

**'I'M EXCITED BUT, I DON'T WANT TO BE
UNREALISTIC'**

**THE ROLE OF HOPE IN SHAPING ASPIRATIONS OF WORKING
CLASS YOUNG PEOPLE IN LEICESTER TOWARDS HIGHER
EDUCATION**

**Thesis submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
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By

**Thomas Andrew Grant
Department of Geography
University of Leicester**

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Abstract

This study questions how young people hope, aspire and plan towards the future, with a particular emphasis on their perceptions and attitudes towards attending university. Higher Education (HE) has become a mainstream part of transitioning towards adulthood for many young people in the UK; however there remains a political concern that participation rates are unevenly distributed across the country. Widening Participation attempts to redress this inequality amongst those from underrepresented groups. This study therefore illuminates what influences young people's educational aspirations.

Working with three secondary schools located in traditionally white working class areas of social housing in the city of Leicester, I used participatory and creative methods to investigate the educational aspirations of working class pupils. I contend that school expectations often differed greatly from the culture of the estate, where education was seldom valued. For some, there was evidence of a clear dissonance between their personal aspirations and those 'high aspirations' for educational success which their school promoted. However, the idea that an 'estate culture' exists was often challenged by other young people, many of whom did aspire to go to university. I found that this aspiration often clashed with family expectations. The process of (re)producing aspirations was often tangled, complex and confusing for young people as they negotiated feelings of close attachment to their neighbourhood, friends and family. This was also complicated by external expectations from schools to 'raise their aspirations' by becoming more mobile and successful (middle class) individuals.

My original contribution to knowledge is to empirically test Webb's (2007) hope theory to illuminate how young people use hope when setting aspirations for the future. I question how the conscious act of setting goals as an aspiration, interrelates with the subconscious and embedded understanding of young people's own class identities (habitus).

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Acronyms

Acronym	Full meaning
A-Levels	Advanced Levels
BSF	Building Schools for the Future
DBIS	Department for Business Innovation and Skills
DfE	Department for Education
DfES	Department for Education and Schools
EiC	Excellence in Communities
EMA	Education Maintenance Allowance
FSM	Free School Meals
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
HE	Higher Education
HEI	Higher Education Institution
LSOA	Lower Super Output Area
MEG	Minority Ethnic Groups
OFFA	Office for Fair Access
OFSTED	Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills
ONS	Office for National Statistics
PAR	Participatory Action Research
ROP	Realising Opportunities Programme
WP	Widening Participation

Chapter 1

Introduction

For the last 20 years, in Britain, the career aspirations of working class youths have been framed as a political problem, with targeted intervention to address issues of social exclusion, poor educational attainment and low aspirations, which are seen as barriers towards helping young people achieve success. I question these assumptions with a particular focus on policies aimed at raising young people's aspirations. I engaged with groups of young people in different areas of Leicester about their educational experiences and attitudes of learning and school to understand their relationship to formal education. I also investigated young people's orientation to the future by gaining an insight into their hopes and aspirations, but also their fears as they transitioned towards adulthood. I also explored their perceptions of Higher Education (HE) and the role university might have in their future lives.

1.1 Widening Participation, Aspiration and Educational Failure

Intervention into young people's aspirations has been a central part of Widening Participation (WP) policy since the late 1990s as New Labour attempted to increase participation rates amongst underrepresented groups. Widening participation seeks to address issues of low attainment and aspirations which prevent young people from attending university (DBIS 2010). Brown (2012) has highlighted these policies often had a geographic emphasis to target those from underrepresented groups in areas of deprivation in a bid to 'raise' their aspirations. It has been argued that within WP policy, the drive to secure economic competitiveness often undermines the social justice and equality agenda (Archer 2007). Equally WP policy has also tended to focus on promoting middle class values and aspirations which risk undermining other potential paths towards employment (Watts and Bridges 2006; Brown 2011), and seeks to make working class young people 'fit in' to middle class universities (Archer et al. 2003).

Under New Labour and then more recently the Conservative-led Coalition government there has been an increased political emphasis on targeting working class groups (Greenbank 2006). Policies were introduced to 'narrow the gap' for those from disadvantaged groups and an

emphasis placed on improving social mobility (Cabinet Office 2009; 2011). These policies were built upon the dual purpose of, firstly, maintaining economic competitiveness in a global economy by having a large graduate work force and secondly upon issues of social justice (Whitty 2011).

I question the consequences of absorbing a 'politics of aspiration' within WP policy (Raco 2009; Sellar and Gale 2011) and the intended and unintended consequences it has not only on individuals but on the social justice imperative which New Labour used as a rationale for promoting HE. The WP agenda therefore forms an important backbone to this thesis because I wanted to understand how young people developed their aspirations for adult life and in particular towards university and how the schools intervened to help raise their aspirations. Whilst my research is not an investigation into any particular WP initiative *per se*, I drew on WP selection criteria to select the schools and young people.

1.2 Social Class and Underrepresented Groups

The concept of social class was once a reliable and trustworthy social measure. Whilst sociologists might argue over the nature of class and its definition, as a concept it was largely regarded as important in understanding and ordering social relations (Butler and Robson 2003). However, in the 1990s the notion of class was questioned. Proponents of individualisation theory such as Giddens (1991) and Beck (1992) argued for a 'third way', and for the effective end of class-based analysis. Whilst I agree that class has become less prominent within society, I argue that it still remains an important part of identity, particularly in how people compare themselves to others. Savage et al. (2001) offer an alternative 'third way.' They argue (2001: 875) that 'whilst class identities are ambivalent [and weak], they are also structured and coherent in their own terms.' The weakening of class identity does not mean it is unimportant or that it does not matter: people are still aware of class. Instead people might position class as a resource which shapes identity, rather than necessarily being identity as a marker in and of itself.

For Savage (2001), Bourdieu's ideas about class being structural means that class imposes such power over people's lives that they may struggle to articulate it using class terms. This means that 'people do not recognise its [class] structural importance to their lives' (Butler and Robson 2003:17). Savage et al. (2001) argue that what is often regarded as the end of class, might

actually be a resistance to people labelling and socially fixing themselves. They argue that people tend to understand themselves as individuals and juxtapose themselves against social class which they use as a social benchmark. It is this benchmark which I am particularly interested in. I therefore explore how Bourdieu's (1986b) concept of class as being structural is expressed unconsciously by young people. I draw on work by Bourdieu to understand the complex social structures which shape young people's lives; the social 'fields' in which they live and the 'habitus' (rules) which govern them (See section 3.4).

I argue that class is structural and continues to inform and shape young people's lives, identities and decisions about the future, even if its prominence within society is seldom articulated. The fact that class is structural means that it might be difficult for young people to identify and articulate class, in that it is something which is ingrained and embedded through the process of socialisation. I also argue that young people use social benchmarks as a means to juxtapose their lives against others which informs a class understanding of their position within society. Here, I argue they are assembling their lives as they compare themselves against others. By comparing their lives, this means that they not only identify difference between themselves and others, but are solidifying their own identity.

Savage et al. (2001) highlight that there is a need to explain the 'growing middle' [class] which advocates of individualisation theory argue reveals that class is no longer relevant to society (Butler and Robson 2003:17). I am therefore also interested in exploring how middle class lifestyles become a benchmark for young people and policymakers alike. Widening participation and educational policy and practice has historically tended to favour middle class children (Reay 2008, Whitty 2011) and helps the middle classes maintain social advantage over those from working class backgrounds (Ball 2003). Indeed, WP promotes very clearly a middle class lifestyle by which HE is the means to achieve social mobility (Brown 2012). I am therefore interested in questioning, how do ideas of a middle class life become a benchmark by which teaching staff and working class young people come to measure and juxtapose their lives against when thinking about the future. Is this something all young people 'buy into' or does this form of intervention create a place of resistance?

Within WP policy and practice the term 'underrepresented' is widely used. It is important to question how it is used to categorise young people. McLellan (2013:6) argues that WP policy speaks little of class, but rather the notion of working class has been replaced with terms like 'underrepresented', 'socio-economic disadvantaged', 'most disadvantaged' and 'poorer'. In many respects I agree. However, I argue that this is somewhat simplistic as underrepresented

groups also include other structural categories of gender and ethnicity, which can all be said to intersect to form various and complex identities in relation to participating in HE. Whilst it is true that the majority of those targeted by recent WP interventions are working class (Greenbank 2006), it is somewhat problematic to argue that 'underrepresented' has become synonymous with working class. I am therefore interested in how various class fractions exist and engage in society in diverse ways.

Individualisation theory has the effect of diminishing the notion of class. Diminishing the importance of class in society makes it convenient, on a political level, because it takes out some of the complexity that surrounds people's identities. It therefore simplifies how inequality is understood because it forms the basis upon which differences in aspiration and attainment can be reduced to the personal and moral failing of the individual (Bright 2011).

Class remains an important, but not always articulated identity for many people. Indeed as I reveal in this research, young people acknowledged clear and persistent differences in what they perceived and how they compared themselves to middle class students. Within this study I am interested in understanding how the nuances of working class identity intersect with gender and ethnicity and how class comes to shape young people's educational experiences, expectations and aspirations for the future.

1.3 Widening Participation Practice

Widening participation initiatives aim to help those from underrepresented groups or those who are the first in their families to attend HE by improving their skills, qualifications and career prospects (Walker 2008; Miller and Smith 2011). They engage academically able young people in a variety of attainment and aspiration-raising activities which include campus visits, master classes, mentoring schemes and summer school placements at universities (Doyle and Griffin 2012). The aim of recent WP interventions has been orientated towards addressing young people's aspirations. They attempt to change the attitudes and expectations of those from underrepresented groups to regard HE as important and beneficial to their lives (Baxter et al. 2007).

The criteria and language used for identifying those for WP intervention has often changed (e.g. 'underrepresented' and 'first in their family'). This ensures that intervention reaches the right groups of people. For example, someone might come from an underrepresented group

but have a family history of participation in university. Universities have also tended to focus on local geographical areas which are typically deprived and located close to the institution. The problem with identifying a WP cohort based on a geographical area is that people who do not need intervention might get included such as middle class families (Brown 2012). Another way of identifying WP students is through those who receive free school meals.

Apart from geographic location and family experience there are other criteria used for determining *who* should be targeted for intervention. There are four important factors to consider: gender, class, ethnicity and disability. It is important to note that the first three factors are identities which all young people have. Gillborn and Mirza (2000:23) argue identities of class, gender and ethnicity 'do not operate in isolation.' I explore how these affect the decisions young people who are from underrepresented groups make about going to university.

Aspiration-raising intervention has tended to promote an emphasis towards targeting the individual, rather than the more radical approach which seeks to target institutional change. Baxter et al. (2007) argue that the debate about the focus of WP has often had two different approaches; the first stresses the need to tackle structural differences, such as class, gender and ethnicity, and looks towards how the university experience can alter to accommodate such students. The second approach works more as a 'deficit model' that seeks to change the individual to make them 'fit' the current system. The former model is therefore a much more radical approach as it seeks institutional reform. The latter reflects the recent period of political intervention into WP initiatives. This research therefore investigates how aspiration-raising initiatives, through schools and universities, attempt to influence young people's aspirations and whether this carries any personal cost and risk for young people themselves.

1.4 Whiteness and Educational Failure

Closely linked to interventions which addressed young people's aspirations was the need to address educational failure. Within this thesis I am interested in two things, firstly the relationship between aspirations and educational failure and secondly the way in which educational failure shapes young white working class lives.

White working class failure in education has been a perennial problem facing politicians, schools and communities and has been an ongoing concern within government policy since at least the 1950s (Whitty 1985). Evans (2006) argues that despite education supposedly being the means to achieving opportunity based on merit and ability, actually social class and parental achievement still continue to determine young people's futures. With regard to educational failure in working class areas a number of conclusions are often drawn.

First, blame can be apportioned to schools and teachers, often for failing their pupils (Evans 2006). Second, young people themselves are responsible for failing and lacking aspiration (Atweh et al. 2008; Bright 2011); Finally, blame is targeted at parents for not pushing and encouraging their children to achieve (Reay 2008; Holloway and Pimlott-Wilson 2011). I explore how all these issues are engaged with by the schools. However, it is the latter two - those which blame young people and parents - which were of most interest to me. This is because as with having low aspirations, blame can be apportioned to young people and parents for deficiencies in attainment. I also question how various attitudes of young people towards education differ from the school culture, where more middle class norms are valued and encouraged and how this differs to young people's own educational aspirations.

Classic sociological research by Paul Willis (1981) questioned how young working class boys seemed to always get working class jobs. Willis considered how working class boys did not value school but resisted school culture, building an identity around this resistance. The idea of resistance has also been highlighted by Bright (2011) who showed how young people, from a former coal mining village in the Midlands of England, often exhibited 'resistant aspiration' with regard to education. Therefore, I have tried to understand, through this research, young people's own identity and the nuances, complexities, emotional ties (Brown 2011) and attachment to place (Hinton 2011) that exist and shape educational aspiration.

In researching young people's relationship to education I have considered the difference between the educational values and attitudes young people have and how these are shaped through place and the neighbourhoods where they live. By considering the enduring impact of social class and how this interacts with place, I contend (in a challenge to both Willis and Bright) that the idea that 'estate cultures' do not value education was often challenged by young people's personally held views and that the process of (re)producing aspirations was often tangled, complex and confusing for young people as they negotiated feelings of close attachment to the local neighbourhood, friends and family, with the external demand that they become more mobile and successful (middle class) individuals.

1.5 The City of Leicester

Leicester is located in the East Midlands region of England. The city has a population of 330,000 and is made up of over 50 different cultures and ethnic groups (LCC 2014). Whilst 45% of the population is White British, the city is ethnically diverse with the second largest groups being Asian / Asian British Indian accounting for 28% of the population. The city also has a small Black African / Caribbean and Black British population as well a wide range of other Asian and new White European groups. Whilst White British remains the largest local population group, this percentage share is about half that of the East Midlands average of 87% (LCC 2014).

Despite this high level of diversity, Leicester's different communities remain largely self-segregated according to race (Vidal-Hall 2003), with dominant localised ethnic populations e.g. largely White British or largely British Asian Indian areas. Unlike many other English cities that have experienced racial tensions, Leicester has largely avoided this since the 1970s. This might be due the fact that many of the city's local disadvantaged White communities had been relocated to newly built public housing estates prior to the 1970s. This left a large stock of cheap inner city housing in the city in the 1970s, which attracted many of the new incoming South Asian refugees from East Africa. This meant that Leicester's White and relatively disadvantaged communities tended not to live in close proximity with Leicester's growing minority ethnic population (Phillips 1981). Leicester's working class White communities tend to be concentrated in the rim housing estates which straddle the outer ring road in the south, east and north of the city.

This level of separation still tends to be maintained today, however Finney and Simpson (2009) question the negative connotations often associated with this assertion. They argue that whilst areas of Leicester do have a high proportion of a single minority ethnic groups, this does not equate to domination or ghettoization. Leicester's Latimer Ward, (where the boundaries have recently been redrawn and renamed to Belgrave Ward in 2015), has the highest proportion of a single minority group in the UK, with a 74% Indian population. Finney and Simpson (2009: 188) argue, 'this is far from a ghetto and cannot be compared with Chicago, where over half the Black population live in neighbourhoods that are more than 90% Black.' The same can be said of the population demographics of many of Leicester's traditionally White working class areas, which have between 70-75% White British populations. I therefore explore whether young people in my research adopted a narrative of segregation and outline their attitudes towards other ethnic groups.

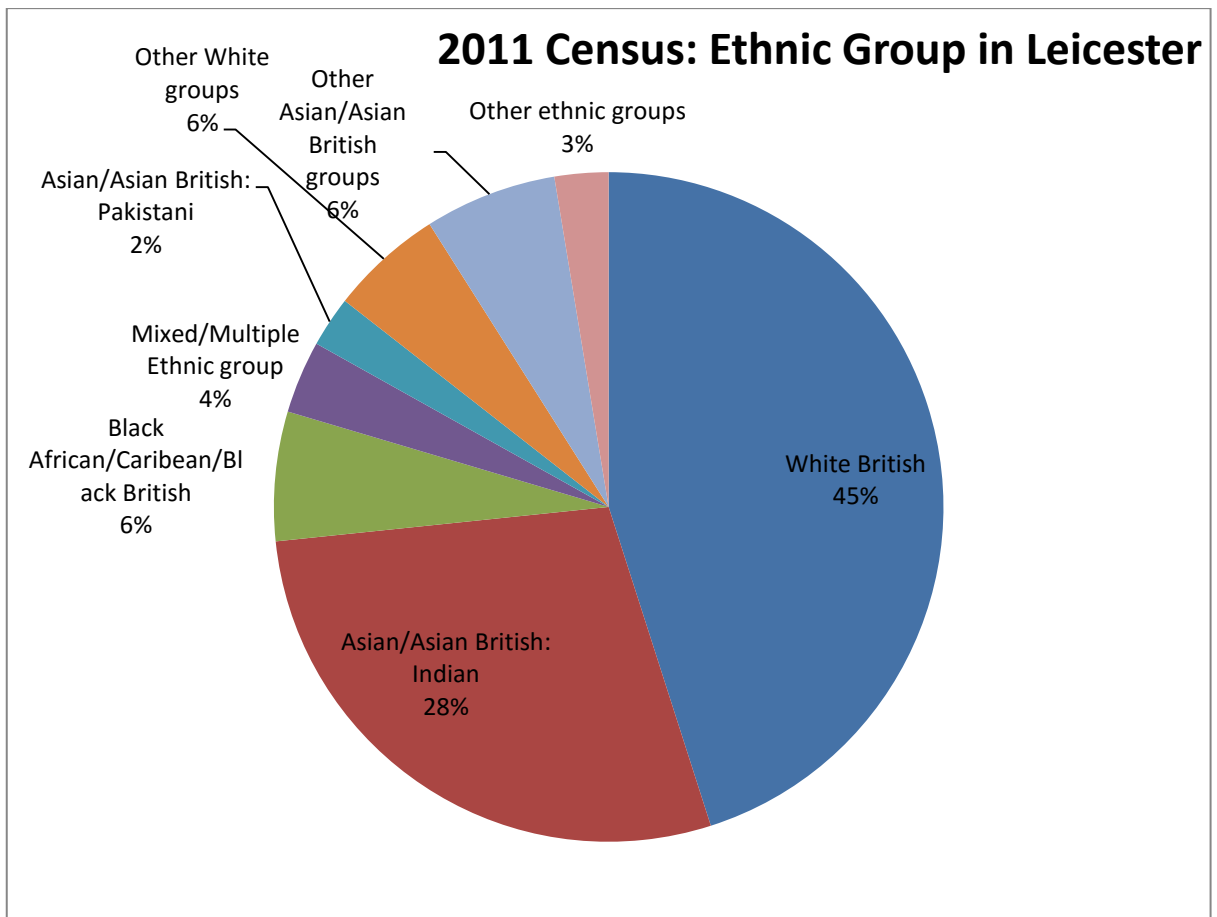


Figure 1: 2011 Census Findings 2011: Ethnicity and Migration for Leicester City (Leicester City Council 2012).

Leicester was once renowned for its light manufacturing base with 250 hosiery and 200 shoe manufacturing companies established in Leicester before the Second World War (Beazley 2006). This was, however, not to last and like many post-industrial cities in Britain, areas of the city now suffer from multiple deprivation. However, it has suffered less than other UK cities which were reliant on traditional heavy industries or one single sector or employer.

The north and the west areas of the city have the greatest levels of educational inequality and are regarded as being more deprived than the East and South East areas of the city. The figure below from the ONS (2014) shows educational deprivation in relation to national figure. Areas in dark blue are some of the most deprived Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) in the country with lighter shades of blue indicating increasingly less deprivation.

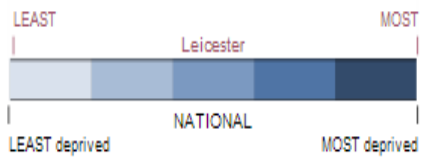
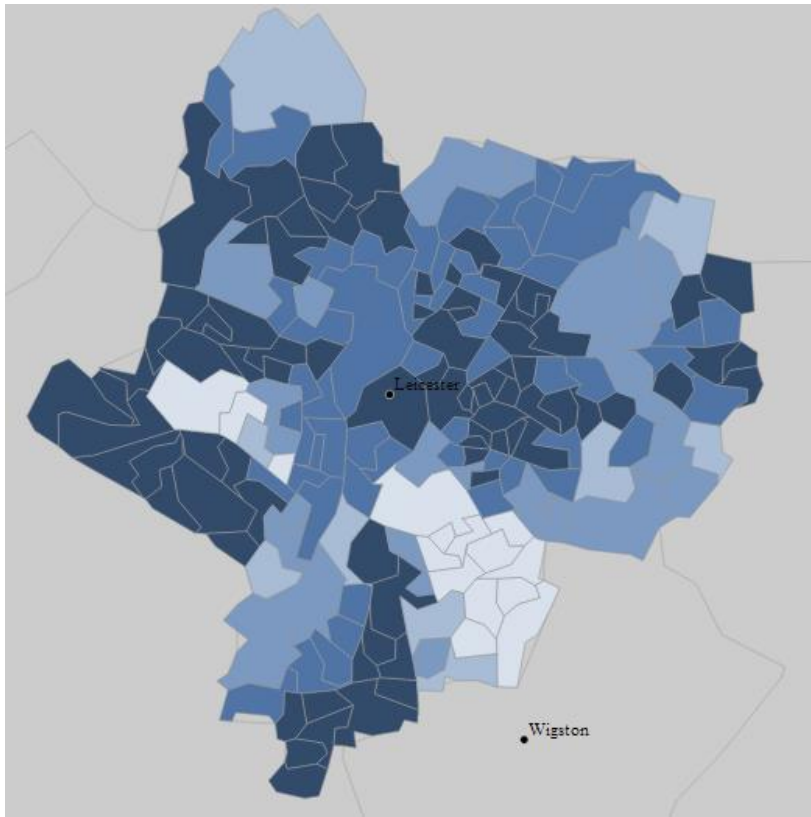


Figure 2: A map of the City of Leicester showing areas of educational deprivation according to council LSOAs (ONS 2014).

This data show that educational deprivation is located in particular pockets of the city, with the largest concentration towards the North and West and in the South. It is therefore important to question why this is the case and how ‘whiteness’ is framed in terms of educational failure, where there is such a diverse and growing ethnic minority British population within the city.

1.6 A Background to the Case Studies: Estates and Schools

All three schools used as case studies in this research serve or are located close to traditionally white working class areas of the city. All three neighbourhoods are located in areas of multiple deprivation. When selecting the communities and schools to approach, I was aware of Leicester's great diversity and wide range of different ethnic and social groups which fall under the remit of WP outreach. Within Minority Ethnic Groups (MEGs), there are some groups that are underrepresented in HE, such as those from Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities, whilst others are overrepresented, such as people from the Indian and Chinese communities (Gilchrist et al. 2003). In Leicester, there are clear pockets of underrepresented MEGs which are deserving of research. However, due to the small scale nature of the research, I decided that the project should concentrate on one ethnic group. As my previous Masters research had focused on white working class areas of the city and this group was classed as a WP target group, I decided to focus on young people from white working class backgrounds within social economic groups III-V.

In terms of multiple deprivation, I am referring to areas which have LSOAs which are classed as being within the 10% most deprived within the country. This is also reflected in data taken from the Church Urban Fund where all three of the housing estates all sit within the bottom 12,000 out of 12,775 Church of England Parishes. Taking data from the Church Urban Fund (CUF) which measures levels of poverty and population demographics within Church of England Parishes, can give a broader idea of the whole estates which are usually included within parishes. (Parishes are usually smaller than Council Wards and larger than LSOAs often following the contours of the estates boundaries).

The Bradgate Estate Parish is ranked among the 10% most deprived of Church of England Parishes. It has relatively high child poverty at 36%, with a third of adults with no educational or vocational qualifications. The estate is slightly more affluent and has a larger mix of people from different ethnicities of the three estates, but it still suffers from high deprivation. There is a majority white population, with 41% being identified as non-white British (CUF 2014). The estate has a secondary school, Bradgate High School, with a student body of around 1,000 pupils.

The Lea Wood Estate Parish is also ranked among the 10% most deprived of Church of England Parishes. It has the highest levels of child poverty of the three estates at 45%, with the same percentage (45%) of adults with no qualifications and 78% of residents identifying themselves

as white British (CUF 2014). The estate hosts a mid-sized secondary school, Lea Wood College of about 800 pupils.

The Swithland Wood Estate Parish is also ranked in the 10% most deprived of Church of England Parishes. Much like the Bradgate Estate, it has high levels of child poverty at 43% and 46% of adults with no qualifications. It has a majority white population with 23% of local people being ethnically non-white British. The school, Swithland Wood Community College is mid-size with about 800 pupils. It is worth noting that despite being close to the boundaries of the Swithland Wood Estate, the catchment area largely circumvents the majority of the Estate; however it was clear during the research, when speaking to the young people and staff members, that many of the participants were from the neighbouring Swithland Wood estate. The other two schools (Lea Wood College and Bradgate High School) catchment areas did, however, largely follow the estate boundaries much more closely¹.

After decades of suffering educational failure, the city's schools have seen some improvements in their recent test results. Leicester schools have recently been praised by the Chief Inspector of Schools, Sir Michael Wilshaw for their improving in standards (Harrison 2013). All three schools within this study have improved their educational standards, being classed as 'good' by Ofsted and were under Local Authority control, at the time of research. This is significant as during this time the Coalition government was encouraging schools to transfer to Academy or Free School status, however within the areas under study this move has been resisted.

1.7 Why is it Important to study Widening Participation in Leicester?

Within Leicester, progression rates to HE across the three parliamentary constituencies vary greatly, but have all risen in recent years. The city, however, remains highly unequal, with a 20% difference in participation rates to university between Leicester East and Leicester West parliamentary constituencies. It is important to question why this might be the case. Leicester is a relatively segregated city with most notable separation being along ethnic and class lines.

Leicester East has an Asian / Asian British population of 58% (of which Asian / Asian British Indians make up the majority). White British people make up 28% of the population. In Leicester South the white British population is the largest, at 44%, with the second largest

¹ To protect the identity of the schools, references of catchment areas and OFSTED reports are not provided.

group being Asian/Asian British Indian at 25% (Cracknell et al. 2013). Leicester West has the largest British Indian population at 64% with the second largest group being Asian / Asian British Indian at 10% (Cracknell et al. 2013). These figures might help show some of the reasons for the big inequality in progression rates to HE, as those from the Asian/ Asian British Indian population are more likely to participate in HE compared to white British people.

Parliamentary Constituencies	1998/ 1999	2011/2012	Difference in percentage	Percentage increase achieved
Leicester East	34.4%	46%	11.6%	33.7%
Leicester South	32.1%	39.2%	7.1%	22.1%
Leicester West	18.7%	25.4%	6.7%	35.8%

Table 1: Participation rates to HE in Leicester’s Parliamentary Constituencies (HEFCE 2014).

Table 1 shows that HE participation rates have increased across Leicester. However, the gap between the highest and lowest constituency has risen from 15.7% in 1998/1999, to 20.6% in 2011/2012 (HEFCE 2014). This suggest that although HE participation has risen across the whole of Leicester and universities have attracted more students from the most deprived western areas of the city, this rise in participation was greater for those from more affluent middle class backgrounds in the south of the city (Schoon et al. 2001) and those from Asian/ Asian British Indian backgrounds in the East city. This means that areas in the west of the city, although seeing improvements are still lagging further behind the rest of the city in 2012 than they were in 1998. The role of race and ethnicity are therefore important contributors in determining HE participation rates. However, it should be noted that Leicester West starts from the lowest participation rate of all three in 1998/1999, but has achieved the highest percentage increase of 35.8% by 2011/2012.

Understanding how young people perceive HE in Leicester, particularly those from areas of deprivation is highly important for understanding how universities and schools can best target these young people. There is therefore a social justice imperative to study WP in Leicester to explain why, despite some improvement, there is a growing inequality in access to university.

Much of the WP research has tended to focus on London (Archer and Hutchings 2000; Archer et al. 2001; Archer and Yamashita 2003; Read et al. 2003; Burke 2011). Whilst some research has been undertaken in the East Midlands region - for example Bradley and Miller (2010) consider young people's perceptions of HE from an East Midland ex-coalmining town - little work has been done within the larger cities such as Leicester, sites which were less reliant on a single industrial employer. Leicester is, in many respects, similar to London in that it is ethnically diverse; however, it is also very different. Whilst Leicester can be regarded as a regional centre to the wider county of Leicestershire, it is by no means the global centre of trade and commerce that London is. This means that there are relatively fewer opportunities for graduate jobs. Indeed the graduate retention rate in the East Midlands is the lowest in the country with only 39.2% of graduates who studied in the East Midlands remaining there 6 months after graduating (Allen 2015). With low prospects for graduates locally, it is important to question how this affects young people as they come to make decisions about going to university.

Furthermore, WP research has tended to focus on those in school Years 11, 12 and 13 or on university undergraduates from WP backgrounds. I therefore investigated young people in school Years 8 and 10 as a means to consider their educational aspirations in the formative years, before they make a final decision about going to university. This is because towards the end of compulsory education, it is often too late for young people to achieve the grades needed for university. The study also builds on government policy which expects schools to expand careers advice to those from Year 8 (Watts 2013).

Leicestershire has three Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), the University of Leicester and De Montfort University (DMU) both located within the City and Loughborough University in the County. Both city universities are committed to ensuring fair access to those from underrepresented groups and have a good record of appealing to those from WP backgrounds. This is mainly due to their geographical location in a low skilled area of the Midlands and being located in a multicultural city. The University of Leicester received its Royal charter in 1958 and consistently features in the top 20 UK university league tables (University of Leicester 2015) and De Montfort University gained university status more recently in 1992 (prior to that being Leicester Polytechnic). This presence of two very different universities within the City provided scope within this study to explore how young people perceived these different local institutions. It also enabled me to investigate how universities implement WP policy and how they worked with the secondary schools in the research.

1.8 Research Questions

To undertake this research, I identified three core research questions which I have broken down into different parts:

1. What are young people's aspirations for future education and adult life and what influences them?

In researching what influenced young people's aspirations I was interested in understanding how class identity, place and young people's ability to hope, shaped their perceptions of the future. I also explored how schools went about (re)shaping and (re)forming young people's aspirations. I was particularly interested in how these differed from young people's *actual* aspirations.

2. What are young people's perceptions and expectation of Higher Education?

In researching young people's perceptions of university I was interested in understanding how the structural markers of class, gender and ethnicity shaped how young people approached thinking about Higher Education and whether this affected their expectations for the futures. I explored the particular, real and imagined barriers, young people living in Leicester had about attending university.

3. How do schools and universities in the research help those from underrepresented groups consider the Higher Education option?

The job of WP does not rest with universities or school in isolation. I was therefore interested in exploring the relationship the universities in Leicester have with the schools in this study and how they support schools to promote Higher Education amongst their pupils. In doing so, I looked to see whether there was any evidence from the research which could help inform WP at universities in Leicester to improve access locally.

