1.1	Media director	**BA(Hon) PGCE**	1.2	2
5	WR R	Carmen	42	Musician/producer **FT**		2	1.2	Wine merchant (prev. engineer)	B(Hons)	4	3
6	WR R	Lucy	37	Science medical journalist **PT**	Sales	1.2	1.2	Science journalist	BSc(Hon)	1.2	1.2
7	WR R	Anna	45	School administrator **PT**	Recruitment manager **FT**	3			BA (Hon)	1.1	H Maker
8	WR R	Grace	36	Head/uni recruitment **FT**	School liaison officer **FT**	1.1	1.2	Accountant	**MSc**	2	2
9	WR 6	Sonia	48	Building reg/architect **PT**		2	1.2	Architect	B Arch MA	5	2
10	WR 6	Caroline	42	Author/Homemaker **PT**	Healthcare research/lecturer	1.2	2	IT company Direct.	**PhD**		
11	WR 6	Amanda	51	Teacher **PT**	NHS Manager/Shop owner	2	1.1	Health service	**BA(Hons) PGCE**	1.2	2
12	WR 6	Isabel	45	Glass artist/Homemaker **PT**	Account Manager, Insurance Co	2	2	Music producer	GCSE A level s	6	6
13	WR 6	Joanna	47	Teacher **PT**	teacher	2	1.2	Software engineer	BA(Hon)	7	6
14	WR 6	William	53	Teacher **FT**	teacher	2	2	Art curator	BA(Hon)		
15	WR 6	Mia		Graphic designer **FT**		2	1.2	Engineer	BA(Hon)		
16	WR 6	Gerda	53	Project manager **PT**		1.2	1.2	Scientist	**MA**	7	H Maker
17	RH R	Elizabeth	35	Psychiatrist **PT**		1.2	1.2	Medical researcher	**PhD**	1.2	2
18	RH R	Susan	45	Campaigns Manager **PT**	Teacher	2	1.2	Software engineer	**BA(Hons) PGCE**	2	2
19	RH R	Josephine	42	Maternity leave	Marketing executive **FT**	1.2	1.2	Software engineer	BTec	1.1	7
20	RH R	Carole	34	PhD Candidate	Scientist **FT**	1.2	2	Primary teacher	**PhD**	1.2	2
21	RH 6	Patience	44	Software engineer **PT**	Teacher	1.2	1.2	Engineer	**MSC**	1.2	2
22	PG R	Helen	39	Dietician **PT**		2	2	IT executive	**BSC(Hon) PGDiet.**	2	2
23	PG R	Stephanie	33	Marketing Banking **FT**	Marketing	1.2	2	Contract Director	BA(Hon)	3	6
24	PG R	Clare	34	Homemaker/vicars wife	Biomedical scientist **FT**	1.2	1.2	Vicar	BSc(Hon)	1.2	1.2
25	PG 6	Alan	55	Police officer /Homemaker **PT**	Police officer	3	1.2	Pharmacist	GCSE A levels	2	2
26	PG 6	Maureen	48	Teaching assistant SEN **PT**	Office work Manufacturing	6	1.1	Manager: business	GCSE O levels	**3**	**3**
27	PG 6	Janet	50	Lecturer **PT**	Engineer	1.2	1.2	IT Director	**PhD**	1.2	H Maker

Highest income band 100k+

PG Qualification

Public Private self-employed

Part time (out of those respondents in paid work): WR- 11/16 RH- 4/4 MB- 3/4

Professional occupation

Appendix 3: Introductory letter to Parents

Dear Parents and Carers

WHAT DO YOU AS PARENTS WANT FROM SCHOOL?

I am undertaking some research into what 21st century parents are thinking for their children in terms of educational and life aspirations, and how this compares with what our schools think and offer.

If you are willing to have a chat with me on a confidential basis, please contact me by email or complete the attached slip and hand it into the school office. The informal interview questions will be very straightforward and mostly I am interested in your experiences and opinions. This study has the support of the school, and for your convenience I can arrange to meet at Wood Rise or visit you at home.

If you wish to discuss any aspect of this research please get in touch and I very much hope you will be able to take part.

Yours Sincerely

Lizbeth

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PS: One minute background

These interviews have developed from doctoral work investigating both short and long term parental expectations, and how they compare to those of school in terms of supporting children now and in the future. In particular, questions relate to parental identity, exploring attitudes towards school choice and living in the local community, as well as educational and life aspirations. By examining links between parental and school identity, children's attainment, life chances and choices I am attempting to discover whether emerging patterns relate to family, local community, school context and background.

I am willing to take part in an informal interview as part of the study on parental expectations and understand that confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained throughout the research process.

Name:

Contact details

Appendix 4: Semi-structured Interview Questions

1. Why did you choose .... School?

2. How do you feel about your child starting (Infant/Secondary) school?

3. What do you expect from .... School during the first year?

4. What do you feel your role in this as a parent? *(homework/on line liaison etc.)*

5. Tell me about/what it is like/how do you feel about… living in this area/community? (year 6, being part of another school community (not local school?) *Start with and describe the neighbourhood around here, what they like, why are they living here?*

6. What do you think is the role of Primary/Secondary school/Education? *What experiences school should provide? What do you expect schools to be doing? What role does this process have at each stage in preparation for career/adulthood?*

7. How far do you expect your child to pursue their education?

8. Does your experience of school have an influence on what you want for your child?

9. Is there a specific career you would wish for your child?

10. Tell me about the sort of life you would like your child to have? (life ambitions)*(Role as a parent?)*

11. How would you describe your professional or work status? *Previous career path/ partner's work status/ future plans. Ensure you have previous and current occupations from both partners in order to allow for greater scope for considering cultural inflections of class later on. Also, follow up grandparents' status/intergenerational links.*
12. Is there anything else you would like to ask that I have not covered?

Appendix 5: Highest qualification of respondents

Highest Qualification		***Breakdown: schools***	***Total in group***
None	Trudy (WR-R)	WR: 1 PG: 0 RH: 0	1
GCSE	Maureen (PG-6)	WR: 0 PG: 1 RH: 0	1
A level or HND	Isabel (WR-6) Alan (PG-6) Josephine (RH-R) - HND	WR: 1 PG: 1 RH: 1	3
UG degree	Genevieve (WR-R) Carmen (WR-R) Lucy (WR-R) Anna (WR-R) Stephanie (PG-R) Clare (PG-R) Sonia (WR-6) Joanna (WR-6) Mia (WR-6)	WR: 7 PG: 2 RH: 0	9
Masters (or other PG diploma)	Tina (WR-R) Georgina (WR-R) Grace (WR-R) Susan (RH-R) Helen (PG-R) Amanda (WR-6) William (WR-6) Gerda (WR-6) Patience (RH-6)	WR: 6 PG: 1 RH: 2	9
PhD or above	Elizabeth (RH-R) Carole (RH-R) Caroline (WR-6) Janet (PG-6)	WR: 1 PG: 1 RH: 2	4

% Degree and above: WR- 87% / PG- 80% / RH- 80%

% Masters and above: WR- 44% / PG- 33% / RH- 80%Breakdown

	None	GCSE	A level/HND	UG Degree	Post Grad Qual	PhD
WR	6%	0	6%	44%	38%	6%
PG	0	16.7%	16.7%	33.3%	16.7%	16.7%
RH	0	0	20%	0%	40%	40%

Totals: Wood Rise 16 respondents Pine Grove 6 respondents Rose Hill 5 respondents

Appendix 6: Household income of respondents

Household Income	Non disclosed: Sonia (WR-6), Gerda (WR-6), Alan (PG-6)
-20	Trudy (WR-R)
20-30	Genevieve (WR-R) Clare (PG-R)
30-40	Carole (RH-R)
40-50	Joanna (WR-6)
50-60	Carmen (WR-R) Lucy (WR-R) Anna (WR-R) Susan (RH-R) Caroline (WR-6) Amanda (WR-6) Isabel (WR-6) Mia (WR-6)
60-100	Tina (WR-R) Helen (PG-R) William (WR-6) Maureen (PG-6) Patience (RH-6)
100-150	Georgina (WR-R) Grace (WR-R) Elizabeth (RH-R) Josephine (RH-R) Stephanie (PG-R)
150+	Janet (PG-6)

% 100K +: WR- 14% / PG- 40% / RH- 40%

% 60K +: WR- 29% / PG- 80% / RH- 80%

	Up to 30K	30-60K	60-100K	100K +
WR	12%	50%	12%	12%
PG	17%	0%	33%	33%
RH	0%	40%	20%	40%

Totals: Wood Rise 14 respondents Pine Grove 5 respondents Rose Hill 5 respondents

Total number of respondents 100K += 25%

Total number of respondents 60+= 46%

Appendix 7: Breakdown of Respondent N-SEC Categories

Cat		mother	father
1.1		Tina (WR R) Grace (WR R)	Georgina (WR R) Amanda (WR 6) Maureen (PG 6)
1.2		Lucy (WR R) Caroline (WR R) Gerda (WR 6) Elizabeth (RH R) Josephine (RH R) Carole (RH R) Patience (RH 6) Stephanie (PG R) Clare (PG R) Alan (partner) (PG 6) Janet (PG 6)	Carmen (WR R) Lucy (WR R) Grace (WR R) Sonia (WR 6) Joanna (WR 6) Gerda (WR 6) Elizabeth (RH R) Susan (RH R) Josephine (RH R) Patience (RH 6) Clare (PG R)
2		Georgina (WR R) Carmen (WR R) Sonia (WR 6) Amanda (WR 6) Isabel (WR 6) Joanna (WR 6) William (WR 6) Mia (WR 6) Susan (RH R) Helen (PG R)	Genevieve (WR R) Taylor (WR R) Caroline (WR 6) Isabel (WR 6) William (WR 6) Carole (RH R) Helen (PG R)
3		Anna (WR R) Genevieve (WR R) Maureen (PG 6)	Alan (PG 6)
6		Trudy (WR R)	
7			Stephanie (PG R)

All of RH respondents 1.2 or 2 N-SEC categories

Respondent categories:

1.1: RH 0% WR 12% PG 0%

1.2: RH 80% WR 19% PG 67%

2: RH 20% WR 50% PG 16.5%

3: RH 0% WR 12.5% PG 16.5%

6: RH 0% WR 6.50 PG 0%

Appendix 8: Examples of N-SEC Categories

	NS- SEC categorisation	Examples of occupations
1	Higher managerial and professional occupations, including large employers	university lecturer, vicar, scientist, marketing director, architect
2	Lower managerial and professional occupations	teacher, graphic designer, dietician, social worker, nurse
3	Intermediate occupations	school administrator, police constable, clerical officer
4	Small employers and own account workers	*No respondents*
5	Lower supervisory and technical occupations	*No respondents*
6	Semi-routine occupations	teaching assistant, agricultural worker
7	Routine occupations	factory production line worker, factory worker, hairdresser
8	Never worked and long-term unemployed	*No respondents*

Template adapted for this study context from 'The Paired Peers Project': A University of Bristol/UWE Bristol Leverhulme-funded study

Bathmaker, A.M., Ingram, N., and Waller, R. (2011) Constructions of class: defining students' social class in the Paired Peers project. *Paper* presented at the BERA annual conference in London, September 2011.

Appendix 9(a): Financially comfortable families

[redacted]

[Appendix 9 content is redacted in this digitised version due to potential copyright issues. All pages are currently accessible at the link in the description below.]

ACORN (2014) the acorn user guide. The consumer classification: CACI. Page 18.
On-line https://acorn.caci.co.uk/downloads/Acorn-User-guide.pdf

Appendix 9(b): Townhouse cosmopolitans

[redacted]

ACORN (2014) the acorn user guide. The consumer classification: CACI. Page 30
On-line https://acorn.caci.co.uk/downloads/Acorn-User-guide.pdf

Appendix 9(c): Educated families in terraces, young children

[redacted]

ACORN (2014) the acorn user guide. The consumer classification: CACI. Page 57.
On-line https://acorn.caci.co.uk/downloads/Acorn-User-guide.pdf

Appendix 10: Fieldwork Interview Timeline

	School	Year	Name	Date of interview
1	Wood Rise	Yr 6	Caroline	22.09.14 (Pilot)
2	Wood Rise	Yr 6	Sonia	02.10.14 (Pilot)
3	Wood Rise	Rec	Trudy	12.11.14 (Pilot)
4	Rose Hill	Rec	Elizabeth	16.12.14 (Pilot)
5	Rose Hill	Rec	Susan	06.02.15
6	Rose Hill	Rec	Josephine	06.02.15
7	Wood Rise	Yr 6	Amanda	09.03.15
8	Wood Rise	Yr 6	Isabel	22.06.15
9	Wood Rise	Yr 6	Joanna	22.06.15
10	Wood Rise	Rec	Genevieve	22.06.15
11	Wood Rise	Rec	Tina	23.06.15
12	Pine Grove	Rec	Helen	25.11.15
13	Pine Grove	Yr 6	Alan	28.11.15
14	Pine Grove	Yr 6	Janet	01.12.15
15	Pine Grove	Yr 6	Maureen	11.12.15
16	Pine Grove	Rec	Stephanie	11.12.15
17	Wood Rise	Rec	Georgina	19.02.16
18	Wood Rise	Rec	Carmen	09.03.16
19	Wood Rise	Rec	Lucy	09.03.16
20	Wood Rise	Rec	Anna	10.03.16
21	Wood Rise	Yr 6	William	10.03.16
22	Pine Grove	Rec	Clare	10.03.16
23	Wood Rise	Yr 6	Mia	18.03.16
24	Wood Rise	Yr 6	Gerda	18.03.16
25	Rose Hill	Yr 6	Patience	18.03.16
26	Rose Hill	Rec	Carole	18.03.16
27	Wood Rise	Rec	Grace	29.03.16