1.9 Overview of the Thesis

Chapter 2 reviews three often interrelated but distinct areas of education policy over the past 20 years. I begin by examining some of the recent changes in secondary education and the

implication these have had for young people as they transition² beyond compulsory education. I then outline how HE has changed in Britain over the past 20 years and some of the major policies which have affected the sector. I also explore the changing way in which widening participation intervention has been promoted and critically question the various ways in which political emphases towards WP have changed. I chart the rise and fall of a 'politics of aspirations' within WP policy and how this has been incorporated within WP initiatives and the continued consequences this has had for those who fall short of these intervention measures. The chapter finishes with a robust discussion about the role that class, ethnicity and gender have in shaping young people's decisions about HE. I argue that previous research has highlighted how these factors often intersect and bring with it a real complexity as young people decide whether to attend university.

In Chapter 3, I set out my theoretical framework. I start by outlining some of the ways in which young people have transitioned from compulsory education to adult life since the Second World War. I then draw on Foucault's (1991) ideas of governmentality and the subjectification of the individual to suggest that today people are expected to be aspirational, self-governing, responsible individuals who are able to compete in an increasingly competitive and global labour market. This has coincided with a change in how the state seeks to provide for its citizens; from welfare to workfare. To explore how this new aspirational citizen is expected to transition to adulthood I argue that, in order to gain an understanding of young people's aspirations, it is vital to understand the start or the baseline of where they are coming from, in terms of their social experience and expectations for adult life. Here I argue that Bourdieu's concepts of 'field', 'habitus' and 'social capital' are useful as they can reveal what is unconscious and embedded within young people and which informs their perceptions and understanding of their place in the world. The chapter finishes by outlining how theorizations of hope developed in utopian studies and the philosophy of education can enable a better understanding of how young people set hope and aspirations toward the future and how this may differ across different historical periods and places. Hope theory can provide an analysis of what it really means for young people to raise their aspirations towards university.

Chapter 4 provides an explanation and justification of the methods used in the research. I explain how the young people were selected and how I collected qualitative data with the young people using participatory and creative techniques. I reflect on some of the limitations

² The transition period here can be regarded at 18-30 to reflect New Labour's target to get 50% of 18-30 year olds into HE.

and problems I encountered during the research and highlight how these often revealed interesting evidence about young people's lives.

Chapter 5 aims to outline, briefly, some ideas about the educational and career aspirations of the young people in the study and also what life is like for young people living on predominantly white working class housing estates in Leicester. In doing so, this chapter forms a foundation upon which the subsequent chapters follow – each chapter building on the one before. It is therefore important to outline the flow of the analysis chapters. I explore how young people in this study assemble their lives and how various ideas, discourses and material objects get grouped together, which form their identities and an understanding of the world around them. Here I draw on Rose's (1999) ideas to look at how young people assemble, manage and market themselves within an increasing neoliberal society.

In the second analysis chapter (Chapter 6), I take this approach further by investigating how young people are understood by schools and the ways in which schools attempt to re-orientate their dispositions and aspirations for the future. This I argue creates a problematic tension; a discord, where different understandings and constructions of the social and of scale, in some cases compete for different futures. In short, this means questioning not only how young people see themselves and construct their lives in the present, but also how they plan for their future and how this often differs from the expectations which schools and government policy have for pupils.

In the final analysis chapter, Chapter 7, I explore how young people plan, hope and aspire towards the future, specifically in relation to HE. As young people seek to pick through different (scaled) expectations placed on them by themselves, their families and school, I use Webb's (2007) hope theory to question what it means to raise one's aspirations as a working class young person and critically question the expectation which government policy and school practise places on young people.

In Chapter 8, I summarise some of my main findings, outlining the contributions I have made to this field and responding to the main research questions set out earlier. I suggest that young people hope in different modes when thinking about their future lives and that aspiration-raising intervention encourage a particular type of risky (resolute) mode of hope towards university. I also put forward a number of recommendations for WP policy and practice and suggest ways in which this research can be taken forward.

The following literature review begins by outlining the key policies which have affected the secondary education schools system in the UK.

Chapter 2

Policy and Literature Review

Higher Education and Widening Participation in the UK

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter I outline how government policy has changed over the past 20 years with respect to addressing issues of low participation to university amongst underrepresented groups. I provide an outline of recent changes to secondary education, as my research focuses on those in secondary school. I then outline changes to the HE sector which have directly and indirectly affected widening participation. I critically evaluate how WP intervention has addressed issues of low participation from underrepresented groups and how the emphasis has changed over the past 20 years. Recent interventions have largely focused on the need to address educational standards and to raise young people's aspirations (Brown 2012). The aspirations agenda has tried to normalise HE by targeting young people through hope-raising activities to set goals towards attending university. I question what 'raising aspirations' means for young people living in traditionally white working class communities and the implications it has for them as they plan their lives.

2.2 Changes to Educational Policy and the Secondary School System

In the past 20 years, two major initiatives have occurred which have focused on addressing educational standards and aspirations within schools. The first notable policy was 'Excellence in Cities' (EiC) which emerged from the UK Government's (DfES 1997: 38) White Paper, 'Excellence in Schools' where there was a commitment to:

Modernise comprehensive education to create inclusive schooling which provides a broad, flexible and motivating education that recognises the different talents of all children and delivers excellence for everyone.

EiC aimed to address socio-economic disadvantage and low educational attainment within major urban areas by offering funding to create partnerships between Local Authorities and schools (Kendall et al. 2005).

The partnerships worked together to address issues of low attainment and raise aspirations by building links with HEIs. This gave pupils an experience of university through summer schools. Measures also included expanding the 'Beacon School' program, where schools which were struggling with attainment could receive advice from other well performing schools in similar urban contexts. Advice was also provided to tackle issues such as truancy and disruptive behaviour, by setting up Learning Support Units and employing Learning Mentors (Blair 1999).

There was an egalitarian agenda to EiC, where it was argued that children should be able to achieve the same outcomes, across the country, regardless of their backgrounds or schooling (Brown 2012). The initiative passed through three phases, costing £386 million. At its peak it included 57 partnerships, with a third of all secondary schools taking part. Research by Kendall et al. (2005) suggests that EiC did help to address many of its aims, particularly in improving maths in the schools involved.

The second notable policy which arguably built on the EiC programme was the Academies Programme which targeted schools deemed to be failing. Launched in 2000, it aimed to address educational standards, low attainment and low aspirations (Purcell 2011). Former Prime Minister, Tony Blair argued:

Academies, of course, are specifically designed for the schools that are underperforming and failing; the beneficiaries being some of the poorest kids in the inner city... Academies were introduced in the areas of greatest challenge, harnessing the drive of external sponsors and strong school leadership to bring new hope to our most disadvantaged areas (Blair 2005).

This was perhaps one of New Labour's more controversial reforms of secondary education (particularly among teachers) (Ball 2009). It involved schools, identified as failing, being taken over and set up as independent, but publically funded, schools. Independent groups could apply to sponsor the schools which included business, faith and charity groups (Purcell 2011). There was devolution of power away from Local Authorities which gave academies and head teachers greater autonomy and freedom to create their own school ethos and identity (Ball 2009).

New Labour also committed to an ambitious project to rebuild or redevelop every secondary school in the country by 2020, through the 'Building Schools for the Future' programme (BSF) (Den Besten et al. 2011). The BSF programme was designed not only to transform the educational outcomes for pupils by inspiring and motivating them, but it also promised to transform local communities that the school served. However, these plans have been criticised for drawing on a utopian impulse for change but failing to bring about some of the radical (even utopian) changes promised (Kraftl 2012).

The arrival of the Coalition government in 2010 saw the BSF programme abolished with 715 schools missing out on funding for new school buildings (Curtis 2010). However, the Coalition built on New Labour's Academy Schools Programme, rolling out its Free School Programme, initially open to any outstanding school, but which was later extended to all state schools. Like the Academies programme, this intervention provided greater autonomy to schools and head teachers (DfE 2010). There has also been a push to promote partnership between Free Schools known as Multi Academy Trusts. The aim of these chains is to provide accountability and support with the most successful schools heading these up. Michael Gove, then Minister for Education argued:

But autonomy isn't just a mechanism for reversing underperformance - it works for accelerating high performance as well... We began by allowing any outstanding school to convert to an Academy. And now we're enabling more schools to reap the benefits of autonomy by letting any schools apply for academy status - provided it's teamed with a high-performing school (Gove 2011).

However, for schools deemed to be failing academically, the Coalition argued that these could also be converted into Free schools. More recently in 2015, mandatory powers were introduced to convert all failing schools judged as 'inadequate' into Free Schools (Morgan 2015). A key theme which connects educational policy, in this section, with WP outreach is that they all seek to address educational failure amongst pupils by raising standards in education and targeting young people's 'low' aspirations.

2.3 A History of Higher Education Policy and Widening Participation Initiatives

Table 2: Higher Education and Widening Participation Time Line	
1992	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • End of the Binary Divide between polytechnics and universities (motivated to reduce ‘prestige inequalities’ (Kettley 2007).
1995	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standard registration fee introduced.
1997	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Dearing Report - opened the way to allow undergraduate fees (Watson 2011) and encouraged widening participation for those from underrepresented groups (Kettley 2007).
1998	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching and Higher Education Act - brought in changes to student loans.
2001	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aimhigher: Excellence Challenge established (Doyle et al. 2012).
2003	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • White Paper leading to variable fees and new universities without award powers (Watson 2011). • Aimhigher: Partnership for Progression established (Doyle et al. 2012).
2004	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher Education Act 2004 – revision to university funding and variable fee which sparked concerns that those from less privileged background might be discouraged by fees and variable top ups (Kettley 2007). • Aimhigher integrated into single initiative (Doyle et al. 2012). • Office for Fair Access established. • Education Maintenance Allowance made wide stream.
2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Variable Tuition fees start. • Universities required to have a fair ‘Access Agreements’ to charge maximum £3000.
2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DBIS White paper- Higher Ambitions: The future of universities in a knowledge based economy (Watson 2011).
2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brown Review: proposes higher fees for undergraduates (Watson 2011). • Realising Opportunities WP initiative begins working with 12 research intensive universities to increase access amongst underrepresented groups (Realising Opportunities Website 2012). • Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission created.
2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DBIS White Paper – Higher Education: Students at the heart of the system. • Aimhigher discontinued (Doyle et al. 2012). • EMA discontinued and replaced with 16-19 Bursary Scheme in September 2011. • Education Act: Leads to increased tuition fees to up to £9000, raised loan repayment threshold to £21,000 from 2012 and saw greater responsibility placed onto universities to widen participation.
2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher Fees introduced (Capped at £9000). • National Scholarship Programme set up.
2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Scholarship Programme ends. • Student Maintenance Grant replaced with loans by 2016.

The expansion of the UK HE sector, as highlighted in Table 2, has been an ongoing concern for successive UK governments for a number of reasons. The first draws on economic and employment principles, which argue that the UK requires a large graduate trained work force to maintain its competitive advantage, within an increasingly globalised economy. This has tended to be a central feature of government policy (DBIS 2009).

The second relates to issues of social justice by increasing participation rates of underrepresented groups. New Labour, promoted an equality discourse, to ensure that those from underrepresented groups had an equal chance of attending university and chances of securing social mobility. More recently, the Coalition government promoted a fairness discourse to ensure those from underrepresented groups had a fair chance of accessing elite universities (e.g. Oxbridge and Russell Group institutions (Brown 2012)). Whilst expanding HE can be regarded in both economic and social justice terms, the pursuit of both means that the equality and fairness agendas risk being undermined by the economic agenda (Archer 2007). Within this thesis I question how the neoliberal economic and political agenda might affect attempts to improve participation amongst underrepresented groups.

In 1992 the *Further and Higher Education Act* saw the end of the binary divide between Polytechnics and Universities. This allowed for the spread of university-level education, increasingly seen as important to the economy, to occur with the Polytechnics now able to call themselves universities and have powers to award their own degrees (Watson and Bowden 1999). The Act aimed to reduce 'prestige inequality' between institutions and to promote greater access for more students (Kettley 2007). However, where Polytechnics once focused on vocational courses, teaching strong skill based education, it can be argued the abolition of this divide has devalued strong skill based learning and that the teaching of skills has now been replaced on many HE courses which now focus on dispositions. This means that what is learnt at university can be transferred to the place of work in the form of transferable skills.

The 1990s also saw growth in the university sector through 'efficiency drives' that increased the typical staff student ratio, almost doubling it (Watson and Bowden 1999). With greater efficiency in the system, larger numbers of students in HE posed the problem of how to pay for them. This was also coupled with a growing sense among politicians and sections of the public that graduates should bear at least some of the cost of attending university. There was also a concern that university budgets were becoming squeezed, with the danger that the HE system

would fall into financial deficit. This situation led to the charging of a standard student registration fee in 1995. This laid the foundations upon which tuition fees were introduced under the New Labour government (Watson and Bowden 1999).

In 1997 New Labour were elected in a landslide victory taking over from a Conservative government beleaguered by the financial crisis of 'Black Wednesday' and splits within the party over the EU (BBC News 15 April 2005). The Dearing Report was also published in 1997, which provided evidence on university funding. The report had been commissioned by the previous Conservative government and had gained cross party support (Watson 2011). It recommended charging variable fees for students, which were introduced through the 2004 Education Act (Kettley 2007). It also argued for widening participation to HE for those from underrepresented groups (Kettley 2007), and identified groups that were deemed to be underrepresented. The report highlighted that those in socioeconomic groups III to V, or from particular ethnic minority groups and people with disabilities should be targeted through WP schemes (Miller and Smith 2011). The New Labour government set a national benchmark of 50% of young people (18-30) entering HE by 2010 (Burke 2006; DBIS 2009). In reality, university participation amongst young people has risen from 30% in the mid-1990s to 36% towards the end of 2010. The 2010/2011 cohort had 239,000 students entering university compared to 162,000 students in 1994/1995 (HEFCE 2011). Although New Labour missed its ambitious target, it did achieve a steady rise in participation rates.

A key policy introduced by New Labour to help those from underrepresented groups was a WP initiative called 'Aimhigher.' This worked with young people from disadvantaged backgrounds to help improve attainments and 'raise aspirations' towards university. The initiative formed partnerships between schools, colleges and universities, aiming to bring the various institutions together. These partnerships would be instrumental in demystifying HE for those from underrepresented groups. It took the form of university taster sessions and summer schools as well as visits to schools from university students. By introducing school and college students to HE students, the aim was to help them to see that university was possible for 'people like them' and to give them confidence about applying to university (Hatt et al. 2008).

The initiative reached its developed form in 2004 after the success of 'Aimhigher: Excellence Challenge' established in 2001 and 'Aimhigher: Partnership for Progression' established in 2003 (Doyle et al. 2012). The project received £136 million annually in government funding.

However, this figure was lowered to £78 million before the Aimhigher initiative was finally ended by a new Conservative led Coalition in July 2011 (Attwood 2010).

Brown (2012) argues that a discourse of equality formed a cornerstone of the initial stages of WP intervention (e.g. Excellence in Cities) during the first term of the New Labour government (1997-2001). There was an emphasis on raising educational standards to ensure that barriers which prevented young people from achieving their aspirations were removed. The focus here was to help young people succeed in their education and achieve their own aspirations and potential. Labour Minister David Blunkett (1997: 3) argued:

Educational attainment encourages aspiration and self-belief in the next generation, and it is through family learning, as well as scholarship through formal schooling, that success will come...We are talking about investing in human capital in the age of knowledge. To compete in the global economy, to live in a civilised society and to develop the talents of each and every one of us, we will have to unlock the potential of every young person. By doing so, each can flourish, building on their own strengths and developing their own special talents.

Aspirations were regarded as central to success, but New Labour gave little detailed thought to what these aspirations should look like and entail. However, the way in which aspiration was framed by New Labour started to change as early as 1999, where failure in education could be attributed by a poverty of aspirations and expectation.

Yes, deprivation makes it a mountain to climb, disadvantage makes it harder to achieve, but children from poor backgrounds are no less intelligent, no less able to succeed. Conference, it is poverty of expectation and aspiration, and not poverty of income, that makes the biggest difference between success and failure. We can see it around us (Blunkett 1999).

The equity discourse initially promoted soon changed during New Labour's second and third term (2001-2010) towards encouraging young people to 'raise' their aspirations towards university. The emphasis shifted away from helping young people achieve their potential, towards trying to change their aspirations towards HE. This often led to the notion that HE should be prioritised over other (more vocational or familial) ambitions.

It is especially important that those who come from families without a tradition of going to higher education, and whose aspirations are low, are supported both in achieving their full potential *before university*, and in aspiring to go on to further study. (DfES 2003: 69 *emphasis mine*).

There is a problematic assumption here that reaching one's 'full potential' means going to university. Aspirations which are not directed towards university were regarded as being lower than those which strive towards HE. (I explore the consequences of the politics and language of aspirations within WP policy in section 3.5). Therefore, New Labour started to shape and normalise the HE route.

The Office for Fair Access (OFFA) was set up in 2004 to ensure that those from underrepresented groups had a fair chance of entering HE. Universities were required (and still are) to complete access agreements in order to charge the full tuition fee cap of £3000 (later to rise to £9000 in 2012), to ensure continued fair access for underrepresented groups. OFFA assesses each access agreement and seeks to provide advice around best practice to institutions. However, OFFA has no power to intervene in the courses universities run and in their teaching practices (Clark 2004).

The introduction of the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) in 2004 provided a weekly bursary for young people from low income families (with a combined income of under £30,000) to allow them to stay on at school or college to obtain qualifications beyond GCSEs, such as A-Levels or vocational equivalents. It was further hoped that this incentive would help increase young people's options and allow more of them to enter into HE (BBC Website, 28 March 2011).

The new Conservative and Liberal Democrat Coalition government in 2010 did not challenge the charging of variable tuition fees with the partial acceptance of the Browne (2010) report. The report, which gained cross party support, argued for the removal of the tuition fee cap and the introduction of a government supported levy (Watson 2011). The final decision made by the Coalition was not to introduce a levy or to remove the tuition fee cap completely, but rather to raise the cap to £9,000, in some cases tripling tuition fees. The new fees are paid up front by the government and reclaimed through tax once the graduate reaches a certain level of earning (£21,000), and is repayable for 30 years following graduation (Watson 2011).

Under the new plans, individual universities are now responsible for WP initiatives, which they are required to provide if they wish to charge the higher level fees of £9,000 (DBIS 2011). This has resulted in changes to how WP outreach operates. Through Aimhigher, provision was once provided through partnerships between existing schools, colleges, HEIs and LEAs. Now this shift from publicly funding initiatives means there are implications, in terms of what intervention aims to achieve, but also a breaking down of some local partnerships, which may mean a lack of direct school involvement.

The Coalition government also brought a change in emphasis to WP policy towards addressing issues of fairness in education and fair access to elite universities (Brown 2012). Despite withdrawing funding for Aimhigher, the Coalition government continued funding the 'Realising Opportunities Programme', through the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills. Realising Opportunities is a national compact scheme which helps young people from underrepresented groups gain UCAS credits to attend more selective, research intensive universities. Compact schemes are nothing new to WP, with many universities offering their own local compact schemes. It is the geographic scope of Realising Opportunities which makes it unique. As a national scheme it works with 15 leading universities giving young people a wider choice of institutions to select from (ROP 2012). This has geographical implications for local universities attracting local young people, who now have more freedom and choice about where they can use their credits.

The backing of this initiative suggests that the Coalition wants to promote fairer access to research intensive institutions. Brown (2012: 100) argues that the motivation for fairness stems from a belief that 'every young person has the right to go as far as their abilities will allow them.' As such, funding for WP initiatives seems to have shifted away from equality of opportunities towards a discourse of fairness.

As part of their access agreements, many institutions are required to provide help to those from underrepresented groups in the form of fee waivers and scholarships. For example the University of Leicester currently (2014 / 2015 intake) has two scholarship packages open to students (University of Leicester 2014):

- 1) The Chancellor's Scholarship: This includes a £1,000 fee waiver for each year of study for those who earn AAB at A-Level.

- 2) The National Scholarship programme: This includes a £2,000 fee waiver in the first year and £1,000 for each of the following years a student is at university.

The National Scholarship Programme was set up in 2012 following the rise in tuition fees to provide £150 million to universities and contributed a minimum of £3,000 towards the cost of scholarships for undergraduate students from low income households. This funding however was decreased in 2014 to £50 million, with the project set to be terminated in 2015 (HEFCE 2013).

The major reform of student finance and tuition in 2012 was accompanied by a wide range of student protests and criticism among those who felt they had been promised social mobility through HE, but who now felt that the withdrawal of financial support from the government greatly damaged their educational and employment prospects (Brown 2013). The removal of EMA which was replaced in September 2011 by a much less generous 16-19 Bursary Scheme (Direct Gov, 16 July 2015), added to this discontent for those who were relying on such funding to help them bridge the gap to university.

The Conservatives have recently formed a majority UK government. The recent 2015 Chancellor's Budget announced plans to scrap the student maintenance grant in 2016 in favour of student loans (Direct Gov, 09 July 2015). This may well have implications for students from poorer backgrounds as they consider applying for university (Ali 2015); however it is not yet clear what effect this may have on participation rates.

2.4 The Use of 'Aspirations' in Public Policy

The use of the term 'aspirations' has been a key part of government policy that has spanned the last 15 years covering New Labour and the Coalition government where reforms to the modern welfare state have resulted in a shift from a 'politics of expectation' to a 'politics of aspiration' with a focus on creating the 'aspirational citizen' (Raco 2009: 436). In this section I question the use of 'aspiration' within policy and chart its rise and changing emphasis within WP. New Labour's initial attempts to raise attainment to ensure equal access to HE were quickly followed by interventions to raise aspirations towards HE. This looked to create responsible neoliberal citizens who could develop the necessary dispositions to align

themselves with the aims, priorities and technologies of government to produce a high skilled-high waged graduate work force (Rose 1999; Brown 2012). The role of the government was therefore to encourage and inspire people to take responsibility to achieve this (Brown et al. 2011). Prime Minister Tony Blair (2002) argued: 'We must not only lift people out of poverty. We must transform their horizons, aspirations and hopes as well.' This view suggests that aspirations and hope are not something that are personal but can be approached through collaboration between the individual and the state.

The use of aspiration in WP policy has been accused of promoting a 'deficit model' where young people can be represented and blamed for problems affecting the economy by failing to raise their own aspirations towards university (Baxter 2007). This means that policy is aligned to try to change individuals so that they might adapt and 'fit in' to be able to participate in HE (Archer et al. 2003). However, this focus means that the need for change within HEIs to accommodate young people from underrepresented groups often gets forgotten.

Concerns about the use of aspirations within WP policy have centred on how it often promotes a 'normalised' view of what it means to have 'high aspirations' and a successful life. Brown (2011) argues that policies which attempt to raise young people's aspirations towards university undermine alternative aspirations which are different to the conventional national norm. Here high aspirations equate to going to university. This leaves alternative (non-university) aspirations to be regarded as 'low aspirations.' For these young people there is a danger that they can be blamed and represented as deviating from that which will make the UK economy competitive and successful.

There was also a spatial element to New Labour's WP intervention. New Labour formed a link between local deprived neighbourhoods and low levels of social mobility. Young people from deprived neighbourhoods were often regarded as being 'fixed in place.' This made having low aspiration synonymous with being working class and living in disconnected geographical areas of deprivation. Brown (2012: 102) argues:

The association of working-class young people with the 'local' scale serves to fix them in place, drawing attention to their distance from the cosmopolitan habitus of higher education, even as the ultimate aim of widening participation initiatives is to enable mobility beyond these communities.

This acted, on the one hand, as a means to justify New Labour's interventions; however it also has the effect of stigmatising young people. By combining the discourse of aspirations with spatial targeting, young people from areas of deprivation could be regarded as having 'low aspirations' that were inappropriate compared to the (normatively) higher aspirations of the middle classes which were focused on being highly mobile, entering HE and achieving a successful professional career (Brown 2012). Towards the end of New Labour's time in office the aspiration agenda placed even more emphasis on changing individuals' aspirations by suggesting there was a need not just to transform, but now to *provide* people with hope.

"If we really want to improve social mobility in the long term we have to change people's aspirations. We have to give people the hope to aim for something higher"
(Pat McFadden in DBIS 2010: 3).

This shows the extent to which New Labour, towards the end of its third term, felt the need to intervene in the lives of people it deemed did not have the right dispositions towards being an 'aspirational' citizen. Tackling educational inequalities, which prevented young people achieving their potential and chosen aspirations, were not enough. Rather, as interventions like Aimhigher developed, the focus turned towards directing hope and aspirations that they might align with the aims and technologies of government.

Under the Coalition Government (2010-2015) there was a toning down of the use of aspirations within WP policy. With the end of Aimhigher, Sellar and Gale (2011: 122) have argued that the 'politics of aspirations' within WP in the UK has largely 'run its course' as WP priorities and responsibilities now rest with HEIs themselves. However, the rhetoric of 'raising aspirations' has continued within other government policies (e.g. work experience programme, community lead programmes) (DfE 2011), National Citizenship Service (Cabinet Office 2011) and Academies / Free Schools (DfE 2010). This suggests certain lifestyles were still deemed inappropriate and that New Labour's legacy of being aspirational equated to securing a professional job and becoming an appropriate middle class citizen. Here a normative and successful transition to adulthood was still regarded as attending HE. Whilst raising aspirations was no longer explicitly linked to attending university, through directly state-funded WP intervention, there were still undertones of a deficit approach which attempted to make working class people think and behave in more middle class ways. Furthermore, the legacy of Aimhigher meant that, within schools and HEIs, raising aspirations has become linked to HE through the form of best practice, where there is a danger that HE might continue to be prioritised at the expense of other options.

The Coalition continued New Labour's emphasis on providing aspirations. It placed emphasis on young people developing 'high' aspirations and regarded schools as central to achieving this.

It is therefore vital all young people have access to the inspiration and support they need to develop high aspirations (DfE, 2011: 8).

Schools should be engines of social mobility that provide every child with the knowledge, skills and aspirations they need to fulfil their potential (Cabinet Office 2011: 36).

It was not only regarded the job of schools to teach knowledge and skills, but there was now an additional emphasis to 'provide' and 'develop' aspirations. Here a shift occurred from the public and social realm of knowledge and skill, which to some degree are dependent on what the collective deems as relevant and of benefit to society, to intervening in the private and emotional realm of aspiration and hope for one's personal future, in order to shape people's dispositions.

The concept of 'raising aspirations' is now ostensibly out of the purview of WP intervention, at least in the sense of a top down governmental strategy. This means that whilst a shift has taken place, where aspiration-raising is now the responsibility of educational institutions (namely schools and HEIs), the explicit link between high aspirations and HE and how HE is prioritised has become less clear. One reason for the decoupling of aspiration from WP might be that over the past 15 years of interventions, such as Aimhigher, attending HE has become a more normative transition for young people from underrepresented groups. Furthermore, such practices that target low aspirations have also become normalised within schools, colleges and HEIs.

Universities have often continued what Aimhigher started, where intervention which raises aspirations towards university is still seen as a form of best practice. Here 'high aspirations' could be assumed to continue to mean attending university, but the term is still confusing. By shifting the emphasis on raising aspirations away from WP and giving greater emphasis to schools providing or teaching aspirations, the meaning of 'high aspiration' can now be seen to have the scope to include other ways of being that exist outside of the HE route. An example of this can be found in Allan Milburn's *University Challenge* report of 2012: "For those who do not aspire to higher education, new solutions need to be found to provide better opportunities to progress" (Cabinet Office 2012).

The legacy of partnerships through Aimhigher might also mean that within schools, raising aspirations may still exclusively equate to transitioning to HE. It is therefore important to consider the effect that this subtle change in policy will have on what it means to have 'high' aspirations for young people's lives. If the legacy of Aimhigher and WP initiatives has been to link high aspirations with HE, it can be said that the link between high aspiration and HE has been cemented within schools and HEIs in the form of best practice, which ultimately risks the continuation of elevating HE over other aspirations.

As well as schools assuming responsibility in this area, the Coalition continued New Labour's stance that *parents* are especially important in providing the aspirations for their children. The Coalition argued that parents should: 'Help their children by warm authoritative parenting, being actively involved in their learning and development, setting clear boundaries and holding high aspirations' (DfE 2011: 13). The responsibility for aspirations, as with New Labour (Brooks 2013), is also being placed at the feet of parents who are held responsible for their children's success through 'holding high aspirations.' Within the *Positive for Youth* (DfE 2011) report, the Coalition argues that poor parenting leads to poor aspirations. Therefore, for the Coalition the task of raising aspirations rests with *both* the parents, schools and young people.

The rationale behind focusing on aspirations has been questioned by Lauder et al. (2012) who assert that making a connection between having high aspirations and economic wellbeing is not guaranteed. They argue that the relationship between educational achievement and wages is no longer straightforward. This view has been supported by Rose and Baird (2013), who argue that many young people are showing 'high aspirations' for professional jobs. However, there is a lack of opportunities for young people to fulfil these aspirations. Therefore the relationship between aspirations and opportunities is something I address, particularly in relation to the question of what can be considered a realistic aspiration for working class young people today. This is not merely a theoretical question, but one which young people within this research were asking of themselves and each other.

More recently, the head of the Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission (SMCP 2014: iii), Allan Milburn has argued that the UK stands on the brink of becoming a nation divided by inequality and with few prospects for social mobility, unless future governments 'adopt radical new policies' to improve mobility within the country. The SMCP commission has in recent years moved away from using the term 'aspirations' in deficit terms, often acknowledging that HE might not be for everyone and that young people need to be helped to fulfil their aspirations regardless of the educational route they choose. In making this distinction, I argue

the commission is trying to steer the debate away from a deficit discourse towards helping young people fulfil their potential and chosen aspirations. This is reminiscent of New Labour's initial focus of WP, which emphasised equality by addressing issues of low attainment (Brown 2012). To achieve this, the Commission argues for improvements in careers advice.

Providing improved careers advice and guidance will ensure that young people can select educational routes that are suitable for them and allow them to achieve their aspirations and potential (SMCPC 2014: 90).

Unlike the Coalition government's policy towards social mobility, where there was a stated section on raising children's aspirations (Cabinet Office 2011), the Commission now argues that the primary focus of teachers and schools should be to raise educational standards and to narrow the gap in attainment.

The UK Government should ensure that raising standards and closing the attainment gap are the twin objectives for all teachers and all schools embedded throughout the schools system (SMCPC 2014: 63).

Whilst the issue of schools' responsibility to raise aspirations remains in the report, this however has little prominence. This suggests a turning point in how aspirations are engaged with. However, with the recent general election in 2015, it is unknown how the new Conservative government will respond to such recommendations. Initial budget plans do not look promising with a scrapping of the student maintenance grant. I argue that this is a far cry from the radical approach Milburn argues for.

Having explored how UK government policy has attempted to shape young people's aspirations, I now turn to review the literature of research which has looked at how structural factors of class, gender, ethnicity and place influence young people's choice to attend university.

2.5 Choosing University: How do Class, Gender, Ethnicity and Place Affect Participation Rates to University?

Issues of class identity, gender, ethnicity and place often interrelate and are key factors in young people's decisions about whether to attend university (Archer et al. 2003). Social class is regarded as an important factor in contributing towards social exclusion in HE (Reay 2001; Reay et al. 2002; Archer et al. 2003). For example, in 2001 for those from Socio-Economic Group I (professional class) aged 21-30, the percentage with a university degree as their highest level of education stood at 87%, compared to just 6% for those in the Socio-Economic V (unskilled class) (Gilchrist et al. 2003). As those from working class backgrounds make up the largest group of people from underrepresented groups in HE, they have been regarded as a key target group for achieving the aim of 50% participation rate for 18-30 year olds (Greenback 2006). Class often intersects with other social markers such as gender and ethnicity to (re)produce inequality amongst such groups (Burke 2006).