Appendix 11: Example of line-by-line coding

5. Tell me about/what it is like/how do you feel about… living in this area/community? **(Excerpt)**

… I helped with the PTA last year before I went back to work and I think it's just… it feels lovely. I think it's quite unique. It feels like a village school but we are in the middle of the city. It really does feel like a village school and I think that has huge advantages. It's really nice, like, even just coming to the Summer Fayre on the Sunday so many teachers came to the school. When (Head teacher) was here loads of teachers were here. The nice thing was we brought the kids, so we had our 3 kids, and we were like you know signed up as parent helpers on a few craft stalls and so, and my husband who obviously, because he's with them less, is more hesitant to give them freedom, let's say, to sort of run around, and so I said when we got here, "Right guys, the 3 of you stick together and you just stay, you stay in the school bit where you would have to stay during the day and as long as you that, that's fine", and sort of off you go and my husband said "Oh, er, you know I'm not so sure, maybe one of us should go with them" and even my oldest went, "Dad, it's gonna be fine. We are gonna know like 97% of the people there

7. How far do you expect your child to pursue their education? **(Excerpt)**

We've had this conversation. It's quite funny because I, I came from a working class background where my parents didn't go to university and I was, out of both sides of my family, I was the first of my generation to go to university and it was never, for me it was never a question, it was just an assumption that actually education didn't end until you finish university. It was just a given that I was going to go on and do that. And if you ask my husband he would say without question our 3 children are going to university, there is no question about that. And I'm probably a little bit more, I think if we dictate that I know at least my youngest daughter will rebel against that, she will rebel, so I, so we talked about, you know, I have a sister who went to art college and she is an incredibly talented person who is running her own business now. And so we have talked about further education coming in different forms, in different, you know, in different guises and things like that. I would hope and expect them to go on beyond high school at like 18, at the age of 18 here, I would definitely sort of expect that. And I think coming from our home, it, it, yeah, it will be just sort of fed into their sort of consciousness that it's just, it's an assumption that actually education doesn't end at 18. I mean we, we didn't. He, (husband) did a conversion course to become a teacher after working in the City for a few years. I did a Masters in Sociology after working in the City for a few years. Education doesn't end at 18 nor does it end at 21 or 22 so, yes, I think they'll take that.
We will know how to help them fill out forms for the universities. My parents didn't know how to do that and I relied on my Guidance Counsellor. My parents didn't know how to do that in terms of, especially in America, like the whole financial aid programmes and things like that, they had absolutely no idea what they were doing, whereas because we have gone through it, it's just, it's just, for us it's just a continuation of that education just as it is... just as if you're not used to the application process of getting into a school by a certain date at Reception you could, because you are coming from a different country or different culture, different language then you are disadvantaged because you don't know to get in in time.

Commented [LB1]: Living in a village community in the city

Commented [LB2]: Working at the school as PTA member. Soft ties and networks

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Commented [LB3]: Seeing staff at week end events

Commented [LB4]: knowing everyone In the school community

Commented [LB5]: 'looking out' for safety of other children with other families

Commented [L.B6]: Assumption to go to university.

Commented [LB7]: Planning already for HE

Commented [LB8]: Assuming university entry.

Commented [LB9]: Unquestioning towards university trajectory by husband.

Commented [LB10]: Expecting education post 18

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Commented [LB11]: Feeding actualisation of HE into child's identity

Commented [LB12]: Importance of lifelong learning/changing trajectories

Commented [LB13]: Parenting role in personal statements. Knowing the educational system and procedures.

Commented [LB14]: Relying on CG in USA

Commented [LB15]: Intergenerational experiences of parents not understanding the educational process

Commented [LB16]: Feeling advantaged from experiencing the process of education/rules of game. Feeling children will be advantaged by knowledge of the system.

Memo:

- School choice 'local school', but choice of area based on Ofsted. Own choices on other basis, not going on tour suggests not on basis of environment-other forces? Village school analogy. Knowing 97% of people at the Summer Fayre. Community sharing values of parenting.
- Respondent referred to Chutzpah- anyone wanting to succeed needs 'Chutzpah' – bold, determined, utterly self-confident. Link to masterful and desirable dispositions. Will get you through if not capitals, weak ties etc.
- Easier trajectory through sibling already been at the school – 'habitus' . Advantage for Nursery children already familiar.
- Perceived 'low expectations' included love of learning, feeling comfortable, settled, love school, enjoyment and then learning will come naturally if all these dispositions are in place in terms of attitudes to learning. Linked to views of 'normality' in terms of reading. Eg. Harry Potter at age 6 years. 'naturally achieving'.
- Love of education and lifelong learning.
- Making friends. Relationships within school community. Children knowing key stakeholders on a personal level
- HE fed into children's consciousness and some emphasis on degree that is career linked, and professions.
- Knowing the rules of the educational game. How to support university applications etc.
- Helping children to find their niche, in terms of nurturing talents so they can achieve at whatever they wish to do.
- Follow up on feeling fortunate, and heavily managed lifestyle and career choices taken by both parents.
- Multi-cultural knowledge as a benefit to children. Follow up on what this really looks like? Does it follow pattern in WR and other settings of research?

Appendix 12: Example of salient theme coding (WR comparison between age groups)

Year 6: Caroline, Gerda, Sonia, Amanda, Joanna, William, Mia, Isabel Rec: Lucy, Tina, Georgina, Carmen, Anna, Grace, Trudy, Genevieve,

A	Category	Dimensions
	Passion	Encouraging children to follow their passion and their heart, to have a dream and a passion, especially primary school. When you love something you do, you get rewards from what you do. Trudy Following the things you find interesting and experimenting, getting a passion for everything thats out there. Genevieve We would like her to be passionate about something, at least some of her academic. Get some of the GCSE's she's capable of. William
	Community awareness	'being educated in an environment where they are coming into contact with different kids from different backgrounds, countries, culture, religions' that's important to us actually. (small town US background not the real world' 'kids, your grandmothers' couldn't tell you anything about Ramadan' Tina When we go to (other areas) there are deprived areas there and there are little pockets. She goes to a middle class school and its not an accurate representation of the city. . They have pushy parents pushing them up the ladder. Georgina We want her to be in a community feel, learn about other people's lives and experiences and so on. William
	Confident	I think we've hugely excited and not nervous at all. But I think that is down to her being a confident child, she is an organised child. She is diligent, who wants to do well at secondary school. Caroline (traits already established at primary school?). Wood Rise won hands down on the focus on the individual child, giving them the best start, getting them confident in a school environment and understanding themselves. Without that foundation, they can't go on with achieving in writing, handwriting and all the rest of it. Anna
	Learning from failures/ problem solving	I think you do get benefits from doing those kinds of physical things, that's why we do it. Climbing and stuff is about solving problems and also about having personal challenges and thinking I can't do this long walk I just want to sit indoors. Lucy Knowing its ok to make mistakes as that's part of the learning process. Understanding themselves I think is key, learning their own style of learning. Anna You've got the rest of your life to learn whatever you want to, just because you haven't achieved what you want to do now, doesn't mean you wont later. If you've got confidence and a dream and you believe in that dream, you can do anything you want!' All those life skills will help them through their life. Trudy It's wrong that children feel its wrong to make a mistake. Genevieve
	Drive/Commitment	Yeah. Well it's almost, sort of, that cultural capital you are given I guess, by your parents that you just absolutely take for granted but if it wasn't there you would need to rely on something else, either your own, really your own hutzpah to

Commented [LB1]: Feeling passionate. Having a dream in primary school.

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Commented [LB2]: Emphasis on passionate about things, in some part emphasis on academic.

Commented [L.B3]: Awarenesss of elite catchment of school. Multi cultural awareness in other areas.

Commented [LB4]: Balance between academic expectation but learning about others lives. Is this as a resource/life tool for the child more than member of society.

Commented [L.B5]: Foundation – individual child, understanding themselves, confident in school environment.

Commented [L.B6]: Making mistakes

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Commented [LB7]: Developing life (soft?) skills.

Commented [LB8]: Having another go and achieving later. Building resilience.

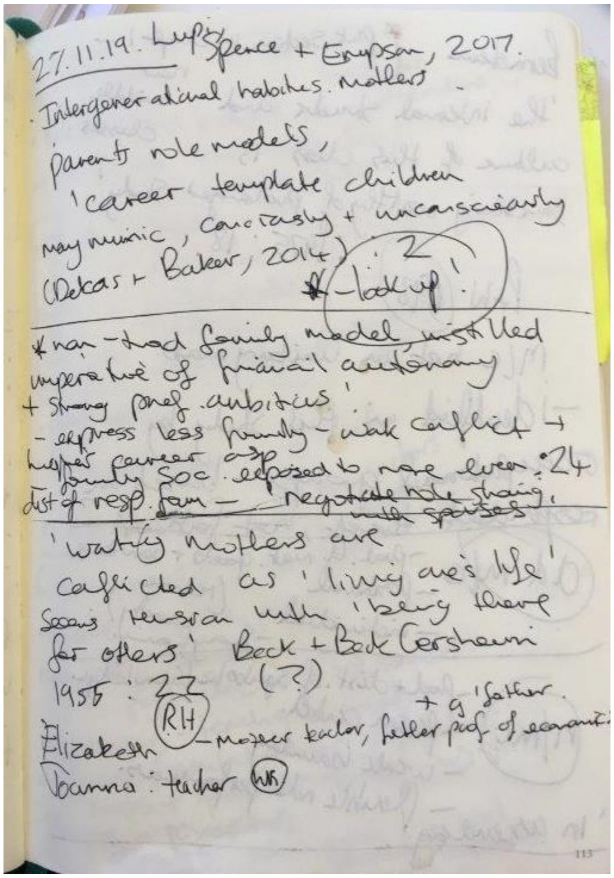
		get you through or someone like a guidance counsellor in school or someone like that. Tina I just want them to work hard and enjoy it and be enthusiastic. I want them to be happy and I want them to be good at what they do. I don't want them aimlessly floating through life. I want them to be interesting, resilient and kind people. Grace I want my kids to know they have to work, being a single parent shows the boys how hard I have to work for what we have. Our holidays are my work and that's my money they know. Mia

Commented [L.B9]: Dispositions that are aspirations or children.

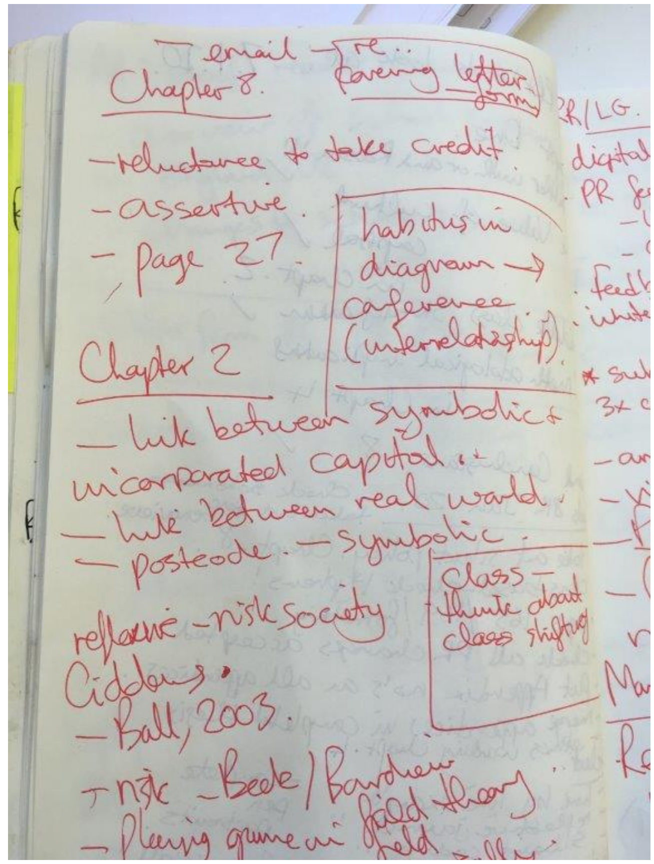
(Example) Memo 1:
Follow up on parental criteria for happiness!
Look at Inclusion and exclusion 'fell other side of the line' Lucy, as well as 'what less educated parents are doing' and link with what Yr 6 parents are saying. Also, compare with aspects of segregation re butcher and RH parent in Rec?
How does the extra-curricular role of provision, proactive parenting, link to disposition formation? Also, experience giving as a critical element of parenting?
Follow up on RH and WR parents who perceive non-involvement in PTA/part of the school but are actively involved- does this connect to the inter play of habitus between the school and community?