In terms of gender differences in access to HE, evidence suggests women are more likely to participate in HE across the population. The general trend within the UK as a whole is for 40% of women to enter HE compared to 32% of men. However, when considering different areas of the country, for those from the most disadvantaged areas (measured using POLAR 2 quintile classification³), women are 44% more likely to enter HE than men (HEFCE 2011).

Ethnicity also plays an important role in participation rates to university. It affects not only whether young people choose to attend university, but also can determine which university they choose to go. For example, certain ethnic minority groups tend to be concentrated in post-1992 universities (Tackey et al. 2011). Some ethnic minority groups tend to be underrepresented in Higher Education e.g. Black Caribbean, Bangladeshi and Pakistani. Other minority groups however, tend to be overrepresented such as Chinese, Indian and South East Asian (Gilchrist et al. 2003). It is when thinking about how class, gender and ethnicity intersect that a more nuanced and complex understanding is revealed about young people's identities and how these by proxy affect participation rates. For example, the Coalition government highlighted that participation for white teenagers is lower compared to most ethnic minority groups (Cabinet Office 2011). However, when gender is applied white working class boys are far less likely to go to university compared to white working class girls. It is estimated that only 6% of white working class boys eligible for FSM attend university (Paton 2008).

³ POLAR (Participation of Local Areas) has been updated three times. The most current is POLAR 3.

Here young people's identity which is formed through class, gender and ethnicity can become a proxy for other barriers to progression. For example the schools involved in this research all identified white working class boys to be at particular risk of not participating in HE. Here educational failure (Evans 2006), low parental aspirations and expectations (Holloway and Pimlott-Wilson 2011), low educational aspiration from children and local cultures and attitudes towards learning (Green and White 2008; Allen and Hollingworth 2013), can all be regarded as barriers to progression. It is however important to question how individual young people view their identity and their relationship to schools and education. In this thesis I critique the assumptions made by schools about these barriers and evaluate how young people themselves negotiate them. Central to this question is the kind of futures that young people hold for themselves and how this differs from the expectations placed on them from schools (I explore this question further in Chapters 5 and 6).

Widening Participation research has investigated working class young people who decide not to participate in university. Archer and Hutchings (2000) considered the perceived risks and benefits that non-participating working class young people associate with going to university. Despite regarding HE as having the potential for increasing personal income, this was often outweighed by the demands and risks associated with going to university (e.g. reduced chances in an overcrowded job market). Archer and Yamashita (2003) have also revealed that disadvantaged young people often viewed themselves as not being 'good enough' to attend university. This belief was often constructed through educational failure due to attending failing schools.

Widening Participation research, which has focused on issues relating to the student experience, has considered how young people's identity affects their choices to attend university. Reay (2001) highlighted how working class young people perceived how they would 'fit in' to university, either by keeping their authentic working class identity or by losing it to a middle class version. For some young people this tension resulted in them rejecting university as an option. Others felt that despite the danger of class transference, they would come out of university untouched. I argue that this tension involves more than identifying class as a category, as this experience may vary from person to person, but that it engenders an emotional and affective engagement with others and the world around them. Indeed I argue that young people in this research tended not to articulate their identity as 'working class.' However, there are clear structural differences in how they positioned and presented themselves against others from outside their social group.

Watts (2007) has also investigated the ways in which working class students, encouraged to apply to Oxbridge, dealt with issues of their identity when applying to university. For many, despite clearly having the academic ability, this was often played down. Young people often adapted their preferences towards what they regarded as more 'realistic' and modest outcomes for people from their social backgrounds. Therefore, issues of various class identities affect not only whether young people apply, but these concerns may persist through the students' time at university. In this study I was interested in exploring how various working class identities shaped young people's expectations about HE. I also questioned what young people themselves regarded as realistic futures for people from their social background.

One reason for hiding one's ability, when applying to university, might be young people's level of cultural and social capital which enables them to 'fit-in' - or not - to universities. Leese (2010), for example, found that young people entering a post-1992 university via the WP route, often struggle to have the relevant social capital (e.g. specialist vocabulary or an understanding of the HEI system) to draw on. This makes the process of transitioning to university life especially problematic. She argued that more needs to be done at an institutional level to help 'compensate' for this lack of cultural capital to enable those from WP backgrounds to compete with other students. I therefore investigated the ways in which young people felt they could bridge this gap in social or cultural capital (Putnam 2000), and point to evidence which suggests that some young people have a level of resourcefulness that enables them to draw on the resource and knowledge of others to help them succeed at university.

Read et al. (2003) also highlight the role of social identity. They found that fear of 'not belonging' at university means that many from disadvantaged backgrounds preferred not to apply to elite universities. They prefer instead to apply to places where they felt they could 'belong,' most notable post-1992 institutions. Here the relationship between class and attachment to kinship ties can be seen most clearly. Institutional culture is often reinforced through activities such as open days, where the typical or 'normal' student life is portrayed as white, heterosexual, young, middle class and single. Such depictions often place those who are not compliant on the margins. Therefore, institutional factors also inform and are taken into consideration by young people when choosing which university to attend.

In my own research I gave space for young people to talk about the fears they might have about going to university. I explored how young people's current life experience is shaped by place and family values and how these orientate young people to the world outside their close knit community. Could this orientation help or hinder them in 'fitting in' at university? And are

they able to imagine expansive and different futures for themselves outside of their local communities?

I was also interested in questioning whether young people felt they could be themselves at university. Reay (2001) argues that for many working class people entering HE there is often a balance between realising their potential and maintaining an authentic sense of self. If HE is often set up to enforce dominant class norms (the middle classes), Reay argues, it challenges and problematizes the notion of selfhood in ways that middle class students do not necessarily have to negotiate. Here the problematic clash of class identity can be seen, where working class students rather than talking about 'finding themselves' at university are concerned with 'losing themselves' and that which makes them authentic in class terms. For example, class markers such as appearance and clothes, accents or lifestyle choices, can form the basis of struggles over class identity for those from WP backgrounds at university (Archer and Leatherwood 2003). Furthermore, such young people often have to contend with the fact that if they are to 'lose themselves' it is only to be replaced by the identity of an 'acceptable' middle class citizen (Reay 2001; Read et al. 2003).

Research carried out from a feminist perspective has considered issues of gender, ethnicity and class. Where female participation rates to HE, particularly amongst WP groups, has improved, albeit marginally, this has led to concerns about male participation rates particularly amongst certain groups. There is a popular discourse which links educational failure and disengagement amongst working class males with a growing concern about the low levels of male participation within post compulsory education (Burke 2011). This anxiety is often linked to a growing crisis of masculinity, particularly in white working class ex-industrial communities (McDowell 2000). For certain groups, such as working class white males and Bengali males; the tendency for non-participation has been seen to be especially problematic (Archer et al. 2001). Recently, the Minister for Universities and Science, David Willetts, has called for White Working Class boys to be treated as an underrepresented group (Harrison 2013a). Archer et al. (2001) research might shed some light on this. They found that for some working class white young men the prospect of earning money now, rather than waiting and potentially getting more income with a degree, was seen as the better and less risky option. For older, white males the importance of establishing their masculine identity through hard work in a skilled manual trade (e.g. as a carpenter or electrician), was also valued over further learning.

The significance of place is another variable which young people use when choosing to apply to university. Here geographical location to home, as well as the type of university they are

likely to apply to, matters to young people (Hinton 2011). Those from WP backgrounds often seek to attend their 'local' post-1992 universities over more elite institutions. Gibbons and Vignoles (2012) argue that geographical distance from a university has little to do with choice to attend university, but it does greatly affect the choice of *which* university. This decision is often affected by cultural or economic reasons that mean that many young people from underrepresented groups choose to attend universities close to their parental homes. Here the presumption of being able to choose from a wide range of universities might result in some being unable to apply to the more 'elite' research intensive universities. Gibbons and Vignoles' research suggests that not being able to apply to an elite university near to home does not put people off university, if they have already decided to go. However, this work does raise questions over fairness and access to elite universities. Social or cultural reasons, such as maintaining one's kinship group, may outweigh the desire to apply and attend an elite university further away (Read et al. 2003). For those in my research who were considering applying to university, I was interested in understanding the spatial reasons for their choice. Do they want to remain local or are they willing to move and relocate? Also do they understand the difference in choice between various institutions?

This section has highlighted the extent and the ways in which issues of class, gender, ethnicity and place are important to young people's social identities and how they shape their perceptions about the possibility of applying to university. In this study, I argue that all four factors did influence young people in how they thought about their futures. Whilst many of them were not at the stage of applying to university, they were starting to form very clear ideas about what they wanted to do with their lives and whether university would form a part of their plans. Young people did not necessarily articulate their concerns in terms of these structural terminologies e.g. 'working class'. However, in the analysis section, I draw out the various ways in which these were constructed by young people, in terms of how they described their own lives in relation to where they lived and their experiences and expectations for life. For young people in the research it was the issue of class identity in relation to others and their close attachment to the local neighbourhood which seemed to shape their educational choices and aspirations for the future.

2.6 Summary

The transition to university has become a mainstream practice for many young people, particularly for those from middle class backgrounds. Government policy has tended to promote this as a linear transition where children pass from formal compulsory education onto university. HE has therefore increasingly been regarded in the UK as the socially normative path which young people should follow. Where young people fail to orientate their lives in a way which represents a responsible and neoliberal citizen the government has considered its role to be to intervene in an attempt to create workers who can compete in a competitive national and global market.

I have outlined how WP policy and discourse has changed over the past 15 years taking three clear stages (Brown 2012). The first stage, during New Labour's first term in office, focused on an equality discourse which helped to address inequalities particularly in attainment. The second can be characterised as a period of greater social control, which looked to alter the goals and aspirations that young people set by encouraging them to develop the necessary dispositions - 'high' aspirations towards HE. Finally, under the Coalition Government, there was a further policy change towards a 'fairness' discourse, which promoted fair access to elite universities in an attempt to help those with the academic talent to rise as high as their abilities will let them. This latter period has seen the decoupling of aspirations from WP policy; however the legacy of Aimhigher has been to cement aspirations as a form of 'best' practice within WP policy and aspiration-raising interventions. This means the use of aspirations persist within government policy and in WP and educational practice. The need for a discussion and critique of aspirations is therefore still a timely and important consideration.

Those interested in researching aspirations have often highlighted that the language used often has a value attached to it – 'high' or 'low' (Watts and Bridges 2006; Brown 2011). They have rightly critiqued this by saying that through using 'high' and 'low' there is a danger that alternative aspirations which exist outside of HE can be devalued. Furthermore, young people who fail to have the right aspiration can be labelled and blamed for not doing so (Bright 2011).

The language of aspirations, however, continues and remains entrenched within educational policy and practice. This critique does not answer the question of what actually happens to young people in the process of being asked to raise their aspirations. It merely speaks of a consequence attached to it. Instead, I argue it is important to question what it means as a process for a young person to 'raise' their aspirations toward university. It is only by asking

these sorts of questions that an understanding of the complex social realities of young people's social lives can be explored and understood.

I argue that understanding how young people set their aspirations and goals for the future is important. In the next chapter I outline how hope theory can offer an insight into other ways in which young people might hope and how different social groups might use hope differently towards achieving different goals and having different means. This in turn will contribute towards a greater understanding of what happens to young people when they are asked to 'raise' their aspirations.

Chapter 3

Theoretical Framework

3.1 Introduction

3.2 Youth Transition and Young People's Futures

I begin the chapter by outlining how the transition from compulsory schooling through to adulthood has changed for young people since the post-war period. What constitutes a typical transition is often open, fluid in nature and takes different forms and patterns over time. (Goodwin and O'Connor 2013). I outline how the traditional markers of gaining full time employment, independence from parental homes and forming new family units have changed by highlighting some of the material changes which have occurred to young people across four distinct periods; (i) The 1950s and 1960s: 'The Golden Era,' (ii) The 1970s to mid-1980s: 'The Age of Mass Unemployment' (iii) 1985-2008: 'The Training Era' and (iv) 2008 to the Present: 'The Age of Austerity.'

I then outline some of the dominant, contemporary theories surrounding the complex transitions young people experience as they transition to adulthood in England today. In doing so I explore some of the issues which young people in this research experience and how this might differ from dominant societal discourses and ideas about the transition towards adulthood.

3.2.1 *The 1950s and 1960s: 'The Golden Era,'*

The 1950s and 1960s can be regarded as a period of relative affluence and expansion after the war as people's disposable income increased. Post-war Britain has been characterised as a period of 'Economic Nationalism', with the state viewed as being at the centre of providing economic growth, employment and welfare for its citizens, underpinned by three principles; prosperity, security and opportunity. During this period wealth grew exponentially in a way

that meant each new generation could assume that it would be twice as well off as the generation before (Brown et al. 2007).

It has been described as a 'golden age' of mass employment and smooth transitions to employment and family life (Vickerstaff 2003; Goodwin and O'Connor 2005). It was also a time of great social and cultural change. This period saw the advent of the teenager, as a consumer, through the creation of a new range of goods and services aimed at young people (e.g. clothing and music record shops). This brought with it new and emerging youth cultures (Skelton and Valentine 1998).

In the 1950s and 1960s boys typically left school and entered an apprenticeship, became trained in a particular trade and expected a job for life (Goodwin and O'Connor 2013). Typical jobs included factory work (mainly in boot, shoe and hosiery manufacturing in Leicester), shop assistants and apprentices. The transition during this period has often been portrayed as being a linear, straightforward and single step; however this has been contested by Goodwin and O'Connor (2005) who suggest that whilst some experienced this, the transition for many was far from straightforward.

During this period many young people easily found work without qualifications. Leicester, for example, had excellent rates of youth employment (Goodwin and O'Connor 2005). The manufacturing sector in the UK was important to youth employment with 33% of male school leavers and 8% of female school leavers entering apprenticeships in the manufacturing sector in 1950 (Allen and Ainley 2012).

For girls, attitudes towards traditional gender roles and having families changed greatly over this time. In the 1940s most girls left school, got married and had children within a reasonably short time span, with little thought to a career (Goodwin and O'Connor 2013). By the 1960s many girls did enter employment. In Leicester, many girls had jobs which were not what they necessarily wanted, but which were preferred to less desirable jobs in factories. For example, many girls at that time wanted to do dressmaking but could only find office work (Goodwin and O'Connor 2013). For girls, having children was still important, but this was regarded as a career break, where many hoped to return to employment at a later stage. This shows the transition to adulthood, for girls, now included the aspirations for a career.

During the post-war period, education was expanded and was regarded as important both for economic growth and fostering social justice. From 1965, secondary education in the UK saw the introduction of comprehensive schools, these were regarded as key to narrowing income

inequality and providing those from disadvantaged backgrounds an opportunity to rise to the top and tackle issues of social class disadvantage (Brown et al. 2007). In 1972 the leaving age for compulsory education was raised from 15 to 16 (Blaug et al. 1982). Higher Education was also expanded, from 69,000 students in 1938 to 215,000 by 1960 (and over 400,000 in 1970) (Brown et al. 2007). The expansion of both compulsory schooling and HE was seen as a means to develop citizens who could be employed by emerging new businesses and who could fill the 'new' managerial roles. It was assumed that this would give economic advantages to a UK in which the most intelligent and able could (in theory) occupy the best jobs (Brown et al. 2007).

The post-war period also saw a rise in social mobility. A study by Heath (1981) in 1972 on UK males showed that the UK population became more socially mobile during this period. With the creation of more managerial and professional jobs this enabled upward mobility for many. Much of this however, tended to be over a short range of mobility, rather than the complete range (e.g. between Classes III and VI rather than I to VII), with 28% of the population remaining stable in their class position (Burgess 1986). This meant a growth or emergence of a 'new' middle class and it was widely believed that this would eventually result in everyone becoming middle class. Status would be allocated on merit rather than privilege, leading eventually to a classless British society (Brown et al. 2007).

However, the expansion of a new middle class suggests that social mobility tended to be one way. Burgess argues that about 25% of men from social classes IV – VII entered middle class professions (in social class I – III). In contrast, fewer from social class I – III made the opposite journey towards working class jobs (Burgess 1986). This suggests that this was not genuine social mobility, but rather an expression of a changing division of labour and class re-composition. Today in the 2010s, this level of upward social mobility has been regarded as unsustainable (Brown et al. 2011), with social mobility widely being seen as stalling towards the end of last century and likely to 'go into reverse in the first part of this century' (SMCPC 2014: v).

For young people, the immediate post-war period afforded them the relative security and opportunity of long term employment and prosperity that many cannot take for granted today.

3.2.2 The 1970s to mid-1980s: 'The Age of Mass Unemployment'

The late 1970s and 1980s has been regarded as 'The Age of Mass Unemployment' in the UK (Hollands 1990: 1). Unemployment was felt most acutely by young people. For example, in 1983 youth unemployment was 27% compared to the national average of 13% (Robert 1983). This period saw a departure from policies related to 'Economic Nationalism' (Brown et al. 2007). Under Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, in the 1980s, a raft of neoliberal economic policies were introduced which saw a dramatic restructuring of the UK economy towards a consumer society. This saw a growth in part-time work and the decline of standard employment (Furlong and Cartmel 2007). Changes were also made to welfare, the social wage and trade unions which were seen as barriers to competing in the global market (Brown et al. 2007). During this time the industrial sector shrunk giving way to a growing service sector.

In the 1980s 25% of UK manufacturing jobs disappeared and the economy started to be restructured away from a heavy reliance on manufacturing towards a consumer-based society reliant much more on the service sector. The legacy of this can be seen today - in 2012 75% of the UK workforce was employed in the service sector (Allen and Ainley 2012), with only 11.4% of the workforce in industrial employment (Wolf 2011). With this restructuring came the loss of many traditional UK manufacturing jobs which young people were once reliant upon on leaving school. This has led to a steady growth in youth unemployment (Allen and Ainley 2012).

Young people in the 1980s were increasingly being employed in the growing service sector (e.g. shop assistants, hairdressers, and administration) (Goodwin and O'Connor 2013). Women's hopes and aspirations for careers also increased. In the 1980s just over 50% of married women were in employment and expected to return after having children (Roberts 1983).

Despite these transitional changes, education was still seen as important for addressing social issues. The introduction of comprehensive schools largely side-lined selective grammar schools. This opened up the opportunities of secondary education to everyone and provided young people with new hopes and opportunities which were once only open to a select few (Roberts 1983).

By the 1980s young people's aspirations for employment had changed from those in the 'golden age' of the 1950s and 60s. Roberts (1983: 5) argues:

If the jobs that awaited beginning workers in the 1960s could be returned, the school leavers of the 1980s would be less than impressed... wider educational opportunities have unblocked young people's aspirations, while the consolation for failure – an early entry into a well-paid, if often monotonous and carefree job – has been withdrawn.

Brown et al. (2011) argue that with the belief that high skilled, high wage jobs were the future shape of the economy, the British state concentrated much of its efforts in developing an 'opportunity bargain' where the state is committed to providing opportunities for its citizens in the form of an education that would enable and encourage them to become skilled and marketable within the global economy. This has subsequently meant that the state has invested vast sums of money intervening in people's lives to mobilise its citizens to compete for jobs. Under this bargain 'learning = earning.' This requires the hard work of individuals, where success is ultimately played out in the job market. If young people's aspirations were now different to those of young people in the 1950s and 60s and with these monotonous but relatively secure 'carefree' jobs being withdrawn, the question was would the economy produce enough new jobs to meet the demands of a growing aspirational youth population?

3.2.3 1985 to 2008: 'The Training Era'

By the late 1980s and early 1990s the effects of wider economic restructuring were seen in different ways for young people across different class groups. High youth unemployment still posed a big problem for the government and a range of measures in the form of youth training schemes emerged. This period has been marked as 'The Training Era' (Holland 1990). School leavers still tended to be employed in low paid jobs within the service sectors. However, youth unemployment remained high with many school leavers (16-18) being 'virtually compelled to take part in post-school training schemes in place of either unemployment or a full time job' (Holland 1990: 1). These schemes on the one hand provided cheap labour to employers, but they also gave young people training and experience of employment.

Reforms to welfare in the late 1980s meant young people under 18 were no longer eligible for unemployment benefits. There was a need to identify those who had not remained in full time education and did not have employment or were in training. Initially the term 'Status Zero' was used; however this was quickly deemed unsuitable as the government wanted cuts in welfare to be seen as positive. In 1999, the *Bridging the Gap* report (SEU 1999) used a new term: 'Not in Education, Employment or Training' (later to be referred to as NEET) (Furlong 2006).

For many working class young males living in ex-industrial areas there was a tendency for them to struggle in the absence of previous, traditional forms of employment. McDowell (2000) argues they were likely to have fewer prospects and a lower standard of living than their fathers did. This has led to the growth of a number of social and economic problems, such as an increase in the levels of unemployment, suicide and poverty (McDowell 2000).

Graduates' prospects also began to change, with many jobs previously not regarded as graduate jobs increasingly becoming so. Green (2001) argues that 'bumping down' of employment options can occur if a person has the required skills, but there are not enough graduate jobs in the market. The result is that someone with higher skills might compete for the same job as someone who has the required, but lower skills and qualifications. It may, however, not necessarily be 'bumping down' that is occurring but rather a gradual restructuring of what constitutes a graduate job. Therefore what is considered a 'graduate job' has changed significantly in the past 20 years. As more and more jobs require a degree, this affects many young people who have not attended university and who now find that they are competing for jobs with graduates.

3.2.4 2008 to Present: 'The Age of Austerity'

Since the economic crash in 2008, which brought with it a new 'Age of Austerity' in the UK, it has been increasingly difficult for young people, both school leavers and graduates alike, to find employment. In 2011 youth unemployment peaked, reaching new heights of over 1 million (Allen 2011). Today, the consequence for many young people, especially for school leavers, is that finding employment is not easy.

'Unemployment rates for 16-17 year olds have been hit hard by the recession. For 16-17 year olds the unemployment rate increased from 29.9 per cent in 2008 Q1 to 40.2 per cent in 2011 Q2; a rise of 10.3 percentage points' (DBIS 2011b: 44).

This is the background into which young people in this research find themselves as they think about and plan for their futures. In 2015, 943,000 of young people aged 16-24 are classed as NEET (13% of this age group). Concerns about the high number of young people classed as NEET has led to the age of compulsory education being raised to 18 in 2014. Young people now have three options (Mirza-Davies 2015).

- Full time education (e.g. School or College)

- An apprenticeship
- Part time education or training (if employed or self-employed)

Whilst the prospect of unemployment, particularly for NEETs and school leavers (age 16-17), is a real possibility, those who leave school without further qualifications tend to end up in low paid minimum wage job with little prospects. Even for those with Further Education, a lack of graduate jobs often results in them competing with graduates for jobs that once did not require a degree (e.g. in clerical / administrative sectors).

Whilst there has been a range of recent initiatives such as the *Youth Contract* (Cabinet Office 2011) aimed at helping NEET young people (aged 16-24) into work and greater levels of participation in HE, the idea of an ‘opportunity bargain’, where ‘learning = earning’ has been questioned. Lauder et al. (2012) argue that there is evidence of an ‘opportunity trap’ emerging since the 1980s, which results in many young people’s expectations not being met within the economy. Lauder et al. (2012) argue that many young people have entered this trap and choose to continue in education because there are no other realistic options to achieve a job which pays slightly better than the minimum wage⁴.

For graduates today, Brown (2013) argues that the prospect of social mobility has now been replaced by social congestion and a growing ‘opportunity trap.’ This means more people are competing for a shrinking number of graduate jobs. Many graduates have had to resort to a further ‘bumping down’ and settling for non-graduate jobs. It would seem that following the recent (2008) economic downturn and HE expansion there are not enough graduate jobs for those with degrees. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) measured graduate unemployment peaking at 20% in 2010 (Allen, and Ainley 2012) and found 47% of UK graduates overqualified for their jobs in 2013 (ONS 2013). This has risen to 58.8% in 2015 (CIPD 2015). This shows that for many young people the promise of education is failing them. For many graduates their aspirations are becoming frustrated as the economy fails to create the level of jobs that an aspiring generation hopes for. In light of the marketization of HE and charging higher tuition fees in England, Hall (2015: 5) argues that prospective students need to ‘strategize about the need to take out debt in order to fund higher education’. This is because while graduate salary premiums are high for some graduates, they are not guaranteed for every graduate. This can mean young people may have to make difficult decisions about participating in university.

⁴ The National Minimum Wage was introduced in 1999 with two set levels, one for 18-20 and one for over age 21. It was not until 2004 that a minimum wage was introduced for 16-18 year olds, however they needed to have finished compulsory education to receive this rate (DBIS 2011b). In 2010 an additional rate was set for those undertaking an apprenticeship (Direct Gov 2014).

Having outlined some of the historical and current transitional experiences through which young people have travelled, I now turn to explore how the theoretical understanding of this transition occurs within the post-modern era.

3.3 Theorising Youth Transitions

Individualisation theory has been used by Giddens (1991) and Beck (1992) to argue that in late-modern society there has been a weakening of traditional social institutions (e.g. marriage, family, employment), coupled with a weakening of the impact of structural factors, such as social class and gender. These institutions and structures once constrained people to certain lifestyles. Instead, the individual has been reframed and there has been a rewriting of the personal biography towards one of greater choice, where one's life must be planned individually - much like a project (Beck 1992). With this comes new opportunities and new risks. However, with risk comes increased uncertainty. This means that traditional life courses are no longer standardised or linear, as they were in the post-war period, but rather something that can be chosen or even opted out of (Bishop and Willis 2014). The effect has been that one's personal life has become more uncertain and complex. With the fragmentation of institutions such as the family, community or employment, or at least the perception of this (Furlong et al. 2011), personal choice is said to have become all-encompassing, with responsibility and planning becoming central pillars of contemporary life.

The de-standardisation of life pathways highlighted by Giddens and Beck, means that traditional markers of adulthood, where children pass through education and onto adult life of work and family, have become much more fluid and less set (Furlong and Cartmel 2007). The period of youth, in which this transition takes place, from formal education to adulthood (age 18-30) has become elongated and less certain. Young people now spend increasingly longer periods of time in education, with a sharp decline in work for minimum age school leavers. Getting a job for young people can remain a long and uncertain process (Furlong and Cartmel 2007). Some young people make the transition far easier than others. I argue this might be due to having better resources in the form of economic, social and cultural capital.

As the nature of youth transitions has changed from that of the post-war period from traditional, straightforward and linear models towards an increasingly 'synchronical' and even

'reversible' model, this has problematized (for some) what it means to move from childhood to adulthood (Du Bois-Reymond 1998: 66). Such transitions between school and work are increasingly less predictable but are rather redefined as a set of movements which are characterised by 'frequent breaks, backtracking and the blending of statuses' (Furlong et al. 2003: 24).

Bishop and Willis (2014: 779) argue that youth transitions work has often promoted a linear model as being preferable over 'synchronical' or 'cyclical' models, where smooth transitions through education to the labour market are seen as being superior to more fragmented transitions. I argue that this is also reflected in government policy and WP intervention, where HE has been prioritized as being a normative path towards achieving social mobility. Here, having 'high aspirations' are vital for succeeding in making this transition (Brown 2011). Whilst social expectation often promotes pathways which are regarded as linear, there is a need to understand from a sociological perspective how pathways may differ from this and how spatial factors influence how young people plan and deal with an increasingly cyclical transition towards adulthood.

Individualisation theory has often come under criticism. For example Bryant and Ellard (2015) argue that although there is a greater emphasis on the individual within society, the extent to which people project manage their lives is often at odds with the ideas of individualisation theory. Perhaps the most important criticism here is that Individualisation theory undervalues the persisting importance of social structures, such as class, gender and race, to young people's lives (Bryant and Ellard 2015). Within this research I question the extent to which young people in Leicester feel that they have the choices required to plan their lives and stress how important features of structural identities of class, gender and ethnicity continue to be as they plan their futures.

Ball (2000) argues that in judging aspiration and success researchers often focus on what young people hope for in terms of their future occupations. However, this might be more important to those from middle class backgrounds because it is seen as vital in securing a prosperous and prestigious future for themselves. Occupation might not be the primary concern of all young people. I ask, therefore, if not occupation, what are young people's aspirations aimed at?

I also question what happens when someone is seen as 'opting out' of transitioning towards what is widely held as the social norm. I question what happens when young people 'opt out' of participating in university and onwards towards 'high' professional jobs. I problematize what happens when young people do choose to 'opt out' and the social implication and potential stigma that accompanies it (e.g. 'low aspirations'). The following section outlines what this new late-modern, aspirational citizen should ideally look like and why there has been a growing concern within political circles to intervene in young people's lives who fail to meet these expectations.

3.4 Aspirational Subjects: The Subjectification of the Individual

Within late-modern society, a greater emphasis has been placed on the responsibility of the individual to carve out their own identity through their careers (Sennett 1999). Attaining a career is seen not only as an option but a personal responsibility (Gottfredson 2002). With the shift in state provision from that of a 'politics of welfare' to a 'politics of aspirations' (Raco 2009: 438), there is now a rationale towards promoting neoliberal ideals which advocate the 'responsibilizing' of citizens who are active, enterprising and individual (Pykett 2010), i.e. aspirational citizens who can compete in an increasingly global market and contribute towards the competitiveness of the national economy. The neoliberal state therefore feels it has an obligation to intervene to raise aspirations of those it deems to be falling behind (Brown et al. 2011). At this point it is important to consider how the individual self is produced and the effects that governmentality has on creating citizens (Foucault 1991) and the implications for those who fail to meet these expectations and social norms.

Rose (1999) argues that the economic functions of citizens have dramatically changed. In modernity a positive work ethic was regarded as a moral and personal endeavour, where a person's commitment to work in industry was rewarded with rising wages, a reasonable amount of job security and a predictable life course. Today, Rose argues such an ethic and expectation is "out of kilter with the obligations that are now accorded to the citizen in social life" (Rose 1999: 103). This shift can best be seen in how the main socio-economic and cultural emphases in late-modernity have shifted from that of producer to consumer.

"Through consumption we are asked to shape our lives by the use of our purchasing power. We are obliged to make our lives meaningful by selecting our personal lifestyle

from those offered to us in advertising, soap operas, and films, to make sense of our existence by exercising our freedom to choose in a market in which one simultaneously purchases products and services and assembles, manages and markets oneself" (Rose 1999: 103).

The late-modern worker is in search of meaning: work becomes more than just providing economic security but rather helps form identity and fulfilment. Work becomes a place where the self is discovered, produced and experienced. This, in theory, makes workers more efficient, productive and innovative and so more aligned with the technologies of government. This means that whilst government has tried to govern society by focusing on the individual subjectivity of its citizens, regulation is not imposed on individuals in the form of a big and technocratic state with high levels of control and surveillance of its citizens. Rather, regulation is imposed through a complex series of technologies, which have brought various political, professional and scientific ideals and aspirations together to help form the individual self (Rose 1999).

For Rose (1999) it is important to consider the connections that are made between political concerns over the productivity of the nation, the aims and ambitions of owners of capital to maximise profit and how to govern (and create) productive subjects to ensure a functioning and productive economy. Central to understanding these relationships is to question how people have come to, consciously or unconsciously, (re)create, actualise and (re)produce their self and identity. Of interest here is not only how this occurs - the process that requires a shift from a producer mentality to the production and creation of a consumer mentality - but also what happens when this fails to be achieved and the reasons why certain neoliberal values fail to inspire people to change. I am therefore interested in understanding what Rose (1999: 103) refers to as the process where individuals assemble, manage and market themselves within an increasingly neoliberal landscape. Do young people consciously orientate and assemble themselves towards the creation of neoliberal subjects and what are the components of this? If not, how do young people respond to this demand?

I address these questions by looking at how different components of young people's lives are assembled, both in the present through various identities and dispositions (e.g. class, material goods, relationships, attachments) and as they prepare and put things in place to help them achieve their desired future (e.g. qualifications, experiences, opportunities, aspirations, plans, goals).

In thinking about assemblage, I explore how both human and non-human actors interrelate and how the material world becomes entangled within young people's own identities (Robbins and Marks 2010). Anderson and McFarlane (2011) argue that various assemblages emerge and can be regarded as fractious and fragile. In a world which places different demands on young people, my research illuminates how they negotiate these often different and fractious expectations that are being placed on them.

I am also interested in the role that schools have in shaping and assembling young people's lives and how this might differ from young people's own assembled or hoped for lives. I consider how power relates and is performed between individual actors (e.g. pupils, teachers, friends) and social institutions (e.g. schools, family) (Robbins and Marks 2010). In this respect I question how schools intervene and encourage young people to develop certain lifestyles toward neoliberal subjectivities. I critique the various expectations that exist between young people and their schools. Latour (2005: 129) argues that 'all actors do something – they don't just sit there.' I question how young people respond to school intervention, building on this notion that they are assembling their own lives by either resisting or complying with school intervention – they are not passive in their response – do they actively resist the disciplinary nature of the neoliberal current that runs through WP intervention or do they adopt it?

Here the role of pedagogical power within school in the process of developing citizens is important. Schools are often one of the primary places where young people start to develop their aspirations for future adult life. Questioning how subjectivities are formed within education means critically questioning how power is performed within schools and in educational spaces. Schools not only foster education, they provide the freedom and opportunity for young people to learn and question the world. And yet, they are also places where the conduct and mentalities of citizens are governed and subjects formed. Pykett (2010) argues that within the geographies of education, neoliberalism and ideas of governmentality are often taken from a Foucauldian framework, which is used to critique the development of neoliberal subjectivities within schools. However, Pykett (2010: 623) argues that:

The distinctive nature of pedagogical power, the pedagogical relationship between state and citizen, and the particularities of schooling as a space, which both opens up critical debate and promotes the explicit governability of reflexive citizens, have all been somewhat neglected.

For Pykett (2010) attributing the onslaught of an authoritarian pedagogic state, driven by neoliberalism, is somewhat problematic. Whilst schooling can produce certain constrained

subjectivities, this process can be actively questioned and resisted by both staff and pupils. For example, Pykett (2010: 627) argues that some Citizenship Education teaching staff actively tried to counter dominant neoliberal trends towards 'individualism, commercialisation and selfishness.' Likewise, Brown (2012: 105) also found an element of resistance amongst WP practitioners who often challenged the focus on the 'individualising politics of aspirations' but were motivated more by a commitment to a socialist ethos of redistributive justice.

Pedagogic power is therefore not necessarily repressive but can also be seen as providing the benchmark which enables citizens to be governed. This means that whilst schools can be regarded as places which are increasingly focused towards a particular political-economic structure and the influence of neoliberalism, this focus might conceal ambiguities which produce a range of responses within and through educational space itself (Pykett 2012). I therefore draw out these subtle differences within my research.

This thesis questions the role taken by the state to provide opportunities through education for young people to become skilled and successful within the job market (Brown et al. 2011). It also critiques how this has often seen the mobilisation of interventions to help young people raise their aspirations (e.g. Aimhigher). By drawing on a Foucauldian tradition of governmentality and subject formation, to which theorists such as Rose and Pykett are heavily indebted, I consider how the state, schools and universities together, intervene in the lives of their pupils to create citizens who are deemed to be governable and fit for the current labour market. However, I have also taken care to draw out the moments of resistance and ambiguities to neoliberalism which exist and are created in and through educational space.

The following section of this review turns to consider how structural factors influence young people's habitus and social identity. In this section, I consider the role that class has in forming young people's identities and educational aspirations and how this can provide an understanding of why some young people struggle to adopt the vision of the sort of 'aspirational' and 'responsible' neoliberal citizen the government would like.

3.5 Field, Habitus, Capital and the Shaping of Educational Choice and Social Identity

Bourdieu's concept of habitus has been used extensively within youth transitions research in order to consider the social processes which shape people's decisions and identity. This has

included research looking at the transition from school to the workplace (Hodkinson 1998), at young people's experience of entering HE (Leese 2010), and at the transition through HE itself (Watts 2007). Habitus can be understood in terms of the processes involved in class formation and reproduction and how these are embodied within individuals as durable and transposable 'core cultural dispositions' (Bourdieu 1986b; Butler and Robson 2003: 36).

For Nash (1999: 177), the term 'habitus' can be seen as:

"A generative schema in which the forms of elemental social structures come, through the process of socialisation, to be embodied in individuals, with the result that people necessarily act in such a way that the underlying structures are reproduced and given effect"

These schemas take form as perceptions or discriminations which are embodied as dispositions that reveal and reflect the history of the group and which are developed through the formative years as a child. The structural code of the culture that follows forms the 'habitus' which in turn allows the generation of social practice. It is the social practice that is analysed to construct an understanding of the habitus (Nash 1999).

By using a schema, researchers can consider the structures by which someone comes to gain knowledge of the world that allows for one thing to be perceived as something to one person and yet to another, as something completely different. It is the repertoire of schemas that contribute towards the discriminations that make up the habitus. Schemas are modified and developed after new experiences, which ultimately affects how the outside world is understood (Hodkinson 1998). Therefore, I place strong emphasis on understanding how young people perceive HE and how this differs across, within and between different class groups. I also explore how different experiences of HE, through socialisation, might shape young people's attitudes towards university.

It is important to note that for Bourdieu, habitus is 'non-natural' in that it is,

'A set of acquired characteristics which are the products of social conditions and which, for that reason, might be totally or partially common to people who have been the product of similar social conditions' (Bourdieu 2005: 45).

This means one working class habitus might vary considerably from another. For example, there are multiple working class fractions and identities which are determined by a range of

social and economic factors, from the type of labour, geographical location and social expectation people have. This means working class identities can differ from place to place and even within a particular place. People from a similar background, on the one hand, may share common attitudes and yet, on the other hand, there might be attitudes or expectations which still differ between different individuals. In terms of education, this means that for some working class young people who have 'a habitus and set of family practices and values' which expect them to attend university (Archer et al. 2010: 86), they are more likely to attend university compared to one of their classed peers who does not.

In talking about habitus, Bourdieu (1986b; 2000) is clear that it should not fall into two clear fallacies, which he calls 'mechanism' and 'finalism'. Mechanism asserts that an action is the result of a 'mechanical effect' which is determined by previously experienced events or conditions (Bourdieu 1986b; 2000: 138). This is to shy away from it being deterministic. Finalism on the other hand argues that agents act with full knowledge and understanding of their actions which are the result of a 'calculation of chance and profits' (Bourdieu 2000: 138).

Bourdieu (2005: 45) also argues that habitus is a 'product of history' and that through education and social experience habitus might be changed. This is because dispositions are not fate or destiny (although they do tend to reproduce themselves), but can be changed through 'pedagogic devices' and through 'historical action' which brings social awareness. As such, I argue that aspiration-raising interventions attempt to alter young people's habitus to include an understanding of participating in HE, by pedagogic means. I also question what happens when intervention leads young people to choose between two equally compelling, but different social fields. Here various emotional and psychological dilemmas might affect young people as they make their decisions (Reay 2015).

Habitus can be regarded as being socially conservative. Bourdieu argues that it tends to reproduce itself and therefore social change does not occur lightly. Bourdieu (2000: 142) writes:

Habitus, a particular but constant way of entering into a relationship with the world which contains a knowledge enabling it to anticipate the course of the world, is immediately present, without any objectifying distance, in the world and the 'forthcoming', that it contains.

As habitus is embodied, it is often subconscious in how it engages and is orientated to the world, how one should engage with it and what one can expect from it? Within habitus,

therefore, there is little sense of orientating one's self to the world in any way which is different to that which is known, felt or experienced. This grounds habitus firmly in the present and leads individuals to expect and orientate their lives towards certain social outcomes. Researching habitus is vital because it forms the starting place of where young people come from, the dispositions which they hold, expect and regard as realistic for their lives. But habitus is not deterministic; it also leaves open the possibility for social change to occur.

In researching habitus, I am interested in exploring how social structures can be reconciled to individual agency: to question how and why people think and act in the way that they do and how these beliefs and values are socially reproduced and changed (Maton 2010). I also consider how educational attitudes have been shaped and reproduced over time, which leads certain individuals to value certain ways of being and transitioning to adult life. I question why, for many living in the neighbourhoods where this research took place, this is reflected in low participation rates in HE (and why this can vary even within class fractions and within local communities).

The role of the family is seen as important in unconsciously shaping young people's habitus from a young age. This leads to young people developing dispositions based on past experiences and socialisation which make them aspire towards possibilities they deem to be feasible and within reach (Pimlott-Wilson 2011). My work engages with habitus to question: what are young people's dispositions towards education and how are these shaped by social factors and actors that young people are a part of (e.g., schools, family, friends etc.)? It also highlights that habitus might evolve as young people's own agency causes them to resist and try out trajectories that are different to the specific family and place-based dispositions they have grown up with, as well as the futures encouraged for them by their schools (Pimlott-Wilson 2011).

Habitus cannot be understood fully without Bourdieu's concept of 'field.' Bourdieu (2000: 151) argues that habitus can be regarded as the 'feel for the game' whereas field is 'the game itself.'

Someone who has incorporated the structures of the field (or a particular game) 'finds his place' there immediately, without having to deliberate, and brings out, without even thinking about it, 'things to be done' (business *pragmata*) and to be done 'the right way,' action plans inscribed like a water mark in the situation (Bourdieu 2000: 143).

A field therefore can be likened to a social arena where struggles and manoeuvres occur over access to specific resources or interests. A field can include:

‘cultural goods’ (lifestyle), housing, intellectual distinction (education), employment, land, power (politics), social class, prestige – and whatever may be of differing degrees of specificity and concreteness’ (Jenkins 1992: 84).

The field is structured by power relations. As such, within each field there is a lot at stake within these struggles and manoeuvres. Here, forms of capital help to compete or maintain the accumulation of resources within a given field (Butler and Robson 2003).

Bourdieu (2004) outlined three types of capital; economic, cultural and social. In terms of education, it is cultural capital that can become institutionalised through educational qualifications. This research therefore concentrates on the effect of cultural capital and the relationship it has to educational aspirations and on transitions from school to HE. Bourdieu (2004: 17) argues that cultural capital,

“Can exist in three forms – in the embodied state, i.e. in the form of long-lasting disposition of the mind and body; in the objectified state, in the form of cultural goods (pictures, books, dictionaries, instruments, machines) and in the institutionalized state”.

For Bourdieu, considering the economic investment of education and how this shapes different social groups is only part of the story. Bourdieu argues that cultural capital must be embodied in that it must be accumulated and invested in and through temporal and economic means: i.e. acquisition does not happen overnight but rather is embodied over time. Walker (2008) has highlighted this through her research which shows that having the necessary institutional cultural capital, by achieving the necessary grades, is not necessarily enough for many from underrepresented groups – they still often lack the necessary social and objective cultural capital to ‘fit in’ to middle class fields. Bourdieu (2004) identifies this as lacking the ability to ‘consume’ the culture found within HE institutions. Here only through obtaining the necessary cultural capital will it make the process of ‘fitting in’ at university more possible and palatable.

Social capital can also be considered important when thinking about how young people experience transition in their lives. I engage with two different theorists who have articulated approaches to social capital: Bourdieu and Putnam. Bourdieu (1986a) argues social capital

occurs within social groups and networks of people, taking the form of 'exchanges, social obligations and symbols, to define group membership, fix boundaries and create a sense of belonging' (Ball 2003: 80). It is a means by which different social groups or class fractions seek to maintain or improve upon their position in society and look out for their interests (Ball 2003).

Bourdieu (1986a: 249) argues networks produce relationships which are the 'product of investment strategies, individual or collective, consciously or unconsciously aimed at establishing or reproducing social relationships that are directly useable in the short or long term.' As such, social capital is most useful when it is being used by drawing on relationships to create opportunities and advantages (Ball 2003).

Putnam's (2000) work is also useful here as it enables a distinction to be made between social capital which enables improvements in a person's or group's social standing, which he describes as 'bridging social capital,' and social capital which maintains a person or group's social position, known as 'bonding capital'. The latter can actually limit the formation of bridging capital. Bonding capital is often associated with those living in deprived or poorer communities. This means that it often allows people to 'get by' rather than 'get on' in the way that bridging social capital does. Bonding social capital is often self-limiting; however it does have the effect of allowing people to sustain their current lives (Kearns and Parkinson 2001). From a geographical perspective it is important to question how various place-based expressions of social capital help or indeed hinder young people's capacity to leave the estate and become socially mobile. Equally, it is vital to understand what enables young people to utilise bridging social capital, as this enables them to have broader identities and to think beyond their current situation towards the prospect of attending university (Putnam 2000). My work therefore considers how schools, as institutions, attempt to influence young people's social and cultural capital to help young people bridge the gap to enter HE.

In summary, this current research explores how young people's own habitus might differ from others in the research and how it might evolve during interventions to 'raise' their aspirations. In doing so I critique how schools seek to intervene, by pedagogic means, to challenge young people's place-based and classed habitus which can create dispositions which often reject HE as a viable option for their lives. Whilst a young person's habitus might help us to understand why they might choose one lifestyle over another and what influences their dispositions and aspirations towards the future, there is a need to address the process of how young people set

these aspirations by interrogating how they hope and plan for the future (Pimlott-Wilson 2011).

3.6 How do Young People Plan, Aspire and Hope towards the Future?

Aspirations research has tended to focus on educational choice, hoped for careers and how these are achieved. It tends to have two main foci: first, from a developmental psychology approach (for example, Gottfredson 2002); and, second, from a sociological / spatial approach (for example, Archer et al. 2010; Brown 2011; Bright 2011).

Gottfredson (2002) outlines four stages in the development of career aspirations:

- Stage 1: *Orientation to size and power* (age 3-5) - Children begin to classify people in simple ways (e.g., weak / powerful or little / big). They begin to recognise the adult world and that working plays an important part in it.
- Stage 2: *Orientation to sex roles* (age 6-8) Children start to think in more concrete ways, making simple distinctions between things. Vocational aspirations tend to be supported by moral imperatives about what is right or wrong and leads to an understanding about gender roles.
- Stage 3: *Orientation to social valuation* (ages 9-13) Young people start to become aware of social differences, such as social class (e.g. dress, behaviour or possessions). At around 13 years old, they begin understanding occupation in terms of prestige and the link between education, income and occupation. They start to determine what jobs are socially acceptable and appreciate the floor and ceiling to their aspirations and reject occupations that seem inconsistent with their social standing. At this point young people often reject options they deem too difficult and carry a high risk of failure.
- Stage 4: *Orientation to the internal, unique self* (age 14+) Young people question who they are as individuals and start to set their aspirations and define goals and plans for achieving them. Occupational planning takes place along the line of acceptable alternatives which have been defined in earlier stages. They start to think about how this fits into wider life plans.

The final two stages are of most interest to me as the young people in this research were from Year 8 (age 12/13) and Year 10 (age 14/15). This thesis deals with issues of prestige, gender and personal identity which help to explain how young people come to develop their place in the world. It also investigates the kind of lifestyle they deem to be appropriate for themselves and how this is projected towards future educational and employment choices. Understanding how young people construct the 'floor' and 'ceiling' to their aspirations can help understand what they regard as realistic. When considering interventions which 'raise aspirations', it is important to question whether so called 'high' aspirations exist within this 'floor' and 'ceiling' and the implications for young people when overcoming the 'ceiling' to aspirations is deemed too risky. I have also investigated how young people set and define goals towards the future, particularly in terms of their career choices. Whilst my current research focuses on young people's educational and career aspirations, I have been wary of placing too much emphasis on professional career aspirations and on economic capital in an attempt to: (i) realise that not all young people's aspirations align with this way of thinking and (ii) understand that human identity, needs and aspirations cannot be reduced to careers or making money (Spears and Loomis 2009).

Research into aspirations from a sociological perspective has also considered the link between socioeconomic background and young people's aspirations (Bishop and Willis 2014). Parental influence has been regarded as instrumental in the development of young people's aspirations. Pimlott-Wilson (2011: 112) argues that 'family socialisation predisposes children to consider particular occupational types over others.' The influence of families in shaping young people's outlook is important when considering aspiration. However, it has also been argued that schools in areas of deprivation often underestimate parent's aspirations for their children (Cummings et al. 2012) and their emotional investment for the wellbeing of their children (Holloway and Pimlott-Wilson 2011).

The influence of place on aspirations has also been highlighted. Research carried out in areas of deprivation has found that strong attachments to place, in close knit communities, can cause young people to develop 'resistant aspirations' which run counter to the dominant discourse and the 'appropriate' aspirations promoted by schools (Bright 2011). Such aspirations can be seen as being problematic and have often been regarded as 'low aspirations' in government policy terms. However, this can often overlook the many positive aspects of young people's lives which are linked to place (e.g. family ties). It is these influences which often shape young people's aspirations (Brown 2011) and can create a 'stickiness of place' which young people find hard to escape from (Allen and Hollingworth 2013). This

'stickiness' might be the result of a number of factors, from family influence and expectation, class and place specific habitus, educational opportunities and location, to employment ties (Green and White 2008). As such, young people, both in real and imagined ways, can become 'trapped' within areas of deprivation, with few opportunities to see their aspirations for employment achieved. The role of place can therefore limit and influence, in negative ways, how young people plan and prepare for the future. For example, the distance a young person is willing to travel to and from work can vary subjectively between people. One person may feel strongly attached to their local neighbourhood or home town and therefore only look within this locality, whereas others might be able to transcend space and take up opportunities outside of their locality (Green and White 2008).

Within geography and the social sciences there has also been a growing interest in how young people exercise hope as they undergo the transition to adulthood. Kraftl (2008) considers how childhood hope is constructed and often universalised and seen as future orientated. He challenges this notion by highlighting the everyday banal hope which young people experience. Likewise, Pain et al. (2010) have outlined how wider geopolitical issues shape not only young people's fears but also their everyday hopes for the future.

Bishop and Willis (2014: 778) argue that young people give meaning to hope in various ways. First, hope can be regarded 'as a source of goals and happiness,' i.e. the importance that young people place in setting goals towards the future and is reflective of societal expectation, of the need to set goals to fulfil a linear transition towards a successful adult life. However, some young people made a distinction between hope and goals. For some, hope made achieving a goal possible. Second, to 'enable the pursuit of goals.' Young people regarded hope as providing the self-confidence and determination to achieve their goals. Third, as 'an asset to draw on when all else is lost.' Young people identified hope as constant and something that was almost tangible - as something which 'keeps you going' - even when plans and ambitions fail (Bishop and Willis 2014: 787). Finally, they identified hope as a 'necessary part of living' where the prospect of not having hope would render life meaningless (Bishop and Willis 2014: 778).

My own thesis extends this debate not only by identifying modes of hope used by young people as they consider their future and how they set goals, but also by commenting on the social conditions which underlie and shape their hopes and aspirations and which produce different aspirations across different social groups. To this end, I engage with Webb's (2007) hope theory as outlined in greater detail in the next section.

Research on hope has also tended to look at the timespans and the extent to which young people plan and feel in control of their lives, often with conflicting findings (Brannen and Nilsen 2002; 2007; Anderson et al. 2005). Anderson et al. (2005) argue that, in planning for their lives, the majority of young adults *did* feel in control, thinking and planning for the future over long periods of time. However Brannen and Nilsen (2007) argue that such findings are too simplistic and fail to take into account different concepts relating to thinking about the future, such as the difference between plans, setting goals, hopes, and the influence of unknown outcomes. This I argue is an important distinction because sometimes it is difficult to plan for the future in a logical way when there are uncertainties about the future. These uncertainties might revolve around structural factors which might make achieving the goal difficult or around uncertainty in the UK economy.

Brannen and Nilsen (2007: 155) argue that there is a difference between making plans and setting a goal where “a goal is something that can only be achieved by careful planning.” Thus the two can be seen as going hand in hand. In the case of WP and the aspiration-raising agenda, getting young people to set goals towards university is often encouraged. Here the emphasis is on planning and making the right choices for the future. Brannen and Nilsen (2007: 155) point to the fact that goals are ‘concrete and achievable,’ because they can be planned. They distinguish between making plans, setting goals and hope, by arguing that plans and goals are often regarded as being achievable. However, plans and goals turn to hope as they become less certain. Hope therefore carries with it uncertainty. This can make young people question the feasibility of plans and goals which eventually turn to hope. In contrast, I argue that this conceptualisation of hope is too simplistic and that hope can still be involved within the acts of planning and setting goals. Whilst Brannen and Nilsen make an important distinction between plans, setting goals and hope, I argue that further analysis is needed by critically questioning the role that hope plays in these processes. Rather than being converted into hope, I argue that hope is intrinsically there from the point of planning. I therefore conclude this review by outlining the literature about social hope, in particular by outlining Webb’s (2007) hope theory and contextualising aspirations within this research context. This will enable a greater understanding of the complexities of young people’s future hopes.

3.7 Hope and the Social Sciences

In using hope theory I aim to broaden the understanding of how popular political discourses around 'raising aspirations' work. I argue that the mode of hope can shape young people's aspirations in ways that need closer consideration than the labels 'high' or 'low' aspirations currently give. I also question the role that uncertainty plays in shaping aspirations and argue that managing risk and uncertainty is a key strategy in aspiration-raising interventions. By critiquing the use of 'raising aspiration' this enables new insights into the rationale young people use as they set goals. Criticism of the use of 'high' and 'low' aspirations has neglected the personal cognitive process of aspirations to which this thesis intends to speak. Whilst WP policy seems to have moved away from using aspirations, the legacy within WP practice and the continued use of the term 'aspirations' within political discourse in education and youth policy, means this is still a timely issue to discuss and something which remains high on the political agenda.

I engage with Webb's (2007) hope theory, to consider the personal cognitive processes found within young people's decision-making and aspirations towards the future. I also chart the difference between how individuals, social groups and institutions enact hope and deal with uncertainty when setting goals and investigate how hope is used through different modes, at different times and in different ways (Webb 2007). Whilst considering young people's personal hopes and aspirations, I also highlight the wider social realities which young people live in and which also shape their (unconscious) aspirations. To do this I used Bourdieu's concepts of habitus and capital (see Section 3.4).

The study of hope within the social sciences has in recent years provoked new interest. Various attempts have been made to categorise hope, indeed Benzein and Saveman (1998) discovered 54 different definitions of hope. Hope has been linked, and has become interchangeable, with terms such as 'expectations, images, attitudes, forethought, ambitions, plans, goals [and] dreams' (Bishop and Willis 2014: 4).

Anderson and Fenton (2008: 77) suggest hope can take four different forms. (i) As an immanent utopianism drawing the 'Not-Yet' into the present (e.g. Bloch 1986; Anderson 2006). (ii) As an 'inexhaustible horizon' that exists outside of the present (e.g. Marcel 1967). (iii) As something that must negate the negative and defer joy in order to critique present suffering (Nietzsche 1996; Moltmann 1969). (iv) As a break from the past and the creation of a

new utopia (e.g. Rorty 1998). What is definitely apparent within hope theory is that it is difficult to define and the object and desire of hope differ between definitions.

Webb (2007) also highlights how hope engenders different meanings within various disciplines. Hope has tended to be seen either as biologically rooted as a universal constant or, as a socially constructed cognitive behaviour. For Webb, unlike for some other hope theorists, these differences in definition do not make them incompatible, but rather they are able to co-exist. He argues that hope as a biological and universal process takes place in the brain as a chemical reaction in a neural circuit as part of an evolutionary process, whilst hope as a social construct dictates the mode of hope that is selected within a given social context and time. Thus, when hope as an innate universal and biological experience interacts with the human environment, this develops socially constructed modes of hoping. Hope is manifested in different ways across different groups within society and is adopted at different times in history. According to Webb, people might draw on different modes of hope at different points in their lives, which in part, explains how so many different definitions of hope have occurred. It is therefore this understanding of hope which I intend to engage with, to understand how hope varies across different social groups, contexts, time and place.

Using the hope theory developed by educational philosopher Darren Webb, my thesis makes a contribution to knowledge by empirically testing Webb's (2007) theory which has largely remained untested against empirical data (Webb 2014). I do this by questioning how hope shapes young people's aspirations in working class communities in Leicester. By considering how young people hope and orientate their future aspirations, I look at the role everyday and future-orientated hope plays in young people's lives. I am interested in how young people accept or reject dominant modes of social hope that are often promoted through schools and universities and how this is sometimes challenged by alternative and localised modes of hope found within the communities where young people live.

Webb (2007) outlines five modes of hoping; Patient, Critical, Estimative (Sound)⁵, Resolute and Utopian. These five modes can be split into two categories; Open-Ended and Goal Directed. The difference between open ended and goal directed hope rests in the object of hope.

⁵ From now on estimative hope will be referred to as sound hope.

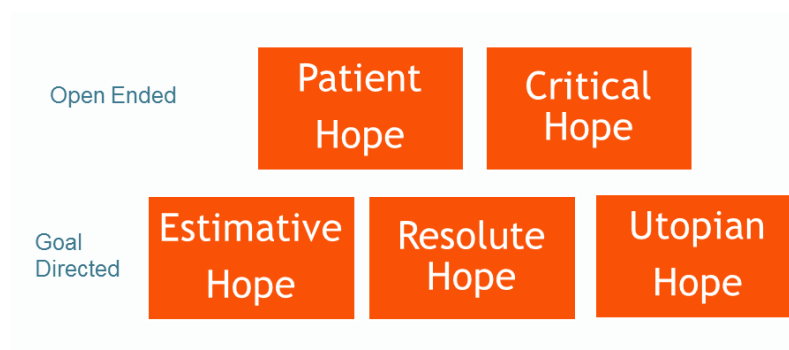


Figure 3: Webb's (2007) Modes of Hope

In *open ended hope* there are no concrete goals, but rather hope is placed in the wayfaring nature and goodness of humans or divine grace and takes the form of an openness of spirit which is able to cast a positive glow on life. Webb (2007: 69) argues that “sometimes we hope, not for anything concrete, determinate or particular. We just hope.” Openness and patience are key characteristics to the object of hope. *Goal directed* hope, on the other hand, involves concrete and specific goals which are set by and are significant to the hoper. Webb (2007: 73) argues that to hope in a goal directed manner is “to conjure in one’s imagination a picture of the world in which the object of one’s hope has been realised”. Imagination and setting goals are important characteristics to the object of goal directed hope.

In this thesis I intend to engage with three of these modes of hoping – Patient, Sound and Resolute, which will be summarised here:

Patient Hope is unpresentable; the object of hope is open and generalised, which makes it difficult to define. The cognitive-affective characteristic of patient hope is of a secure trust which takes shape either in a belief of the goodness of the world and humanity, or that of a deity. To hope is to stand firm and be patient in the trust of another’s behaviours. It chooses not to accept life’s trials but to believe all will be well.

Sound hope is future orientated towards a significant goal and desire. It involves the mental imagining of what is hoped for and a probability estimate of how achievable it is. Probability plays an important role where hope asserts that something is possible but uncertain. The sound hoper looks for the perceived probability and degree of control over the situation when setting a goal. This often makes this mode of hoping held in check to the social reality and spatial-temporal world around the hoper (Webb, 2007).

Resolute hope is also future orientated towards a goal that is significant to the hoper. This time, it also involves the mental imagining of the goal but rather than considering the probability of the goal happening, it is characterised by a cognitive resolve that seeks to look past the reality and context within which the hoper resides. It looks to form pathways towards achieving the goal and organising feelings and actions towards attaining it. Resolute hope looks beyond the evidence. If one pathway fails, then the person is motivated and unswervingly persistent in developing new ways of achieving the goal. This means people are willing to take less than fair gambles and increases risk-taking behaviour in achieving what they hope for (Webb 2007).

Webb's (2007) other two modes of hope - utopian and critical - are not applied in this research for the following reasons:

Utopian Hope: Webb (2007: 78) argues that utopian hope is a political and social endeavour. It shares many of the characteristics of resolute hope by hoping against the evidence, however 'the resolute hoper resolves to continue striving for her or his personal goals within society as it is presently structured, [but] the utopian hoper critically negates the present and is driven by hope to announce a better alternative.' The purpose of this research was not to question whether widening participation or aspiration-raising intervention is utopian in nature. Indeed there was no evidence of collective utopian thinking either by young people themselves or within government and WP policy. I argue that this is mainly because aspiration-raising intervention promotes the responsible goal driven individual. This is a far cry from the utopian and collective hope defined by Webb. I was interested in understanding how young people sought to navigate through the present reality and the effects of neoliberal education policies on enabling young people to achieve social mobility. The focus of the research was therefore not on whether people could see an alternative.

Critical hope: For Webb (2007) critical hope involves not being content with the present reality but to suffer under it and begin to contradict it. Here Webb draws on Bloch who argues 'hope is experienced as a restless, future-oriented longing for that which is missing' (Webb 2007: 71). The object of critical hope is therefore one of 'passionate suffering and passionate longing' which manifests in the behavioural domain as 'the criticism of present misery' (Webb 2007: 71).

I argue that there was little evidence of young people using this mode of hope particularly in respect of thinking about their futures. Many of the young people were happy with their lives, often expressing a desire to try to keep hold of them or expressing a concern about feeling torn between different expectations being placed on them. Young people tended not to critique the world around them. Yes there were elements they did not like, however this did not point to a passionate suffering and longing for it to change and it certainly did not lead them to conclude that their present lives resulted in misery which somehow needed to be changed. This does not however mean that young people do not or will never hope in this mode, but that they are not employing this particular mode with this social context and given time period.

Central to Webb's (2007) theory is the idea that hope might be expressed differently across different historical and spatial contexts. This is important because it shows that hope can be understood and experienced in different ways across different time and space. In considering young people's hopes, aspirations and expectations it is important to distinguish between these three. I argue that hope is a driver of aspiration, whilst optimism is the driver of expectation. Hope and optimism (although related) are also distinguishable from each other. Webb makes a clear distinction between the two. Optimism involves a 'generalized expectancy that good future outcomes will occur' (Webb 2007: 73); this makes optimism a driving force of expectation. An expectation is therefore to have a sense of certainty and optimism about the future. Here a goal is somewhat surreptitiously regarded as a 'birth right' and one experiences a sense of entitlement towards that goal. Hope, however, carries with it considerable uncertainty (Webb 2007; Brannen and Nilsen 2007). For Webb, hope engenders not expectancy but a possibility. Drawing on Lazarus (1999), he argues that hope points to the *possibility* of a positive outcome. However, this is followed by a sense of anxiety that the outcome might not happen, and so hope can be seen as an outcome which, although uncertain, is possible. In understanding hope as driving aspiration, which takes the form of a desire or goal, it is important to consider how these goals are implemented, which in turn allows us to distinguish between Sound and Resolute modes of hope (see Figure 4).