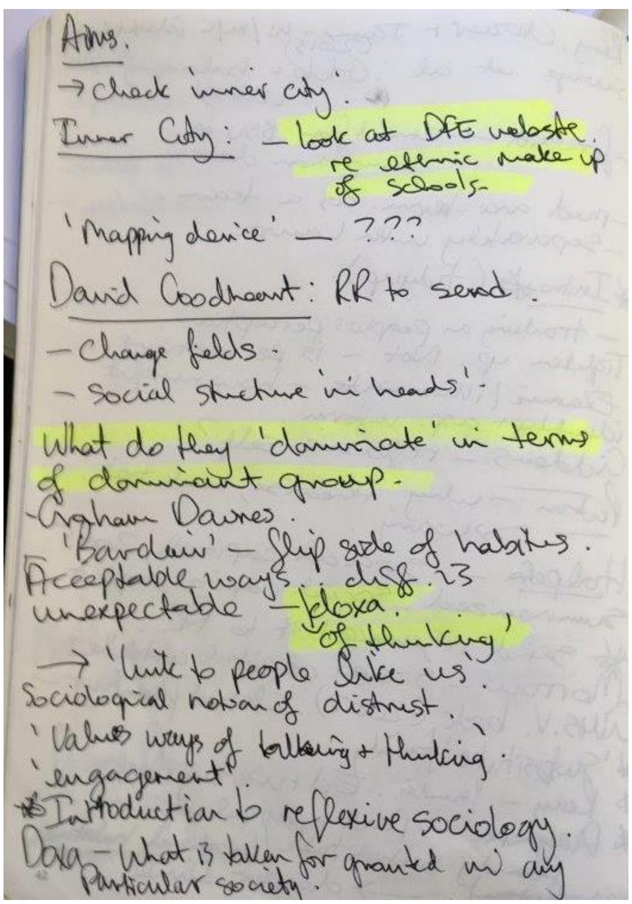
Example (Memo 2):
Have another look at creating networks and opportunity/relationships as dispositions. Are they the same/linked? Soft ties/networks in community/school embodying these values? Chutzpah?!
What does Tina mean by 'fully formed human beings'?
Link between Tina re sociology and Elizabeth and partner (RH) re not 'ologies' at HE.
Are there links with life not always exciting, Gerda's pragmatic approach with PG year 6?
N Vivo:
'fed into their consciousness' (re trajectory to HE)
'Creativity' from WR parents
Follow up upon negotiation of choice through discussion and outlining options and limitations to future choice?

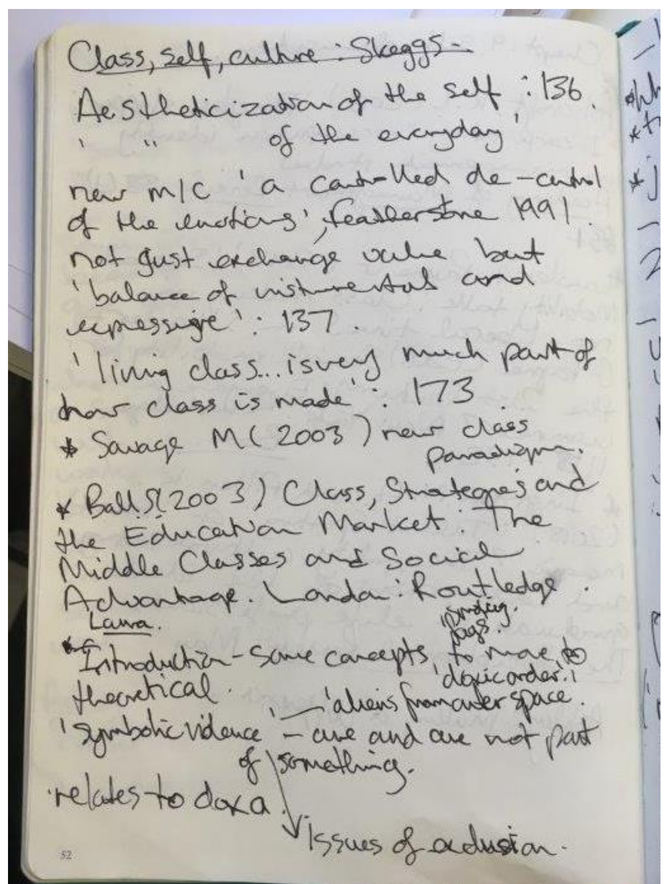
Appendix 13: Research journal extracts


27.11.19. Lupi/Spence + Empson, 2017.
Intergenerational habitus. mothers
parents role models,
'career template children
may mimic, consciously + unconsciously
(Dekas + Baker, 2014): 2
* - look up'.