Figure 4: The difference between Sound and Resolute hope

A Sound hope is a goal that is mediated by probability: ‘Hope = desire + probability estimate’ (Webb 2007: 73). The extent of certainty varies depending on the level of risk. For those who exercise a sound mode of hoping, an aspiration is much more achievable because the goal has been set and classed as having a reduced risk of failure (i.e. there is more than a fair chance of success) (Webb 2007). For a resolute hoper the goal is more uncertain and carries a bigger risk of failure; however there is a belief and determination that the goal will eventually happen. However, neither sound nor resolute goals are certain. The difference is found within the pathways by which the goal is achieved. I also argue that these can be shaped by both abstract and concrete understandings of the world, as well as social and cultural influences and young people’s habitus, which can cause young people to question the feasibility of goals that exist outside of existing social structures and experience. This, in turn, can inform the ‘probability estimate’ (Webb 2007: 73) that young people might use. Modes of hope might also be shaped by habitus, not only in what young people orientate their life towards, but also in how they reach conclusions about the future. This is to say that habitus might unconsciously shape and inform how young people hope and indeed the mode of hope they draw on.

In the case of WP intervention, it could be argued that by encouraging young people to raise their aspirations, such exercises are trying to move young people from alternative modes of hoping (e.g. patient or sound modes) towards a more resolute mode of hoping, one which encourages young people to consider different pathways, not only cognitive thinking but also in social and cultural expectations, towards middle class norms. Here the mode of hoping takes the form of ‘looking past’ the evidence which informs how achievable a goal is, by developing a cognitive resolve which seeks to be unrelenting in its pursuit of a goal, changing course if needed to see it to fruition (Webb 2007). For young people from underrepresented groups who have little history of going to university and who face structural barriers towards entering HE, I argue that being asked to raise their aspirations and hope in a resolute mode, requires them to look past this evidence. This perspective can be seen in a recent statement by Prime Minister David Cameron:

"You've got to get out there and find people, win them over, get them to raise aspirations, get them to think they can get all the way to the top" (BBC 14 November 2013).

For David Cameron, like previous Prime Ministers, Tony Blair and Gordon Brown and other mainstream politicians, it is how young people *think* that is the problem. In raising aspirations I argue that Cameron is promoting a mode of hoping that draws on cognitive resolve which bypasses the structural realities of people's lives. It rather encourages young people to develop new plans and pathways to ensure they get 'all the way to the top.' However, I argue that this is often easier said than done for those from working class backgrounds and that structural factors continue to matter even if they are often ignored or underplayed by political elites. Therefore, young people are being asked to change how they hope by moving towards a resolute mode of hoping. Aspiration-raising initiatives encourage young people to engage with risk and uncertainty in new ways which counter their existing social experiences.

Within current interventions designed to raise aspirations, I argue that there is a tendency to promote a resolute mode of hope, to *set goals* towards middle class norms. This can be seen as a means of teaching hope (Synder 2002) and reorienting working class habitus through pedagogic intervention toward a more normatively middle class habitus (Bourdieu 2005). This is delivered by getting young people to change their future goals and dispositions towards university. However, in doing so this requires young people to look beyond the evidence located within their class-based, social experiences and strong place-based attachments and to begin to form goals which engender a cognitive resolve to set a path towards university and professional jobs. It is important to acknowledge that not everyone who hopes towards university will need to adopt a resolute mode of hoping. For those from middle class backgrounds, where there is an expectation to attend HE, I argue that they are likely to adopt a sound mode of hope towards HE. This might reflect the level of resources and capital young people have at their disposal to help make this possible. However, they might need to adopt a resolute mode of hope towards other aspirations (e.g. home ownership for young adults). Therefore resolute hope can be expressed differently between and within different class groups and it is mediated by various factors including class, habitus and place.

Central to understanding how hope is constructed are ideas of dominant social hope. Beuret (2011) argues:

'There are competing versions of hope in a given society, but there is also a hegemonic form to hope. For us, living in a becoming-neoliberal world, that hegemonic form is

aspiration...We hope for social mobility...Hope, the dominant form of hope, is to do better than your parents.'

It can be argued that this is something which crosses class and yet achieving a better life for one's self, that exceeds parental experiences, is becoming increasingly harder regardless of class and background. In respect of the focus of this research HE is often portrayed as being a means to achieve social mobility for those from underrepresented groups. Here Berlant's (2011: 1) use of the term 'cruel optimism' is helpful: 'something you desire [which] is actually an obstacle to your flourishing.' She argues that since 1980 many people have remained attached to ideas of upward mobility which are simply unachievable in liberal-capitalist societies. Another way of looking at this is to replace optimism with expectation. I argued earlier that optimism is a driver of expectation: 'cruel expectation' suggests that what one is expecting (e.g. social mobility) is unlikely to be achieved by most people. Therefore a central question of this research is to understand the extent to which young people are expecting to achieve social mobility through attending HE and the aspiration to set goals towards it.

For Webb (2007) resolute hope is to hope against the evidence and is what allows people to direct their thinking, feelings and emotions to develop cognitive pathways and resolve that overcome the evidence and look towards how such goals are achievable. As argued in the previous chapter, the push to raise aspirations places expectations on young people from underrepresented groups to plan their lives in ways that are beyond their current expectations and experiences. The need to tackle low aspirations suggests the need to teach hopeful-thinking. Halpin (2001: 405) argues that 'hope can be mediated [by teachers] – maybe even taught- within the educational context via the adoption of cultures of learning that accentuate the positive rather than the negative.'

Widening Participation initiatives aim to create citizens who can use HE to become more socially mobile and encourage young people to 'raise aspiration' by adopting cultures of learning which promote positive outcomes. Furthermore, if hope can be taught, then part of the process of raising children's aspirations is to encourage the development of a resolute mode of hoping to achieve this. It can also be regarded as a 'socialising and moralising enterprise' (Rose 1999: 194), to ensure the creation of responsible and aspirational individuals. In aspiration-raising activities, young people are required to imagine the future and set goals and pathways. This thesis therefore critically considers how young working class people hope and the ways in which they respond to attempts to raise their aspirations.

3.8 Summary

In outlining this theoretical framework I have highlighted three interrelated literatures and debates around how young people seek to transition their lives towards adulthood. I have outlined how the role of the individual has been repositioned and prioritized within a neo-liberal context. Individuals are increasingly regarded by the state as responsible for their own lives, whilst the UK state increasingly regards its role as providing opportunities for its citizens to succeed. This is achieved through various technologies of governance that encourage the development of a certain type of responsible neo-liberal citizen. This can affect how young people transition their lives towards adulthood. I question the extent to which proponents of individualization theory can legitimately argue that this enables the individual to plan their life as a project, when the traditional marker of social institutions and structures are weakened. Therefore, I explore the extent to which social institutions and social structures, such as family and social class, are valued by young people and how these contribute towards their own identities and plans for the future. I do this by engaging with Bourdieu's (1986b) concepts of field, habitus and capital to understand how structural issues, particularly of class, leads to dispositions being formed by young people towards certain expectations for adult life. I also engaged with Bourdieu's theory to ask how habitus can change and be altered by both pedagogic means (Bourdieu 2005) and young people's own agency to hope for something different (Pimlott-Wilson 2011).

Capital, in its various forms (social, cultural and economic) can also help explore how young people relate not only to their community, but also how they perceive others from outside. Ideas of capital are therefore used to understand how young people can bridge the gap from their working class communities and identities towards engaging with HE and developing strategies for entering university.

I have outlined some of the distinctions between hope, aspirations and planning for the future. I argue that understanding the role of hope in shaping young people's aspirations enables an analysis and critique of the process of raising aspirations and what it means for young people's future aspirations. I have argued that looking at how hope is produced within various place based contexts, as a social process, is vital for understanding why young people consciously plan and orientate their lives in a particular way. Here, Bourdieu's work can bring a greater understanding of where young people have come from and in particular the unconscious social processes which shape their lives and orientations to the future.

I have engaged with Webb's (2007) hope theory to gain an understanding of how young people hope towards the future. Here Webb's various modes of patient, sound and resolute hope are important and can vary across different spatial and temporal settings. I also question how uncertainty influences the ways young people hope and plan for the future.

The relationship between hope and Bourdieu's (1897b) theories of habitus and capital is not made explicit within his writing or within the literature on hope theory. Hodkinson (1998) argues that Bourdieu says little about how individual habitus or personal cognitive strategies develop. It can however be implied that hope is a form of capital, informed by a person's habitus, that facilitates the development of individual habitus or cognitive strategies needed for setting hope, plans and aspirations for the future. I have also questioned how different groups use hope to maintain their own status, but also where hope is useful in allowing different social fields to be bridged. As such, social, cultural and economic capital might aid or hinder young people as they seek to assemble their future lives.

Whilst Bourdieu (2000) provides a more structured approach to understanding the social world, in particular through the enduring influence of class, he is clear that his concepts such as habitus are by no means fixed. Indeed habitus can change through socialisation, pedagogic intervention and personal agency (although habitus tends to reproduce itself). I argued that this capacity to change means that young people are able to actively assemble their lives. Within this research I am interested in questioning how renegotiating and reframing one's habitus and social field challenges social structures.

I also argue that hope can form a component of habitus. Like habitus, hope can vary across place and time and is a product of history. Therefore, different people will draw on common modes of hope in different ways to achieve their social expectations. I have highlighted how habitus for Bourdieu remains firmly in the present. In this respect it is useful for understanding where people have come from and the social expectations which they have. However, within this research my interest is also in the future and how young people set hopes and aspirations towards it and indeed how schools try to influence these. Therefore, habitus can be seen as the starting block and it aids one's understanding about where young people start from. It is not set or predetermined, but can be changed through pedagogic means (Bourdieu 2005). Equally, habitus does not ascribe to the assertion that people act consciously in a cost benefit analysis which calculates the chance of success. I use habitus to inform a critique of the 'raising aspirations' agenda, which I argue, tends to employ what Bourdieu calls 'Finalism.' Habitus is useful here because it dispels and challenges the assertion that young people fail to achieve

social mobility because they consciously fail to make the right choices or set the right goals. In thinking about hope theory, I use habitus to critique this assumption by highlighting the unconscious structural identities and inequalities which persist. I also question what happens when young people are introduced to two very different but equally compelling social fields – one they know that is tried and tested and which aligns with their current habitus and another which is unknown, but promises a more prosperous and better life. I argue that as part of this, WP and aspiration-raising interventions attempt to introduce new experiences and possible futures to young people that are often very different to their current expectations. I also question the impact this has on individuals as they think about their futures.

In writing this I am aware that a degree of conflict exists between habitus and resolute hope, particularly in the case of raising aspirations and the development of different outcomes. In this thesis I attempt to outline the logic associated with raising aspirations. This is important because only by understanding what the raising aspirations agenda is asking of young people, through how they hope, will an effective critique and understanding be achieved. Resolute hope asserts that people make conscious choices about the future, but that they need to set goals which are risky and develop a resolve towards participating in HE. Habitus, however, asserts that people follow the rules of the field, like a game, which is more subconscious and where one instinctively ‘knows one’s place’. Intervention which seeks to encourage resolute hope therefore stands in the face of this, often arguing that all young people need to do is to make the right and necessary choices, ‘grit their teeth’ and relentlessly pursue their goals. If they fail, it can be attributed to a lack of effort or resolve. Habitus, on the other hand, reveals the complex social realities of young people’s lives, which I argue sometimes makes it difficult and even unattractive for young people to adopt a resolute mode of hope towards university.

There is also a degree of conflict between sound hope and habitus. Like resolute hope, I argue sound hope uses a ‘finalist’ approach. Whilst resolute hope tends to be more extravagant in its approach by taking on greater risk, sound hope is relatively conservative but still makes calculated decisions based on a more than fair chance of success (Webb 2007).

Sound hope uses a cost benefit analysis where there must be a high chance of success for the goal to be adopted. However, as I argued with resolute hope, habitus asserts that social expectation is unconsciously engrained and endowed within people. Working class young people, who might hope in a sound mode of hope for their aspirations, might use habitus as the social base and evidence for making life plans. When calculating a cost benefit analysis through intervention, it is the unconscious rules of engagement, within the field, which might

direct young people's calculations when thinking about setting goals. This means it is important to question how habitus influences and affects how young people exercise hope.

However, there are also elements of compatibility between sound hope and habitus. Sound hope is socially conservative and as such is unlikely to lead to social change (Webb 2007). This is important because Bourdieu (2005) argues that habitus tends to reproduce itself. When the calculations involved in setting a goal using sound hope are influenced by habitus, then I argue that habitus forms the evidence base upon which these decisions are made. This means that those who hope in a sound mode are likely to make decisions and goals which reflect their habitus.

Whilst hope theory helps to explain the orientation and trajectory of young people's lives, epitomised in a goal (Webb 2007), ideas around assemblage (Rose 1999; Latour 2005) help to explain what happens in-between; that which helps young people develop their goals. In thinking about how young people orientate their lives towards the future, I am not merely interested in what goals they set but how they set them and assemble their lives. I am therefore interested in drawing out not only the outcome in the hoped for goals, but also the various stages which are needed to accumulate the necessary skills, knowledge, attitudes and dispositions towards achieving that goal. Within this I also acknowledge the presence of a degree of social messiness (Law 2004), which often makes outcomes and changes difficult and problematic for some young people. Intervention to raise aspirations can be said to try to change the social field and the social structure (habitus) and rules of engagement (Bourdieu 2000). I therefore question what happens when intervention which takes a 'finalist' approach meets classed forms of habitus which are endowed and ascribed to young people by their past social experiences.

I now move to the methodology chapter which highlights the methods used within the research and some of the complexities of undertaking participatory research within educational settings. I argue that issues of time, resources and young people's engagement sometimes created difficulties during the research which required adaptations out in the field and yet these problems often revealed vital and interesting data which I was able to reflect on.

Chapter 4

Methodology

4.1 Introduction

In this project I used qualitative research methods which included participatory and creative techniques to run workshops with young people to explore their aspirations for further education and adult life. The workshops were audio recorded and transcribed after each workshop and this material forms the main basis of the data in the analysis chapters. The young people also produced a range of visual materials as part of the workshops. I kept a research diary to record participant observations and personal reflections during the research. I also interviewed teachers and members of school staff responsible for dispensing careers advice, using semi-structured interviews. Furthermore, interviews were also undertaken with staff from the WP teams at the University of Leicester and De Montfort University.

I highlight some of the complexities associated with undertaking a Participatory Action Research (PAR) project within schools, where issues of time, pupil engagement and resources resulted in the participatory elements of the research needing to be scaled down. I argue that within an educational environment, where this research took place, participatory techniques were more suited. I have reflected on how emerging working class masculinities and identities are formed and managed within schools and I also discuss the rise of therapeutic intervention and the effects of pupil's disengagement in education and what happens when it passes from an educational setting into the research setting. This provided not only challenges but important evidence and reflections about how young people transition and deal with the expectation placed on them within schools.

4.2 Selecting the Neighbourhoods and Schools

When selecting the neighbourhoods and schools as case studies, I took a number of considerations into account. Leicester, as a multicultural city, has a wide range of varied and complex communities, some of which would have benefited from research into WP. I decided that whilst a comparative study of different ethnic populations would provide an excellent

basis for my PhD, that to avoid the problem of multiple variables I should actually focus on one particular ethnic group classed as being underrepresented; that of white working class. This was mainly due to the size and limited scope of the research project. This research, therefore, focuses particularly on schools located within or in close proximity to predominantly white working class estates. The importance of Leicester as a prominent multicultural city, in the UK, should not be overlooked. However, I investigated how changes in the local population over time were dealt with by the existing white community housed in these neighbourhoods and how discourses of whiteness were shaped in school particularly with regards to working class failure (Evans 2006; McDowell 2002). This is particularly important as educational research investigating young people's experience of schooling, in relation to their racial identities, has often seen whiteness given less attention compared to minority groups (Nayak 1999).

I selected schools using POLAR 2⁶ data which identifies low participation rates to HE. Each school was also identified as a target school by the WP team at the University of Leicester (University of Leicester 2011). I initially identified two schools as being suitable, one in the city and one in the county. (This was because some suburban schools in the conurbation of Leicester are officially outside of the Leicester City boundaries and are therefore run by Leicestershire County Council). The two schools had neighbouring catchment areas and were classed as being in neighbourhoods that had low participation rates in HE. However, I found that obtaining access to the city school was problematic as the school was awaiting an Ofsted inspection, which was therefore focusing their attention. Getting permission to do research in the County school was less problematic. However, after obtaining permission and selecting participants with the school, the gatekeeper went on long term sick leave and I was unable to continue. This resulted in delays to starting the fieldwork and I realised the need to refocus on another area of the city.

I then gained access to three other schools within the city, all of which were located in or close to predominantly white working class 'rim' estates, which were classed as areas of deprivation. The catchment areas of these schools also neighbour each other. This allowed a substantial geographical segment of the city to be studied. Table 3 outlines the communities which are served by the individual schools. Table 4 details the three schools which took part in the

⁶ POLAR 2 data charts the geographical distribution of participation in higher education across the country. The classification shows the chances young people have of entering higher education based on their postal address. There are five classifications with 1 representing the bottom 20% of areas with the least levels of participation through to 5 which includes the top 20% of areas.
<http://www.hefce.ac.uk/whatwedo/wp/ourresearch/polar/>

project. Pseudonyms have been used to protect the identity of the three schools and I have named the neighbourhood according to their respective school's pseudonym.

Area (Parish)	Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) Ranking according to Church of England (CoE) Parishes ⁷	Percentage of Children in Poverty ²	Percentage of population living in Social Housing ²	Percentage of Adults with no Qualifications ²	Ethnic Diversity Percentage of population not classed as White British ²	Area description
Bradgate Estate	Over 12,000 out of the 12,775 CoE parishes	36%	42%	30%	41%	Slightly more affluent of the three areas, but still suffering from high levels of deprivation. The Bradgate Estate has a more diverse population; however there remains a large White British population.
Lea Wood Estate	Over 12,500 out of the 12,775 CoE parishes	45%	50%	45%	22%	This area has high levels of child poverty and adults without qualifications and has a predominantly White British population.
Swithland Wood Estate	Over 12,600 out of the 12,775 CoE parishes	43%	58%	46%	23%	This neighbourhood is the most deprived of the three case studies with the highest levels of adults without qualifications. Like Lea Wood Estate, there is a predominantly White population.

Table 3: Showing data relating to the estates in terms of the Church of England Parish in which they are located

⁷ Church Urban Fund Website. Data obtained from Church Urban Fund from the Church of England parishes which the estates are located in.

School	Student Population ⁸	Free School Meals ⁹	Percentage of pupil living in quintiles 1 and 2 (POLAR 2) ¹⁰
Bradgate High School	1040	25%	97%
Lea Wood College	800	36%	95%
Swithland Wood Community College	860	36%	80%

Table 4: School demographics

4.3 Participant Selection

Having identified and gained access to three schools, I worked with gatekeepers to select participants. The selection was initially carried out by the gatekeepers who were given a set of criteria (see table 3) and was followed by a conversation about the suitability of those selected. The first school, Bradgate High School, gave permission for both Year 8s (age 12-13) and Year 10s (age 15-16) to be involved in the research, whilst the other two, Lea Wood College and Swithland Wood Community College, gave permission for only Year 8s to be in the research. This was due to Year 10s needing to focus on their GCSE exams. The research therefore focuses on Bradgate High School as the primary case study, with Lea Wood College and Swithland Wood Community College as supporting case studies.

Initially a total of 49 young people were involved in the research. However 5 participants withdrew from the project and a further 9 were not included in the analysis as, despite the schools gaining verbal consent from parents prior to the workshops taking place, the young

⁸ Ofsted Website

⁹ Schools and Colleges Services Schools Database, University of Leicester (2011)

¹⁰ Polar 2 quintiles refer to the bottom 40% of areas with low participation rate to higher education

people or their heads of year failed to return parental consent forms to me. Therefore, 35 young people are included in the research findings and analysis (see Table 6 for a full breakdown of participant's gender and school they attended).

Initially, I planned that the workshop groups were going to be mixed in gender terms, as this reflected the demographic of the schools. However, this did not always happen. Bradgate High School selected all male participants to take part. This may in part be down to media coverage at the time of the research in which MP David Willetts, the Minister of State for Universities and Science, argued that white working class boys should be classed in the same way as ethnic minority groups in efforts to widen access to HE (Harrison 2013). The gatekeeper was therefore very keen for this group of boys to take part in the research and this was reflected in the participants the school put forward:

Sarah [gatekeeper] had assumed that the research was going to focus on white Free School Meals (FSM) boys (something also assumed at Lea Wood College). However, I said that in order to represent the demographic of the school that the groups should be mixed. The impression I had was that the majority of young people she had in mind were boys (Field Diary 12/12/2012).

Gender tended to play an important role in the workshops. Where the groups were all males, unsurprisingly this tended to increase visible macho and 'laddish' behaviour, particularly in the Year 10 groups. Within the other two schools both male and female participants were selected by the schools. This again had different influences in the groups. Within Lea Wood College groups, male and female participants seemed to get on quite well, with the girls often putting the boys in their place if they misbehaved. In Swithland Wood Community College, however, some of the boys tended to goad the girls, often sparking arguments (this is explored further later in section 5.6.1). Table 5 shows the criteria given to schools to use for selecting participants. On reflection I realise that in future research it would be advisable to have criteria selected specifically in relation to gender in order to avoid confusion.

Table 5: Criteria given to schools to use for selecting participants

	Criteria (Group 1)	Criteria (Group 2)
Year 8	<p>Able and engaged in the education process</p> <p>Most likely to achieve 5 A*-C GCSEs</p> <p>Free School Meals</p>	<p>Able but at risk of being disengaged from education process</p> <p>Less likely to achieve 5 A*-C GCSEs</p> <p>Free School Meals</p>
Year 10	<p>Able and engaged in the education process</p> <p>Most likely to achieve 3 A-levels or equivalent</p> <p>Free School Meals</p>	<p>Able but at risk of being disengaged from education process</p> <p>Less likely to achieve 3 A-Levels or equivalent</p> <p>Free School Meals</p>

I wanted to research those from Year 8, before they made their choices about which GCSEs to take, and Year 10 as they considered choices for Further Education (FE). This enabled me to explore young people’s aspirations and decision making process the year before they were due to make important decisions and choices about their education. I felt that it was important that all the young people were selected on the basis that their teachers believed that they had the ability to go to university so not to provide false hope to those who are unlikely to be able to go. I also ensured that participants were currently receiving free school meals (FSM) in order to reflect the often used selection criteria for WP events and activities.

Within each year group I split the young people into two groups for the workshops (See Table 5). The first group included young people who were judged to be ‘engaged’ in the education process and so likely to achieve 5 A*-C GCSE grades. But these young people came from underrepresented groups and were at risk of becoming excluded from HE. The second group included pupils who, whilst ostensibly having the ability to attend university, were at risk of becoming disengaged with the education process and were in danger of not achieving the necessary grades at GCSE to continue in education. I wanted to include this latter group in

order to understand why young people from white working class backgrounds often struggle to engage in education and to investigate why some young people from this group are able to succeed in their school studies. This enabled me to critically consider reasons why this disparity might take place. I was also aware that many young people in Year 8 may not know whether they definitely want to attend university; this criterion, based on current academic ability or potential, was regarded as a better reflection of their likelihood to attend university in the future.

I was also aware of the problematic tension that the labels 'engaged' and 'disengaged' might have as the terms themselves can wield power for those in authority within a school to deem pupils level of engagement as being satisfactory or not, without understanding the underlying reasons and causes why this might be the case. However, the terms 'engaged' and 'disengaged' were used, for want of better words, in order to communicate with teachers so that they would easily understand and apply these when helping to select pupils. It is worth noting that none of the teacher questioned this labelling. It is also important to stress that none of the pupils were aware that this criteria had been used to place them into groups because of the effects this might have on them psychologically and also in terms of playing up to a given label. However in section 4.6.2, I highlight that some of the young people regarded as 'disengaged' often revealed a level of critical thinking about their world precisely because they were questioning the status quo. I was interested, therefore, to question particularly what the reasons were for their disengagement at school.

Communicating the details of the research workshops to gatekeepers was sometimes problematic, as was the case over the gender issue. Another issue emerged in Swithland Wood Community College as the result of a misunderstanding over the structure of the workshops. The gatekeeper had arranged both groups to take place at the same time. This resulted in a larger group of 12 young people of mixed ability being in the same group, which made a big difference in terms of behaviour and my capacity to collect rich data. This number was later reduced to eight, by participants withdrawing over the course of the weeks. The result was that the group was harder to control (even when smaller), so the more able and engaged pupils often got frustrated with the more disengaged pupils messing about. This often made it difficult to conduct, record and transcribe the workshop exchanges.

Table 6: showing pupil participation according to school, Year group and gender.

School	Year 8		Year 10		Withdrawn	Total
	Male	Female	Male	Female		
Bradgate High School	12	0	8	0	7	27
Lea Wood College	4	5	0	0	3	12
Swithland Wood Community College	4	4	0	0	4	12

Whilst the workshops became more manageable over time, I sometimes struggled to obtain good quality data from the group. This however did not limit the pedagogic imperative to help young people to understand how HE could benefit them. Many of the young people were still interested in learning about HE and therefore whilst data collection was hampered by the large group size, the aim of helping young people understand university was still achieved. My observations of the group dynamic and their disengagement does however reveal important information and data about young people's lives which I discuss later in this chapter.

4.4 Ethics

Ethical clearance was obtained from the University of Leicester in line with university ethics procedures (University of Leicester 2015). I identified a number of key issues as being important to the research in line with Valentine's (1999) advice. These include:

- Informed consent
- Privacy and confidentiality
- Safety
- Issues of power and social justice
- Dissemination and advocacy

At the beginning of each series of workshops, issues of informed consent and confidentiality were discussed with the young people, both in terms of what they could expect from the researcher with respect to concealing their identity and also the importance of keeping each other's confidentiality. The identities of participants and schools have been protected as much as possible through the use of pseudonyms. Every effort has been made to ensure participants and schools remain anonymous, as much as the use of pseudonyms can allow. Young people were advised that they could withdraw from the research without giving reason and the relevant DBS check was taken to ensure young people's protection and safety and to meet school access requirements.

Other ethical issues related to doing research with young people were considered over issues of power, social justice, dissemination and advocacy (I will discuss these further as the discussion of methodology continues). Traditional more positivist methods of research that rely on well-defined verbal and intellectual skills, such as questionnaires and formal interviews can intimidate young people and may not provide the best set of results (Valentine 1999). This problem was addressed through using participatory and creative techniques that allowed the young people to express themselves in ways that helped them feel more at ease about participating in research. Where necessary, I discussed ethical issues relating to activities with the young people and codes of conduct were developed with participants inputting their thoughts and ideas as part of the research process. I therefore took on these points when designing, collecting and analysing the research data.

On a number of different occasions, [as outlined in section 4.6.1 and chapter 5.6], there were a range of racist, homophobic and sexist comments and questions. For me, as for other youth researchers (e.g. Horton 2008) this posed a number of ethical dilemmas and questions:

- Should I challenge these views?
- Should I merely capture and record them?
- Am I being complicit if I do not challenging them?

I knew that with a youth worker's hat on, I would definitely challenge these views and yet, as a researcher, I was also interested in understanding why participants thought like that. Does making a point and coming into conflict help this process? These are questions I never quite managed to reconcile and I identify with Horton's (2008: 364) descriptions of being 'haunted' by a 'sense of failure' when not finding an adequate response.

When thinking about leaving the field, it was important to consider the ethics of leaving young people, especially after discussing issues which were likely to be affecting their lives and aspirations. Young people often expressed clear emotions, particularly related to their futures, where they were often fearful and afraid of the unknown. This sometimes translated into moments of affect, within the group workshops, where young people's own emotions influenced me.

It was as if there were a sudden change of tone in the group, from that of talking hopefully about the future, with excitement, to a sudden change almost of despair – to the point that I felt caught in this transmission of affect and emotions, of fear and sadness that was seemingly gripping the group. (Field Notebook, Year 10, Engaged Group, Bradgate High School).

It should therefore be noted that emotional responses and reactions during the research also influenced my later analysis of the research (Bennett 2004). I have therefore been keen, within this thesis to highlight some of the emotional depth of the data. (I discuss this further in chapter 5.6). In working closely with the schools and with people responsible for careers advice I was able to discuss broad themes with the gatekeepers. This ensured that schools were aware of some of the findings and could continue to work with young people to explore issues and concerns they had about the future and relating to attending university.

4.5 Research Design: Moving from PAR to Creative Methods

4.5.1 Participant Action Research

Initial plans for the research design were to use a Participant Action Research (PAR) methodological approach with the young people. PAR has been increasingly used by geographers as a way to 'effect change' (Pain and Francis 2003: 46). The intention of PAR as a research tool is to join research with education and action in a way that is focused on producing social transformation and preferred outcomes (Kindon et al. 2007). PAR seeks to include participants in all aspects of the research which includes design, data collection and analysis and dissemination (Pain and Francis 2004). As such, I hoped to include participants in some, or all, of the different stages during the research process (Pain 2004), in a way that would lead to collective action in order to "challenge social exclusion, democratize the research process and build the capacity of young people to analyse and transform their own

lives and communities” (Cahill 2007: 298). I was also inspired by the work of Freire (1972) and hooks (2003) to frame the workshops in a participatory manner and using recent qualitative PAR research that uses creative techniques such as music, dance, photography, video, personal diaries, film-making (Pain 2004).

PAR is also an attractive method as it allows for the consideration not only of personal experiences and possibilities for transformation, but also to explore how these might fit with wider geopolitical factors (Cameron and Gibson 2005; Cahill 2007; Cahill et al. 2007). In the case of this research, this included the changing nature of employment within the national and wider global economy and how this shapes national education policy in its attempts to shape young people’s lives. Howard et al. (2002) outline a number of different forms of participation, ranging from pragmatic, educational, human rights, democratic and transformative forms of participation (see Table 7).

Table 7: Types of Participation (Howard et al. 2002 in Bland 2006)

Type	Reasons for Participation	Level of Involvement	Outcomes
<i>Pragmatic</i>	Key source of information	Data gathering	Insider knowledge Potentially superficial
<i>Educational</i>	Formal skill development	Carrying out assigned tasks as research assistant	Increased knowledge and skills Leadership and development
<i>Human Rights</i>	Right to be involved in decisions affecting them	Involvement in decision making	Participants’ voices heard Potentially empowering
<i>Democratic</i>	Development of civic skills and knowledge Take part in democratic decision making	Shared decision making	Increased ability to engage in the democratic process
<i>Transformative</i>	Examination of power relations Meaningful decisions on their own lives	Full partners in all decisions as co-researchers Parity of esteem	Increased ability to affect own life choices Empowering

It is at the transformative level that PAR is best able to act as a means of empowerment that allows participants to challenge unequal power relations (Bland 2006). My ethical impulse was certainly to try to achieve this when working with disadvantaged young people (Sime 2009). I felt that PAR would form the best means to explore issues of social exclusion from HE with participants. However, the practicalities and realities of completing a PhD and the demands of schools around recruiting pupils made this difficult to achieve at this transformative scale. There were several reasons for this:

1. Time, was the primary reason for reconsidering a PAR methodology. The limited amount of time I was allocated by schools resulted in the research questions being predetermined by myself prior to meeting the participants. Initially my hope was for participants to act as co-researchers and be involved in the design of the project. My hope was that this would make the research transformative in nature. However, in order to cover all that I felt was needed to be considered when looking at this topic, this required more time to organise than I was given by the schools to work with the young people. This was because teachers were understandably keen to ensure that pupils' time away from lessons was minimised.
2. Resources: I had a limited amount of resources which meant certain PAR ideas would not be practical e.g., making a film. This meant it was necessary to give young people a choice of *possible* options, which would have undermined attempts to create a properly transformative PAR project. Initial attempts to make activities more participatory in workshops 1-3, by giving young people more freedom to come up with ideas, led to suggestions that were not achievable (e.g. trips to the neighbourhood), whilst other groups struggled to think of any ideas, which would have impacted on the quality of data being produced.
3. Young people's willingness: Whilst the majority of the groups were very engaged and enjoyed the activities in the research, a minority did not. This meant sometimes it felt difficult to motivate young people. Trying to achieve full scale transformative PAR, where young people were involved in the research design, would have produced very little data in some of the groups that were less engaged and less enthusiastic. For such groups the research was much more akin to Freire's (1972) idea of a 'banking' method of teaching where there was an expectation that I, as the researcher/teacher, would provide the activities and information about HE.