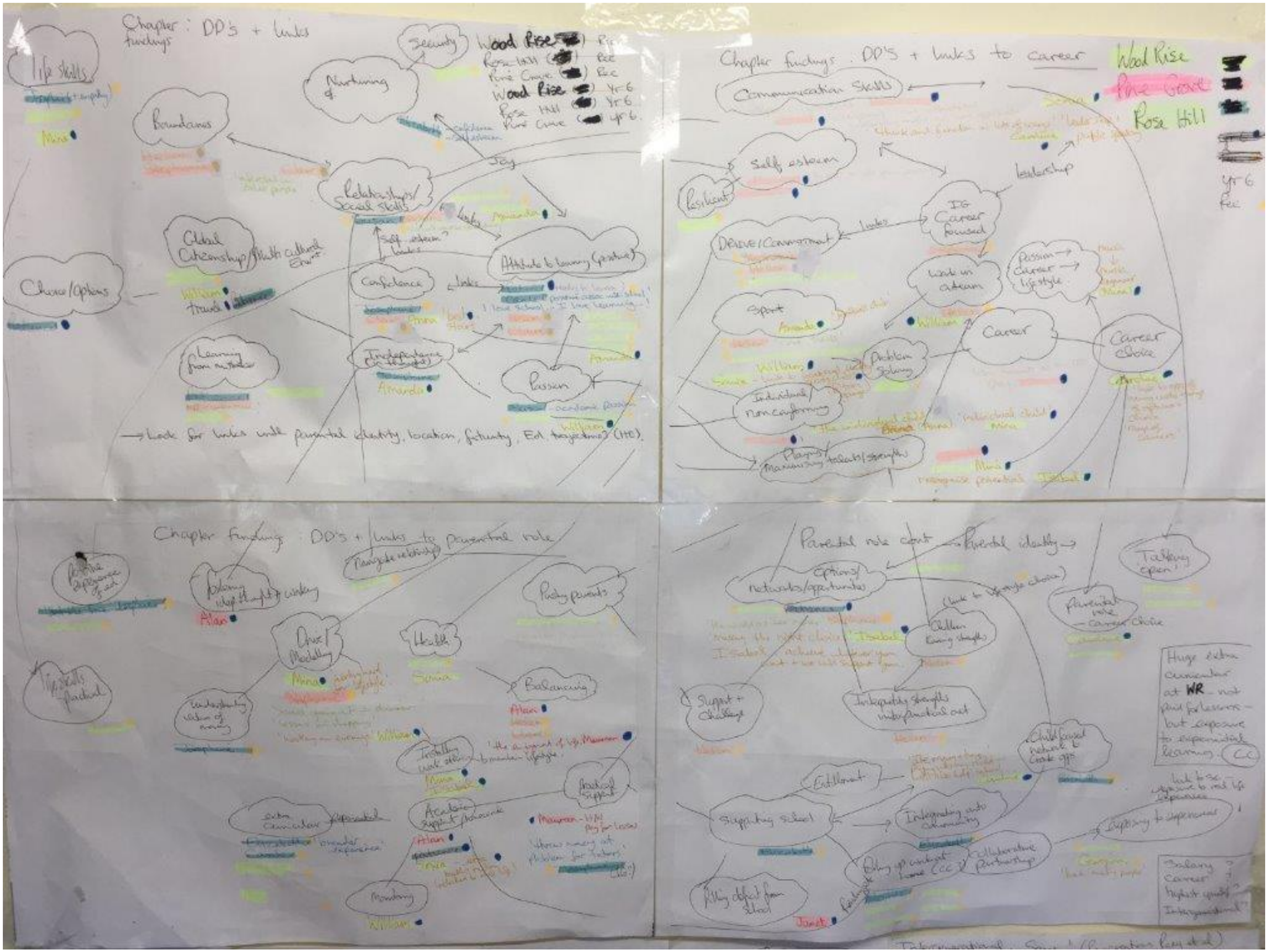
* non-trad family model, instilled
imperative of financial autonomy
+ strong prof. ambitions'.
- express less family - work conflict +
higher career asp
family soc. exposed to more even: 24
dist of resp. fam - negotiate role sharing, with spouses
'working mothers are
conflicted as 'living one's life'
seems tension with 'being there
for others' Beck + Beck Gersheim
1955: 22 (?)
+ g'father.
Elizabeth (RH) - music teacher, father prof of economics
Joanna: teacher (WR)
113


Chapter 8. email - re.. Covering letter / form
- reluctance to take credit
- assertive.
- page 27.
habitus in diagram → conference (interrelationship).
Chapter 2
- link between symbolic & incorporated capital.
- link between real world
- postcode. - symbolic.
class - think about class shifting
reflexive - risk society
Giddens.
- Ball, 2003.
- risk - Beck / Bourdieu field theory
- Playing game in field
RR/LG.
digital
PR
feed
white
* sub
3x