During the course of the research I felt the pressure (mainly from myself) to include a PAR methodology. This was due to recent debates within children's geography about the difference between using PAR as an approach and using participatory techniques as alternative methods. Kesby (2007) argues there is a big difference between the two. As I had the ethical impulse to include PAR as an approach I felt that this was the best means to help the young people achieve social transformation. I was therefore disappointed when I realised this was not possible and I felt frustrated that I was unable to achieve this within my own research context.

Ambitions for a full scale PAR project were too costly in terms of time available. This meant that the research had to be adapted as spending a lot of time on planning participatory elements of the research would have impacted on the amount and quality of data collected.

Whilst planning the research I had hopes of getting the groups to come up with ideas about what to do throughout the four workshops. However, for various reasons, this has not really worked. The main reason is time – especially at Bradgate High School where we only have 45 minutes each week. Spending lots of time planning things seems a big risk, where we could have a great participatory student led session but be limited on the data collection front (Field Notebook 23/01/2013).

Initially, when trying out PAR as an *approach*, it often felt like there was a tension between maintaining control over the research to ensure that sufficient data was collected, and being bold and taking a risk through being more participatory. As the research progressed I quickly realised that using a PAR as an approach might not be the best option in this case given the limitations encountered. I felt that this could scarcely be called a PAR project at a transformative level. This caused me to question the relevance of the method I was using. What eventually emerged however was a series of workshops that drew on participatory and creative *techniques* (Grant 2016).

Whilst full scale PAR was not possible, I approached young people as knowledge producers and experts in their own lives and the world around them and ensured that where possible the workshops still tried to foster many of the feelings and values of participatory methods, inspired by Freire (1972) and hooks (2003). This meant approaching the workshops as a micro community which challenged what I interpreted as learnt helplessness and which tried to evoke hope in disadvantaged people (hooks 2003). This meant being very careful with the questions I asked and trying not to assume how young people thought; however this did not

always work out quite as I had expected or hoped. I also ensured that young people were included in as much of the research design and decision-making processes as possible, but I remained aware of the limitations I had encountered.

I undertook research with 7 separate groups consisting of 6-8 young people in each workshop (apart from in Swithland Woods Community College, where there was a single group of 12 pupils which included both Engaged and Disengaged groups). Each group met over the course of 4 weeks. This resulted in 28 workshop sessions taking place across the whole period of the research. Each group met four times in total over four consecutive weeks and took part in the workshops which lasted about an hour. The workshop sessions drew on creative methods, with each young person being given a folder to keep worksheets in. This helped me later to identify different people, especially when transcribing. The young people were very proud of the folders they had completed for the research, with some asking for them to be returned so that they could show their parents. After a period of time to analyse the data and to make electronic records of the workbooks, I returned the folders to the groups that had asked, so that they could use the material to continue the process of thinking about their futures with their parents. I felt that this was an important step in feeding back the research to the young people and their families to ensure that they also benefited and had something to reflect on after the research had finished.

The workshops were based around the following themes:

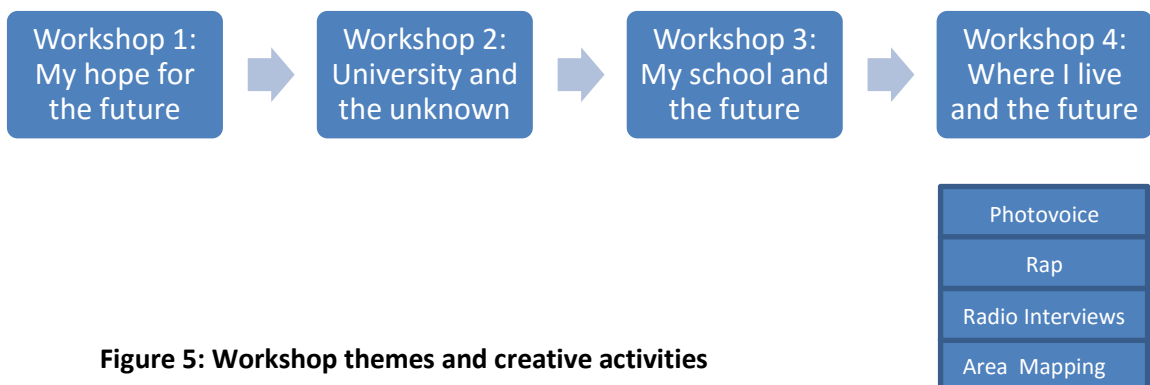


Figure 5: Workshop themes and creative activities

In the first three sessions various activities were used based on creative methods. This included a mixture of visual, kinetic and written forms. This was because people tended to prefer different methods over others. For example, some may find written methods alienating but rather prefer verbal methods, or vice versa. A range of methods were therefore used to

maximise participation amongst young people (Cahill 2007). This enabled a degree of choice and flexibility for participants to have a say about the activities they undertook during the research, it also included them in the decision-making process (particularly in workshop 4).

One technique was to ask young people to use their imagination to think about what their future might look like for adult life. Imagination is vital to thinking about how things can be different. Given the right conditions imagination can be allowed to flourish and when kept in balance with reason this can lead to progress (Bland 2012). This thesis considers the role that imagination has in how young people plan and set hopes and aspirations for the future and how different pathways become constructed or contested by young people.



Figure 6: 'Imagine the Future' exercise, Candice, Year 8, Lea Wood College

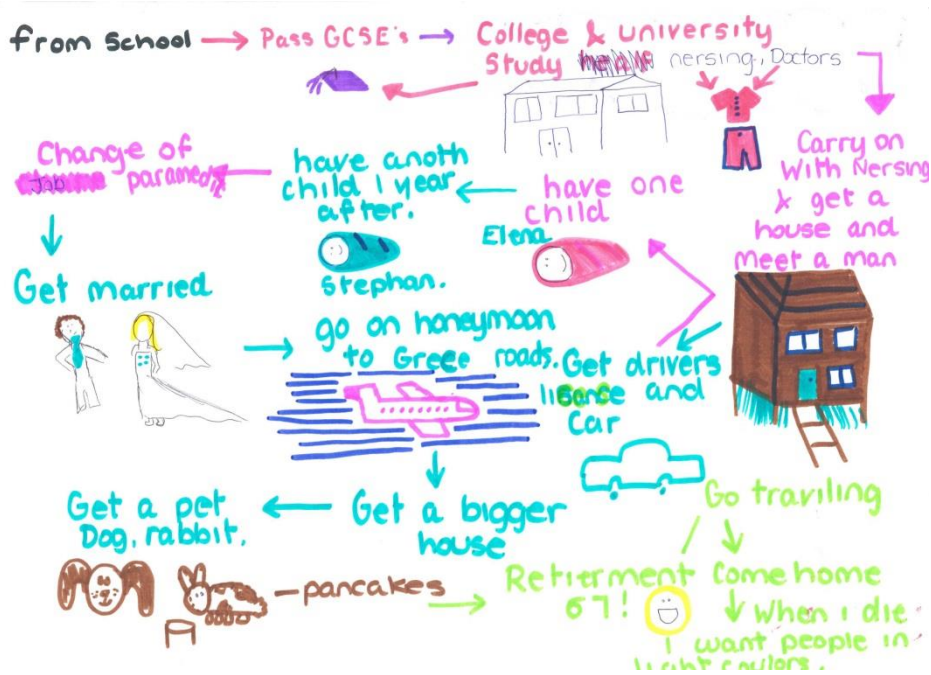


Figure 7: 'Imagine the future' exercise, Kimberley, Year 8, Lea Wood College

The final session ended by working with young people on a final creative project to explore issues of living in their neighbourhoods. It gave young people a choice about what creative method they wanted to use. I was able to build momentum and excitement about the activity with the young people by giving them a choice about what activity they wanted to explore. I asked them to choose from four activities to give young people a sense of 'ownership' within the research. The activities included:

Radio Interviews: Interview each other about life in your neighbourhood. Think what questions you might like to ask each other about what it is like living here.

Mapping diagrams: Draw a map of your area and think about the opportunities that are open to you?

Photovoice: Take photos of the people, places and things that are important to you.

Rap 'where I live': Write a rap about living in your neighbourhood.

Of these four choices of creative methods in the final workshop, photovoice was the most popular, with four of the groups choosing this option. One group chose radio interviews, one chose rap and the other group, neighbourhood mapping. Table 8 shows the different activities the young people selected to take part in.

Group	Photovoice	Rap	Neighbourhood Mapping	Radio Interviews
Bradgate High School, Year8, Engaged Group				
Bradgate High School, Year 8 Disengaged Group				
Bradgate High School, Year 10, Engaged Group				
Bradgate High School, Year 10, Disengaged Group				
Lea Wood College, Year 8, Engaged Group				
Lea Wood College, Year 8, Disengaged Group				
Swithland Wood Community College, Year 8, Mixed Group				

Table 8: Session 4 activities according to group

Some examples of the creative methods used are discussed below and include a brief discussion about some of the practicalities about undertaking these methods.

Photovoice



Figure 8: Example of Photovoice, Blake, Year 8, Lea Wood College

Young people were asked to take photos of the ‘people, places and things that are important to you.’ The aim of this activity was to gain a better understanding from the perspective of the young people about their own lives and what it means for them to live on a white working class estate in Leicester.

Photovoice required much more thinking around ethics prior to giving young people cameras compared to some of the other creative techniques. I asked groups to develop a set of rules to govern the research process.

When I spoke about the ethics of taking photos there were the usual sniggers. There was a general consensus about the need to have rules. The main rule was nothing indecent, such as ‘no bum holes’ (Tanya). I suggested that they asked permission. Someone wrote – ‘No photos inside because of security in case someone comes in and nicks your TV or Xbox.’ However, many in the group felt that it wasn’t a good rule. I suggested that if you wanted to take photos inside you could, but if you didn’t want to, that was ok. The argument was then made that someone would need to know where a person lived in order to rob you anyway (Year 8, Lea Wood College, Disengaged Group) (Field Notebook 09/01/2013).

This process helped to get young people excited and thinking about what they would take photos of. I identified four key areas to discuss with the young people before allowing them to proceed with taking photos. If these were not brought up by young people themselves, then I raised them with the group.

These included:

- Practically demonstrating how the cameras worked.
- Ensuring people's privacy.
- Gaining consent from people in photos (Johnsen et al. 2008).
- Not to cause embarrassment to people in the photos (Luttrell 2010).

In terms of engagement, those in the more educationally engaged groups tended to handle this activity much better. In Lea Wood College the entire Engaged Group brought their camera back whilst within the Disengaged Group all forgot to do so. In other groups only some students brought their camera back. When this occurred, young people who had not returned cameras were asked to draw what they would have taken. Likewise, in Bradgate High School, not everyone in the Disengaged Group brought their cameras back:

Three of the six young people brought back the cameras, so for the ones who didn't, I got them to think about what they would have taken photos of and to draw what was important to them. They were fascinated with the negatives as I think many of them may not have seen them before and they didn't really understand the concept that you couldn't plug a disposable camera into a computer to get the photos. I explained that the negatives were a backup – it was like saving them on your computer in case you want to reprint them. Those who had not brought their cameras along wanted to know how they could print them – I explained that they needed to go to Boots but that it would cost them £5 (Field Notebook 19/06/2013).

Each group exhibited varying levels of research success, often with those from the more engaged student groups performing and participating much better than those in Disengaged Groups. Sometimes, when activities did not go to plan, some young people began to consider themselves in light of the way in which discourses of disengagement, disaffection and educational failure can pathologise young people. When one is always being blamed for failure, it is easy to then label oneself as a disappointment.

Quite a few of the lads (Bradgate High School, Year 10, Engaged Group) were disappointed with what they had or had not taken [photos]. Saying things like, 'I'm sure I took more than this'. Leo was particularly disappointed and asked 'Are you disappointed with us sir?' I said 'No of course not, it is more that it got you thinking about where you lived'. I reassured them that they could always draw what hadn't come out (Field Notebook 06/02/2013).

This sense of failure and disappointment suggested that young people were participating and trying to do well and were hoping to impress. However, in light of apparent 'failure', they assumed that I, as the researcher, would be disappointed with their performance. This has important implications when thinking about research in terms of a Freirian approach to teaching and research. Firstly it showed that these young people still maintained a very traditional researcher-participant relationship. They saw my position as a researcher as being someone who holds power. Secondly it shows how pervasive ideas of failure are and the sense of being a disappointment to those in power, be it researcher, teachers, etc. As such, attempts to empower young people through the research process are made more difficult when there is a culture of blaming the individual for their alleged shortcomings. This is not to place the blame onto schools and teachers, who are often well meaning and supportive but without addressing power relations, interventions into educational failure can lead to a 'diminished self' (Ecclestone 2007). Participatory influenced and creative research should try to counter this. I argue that even in this case, where young people were engaged in the activity, the process of doing participatory / creative research with disadvantaged young people is made problematic when young people start to consider themselves from a position of lack.

Rap Music

Everyone thinks life is about money but no one values the small things.

Your family keeps you on track,

That's why you don't turn back,

Keep following your dreams,

Life can be a thin Beam,

Just give 100%

(Karl, Year 8, Bradgate High School)

Participants were asked to write a rap about living in their neighbourhoods and were asked to think about not only what was important to local people, but to consider including some of the positive and negative aspects of living in their neighbourhood.

The raps produced were, in the most part, lyrically and rhythmically eloquent and provided some rich data about life as a young person in Leicester. The group involved were excited

about writing raps and during the process it felt like the participants were actually leading what we were doing.

We [Bradgate High School, Year 8, Engaged Group] also started thinking about the rap and talking about what was important to them so that next week we can look at the area. They seemed to like the idea of using a Cajon drum so I will take mine in for next week. For maybe the second time in this research it actually feels like it is taking more of a participatory edge. (Field Notebook, 01/05/2013).

This group was an all-male group which made it easier for them to decide on doing raps. Within the mixed groups some of the boys were keen; however the girls preferred to use some of the other available methods and therefore photovoice was often chosen as a compromise.

Neighbourhood Mapping and Mock Radio Interviews

Whilst two groups chose one of these two methods, they largely did not work effectively. For the neighbourhood mapping I asked young people to draw their neighbourhoods and to think about some of the places which would provide opportunities for their future education and employment prospects. For the mock radio interview young people were asked to interview each other about their experiences of living in their neighbourhoods. Before undertaking this, I suggested young people might like to spend some time thinking about possible questions they could ask each other.

The group that chose the radio interviews (Year 10, Disengaged Group, Bradgate High School) wanted to split into smaller groups of two to three students, to talk about it. However, when going round to see how they were getting on they mainly seemed to use this time just to chat about other things. This provided a good opportunity at the end to talk about their neighbourhood, but I decided not to get them to perform the interviews as I felt they had little prepared. Likewise, the group that chose the neighbourhood mapping had little prepared, as the result of being a badly behaved group where those who were interested were constantly being wound up by those who were not. So, the activity never really took off.

4.5.2 Interviews with Professionals

I conducted semi-structured Interviews with the gatekeepers of the three schools. They tended to be the teachers responsible for careers and extracurricular activities. The teachers were all extremely passionate about the importance of education in helping young people to break cycles of poverty and achieve social mobility, with all speaking of the importance of raising both educational standards and aspirations. I got the impression that for the majority of teaching staff interviewed this was more than a career, but something where they felt they were making a difference to individual lives. In speaking to them there was often a real desire to ensure that all of their pupils achieved their potential and there was often a sense of the burden of responsibility they felt to ensure that their pupils were ready for life beyond the school. They were therefore teachers who attempted to 'go the extra mile' to help their pupils. One teacher, David argued that teaching was his 'life's work' (David, Teacher, Lea Wood College).

I also conducted a further three interviews with representatives of the WP team at the University of Leicester and De Montfort University. These were to help gain a deeper understanding of widening access from the perspective of the HE institutions in Leicester. Whilst the main aim of the research was to capture young people's voices about their futures, I was also interested in looking at how schools and universities view the issues that affect young people and what is being done to help young people think about their futures. The interviews were transcribed and coded using NVivo.

4.5.3 Secondary Data

Secondary data was used to investigate the national and local policies which help to promote HE using recently produced white papers by the Coalition Government from the Department of Education, Cabinet Office and Business Innovation and Skills. I looked for policy which addressed issues of social mobility, education, youth and Higher Education. Previous policy documents from the New Labour Government were also selected based on academic commentaries of the previous government initiatives and web based search engines (e.g. Scopus / Google Scholar). Relevant quotes were selected and coded into key themes, where I particularly looked for themes which matched or reflected evidence found in the primary data.

This process of coding was particularly useful for the second analysis chapter which discusses how government policy is enacted on the ground by secondary schools.

Literature on university WP policies has also been used to support the interviews given by representatives from WP teams. This route was taken to consider the research in terms of wider national policies and in light of an increasingly volatile global economy and drive for the UK to remain at the cutting edge of competition both nationally and internationally. Universities and WP are often seen as instrumental in this and so investigating what drives and informs policy is important when researching how institutions apply educational policies when working with young people. Policy documents were obtained through collecting online and printed WP policy documentation which was designed to communicate the universities WP strategies to members of university staff. As with government white papers, data was collected through identifying relevant quotes and coding them thematically against codes found within the field.

4.6 Challenges and Issues of Reliability

4.6.1 Gender Differences

During the research there was evidence that particularly for young men in the target schools being seen to be sexually experienced and knowledgeable was important. In the main case study (Bradgate High School), where the groups were all male participants, there was evidence of a particular form of adolescent masculinity that promote forms of 'laddish behaviour' such as comments on misogyny and sexual conquest. This was particularly the case amongst the Year 10, Disengaged Group where a specific form of adolescent masculinity emerged.

I just had the first session with the second group of Year 10s at Bradgate High School where I introduced the research. The first noticeable difference was the level of laddish behaviours that was not seen in the other groups [at Bradgate High School]. When any female walked past the window into the main entrance of the school some sort of comment was passed about how they looked, whether they were 'fit' (Aaron) or comments such as, 'I would poke that.' (Aden). One of the lads (Aaron) opened up the window and shouted 'Alright ladies'. The two young girls about Year 10 or 11 ignored him and just carried on walking. Later Aaron shouts 'My god, Pete Crouch's Mrs' [Professional Footballer] as a tall blonde walks past. (Field Notebook 20/02/2013).

Pascoe (2007: 4) argues that masculinity is 'a configuration of practices and discourses that different youths (boys and girls) may embody in different ways and to different degrees'. In her research in an American High School, Pascoe argues that masculinity is an identity that uses sexual discourse and behaviours and practices that assert dominance and control. I argue similarly in my research that for this particular group of adolescent males the transition to adulthood sees a particular form of repeated ritualised acts, where achieving masculinity is a process which involves social interaction to assert one's credentials. The quotes above occurred repeatedly every session, indeed every time a female walked past the widow.

This repetitive and almost ritualistic behaviour attempts to assert their sexual mastery. By often objectifying women and denying their subjectivity, it can be regarded as the means by which these young men form their masculine identity. This will become apparent as the thesis continues into the analysis chapters, as the young men consider what HE might mean for them and how their ideas of masculinity and transitions to adult life differ in comparison to their understanding of 'effeminate' male university students who they dub as 'fags' [see Chapter 7.2.1 p203].

The overt display of masculinity mentioned earlier, however, appears to be somewhat of a façade. During an activity, where the young people broke into pairs, I overheard Aden talking about the difficulties of getting a girlfriend and that he, 'Didn't have much luck with girls'. The sense of emerging masculinity as being a process suggests that, for the young men in this research, what they are transitioning to in terms of their masculine identity has not yet been realized. This may explain why there is a continued need for the ritualistic performance of this identity.

Beyond the social factors which help to explain changes in adolescence, biological, cognitive, psychological and emotional changes might also play a part in structuring young people's behaviour and motivations. Dahl (2006: 18) argues that a disconnect can occur between biological changes during puberty where the body becomes ready for sexual interests, but that this can be inhibited by a 'relatively immature set of neurobehavioral systems for self-control and affect regulation.' This can result not only in an increased likelihood of risky behaviours and emotional problems, but can also affect how young people deal with complex social situations and their ability to handle strong emotions.

In the case of the adolescent males above, Aden shows how this disconnect is occurring between his longing for adult masculinity and his inability to navigate the complex social realities of attracting someone of the opposite sex. The repetition of a particular form of public

masculinity within the group might have the effect of disciplining behaviour which runs counter to this ideal of working class masculinity.

At Swithland Wood Community College, being seen as knowledgeable about sex was something that the girls tried to show, possibly as a means of getting the attention of the boys:

There was also a lot of quite sexualised language [being used] especially from the girls. I noticed that the boys were enjoying this and there was a notable group of two boys and two girls. I have not really picked up on this need to use highly sexualised language to impress the opposite sex when working in Lea Wood College – in fact the girls are more likely to put the boys in their place if they said or did something inappropriate. In Swithland Wood Community College, it seems that some of the girls try to be the centre of attention through their knowledge of sex, much to the amusement and attention of the boys (Field Notebook 23/05/2013).

Between the two schools that had mixed groups in this research there was a big difference in how the boys and girls engaged with each other. This, in part, might be due to differences in what young people regard as important in transitioning towards adulthood. In Lea Wood College female identity took on a much more matriarchal guise, where the girls were repulsed by certain behaviours (e.g. chewing loudly) and often challenged ideas and assumptions that the male participants had. In Swithland Wood Community College, however, girls used their knowledge about sex to impress the boys. This had the effect of attracting the male participant's attention. However, in both respects the female participants tended to carry more influence over the male participants.

Gender did therefore have an impact on the research and how young people engaged with each other but this was not uniformly found throughout the groups. It can be said that gender is performed relationally and in context. For example, not all of the male groups in Bradgate High School performed a 'laddish' form of masculinity. Furthermore, evidence of girls trying to impress boys was only evident in one of the groups in the research. The various effects of gender tended to be isolated to particular groups.

4.6.2 Dealing with Disengagement in Research

Atweh et al. (2008) argue that when looking at those classed as being disengaged at school, there are often two means of approaching the issue. The first considers disengagement as an

individual problem; this tends to label and blame the individual for personal shortcomings and leads to activities and intervention that try to remedy the problem. The issue here is that young people are often passive recipients of these activities which merely act to reinforce the very things they are trying to remedy. The second way in which school disengagement can be considered is in terms of wider social problems, such as social exclusion, where the blame is often shifted away from the individual to the system and its institutions (e.g. schools). It is important, as I move into the analysis phase, to consider the relationship between the individual and the institution to explain and understand the nature of engagement and to questions why some young people actively choose not to engage in education.

Group participation in the research tended to reflect the categories of engagement they had been put into. Those in 'Engaged' Groups tended to get involved in the activities, whereas those from more 'Disengaged' Groups often struggled to take part in activities and sometimes showed little enthusiasm for parts of the research. These groups tended to prefer more interactive activities, ones that were visual rather than written.

They (Year 10, Disengaged Group, Bradgate High School) were much less willing to share and did much less in terms of volume of work than compared to the other group. I got the impression they were much more interested in doing more practical things so next week I am going to make the activities much more engaging and hands on (Field Notebook 28/02/2013).

I made the workshops more 'hands on' by using props to look at young people's understanding and expectations of university. I used a mixture of props and visual photo cards depicting what could be regarded as a 'typical' undergraduate student living in halls of residence away from home. The young people tended to connect much better with the discussion about university when they had an object or photo card to talk about. Whilst this worked I would have liked to have explored much more kinaesthetic approaches, for example Gauntlett (2007) has used Lego as a form of serious play and 3D box models (Awan and Gauntlett 2013) to help people explore and understand their lives. For many of the male participants in this research such hand on activities might have proved more effective.

I also made the workshops more accessible by building visual methods into the research activities. This meant that rather than instructing young people to write something, I also gave them the option to draw. Not only did this help to hear the voice of the participant (Bland 2012) but it also produced rich qualitative data for the research (Walker 2007). By using visual methods that involved drawing, mapping and photos, I was able to use this data to spark

discussion and to support the visual data. This allowed me to confirm what young people meant and it also operated as a means of analysing the data (Bland 2012) and therefore took on a useful 'talk and draw' character (Prosser 2007: 22).

When visual methodologies are used in research the 'talk' data is often regarded as secondary and the visual as primary (Bland 2012). However, within this research visual methods were often used as a supportive strategy to stimulate conversations. Whilst the analysis chapters include use of visual data as evidence, this was by no means the primary way of collecting and analysing the data. However, visual data is used to support what young people were saying and should be regarded as helping clarify verbal data.

In terms of the research (and education) setting, a greater consideration of what engagement verses disengagement means is required. McMahon (2003) argues that engagement needs to be considered beyond the notions of commitment, involvement and concentration, but rather it has also to consider the levels at which engagement occurs. Taking a Freirian (1972) understanding of the 'banking' concept of teaching, engagement can occur through packaging teaching material in a way that maintains and keeps students' attention. Engagement is thus measured through pupils' levels of interest, enthusiasm or cooperation in the learning process and fails to consider how students themselves are involved and how knowledge is produced and for whom. Engagement in this form has a danger of being too passive and compliant. In terms of this research it could be argued that many of the activities in workshops were 'packaged' in a way to keep and attract students attention and thus could be regarded as superficial. Indeed many of the activities that I hoped would be new and fresh were very similar to some of the activities teachers told me that they use with young people. This may, in part, reflect why disengagement continued into the research.

However, this said, for some of the Disengaged Groups, some of the best examples of critical thinking and questioning the world around them, came from those who were not engaged in education and did not particularly want to engage in the creative activities. The process of not engaging actually seems to free some of them to question the world around them. During the research, and when investing ideas and in trying to make the sessions creative and fun, my understanding of engagement was for young people to take part and be interested in what we were covering but instead this approach had a danger of leading to passive compliance. In fact by not always complying this gave space for students to question things. This led some to question the status quo, the purpose of the state, education, universities and even the research, and this provided great insight into why young people might reject the HE option.

For example, when talking about university a conversation developed over what students tend to wear.

Aaron: If you go to uni, do you have to wear certain clothes to go to uni?

TG: No you wear what you want.

Aaron: Are all the girls dressed poshly or casual?

TG: It's just normal – whatever they want to wear.

Aaron: Yeah but what do you mean by normal? Cos all the girls round here wear short skirts.

Rick: Yeah but have you gone past Leicester Uni?

TG: Most students wear hoodies and jeans

(Aaron and Rick, Year 10, Disengaged Group, Bradgate High School).

This shows a high level of critical thinking from Aaron but it also shows how I, as a researcher, approached the conversation from a 'middle class' insider's perspective. My 'normal' was not necessarily the group's 'normal.' This simple exchange shows the influence and power that researchers can have on the research through the assumptions, beliefs and ideologies that they hold (BERA 2000; Atweh et al. 2008) and the importance of considering and critiquing how different world views are constructed through not only the eyes of the participants, but the school, wider society and the researcher. All of these offer very different constructions and a different understanding of the world.

By questioning what is 'normal,' young people in the above exchange were questioning not only how the world works, but who defines what is normal. It is often the powerful or dominant who determine or impose what is regarded as representative or 'normal' (Reay 2007). In terms of participation this is important because by questioning what is 'normal' and in some cases rejecting it, young people rather than just being passive are actually engaged as active resisters; actively questioning and actively constructing their lives (Bland 2006). Not only did young people here question the world in this way, but this also caused me as a researcher to question my own assumptions of the world and of the lives of the young people I was working with.

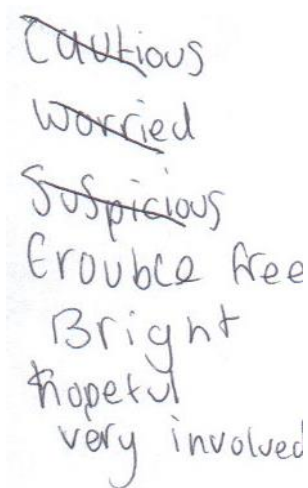
4.6.3 Research Effect: Reflective Awareness, Playfulness and Group Learning

During the research period there were a number of occasions where people changed their position or corrected themselves, perhaps because of the impact of the research process. One teacher, for example, spoke about 'normalising gentleness' before changing the phrase to 'legitimising gentleness.'

Sarah [Bradgate High School, Teacher] told me about the learning days where they try to normalise or legitimise gentleness. She said that to 'normalise' – correcting herself to 'legitimise' gentleness when she saw me writing it down, was important to show that it is alright to be 'soft' and although it is impossible to measure, she hoped that it had some effect on the young people. (Field Notebook 12/12/2012).

This is interesting because it showed that the process of doing research can have the effect of developing a reflective awareness among the audience and subjects. Perhaps realising how a researcher might use 'normalise' within research to speak about power relations within the school, or maybe from a feminist perspective of 'symbolic violence' against those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, this might have resulted in a change of word being used.

There was also evidence of young people being reflexive and changing their stated opinion during the research.



~~Cautious~~
~~worried~~
~~suspicious~~
Trouble Area
Bright
hopeful
very involved

Figure 9: Student jottings about the future

In this second example, the young person concerned was asked to write down words about how they *really* felt about the future. It was interesting that Justin (Year 8, Engaged Group, Bradgate High School) initially wrote down quite negative words before crossing them out and

then writing and feeding back to the group more 'positive' words. Here the young person has made no attempts to hide the words he has crossed out. They remain visible and transparent. This might suggest that he wants to highlight the tension between being expected to be positive and how he actually feels about the future. It might be that he realises that the school expects him to be seen to be positive and that somehow this was not the place for him to show *actual* negative feelings but a place to perform positive ones.

In both these cases it might also reflect a playfulness around what is being expected of the subjects and what I, as a researcher, wanted to hear, which is playing on the edge of that which is seen as a taboo. However, whether this reveals an interesting way of communicating tensions or playfulness, it does lead to questions over the reliability of some of the data and the extent to which research is able to reflect and understand the real world, rather than mask the realities of how people really think about and understand the world.

Sometimes during the research there was also evidence of young people simply 'copying' each other. This meant that some ideas became the opinion of the group rather than that of individuals. However, this said, by picking up on key themes this often gave me the chance to gauge if others in the group did agree.

Candice: Unrealistic - I stole his [Justin's] word.

(Candice, Year 8, Engaged Group, Lea Wood College)

This shows that peer to peer learning occurred within the groups and that this is a natural part of undertaking research within a group environment. Such ideas were used in conjunction with other material to form a bigger and more adequate picture of what young people did think. It could also be that these discussions form the basis for testing out and developing ideas amongst their peer group. In having a discussion about what is realistic, this might be informed by young people's own habitus, where the discussion can be seen as a forum for understanding one's own habitus against other people's habitus within the group.

4.6.4 Power and Trust in Research

The young people involved, unsurprisingly, sometimes questioned the purpose of the research. They were well aware of the way in which the estates were often seen as being areas of disadvantage and areas that are targeted for educational improvement.

We had a conversation about the neighbourhood and young people were speaking about living on an estate. Aaron said 'Why here, why is it always us?' (Field Notebook 20/02/2013).

There is a sense here that for young people this was just another intervention; another thing to try to 'help' the area. The young people often acknowledged that the area had its problems but they were also wary of when outsiders come in by means of intervention. In another workshop young people directly questioned my motives for working with them.

One of the lads was interested in what I would use the research for – so I told him it was for my research thesis which I will write up after. 'So you are just using us?' He said. 'You don't really care do you?' I replied, 'Well you could look at it like that in one way, but actually I do care and hope that you will get something out of this and be able to think about your futures better as a result. He gave a sort of OK nod as if I had appeased his allegations of 'using them' (Field Notebook 12/06/2013).

Although young people were initially wary and many did question my motives and the purpose of the research, this I felt did help to build trust as I was able to answer their questions. However, this reminded me of how power is often structured not only in the research setting but also in terms of how neighbourhoods are perceived and how negative perceptions are maintained and can be reproduced.

Howard et al. (2002) argue that it is important that participants are made aware of the researcher's ideas about social change so as to uncover any potentially concealed conceptions of social change. Young people were made aware both by the school and by myself about the reason for me being there and that there would be a focus on what university can offer them. I was also aware of the importance of giving young people the space to think about their futures that may or may not include going to university. Whilst the example earlier suggests there was some suspicion on this front, on the whole I felt that young people were open and honest about what they thought their futures might be.

4.7 Data Analysis

Analysing data is a process which is not divorced from the field. Indeed Crang and Cook (2007) argue that data collected is often far from 'raw' in the sense that it has often been partially analysed and ordered in the field through the focusing of research questions, methods used

and the involvement of participants in helping the researcher to understand the data better. In order to help this process of partial data analysis within the field, I was keen to heed Pyyry's (2013) advice who argues that when analysing data with young people, the role of the researcher is to create space to allow participants to reflect on their work to highlight what is significant. When collecting the data, where possible, I asked the young people to explain their work (e.g. photo / drawing) to ensure that I understood the meaning behind it. For example, in the ranking exercise not all young people identified education as important. This provided an excellent opportunity to allow young people to rationalise why they had chosen certain things over others and led to discussions between young people about why they hold different views to each other (Grant 2016). This process also helped to build group trust as a learning community. I found that this initial stage of partial analysis was invaluable in helping me to make sense of the data when arriving at the point of more formal data analysis and it helped me to continue to make connections to the various social processes that were taking place within the groups being studied.

After the field work was completed I had the task of trying to order and analyse the data to make sense of it (Crang and Cook 2007). Once I had finished collecting the data in the field, the audio recorded data was transcribed and visual data scanned to a computer so that the data could be coded. I followed Crang and Cook's (2007) framework which gave guidance to follow when coding, but also gave me flexibility and freedom to be creative when analysing data.

I began the process of formal data analysis by using an open coding technique which included reading through the material and annotating each piece of data to try to uncover the 'meaning of intent' that was behind each statement or visual piece of data (Crang and Cook 2007: 133). To help achieve this I used NVivo to order and manage my data. Crang and Cook (2007: 133) argue that analysis can be an iterative process which occurs 'between doing, ordering, interpreting and writing'. As such I found that understanding and ordering the data took time, but also developed through these various stages.

I then began the process of coding the data into key themes and similarities. This required reading through my material again. I identified a number of parent and related children nodes. These were developed over time where often similar nodes could be amalgamated under parent nodes. NVivo allows visual data to be uploaded and coded in a similar way to

transcribed data. Ascribing meaning and interpreting the visual data was not always straight forward. In order to understand visual data this was often analysed, where possible, in conjunction with the transcripts of the workshops to ensure that an accurate understanding of the material was obtained and was representative of the young people involved. Rose (2012: 326) argues that whilst visual methods, such as photography, provide unique information and insight into the lives of individuals, often in ways that words are unable to – visual methods still rely on an aspect of spoken or written work to ‘make the effects of those visual materials evident.’ Therefore, where possible, visual material was included and analysed *with* the audio transcript of the workshop in this thesis.

Where there was no recorded transcript, but only a written explanation of the visual material, this was analysed separately and coded thematically using NVivo. I was also keen to ensure that when analysing I was aware of the difference in how I represented young people’s views and how this might differ from their own views. I found that asking myself ‘is this my view’ or ‘is this their view’ were good ways of ensuring a correct understanding of the meaning behind various data (Crang and Cook 2007: 140).

After the audio and visual data was coded a number of key themes emerged. I then began to make connections between these themes using code maps and mind maps. This allowed me to think not only about the data and develop the codes but also allowed me to consider how it related to theory. I was then able to use these ideas to organise the data into three analysis chapters. This aimed to give voice to some of the issues highlighted by young people. I wanted to consider how schools attempt to raise aspirations and how these might differ to young people’s own educational, career and lifestyle aspirations for the future.

4.8 Summary

In summary this methodology chapter has charted how the research unfolded within the fieldwork. Starting with the ethical impulse to undertake a PAR approach by including young people as co-researchers, I quickly realised that this was not a feasible option. This was mainly due to a lack of time and resources available to me. What emerged however was a scaled down participatory research project which drew on creative techniques to undertake the research with young people in culturally relevant ways. Where possible I asked the young people to choose the activities for the workshops in an attempt to address my ethical impulse

to have at least some sense of participation in the research process. The young people produced excellent creative works which included photography, rap and neighbourhood mapping.

This methodology chapter highlights some of the issues and problems encountered through undertaking each of these activities. I particularly highlight the role of power and disengagement when working with working class young people, both in the challenges it brought to undertaking the field work but also what it revealed in terms of useful and enriching data. This chapter finishes by describing how the research was analysed as both a transcription of the workshops and also how the visual and creative material was incorporated within the analysis and allotted into themes to aid the analysis process.

The following analysis chapter begins by briefly outlining the background and careers aspirations of the participants in this research. It also provides an insight into what it means to live and learn on a white working class estate in Leicester from the perspective of the young people involved in this research. Using empirical data collected in the field, I discuss how young people perceive school, life in their community and their hopes and aspirations for the future. I argue that for young people the local community is very important, where close attachments to friends and family forms the foundation of their lives. I also argue that there exists a tension, for some, between the kind of future that schools promote and young people's own aspirations. For others there is an openness to embrace new and expansive futures, often including participating in HE and yet I argue this is far from certain and again is problematic for young people as they reconcile this with their own localised and class expectations. I therefore discuss what this means for young people as they seek to assemble their lives and look towards the future.

Chapter 5

Living and Learning

Young Lives on a Working Class Housing Estate in Leicester

*In my area everyone's the same,
No one has money but tries to head for fame,
How are we chavs?
Just because we live in flats?
My family is what I worship,
They make living worth it.*

(Curtis, Year 8, Engaged Group, Bradgate High School)

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I begin by outlining the career and educational aspirations of the young people in the research before exploring what life is like for young people living in a traditionally white working class community in Leicester. I explore what is important to them and how they seek to assemble their lives and make sense of the world around them.

I argue that for young people in the research there was often a determination to express the enduring importance of the local. I highlight the interconnectedness of the local, which creates close knit and secure communities, the central role that family plays for young people and the importance of technology in young people's social lives.

The thesis touches of issues on class identity; however before the next three analysis chapters it is important to highlight that class identification was seldom cited as an identity marker by young people themselves. There could be many reasons for this, not least perhaps because of the age of the young people, however, I argue that class although not articulated in terms of the tradition 'working', 'middle' and 'upper' class lexicon – issues of class were not absent from the research. Young people regularly compared themselves by other more privileged

young people and students (for example see Section 7.2). This is reflective of Bourdieu's (1986b) understanding of class as being structural which means it is difficult to articulate its affects, however it greatly influences how people practice their lives though things like educational choice and tastes.

However, the absence of class might also reflect my understanding of class as a researcher – being structural and affecting people's lives, but being difficult to articulate. Class can therefore form a benchmark upon which people compare themselves subconsciously against others. I did not introduce the theme of class because no one in the research brought it up. Indeed the choice to label the young people working class and include this within the title of the thesis was to highlight the importance of structural factors to shaping educational aspirations and choice. Class therefore does affect young people's lives and the choices they make regarding education, but I argue that this occurs at a subconscious level, particularly for young people who might be unaware of class terminologies. My role as a researcher was to try to uncover the reasons why young people did compare their lives to others and what made them have particular orientations towards education.

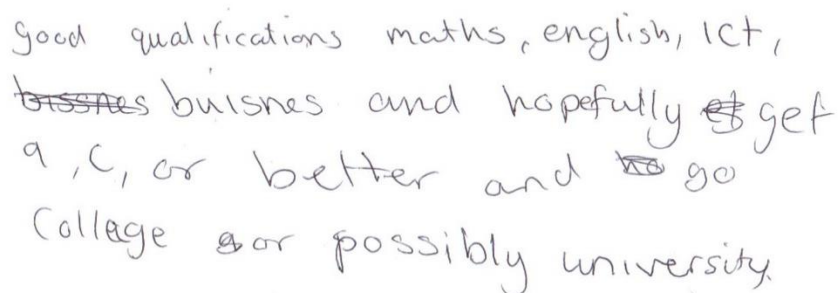
The chapter challenges hegemonic assumptions over the value of education to young people's lives (often reinforced by schools), the stereotypes associated with living on a 'dodgy' council estate and the lure of celebrity aspiration (expressed in Curtis' rap above). It also considers some of the wider geopolitical factors, such as in-migration, multiculturalism and economic restructuring which affect young people's lives in cities such as Leicester. I therefore critically explore how young people come to construct 'the local'. I argue that for some, the scale by which they imagine their futures revolves around the geographical boundaries of the local estate. I now turn to hearing the voices of the young people in this research. The chapter continues by outlining what it means to live and learn as a young person in a white working class neighbourhood in Leicester. I explore how young people construct, assemble and orientate their lives towards the future to understand why they hope and aspire for certain outcomes.

5.2 Educational and Career Aspirations

It was very clear from the outset that different groups of young people in the study regarded education very differently. Whilst a few saw education as largely pointless, the majority regarded education as the best means to achieve a successful life. The research asked young

people to imagine what their futures would look like and how they planned to get there. The majority had plans to enter some sort of education after compulsory schooling. This ranged from going to college for A-Levels through to getting an apprenticeship. Few of the young people spoke of dropping out of school or of not continuing in further education of some sort. Some students, however, were very vague about the issue of continuing in education and had little idea about the future. This line of questioning was sometimes met with a grumble; that knowing 'what you want to do' in the future in terms of education and employment was 'too soon' (Kimberley, Year 8) and 'quite difficult' to do (Tanisha, Year 8), especially for those in Year 8. But this was countered by the expressed view that it is 'really important' (Kimberley, Year 8) and a necessary thing for students to start thinking about, even if it does feel too early.

The majority of young people spoke of wanting to go to college, with some considering university and a minority considering apprenticeships and trade professions. Most had clear ideas of what they wanted to study and what they needed to do to get there. In most cases this entailed continuing in further education to study A-Levels, or getting an apprenticeship. For those in the Engaged Groups, they tended to have a clearer sense of what subjects they might need to study and how they relate to their future career aspirations.



Good qualifications maths, english, ICT,
~~business~~ business and hopefully get
a, C, or better and go
College or possibly university.

Figure 10: What do you need to do to get there [chosen career]? (Ben, Year 8, Engaged Group, Bradgate High School)

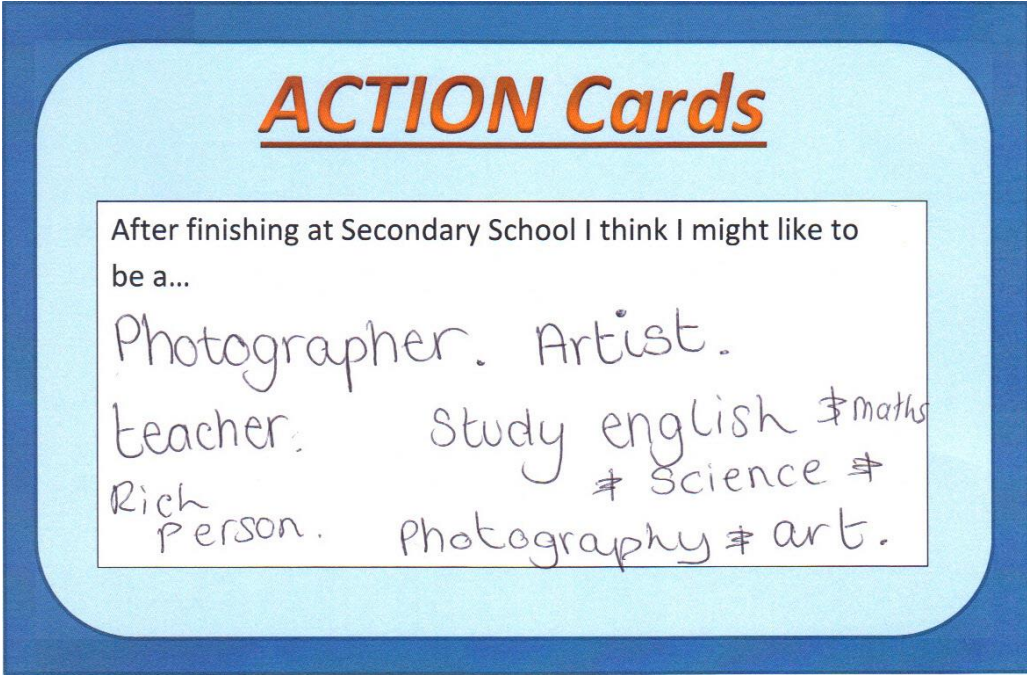


Figure 11: After finishing at Secondary School... (Candice, Year 8, Engaged Group, Lea Wood College)

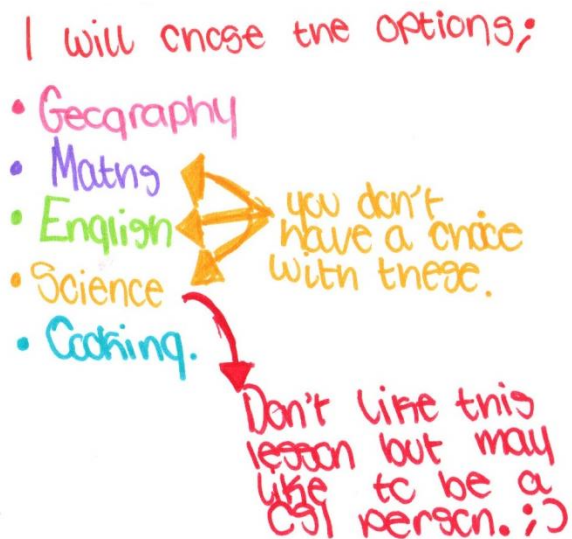


Figure 12: Which GCSE options will you choose? (Britney, Year 8, Engaged Group, Lea Wood College)

Some however had more of a 'wait and see' approach to their future in terms of education (Allen and Hollingworth 2013).

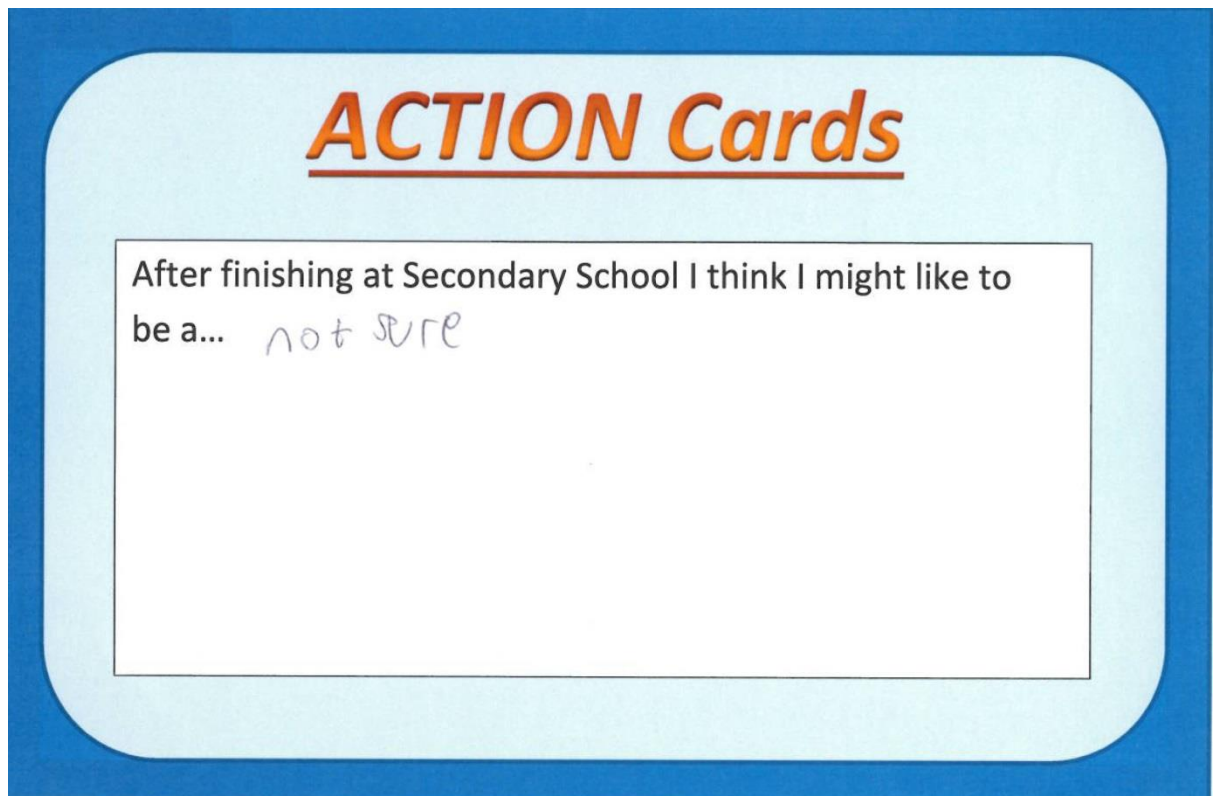


Figure 13: After finishing Secondary School... (Rick, Year 10, Disengaged Group, Bradgate High School)

When talking about the future, young people's career aspirations varied widely, from more traditional trades, such as electrician or carpenter; service sector jobs, such as fitness instructor or nursery worker; through to jobs in the creative industries, such as website and games designer or photographer, as well as more traditional professional careers such as teacher, lawyer, or surgeon. A small number looked towards science and engineering professions (e.g. engineer). A small minority of males favoured 'celebrity' jobs relating to sports, particularly football and boxing. However, this sporting option was largely seen as being unrealistic and too difficult to get into.

ACTION Cards

After finishing at Secondary School I think I might like to be a... Footballer because it's a sport & I like.

Realistically, I'd like to be a some kind of mechanic/Electrician

'Footballer because it's a sport I like. Realistically, I'd like to be some kind of mechanic.'

Figure 14: After finishing Secondary school... (Fred, Year 8, Disengaged Group, Bradgate High School)

On the whole, preferred jobs tended to fall along traditional gender lines, for example, with trade jobs being preferred by males and caring profession jobs, such as nursery worker, preferred by females.

Many of those in the Engaged Groups had a much clearer idea of what they wanted to do, often opting for careers that would require or benefit from HE qualifications. It was also not uncommon for young people to have second choice career aspiration or 'back up plans' if they did not succeed (also found by, Archer et al. 2010; Brown 2011; Allen and Hollingworth 2013). Whilst the majority did have a clear idea of a job or career for their future, for a minority this was not always the case, with some struggling to think clearly about what they did want to do. Often this was matched by a strong connection to place and a determination to remain close to friends and family.

Table 9 shows each participant and their self-identified ethnicity, careers aspiration, and parents/ carers current occupation. For the majority of young people their stated aspirations were often very different to their parent's current occupation. The majority of parents were in

low skilled jobs or were unemployed. This is interesting as it shows that young people's aspirations were divergent to their parent's current occupation, with many of the young people aspiring towards jobs which required a higher level of skills and qualifications.

School	Name (Male / Female)	Ethnic Origin	Parents Job	Career Aspiration
Bradgate High School Year 8 Engaged Group	Curtis (m)	English	Unemployed	Professional Boxer or a ABA Boxing Coach
	Lance (m)	White British	Unemployed	Lawyer
	Karl (m)	British Black Caribbean	Parcel Delivery driver	Sports Coach or Pro Footballer
	Adrian (m)	White British	Mechanic	C.S.I or Anime TV Creator or Artist in the comic industry
	Justin (m)	White British	Armed Forces	Detective or Fitness Instructor
	Ben (m)	White British	Unemployed	Game Designer
Bradgate High School Year 8 Disengaged Group	Keane (m)	White	Unemployed	Electrician
	Jett (m)	White British	Unemployed	Unsure possibly a Pilot
	Hadley (m)	White British	Training for teaching	Professional Footballer or a Fireman if I don't become a Footballer
	James (m)	British welsh	Unemployed	I am not very sure but I want to go to College. I like to cook so I might go to college to be a Chef
	Fred (m)	N/A	NA	Footballer because it's a sport I like, realistically I'd like to be some kind of Mechanic or Electrician
	Rex (m)	White	Unemployed	Designer of something, preferably a website or something to do with ICT
Lea Wood College Year 8 Engaged Group	Blake (m)	English White	Self Employed Landscape Gardener	Architect / Fireman or Policeman and fly helicopters
	Joey (m)	White British	Something somewhere	Chef
	Kade (m)	White British	Self Employed Builder/ Care Worker	Game Designer or Game Coder
	Candice (f)	White British	Teacher and Mechanic	Photographer, Artist or Teacher
	Britney (f)	White British	Warehouse Operative / Carer	Chef, or Lawyer or Business Woman / Entrepreneur
	Kimberley (f)	White British	Builder & Museum Assistant	Nurse or Doctor
Lea Wood College Year 8 Disengaged Group	Jon (m)	NA	NA	Footballer, Millionaire / Billionaire
	Sanya (f)	Half British Jamaican & West Indies	Team Leader Tesco/ Tesco	Surgeon / Doctor
	Tanisha (f)	Black & Mixed	Unemployed	Unsure
Swithland Wood CC Year 8 Mixed Group	Eden (m)	English	Blood Pressure	Chef/ Policeman
	Kayleigh (f)	English	Unknown	Hairdresser
	Roxanne (f)	English	Unknown	Working at a little school with small children before they start school
	Jayden (m)	NA	NA	Astronaut
	Kaydon (m)	NA	Carer and Gardener	IT Technician, Game Tester, Musician
	Sonia (f)	NA	Builder, Dance Volunteer	I want to be a Girl Footballer, Basket Baller or Ping Pong (Professional) or a PE Teacher
Bradgate High School Year 10 Engaged group	Declan (m)	NA	NA	Nuclear Engineer or some sort of Engineer in the Army
	Zain (m)	White British	Security	Carpenter
	Bill (m)	Caucasian	NA	Teacher
	Leo (m)	White British	NA	Fireman or Policeman
Bradgate High School Year 10 Disengaged Group	Keaton (m)	White Welsh	Unemployed	Film Critic
	Rick (m)	White	Builder	Not Sure
	Aaron (m)	Mixed Heritage	NA	Not sure maybe an Engineer
	Aden (m)	White British	Factory worker Walkers	Footballer but if I don't succeed I would like to Coach or Manage anything which is in the football criteria

Table 9: Showing each participant and their self-identified ethnicity, career aspiration and parents/ carers current occupation

5.3 Family, Friends and the Enduring Importance of the Local

'But what you think about your friends and life,

It's the thing that doesn't bring strife.'

(Rap, Lance, Year 8, Bradgate High School)

Despite there being a range of different aspirations expressed about the future most of the young people in the study typically saw the local community, in which they lived and felt that they belonged, to be extremely important in maintaining social connections and the basic fabric of their lives. Friends and family were often identified through photography activities as being very important to young people, particularly for the female participants and to a lesser extent for male participants who tended to focus on technology and pets.

Figure 15 (below): Photovoice exercise - What are the people, places and things that are important to you? (Candice, Year 8, Engaged Group, Lea Wood College)





Figure 16: Photovoice exercise - What are the people, places and things that are important to you? (Kimberley, Year 8, Engaged Group, Lea Wood College)

For many of the young people, the estate was important, but problematic, as many spoke of the limitations and attendant issues of living on an estate. But it was the relationships forged there, with their friends and families, which made the local estate so important. The estate can therefore be seen as a site which brings together those who were most important in young people's lives, namely family and friends. These attachments were often identified as the single most important thing for young people and were sometimes prioritised over other things such as achieving a good education or career. The estate, however, was also seen as being incidental and problematic to the rest of one's life, as Leo points out.

TG: So what's important to you?

Leo: Family and friends and where I live, know what I mean...?

TG: What particularly about where you live?

Leo: No I live in Bradgate Estate- obviously there are robbers - I live on a council estate! Like the people who live round there and like the house and that...School, football, that's it. (Year 10, Disengaged Group, Bradgate High School).

What tended to 'make' the local for young people were the relationships rooted there, particularly with family and friends and those who 'live round there.' Leo's words highlight that within the estate there are things that are perceived to be unsavoury. However, this account reveals a general optimism and desire to promote the positive aspects of living on the estate. I argue that this might create a particular type of 'micro-scale' where young people carefully construct notions of the local around these positive aspects of living where they do.

This means that for some, the family unit was a source of security, providing the bedrock for the rest of life, the social structure on which young people wanted to build and maintain their lives and led to a reinforcement of a micro-locality, which is constructed out of that which is known and deemed to be safe.

My top 5;

Money	Just to buy things.
Family	They are there to help and company.
Friends	Hang out with after school and that.
Housing	Somewhere to live and sleep ;).
Education	People need this ; some want this but some don't.

Figure 17: Ranking Exercise – (Britney, Year 8, Engaged Group, Lea Wood College)

My top 5;

1) Money	-Just to buy drugs & alcohol!
2) Friends	-Hang out with friends 24/7
3) Family	-Having meals with family.
4) Housing	-Want somewhere to live.
5) Work	want work to buy drugs & alcohol!

Figure 18: Ranking Exercise – (Candice, Year 8, Engaged Group, Lea Wood College)

This exercise called 'My Top 5' asked young people to choose the 'top 5' most important things to the lives of people on the estate. I then asked young people to compare how these differed to their personal views. For Candice eating with family was regarded as important to her personally which also reflects a wider culture which values family life on the estate. For Candice and Britney, the family was the very basis of social life, a main source of company and sociability and this can be seen through quite traditional family values, represented in this example, by eating together. Candice also argued that they [people from the estate] 'all care about family in this place' (Candice, Year 8, Engaged Group, Lea Wood College).

Maintaining strong ties with family and friends was regarded as very important to most young people and the desire to stay near to these contacts often shaped their present lives but also their future aspirations and hopes. Family tended to act like an anchor and a source of security for the present, but also as a way of holding young people within their neighbourhoods.

Family tended to be regarded as important to identity 'cos it's where you come from' (Jon, Year 8, Disengaged Group, Lea Wood College), and was also seen as a place of safety for when things go wrong.

Karl: family [is important] because then if it goes wrong you got someone to help you
(Karl, Year 8, Engaged Group, Bradgate High School).

In a world of risk, uncertainty and temptation, family was regarded as important to keeping young people 'on track' (Karl, Year 8, Bradgate High School) (Thomson et al. 2003: 41), and tended to have a great influence on what young people aspired to do.

These close attachments to family tended to engender strong feelings of loyalty, place and belonging which were often expressed as a desire to remain living on the estate(s) (Allen and Hollingworth 2013; MacDonald et al. 2005; Reay and Lucey 2000).

Fred: I am probably still going to be here in Leicester because my family lives here and I don't want to live away from my family. (Year 8, Disengaged Group, Bradgate High School).

For other young people, moving away from the local neighbourhood and family networks might even lead to regret.

TG: You said living round here- is living round here important to you?

Aaron: Yeah because that is where your family are.

TG: So the thought of having to move away to get a job...?

Aaron: No because if my family need me you ain't going to be there

Keane: I'm definitely going to move out of Leicester

Aaron: What's the point?

Keane: I want to go somewhere more peaceful...

Aaron: You move and I will guarantee you will regret it.

... TG: So do you think the main thing that would keep you here would be your family

Aaron: Yeah family and friends, cos if you have got a perfect life here... well not perfect, but a good life, then what's the point of leaving it cos you might not even have a good life and then you come back and have lost everything, and then you have to start all over again.

Later I asked them:

TG: So why is family so important?

Aaron: Because that's the main thing that you have to look after in your life, ain't it really?

Keane: It keeps you happy.

Aaron: You do anything for your family though don't you? (Year 10, Disengaged Group, Bradgate High School).

This again reinforces the notion of loyalty and responsibility to family. For Aaron it was clear that despite seeing the potential benefits of moving away to get a job, this was not a realistic option because it would result in moving away from family who might need him. Aaron's disinclination to move might however reflect something of the spatial boundaries within which some people live their lives and understand the world around them. In a later exchange Aaron expanded further his reasons for not wanting to leave the estate.

Rick: I wouldn't move proper far

Aaron: No offence, but I will not move to Lea Wood [rival estate]

TG: You wouldn't move to Lea Wood?

Aaron: Coz it's shit!

TG: Aden what about you?

Aden: I would just stay at Leicester

Keane: I wouldn't want to stay here all my life

Aaron: Don't stay here all your life, no one's telling you to stay (Aaron, Rick and Aden, Year 10, Disengaged Group, Bradgate High School).

Here it is important to question what young people mean when they speak of 'Leicester' and why this affinity with the local estate and family is so central to young people's lives. I argue that when young people spoke of 'Leicester' it tended to refer to a much smaller locale than the wider city of Leicester. For Aaron, 'Leicester' was regarded as the estate – the place where his family is located - and to move away would lead to regret. Where there was a consideration given to moving off the estate, Aaron spoke of the neighbouring estates as not being an option. Aaron's defensiveness here shows how the geographical boundary of 'Leicester' might extend up to, but not include, even the neighbouring estate. This may be down to strong versions of territoriality which often occur particularly for young men living in areas of deprivation, often as a result of a combination of historical and generational stories being passed down and limited opportunities being open to individuals (Kintrea et al. 2008). Although there was little evidence of some of the obvious negative territorial behaviours (e.g. fearing going to another neighbouring areas or facing gangs), Aaron's reluctance is perhaps motivated by an inner need to create a sense of ownership and maintaining a sense of control over his life by setting clear boundaries around where he is prepared to look for employment and to live (Kintrea et al. 2008). This might be because the local neighbourhood is perceived to be a familiar and safe place (Archer and Yamashita 2003), whereas residential locations off the estate are unknown and can bring fear and anxiety.