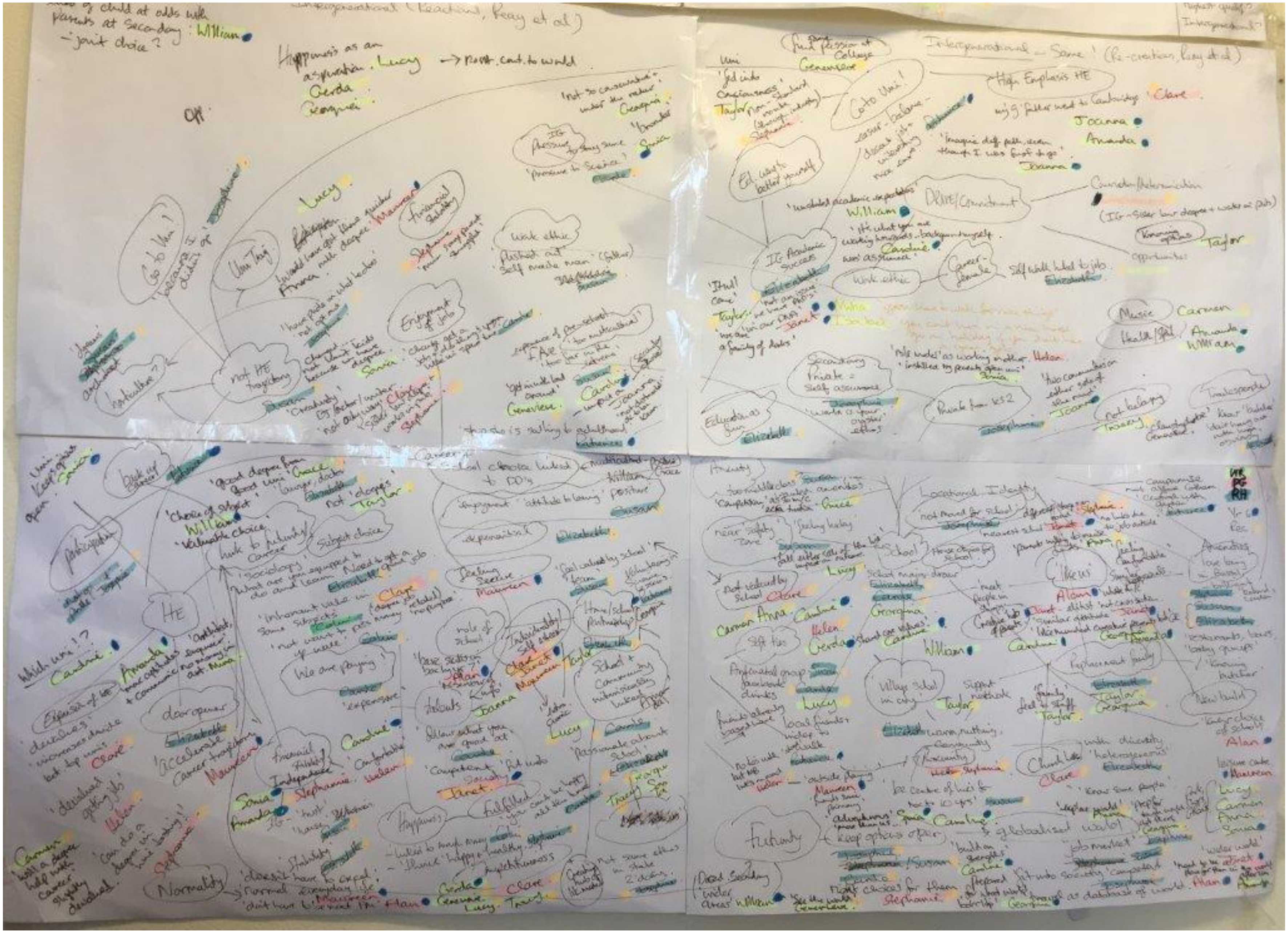

Aims.
→ check 'inner city'.
Inner City: - look at DFE website re ethnic make up of schools.
'Mapping device' - ???
David Goodheart: RR to send.
- Change fields.
- social structure in heads'.
What do they 'dominate' in terms of dominant group.
- Graham Dawes.
'Bourdieu' - flip side of habitus.
Acceptable ways... diff. 23
unexpectable - doxa. 'of thinking'
→ 'link to people like us'.
Sociological notion of distrust.
'Values ways of talking + thinking'.
'engagement'.
* Introduction to reflexive sociology.
Doxa - What is taken for granted in any particular society.


Class, self, culture: Skeggs -
Aestheticization of the self: 136.
' " of the everyday'
new m/c 'a controlled de-control of the emotions', Featherstone 1991.
not just exchange value but
'balance of instrumental and expressive': 137.
'living class... is very much part of how class is made': 173
* Savage M (2003) new class paradigm.
* Ball S (2003) Class, Strategies and the Education Market: The Middle Classes and Social Advantage. London: Routledge.
Laura.
* Introduction - some concepts, to move to theoretical. 'doxic order'. 'bridging bags'.
'aliens from outer space'.
'symbolic violence' - are and are not part of something.
relates to doxa.
↓ Issues of exclusion.
52

Appendix 14 – Mind map of themes (Upper section)



Appendix 14: Mind map of themes (Lower section)



Appendix 15: Biographical Questionnaire for Respondents

<u>Part 2: Personal Information</u>

Gender:

Age:

Marital Status:

Children (ages):

Education qualifications (highest level):

Occupation: (FT or PT)

Previous occupations:

Household Income band: under 10k / 10-20k/20-30k/30-40k/ 40-50/50-60k/60-100k/100-150k/150k-200k/200k+

Ethnic group:

Fathers'/Mothers' occupations of parents:

<u>Part 2: Personal Information</u>

Gender:

Age:

Marital Status:

Children (ages):

Education qualifications (highest level):

Occupation: (FT or PT)

Previous occupations:

Household Income band: under 10k / 10-20k/20-30k/30-40k/ 40-50/50-60k/60-100k/100-150k/150k-200k/200k+

Ethnic group:

Fathers'/Mothers' occupations of parents:

Appendix 16: Desirable dispositions (i)

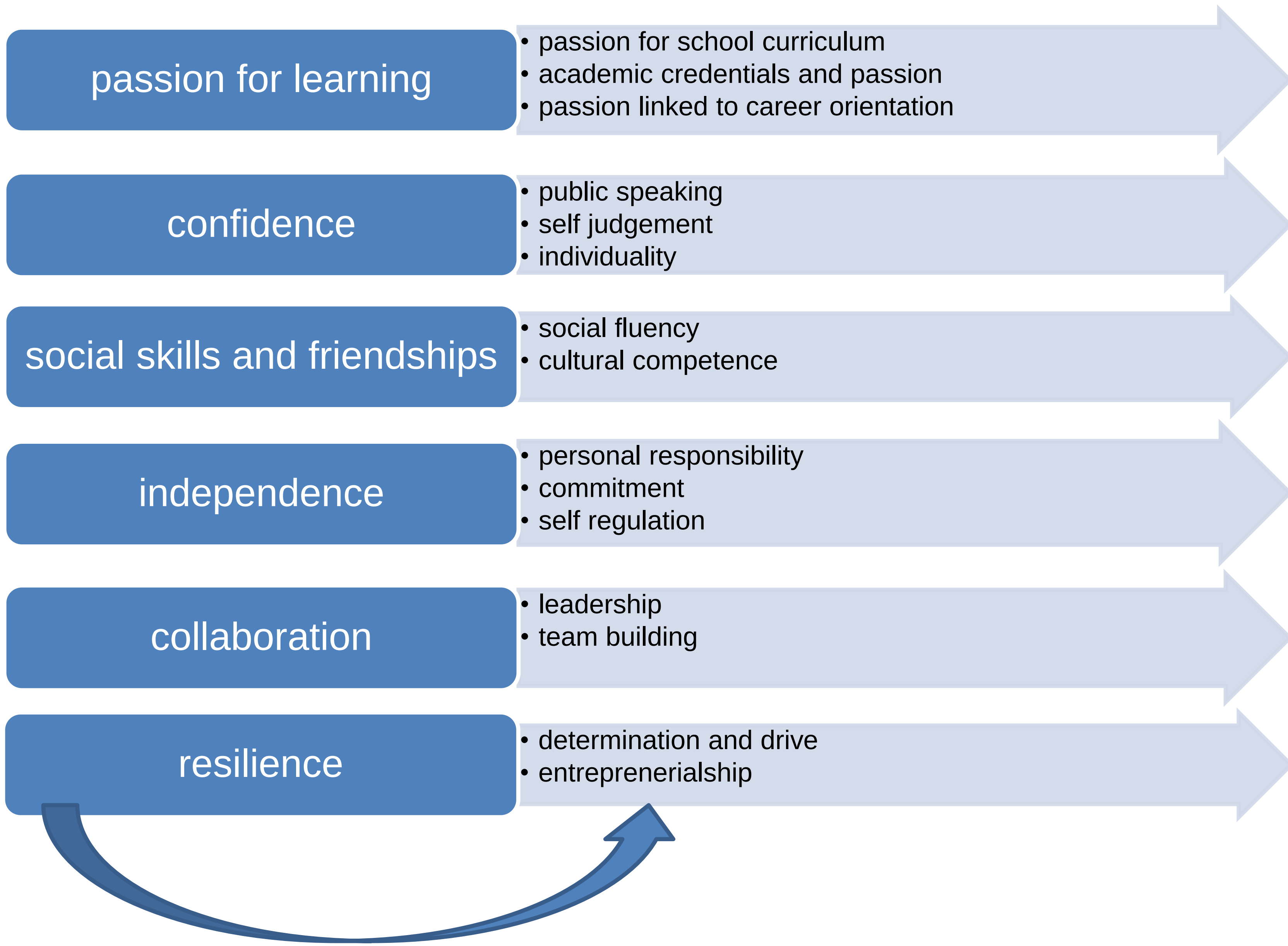
Reception parents

- passion for learning
- confidence
- collaboration
- social skills and friendships
- individuality/hutzpah
- independence
- resilience
- making choices

Year 6 parents

- passion for school and academic subjects
- public speaking
- social fluency and cultural competence
- leadership skills
- personal responsibility
- self judgment and self regulation
- determination and drive
- commitment
- team building and collaboration

Appendix 16: Transformative desirable dispositions Reception to Year 6 (ii)



Appendix 17: Research presentations

Paper Presentation at BERA Annual Conference, University of Leeds: Thursday 15th September 2016

Parental Aspiration and the Transfer of Intergenerational Advantage and Disadvantage

Lizbeth Bullough Bath Spa University

This is a paper that reports some of the findings from qualitative research undertaken for a PhD by an experienced early years practitioner and teacher educator. It proposes that findings regarding the importance to parents of the development of certain personal attributes in their children, are of much wider interest as they illuminate the continuing development in the turns of the working of social structure as people respond to changing circumstances. Taken from a series of semi-structured interviews with parents of children at key transition points in the English primary school, data is examined in terms of parental aspirations for children's futurity in three urban settings. Adopting a constructivist grounded theory approach, this paper compares emerging data both to institutional habitus as well as parents' own social background and experiences. At the same time, parental perceptions are explored in how they relate to locational habitus underpinned by shared location, identity, values, biography and resources. Looking within the family, at family practices (Vincent and Ball, 2006), research investigates how the strong sense of belonging felt by dominant groups within an 'urban village' environment (Butler with Robson, 2003), with school and community culturally linked, may lead to exclusion of some families from differing socio-economic and cultural contexts.This paper proposes that parents are already life mapping for their children, particularly through the acquisition of specific personality traits which facilitate social fluency, adaptability and resilience (Reay et al, 2011). Relating these desirable dispositions to dominant social narratives, for example employability, provides a rich context for the interpretation of data, where children are being prepared in terms of both 'masterful learning dispositions' (Siraj-Blatchford, 2010) and 'occupational competencies' (Vincent and Ball, 2006: 164). Parental attitudes to higher education, against a background of life planning, additionally suggest a changing perception towards higher education, with ambiguity regarding the pursuit of a university degree accentuated by high tuition fees, economic instability and uncertainty as to its value and whether future investment is likely to be suitably rewarded.

Keywords: aspiration, dispositions, social narratives

Butler, T. with Robson, G. (2003) *London Calling*. Oxford and New York: BERG

Siraj-Blatchford, I. (2010) 'Learning in the home and in school: how working class children succeed against the odds. *BERJ*. 36 (3); 463-482

Reay, D., Crozier, G., and James, D. (2011) *White Middle Class Identities and Urban Schooling*. London: Palgrave MacMillan

Vincent, C. & Ball, S. (2006) *Childcare, Choice and Class Practices*. London: Routledge

Parental aspiration and the transfer of inter-generational advantage/disadvantage: Lizbeth Bullough

Sutton Trust Summer School: Thursday 25th June, 2015 (11.15-12.15)

Objectives	• To explore research into parental aspiration and the intergenerational transfer of advantage and disadvantage. • To consider the possible impact of learning dispositions regarding children's futurity. • To engage with literature in order to identify internal and external barriers that may limit perceived aspiration and progression. • To consider implications for teachers in terms of young people's aspirational identity, and discuss strategies to support development of key skills.
Session information	Participants will have the opportunity to: • become acquainted with current and recent research related to aspiration, examining possible implications regarding life chances and choices of children and young people. • discuss the meaning of aspiration, and identify barriers that may limit aspiration and progression. • investigate links between parental aspiration and children's futurity, with consideration given to differing socio-economic and cultural contexts. • consider the connections between children's futurity and the changing context of the labour market. • identify implications regarding practice at grass roots level throughout all key phases, particularly in the light of theory. • evaluate their own school community context regarding the institutional view of aspiration, and how they can make it relevant to their pupils. *Following a presentation outlining recent research in the field of aspiration, an interactive workshop will provide opportunity for collaborative participation and discussion where participants can consider implications which may be relevant to their own school context.*

Key texts	Brown, P. and Lauder, H. (2011) *The Global Auction*. Oxford and New York: OUP Butler, T., and Hamnett, C. (2011) *Ethnicity, Class and Aspiration*. Bristol: Policy Press Menzies, L. (2013) Educational Aspirations: How English Schools Can Work With Parents To Keep Them On Track. *JRF Viewpoint*. Jan 2013 Riddell, R. (2010) *aspiration, identity and Self-Belief*. Stoke on Trent, UK: Trentham Siraj-Blatchford, I. (2010) 'Learning in the home and in school: how working class children succeed against the odds. *BERJ*. 36 (3); 463-482 Strand ,S. and Winston, J. (2008) *Educational aspirations in inner city schools*. University of Warwick. On-line at: http://go.warwick.ac.uk/wrap Vincent, C. & Ball, S. (2006) *Childcare, Choice and Class Practices.* London: Routledge
Additional readings	Bradley, H.; Abrahams, J.; Bathmaker, A.; Beedell, P.; Hoare, A.; Ingram, N.; Mellor, J. and Waller, R. (2013) The Paired Peers Project (2010-2013) *Year 3 Report* Bristol July 2013 Brown, P. Lauder, H and Ashton, D. (2008) Education, Globalisation and the knowledge economy. *A commentary by the Teaching and Learning programme*. On-line: http://www.tlrp.org/proj/phase111/assoc_brown.html Claxton, G. (2002) *Building Learning Power: Helping young people to become better learners*. Bristol: TLO Fernstein, L., Duckworth, K., Sabates, R. (2004) A Model of the Inter-generational Transmission of Educational Success. *Wider Benefits of Learning Research Report No. 10*. Institute of Education, London : WBL Lareau, A. (2003) *Unequal childhoods: Class, Race and Family life*. California: University of California Press Little, S. (2012) Raising Aspirations: Regional Education Expertise Forum (REEF) *Research Briefing* at : http://www.collaborationsheffield.co.uk/assets/pdf/raising-aspirations-leaflet.pdf Sissons, P. (2011) The Hourglass and the Escalator. *Report for the Bottom Ten Million research programme*: The Work Foundation