Putnam (2000) argues that within deprived communities people are more likely to use bonding social capital. This enables people to have social interactions that support survival and a 'getting by' mentality. Whilst bonding social capital can be sustaining, it can also be self-limiting (Kearns and Parkinson 2001). Bonding social capital therefore merely 'bolsters our narrower Selves' (Putnam, 2000: 23). The effect of this is that people living in deprived areas tend to not have the bridging social capital, both in social contacts and possessions, to help lift themselves out of their current situations. Forest and Kearns (2001: 2141) argue that,

‘close family ties, mutual aid and voluntarism are often strong features of poor areas. It is these qualities which may enable people to cope with poverty, unemployment and wider processes of social exclusion’

If social capital acts to trap someone in poverty it can eventually become destructive (MacDonald et al. 2005). As such I argue that bonding social capital reinforces the notion that the estate is familiar, known and safe. Within the familiarity of local estate exists a psycho-social safety net (Reay and Lucey 2000), however this may also act to trap young people within their locality. In section 5.6, I highlight that many of the young people in this research were fearful of the unknown and of gaining adult responsibilities and were therefore worried about the future. This familiarity and association of the local estate and social networks within it, might help to explain why remaining local is so important, as social networks ensure a safety net which allows people to survive and get by.

Also of interest is Keane’s assertion that he did not want to stay in Leicester ‘all his life’. Aaron’s response is to somewhat admonish Keane, and yet both placed high value on Leicester family ties. It might be that Aaron regards Keane’s desire to leave as being too ambitious - that somehow by thinking beyond the spatial boundaries of his current community - he is thinking beyond himself. The need to conform to the social group might be another gendered example of asserting and maintaining working class masculinity within the group. A working class masculine identity might be closely linked to place and therefore the local estate. To leave might risk losing this identity. However, this exchange reveals that such thinking - to remain on the estate - was not a ‘clean sweep’ across all of these young people, but that in discussing their futures, different ideas and expectations often promoted quite heated and unexpected debates about young people’s own social position within society. This shows the importance of agency for young people from working class estate backgrounds.

The influence of families in shaping how young people thought about their futures was important. For some, the importance of remaining close to family mattered so much that staying on the estate was the only conceivable option for them. However, others felt torn between living by more collectivist values and pursuing individualist values of a kind that might lead them away from family. This is clear in Candice’s comments:

about my future I feel;

- Scared
- Happy
- Worried
- Lucky
- Excited
- Naive
- Unrealistic
- Unlucky
- Hopeful.

I need to think of others as well as myself! But I need to think of myself.

Figure 19: How do you really feel about the future – (Candice, Year 8, Engaged Group, Lea Wood College)

TG: What do you mean about 'others'?

Candice: Meaning that I wouldn't think about the other parts of my family, I would just be thinking about myself and if they needed help. I just think that my life is more important. (Candice, Year 8, Engaged Group, Lea Wood College).

In seriously considering going to university and the prospect of moving away from home, some young people like Candice expressed concerns about feeling torn between being there for her family and leaving the estate in search of a more independent life. In thinking 'too much' about herself, Candice is scared of feeling selfish for thinking that her life is more important than those she loves. Here there is a tension between maintaining the collectivist values which hold such communities and families together and more individualistic values, which increasingly require young people to strive towards independence and follow more 'middle class' routes towards HE and a life off the estate.

The role of family in shaping young people's habitus is well documented particularly in shaping attitudes towards education and school experience (Reay 2004). However, habitus is also

something which young people have agency over and is not necessarily deterministic. Therefore habitus can be regarded not as something which is static, but has the capacity to evolve over time as young people develop their life plans and socially interact with others (Pimlott-Wilson 2011). The sense here is that Candice struggles to reconcile her hope for an independent life off the estate, with her desire to remain there for her family, suggests what Bourdieu calls a 'destabilised habitus' which is 'torn by contradictions and internal divisions' (Bourdieu 2000: 163). Reay (2015: 14) argues that a divided habitus is often 'caught between two very different but equally compelling fields.'

I would argue that this creates an internal conflict as Candice struggles with the opportunities of inhabiting two conflicting social fields. The result is that Candice's habitus is being pulled in different directions (Ingram 2011) which results in this sense of feeling torn. Candice is likely to look at these fields and instinctively 'find her place' and perceive 'the right way' about engaging within a particular field. It is that which makes her instinctively know what is realistic – Bourdieu argues that such thinking is 'inscribed like a watermark.' (Bourdieu 2005: 143). Young people tended to question how realistic HE was for 'people like them.'

I argue that intervention which seeks to 'raise aspirations' attempts to alter how young people perceive the social field of higher education. It seeks to place it within their field of vision (Skeggs 2004) and attempts to encourage young people to 'incorporate the structures of the field' so that they can also 'find their place' and develop the necessary disposition and habitus to enter HE. In doing so it seeks to frame it as a norm and imperative. However, for Bourdieu (2005: 143) if someone has 'incorporated the structures of the field', their practice or actions follow instinctively and unconsciously. They are not defined by 'consciousness or will'. This has implications as young people approach the field of HE, as many of the young people like Candice clearly are incorporated into a different field, but feel drawn by the promise and bright lights of a university degree – this creates the feeling of being torn and destabilises the habitus. The process of raising aspirations therefore attempts to transform dispositions which encourage young people to consider HE.

The complex nature of habitus, as something which has the possibility to be transformed but equally can merely reproduce a social outcome, means that transformation is not certain. Candice's struggle here perhaps shows the difficulty and complexity of transforming habitus and perhaps why, although not being eternally fixed, habitus often tends to be reproduced among less powerful social groups (Bourdieu 2005).

Friends were also sometimes considered as important as family and were frequently identified as significant others to these young people.

Candice: Friends – They [people from the estate] are always hanging out with friends

Kimberley: Yeah, smoking on my corner and sitting on my wall: I have to push them. The worst thing is that it's my mum and dad's property; they actually own it –it's not council.

Friendships, of course, help shape young people's identities regardless of social background. Fitting in amongst one's peer group and adopting the social norms and values of one's friends is important to maintaining friendships (Bunnell et al. 2012). For those from lower social-economic backgrounds, intense friendships are argued to distinguish them from more privileged groups, where there is a perception that the more affluent might struggle to make close friends (Sutton 2009). This in part explains how some of the social behaviours and values described are reproduced on the estate. Within the methodology chapter, I highlighted how masculinity is often performed as a disciplinary process, where the social construction of gender is iteratively performed by adopting the social norms of the group and thus maintaining friendships and fitting into one's peer group. For other groups in this research, such as Year 8 Engaged Group in Bradgate High School, friendship revolved around computer gaming (See next section 5.3), where taking part in online gaming with friends cemented friendships.

Burnell et al. (2012) argue that friendships might reinforce segregation from other groups and through the development of cultural and spatial practices these can be detrimental to education and the development of skills and ambition. As such, friendship can not only build identity, but it can re-inforce difference and also act as a site of resistance. For some young people in this research it was clear that education formed this site of resistance, which was often maintained through allegiance to peer groups. For example, the general determination to remain as close as possible to family and friends was not felt by everyone. Among the Engaged Group at Bradgate High School, Declan had aspirations to leave the estate and Leicester and whilst he acknowledges that most of his family come from Leicester, this did not seem to be a particular concern. Rather, university and the army were seen as a means of escaping the estate and the city.

Declan: Go to college/ university – and get some sort of engineering degree and then either work in the military or something like that – come back and do some traveling –

go to Africa, come back and go to work and have some kids and get a house – anywhere but Leicester.

TG Anywhere but Leicester?

Declan: Anywhere but Leicester.

TG Why don't you want to stay in Leicester?

Declan: Been here too long, most of my family come from Leicester.

TG: Do you know where you might like to live

Declan: No idea (Declan, Male, Year 10, Engaged Group, Bradgate High School).

Declan wants to live 'anywhere but Leicester' but there is no suggestion here of where he might like to go. This suggests perhaps a more general sense of discontentment with the area. The army and HE may provide the means to one day leave the estate. Loveday (2014) argues that government policy often regards HE as a means of escape for those from working class backgrounds, and as such this positions working class people as being in deficit. Whilst the armed forces are often seen as the traditional means for working class young people to 'escape' the estate, Declan has incorporated the two as a sure means of leaving the estate. In both cases, how young working class people are constructed as being in deficit differs from the values and full sense of life which the majority of young people in the research felt they would have. For many, escaping the estate was not a priority and this 'full sense of life' was measured through successful and fulfilling relationships primarily in local spaces (Miller 2008).

Whilst family and friends were regarded as important and influential in young people's lives, it was also clear that technology was also central to the construction of young people's social identity and the formation of deep and meaningful relationships. For the male participants this tended to revolve around game consoles and for the females around the extensive use of mobile phones and laptops. How young people spoke about using technology however also reveals a fragility in how they understand the world around them.

5.4 Technology and Young People's Lives

Life's a never ending game,

Waiting to be played,

You hope it won't fade

(Ben, Year 8, Bradgate High School)

In this section, I draw on Horton's (2014) call for geographers to investigate the *meaning* and *matterings* of popular culture to young people's lives. I explore why technology mattered so much to young people and how it shaped and characterised their relationships to each other and the material world around them. The use of new technology and media have become a central part of youth culture which in the past decade has seen the rise of new forms of social networking, online games, video sharing sites and gadgets such as iPads and smart phones. These have become intrinsically part of youth culture and of young people's lives, in how they socialise, play, learn and form their identity (Ito et al. 2008). Technology was important to all young people and made up a big part of their social lives and helped shape career aspirations.

French or Business I don't have a clue,

But Game Designing is a job and that's what I want to do

(Ben, Rap, Year 8, Engaged Group, Lea Wood College).

In thinking about how young people construct and assemble their lives, the metaphor of gaming was powerful. The rap quoted at the beginning of this section, suggests that some young people may feel excluded from participating in 'life' and wider society. The sense of precariousness in having to wait to participate can be likened to a computer game which is for sale and yet without the necessary resources to purchase, participation remains in a state of waiting. Rather than hoping optimistically and positively in one's ability to participate and carve out a life, Ben is concerned that despite the promise of taking part in 'the game,' his inability to participate might result in life itself passing him by and fading. It might well be, however, that Ben is merely talking about the future as he looks to transition to adulthood and is therefore in a state of becoming; however the tone is still far from optimistic.

The idea of life fading also resonates with computer games, such as *Call of Duty*, where gamers are given multiple lives and chances. Young people often spoke about the importance of

getting things right and the pressures of failing at school. In this respect real life gives you one chance at success, unlike the virtual world which can be replayed again and again.

During the photo-voice exercise, TVs, laptops, computers and games consoles were often identified as being important to young people's social lives.



Figure 20: Photovoice – (Bill, Year 10, Engaged Group, Bradgate High School)



Figure 21: Photovoice - (Kade, Year 10, Engaged Group, Lea Wood College)

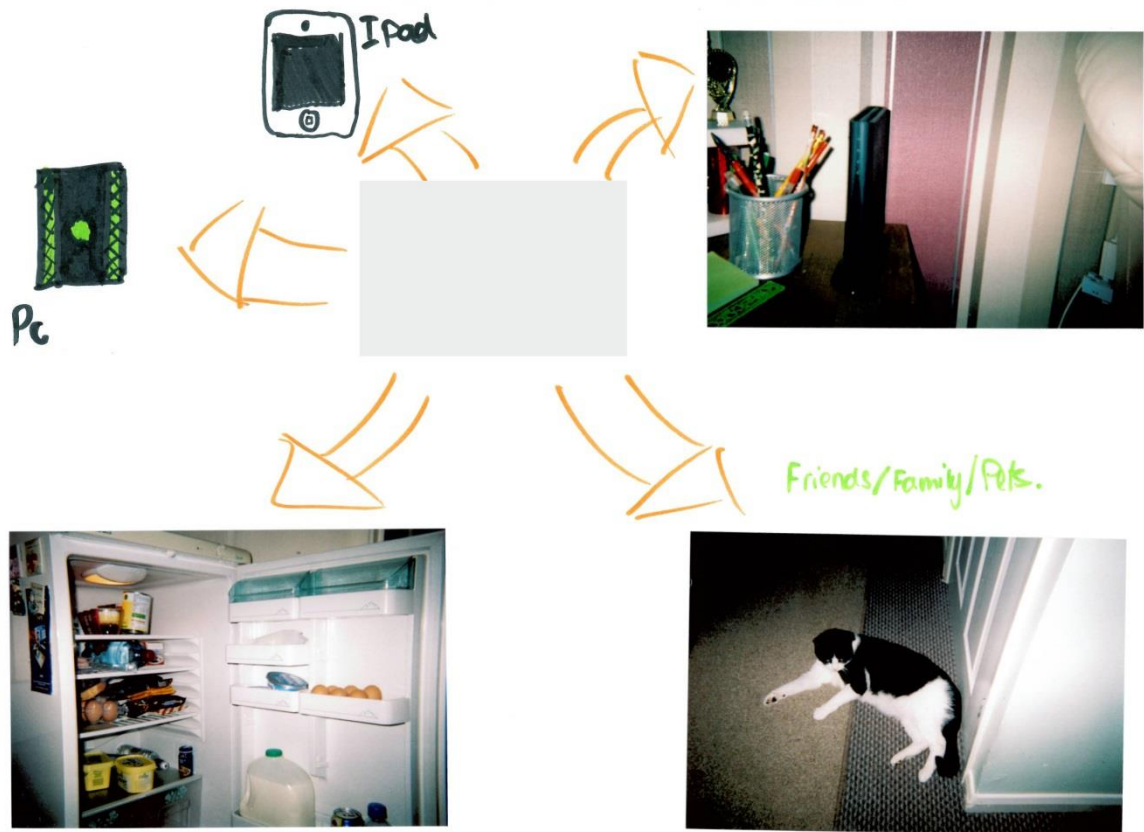


Figure 22: Photovoice – (Zain, Year 10, Engaged Group, Bradgate High School)

Computer game consoles were a big part of a male participant’s social life, forming a rich platform for social interaction through online virtual communities, often via the popular video game *Call of Duty*. This forms a platform for developing and maintaining friendships but also opens up new spaces and ways of engaging with each other.

Ash and Gallacher (2011: 358) argue,

‘virtual’ worlds do not sit alongside the ‘real’ world; they are themselves ‘real’ worlds, which are brought into being through material practices and technologies.’

Playing online games therefore opens up a new space for young people to engage with each other. The importance of forming relationships through these sociotechnical connections should not be underestimated (Horton 2014). For boys, this was more than a game – it was integral to their identity. Ben spoke about how, if he were to go to university, he would not sacrifice this aspect of his life.

Ben: One thing – if I am going to uni I am bringing my Xbox – I don’t care!

TG: Yeah everyone has Xboxes.

Ben: What at Uni?

TG: Yeah

Justin: Why are you so shocked?

Ben: I don't know.

Adrian: You got to have some fun!

(Ben, Justin and Adrian, Year 8, Engaged Group, Bradgate High School).

Gaming was therefore more than an identity, it can be likened to an extension of the self (Webber and Mitchell 2008), where to leave for university without one's game console can be likened to leaving without part of one's physical body. Ben's rationale, here, reveals the complexity of how the material world shapes his life and how he expects it will shape future relationships with others at university (Horton 2014).

For young men, gaming was a passion, forming part of their identity and social connections and it enabled them to have a sense of participation in something. The way in which they often spoke in quite animated ways about playing computer games was often in stark contrast to how they spoke about their imagined futures. I argue that gaming enables a level of participation which is not only accessible, but can also be replayed, rebooted and paused, unlike the real world as projected into the future. It was integral to how young people assembled and managed their social lives.

Webber and Mitchell (2008) argue that new social media devices can act as a link between a young person's personal and social identities. Here young people can bestow on them the same affection which is felt for the people they interact with through it. In this case, the interactive nature of gaming and the social networks formed enables a form of participation where young people feel that they are part of something, even if they feel they might struggle to participate fully in the real world. This virtual forum creates a safe place for young people to live vicariously through gaming and is a means of consolidating friendships and alliances.

For female participants, laptops and mobile phones were regarded as especially important, particularly for keeping in touch with friends, and it helped to shape their identity.

Candice: Technology [is important] - with our phones and laptops because that's the way that people talk to each other, we don't talk face to face no more (Year 8, Engaged Group, Lea Wood College).

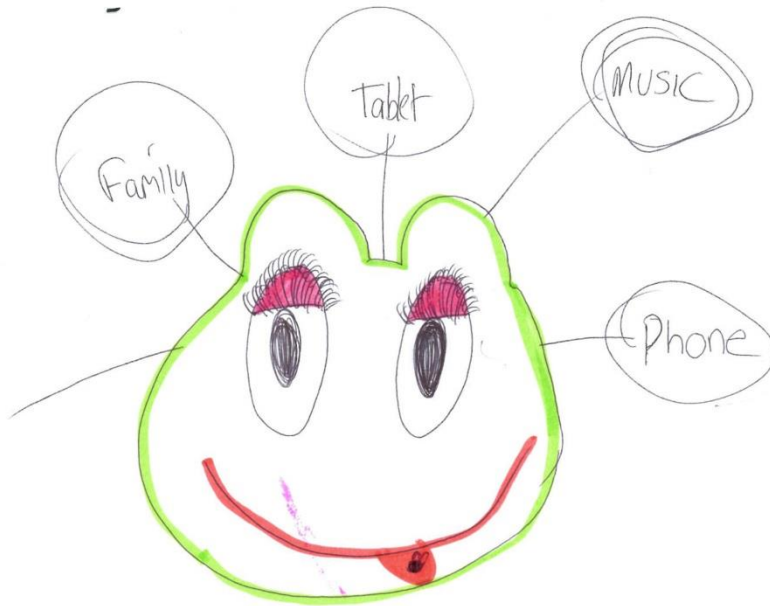


Figure 23: Drawing by Tanisha – (Year 8, Disengaged Group, Lea Wood College)

These technologies were regarded as precious new pieces of equipment, which provided important information and were things that needed looking after.

Kimberley: And my lap top and my phone – oh my God it's so important for me to have because I need information, that I don't actually store in my head and keeping in touch with friends (Year 8, Engaged Group, Lea Wood College).

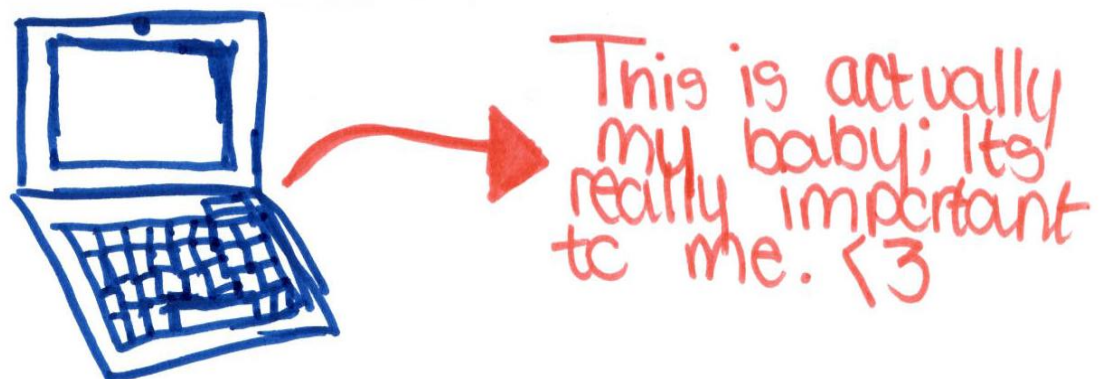


Figure 24: Drawing by Kimberley (Year 8, Engaged Group, Lea Wood College).

The importance of laptops, phones and iPads carries considerable emotional investment for female participants; they are something to be cared for. This nurturing requires considerable

investment to 'keep in touch' with friends. For Kimberly, her phone mattered so much because it held the phone numbers and 'information' to keep in contact with friends – it acted as a gateway by which friendships are performed and reproduced. For Candice her phone and laptop also acted as an alternative medium to talking 'face to face'. Candice's rationale here is that it is not a negative thing. It does not follow the narrative that the art of conversation is dying. She is highlighting the changing ways and mediums for communicating. Rather than isolating the individual, technology enriches relationships for young people.

Mobile phones and new social media provide a new virtual space to engage with one's friends which creates a state of 'always-on' relationships. The arrival of mobile internet from 2007 has changed the landscape of mobile communication, where texting once took central stage. Today, mobile internet makes mobile communication, through various social media, much more portable and has greatly changed consumption patterns. Young people have been at the forefront of adopting this new technology (Goggin 2013). Social networking sites such as Facebook, Myspace and Twitter and smartphone apps such as WhatsApp and Blackberry Messenger, Face Time and Skype have created the means to always be in contact with not only a small group of close friends, but gives the ability to browse the thoughts and activities of a wider social network of people. Social media allows young people through status updates to share their everyday activities, how they are feeling and to update each other on how their relationships are faring in real time (Ito 2008) and are regarded as a critical way of staying connected with one's friendship groups (boyd 2009).

Ito et al. (2008: 15) argue,

Due to the affordances of media such as social network sites, many teens also move beyond small-scale intimate friend groups to build "always-on" networked publics inhabited by their peers.

Phones and laptops acts as the gatekeeper to these extended online communities. For Kimberley it could be that the need to have her phone for information might express the extent of her extended social network, where her phone and laptop help her to hold it all together. As online interaction is instant and occurs 24/7, the state of being 'always-on' means that young people need to have the information at hand to enable social interaction online.

For both males and females, technological devices are important to their social and cultural identities and they make up a big part of their lives, both in terms of learning and socialising. New social media facilitate rich social interaction both virtually and in person. Whether it is

through new social media, mobile phones or computer gaming, technology tended to be a means of solidifying social network. As such, ICT forms an important and central role as young people assemble their lives and develop a meaningful place in the world around them. In doing so, young people's relationship with technology helps to create a site for participation, inclusion and socialisation – for boys this was through on-line gaming with each other and for girls keeping in touch with each other through their phones and social media. It is the centrality of material culture to their relationships and the development of ritualistic and routinized behaviours through social media and online gaming which helps them to assemble and order their lives and create meaning (Miller 2008). The next section considers how celebrity culture is understood by young people in the research in relation to their career aspirations.

5.5 Celebrity Culture and Being Realistic

'No-one has money, but tries to head for fame'

(Curtis, Year 8, Bradgate High School)

Within the estate(s) some young people spoke about a tendency towards aiming for celebrity status. The extent to which young people in the research bought into this idea however, varied considerably, with many dismissing this potential link between heading for fame and getting rich quick.

The role of the celebrity is often regarded as being increasingly important today, especially among young people. However, this view remains problematic. On the one hand, celebrity is seen by society as being important in providing positive role models to young people. At the same time, there exist rather contradictory fears about how young people might value and strive for celebrity status, rather than achieving success through hard work or skill. These anxieties can often be accentuated when considering the idea of the 'non-deserving' working class (Allen and Mendick 2013). These two conflicting views suggest that young people should look towards the achievements of celebrities - that anyone with chutzpah, drive and ambition can make it - whilst at the same time being careful about aspiring to follow in some celebrities' footsteps for fear of the potential harm this might cause to the values of hard work and

discipline as the preferred route to success. This view is especially fuelled by perceptions of the 'undeserving' celebrity: someone who has risen to fame from very little hard work or talent.

Allen and Mendick (2013) argue that celebrity often acts as a discursive tool that young people use to structure their relationships to education and work, within a neoliberal understanding of the world. This understanding is built by gaining meaning from the lifestyles offered by advertising, soap operas and films in which celebrity features highly. By offering opportunities to choose and purchase a lifestyle through the market, this practise allows the individual to assemble, market and manage themselves as self-regulating individuals, who are responsible for their own choices and life pathways (Rose 1999). How young people negotiate and assemble themselves in relation to neoliberal citizenship and ideas about celebrity status is therefore important to consider.

For some, fame was sought through sports and record breaking activities or by starring in movies.

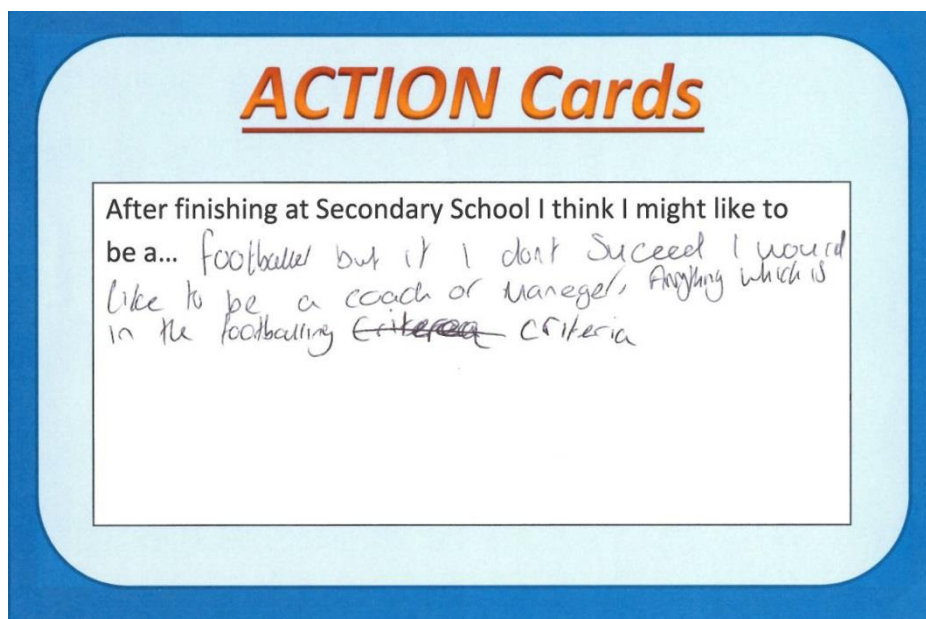


Figure 25: After finishing at Secondary school.... (Aden, Year 10, Disengaged Group, Bradgate High School)

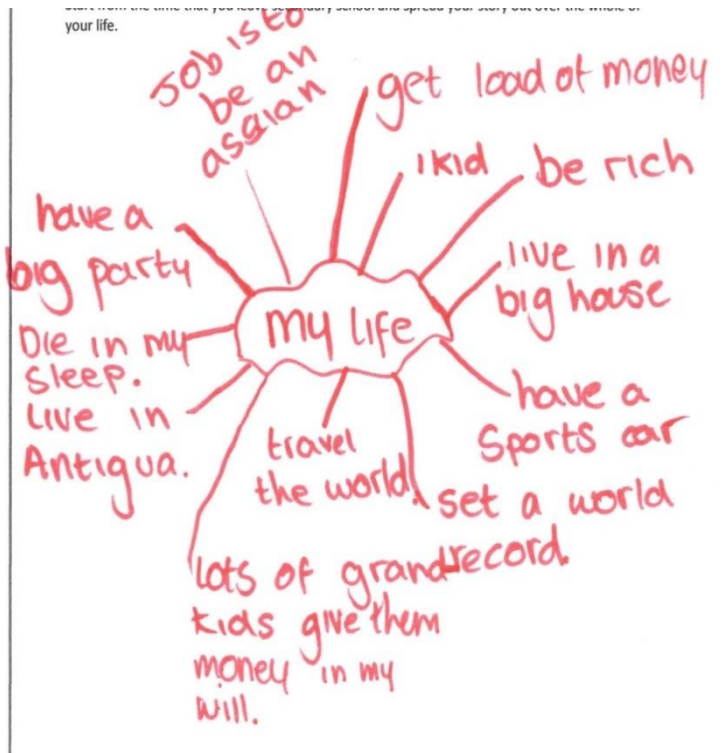


Figure 26: 'Imagine the Future' Exercise – (Sonya, Year 8, Disengaged Group, Swithland Wood Community College)

Few, however, regarded this celebrity way of life as sustainable or realistic for themselves, with a clear difference between abstract thinking (e.g. be in a scary movie), where there was little forward thinking and planning, compared with those who had more concrete plans. This is supported by Kintrea et al. (2011) who argue that despite having ideal occupational ambitions which related to celebrity or sports at the age of 13, such aspirations tended to wane for most by the age of 15. This meant that young people's aspirations tended not to be wedded to ideas of becoming professional footballers or pop stars.

For many of the young people, closely linked to notions of celebrity was the acknowledgement that to be successful would probably require a lot of 'hidden' hard work and discipline, especially within an area such as sport. A career in football, especially for the boys, was often expressed as an aspiration. However, this was largely regarded as a very unlikely outcome:

Adrian: Like if you want to be a footballer, you want to have a good education so...

Justin: You got something to fall back on...

Adrian: Yeah. If you say you want to be a footballer in there [Connexions office] they are going to be like... er... not going to happen. But if you want to be something realistic, like I want to be a doctor, they will be like talking to you about it. Like if you want to be... let's take an example... a fitness instructor, you would be talking about becoming a fitness instructor in there, not talking about becoming a footballer and kicking a ball on the field for 20k.

TG: I am interested by what you mean by realistic? Do you think there are some jobs that aren't realistic?

Adrian: I think there is like a 0.3% chance of actually becoming a footballer.

Karl: Like every boy when they are three or five wants to be one (Year 8, Engaged Group, Bradgate High School).

Here of interest is the assumption that Bradgate High School would actively discourage young people from pursuing a career as a professional footballer, instead choosing a more regular sports related job. In this respect this seems to show that the school does influence young people's aspirations. The salary of the professional footballer quoted in this exchange suggests that aspirations are not pitched toward becoming an elite Premier League footballer. The wage estimate could also show that Year 8s do not yet have an accurate understanding of the value of money and so £20,000 might seem a huge sum to them.

This exchange suggests that career advisors in schools feel that becoming a doctor might actually be a more 'realistic' aspiration. However, this assumption is problematic given the high number of medical students coming from privately educated backgrounds (Cabinet Office, 2011) and the underrepresentation which occurs in access to medical degrees along socioeconomic and ethnic lines. This puts young people from lower socioeconomic at a considerable disadvantage (Brown and Garlick 2007). I argue that this is the result of emphasis by government policy and many schools to push their pupils towards acceptable middle class 'high' jobs and in doing so promotes HE as the best means of achieving this (Brown 2011).

Whilst fame was regarded in some places as a quick fix within the culture of the estate, when talking about ideas of celebrity, young people often rejected this notion outright. Young people considered the idea of getting rich through fame as being unrealistic (unless they had very good reason to think otherwise). I want to argue that for many young people in the

research, celebrity aspirations provided escapist moments of fantasy, rather than being concrete career aspirations. These are abstract imaginations of what could be, but young people hold no ties to the possible celebrity future and attach no goals or means of achieving them. Such futures are much more than uncertain – they are extremely unlikely. I argue that fantasy, as an abstract longing, remains unachievable unless concrete goals are set to achieve it. Young people tended not to have a clear pathway towards achieving celebrity or professional sports lifestyles. This, I argue, limits these longings to fantasy which do not get converted into hope.

There was, however, some evidence of young people who *did* have reason to aspire towards professional sports careers and who had obvious and exceptional talent and well thought through plans, having been scouted and guided by professionals. Curtis who, unusually, is pursuing a career in boxing at an international level, makes the link between being an up and coming professional boxer and the need for hard work and sacrifice. For his peers, however, the lure of becoming a sports celebrity meant he would not need to go to university. Curtis, on the other hand disregarded these comments by arguing for the importance of education.

Ben: You don't need to go to university (to Curtis)

Curtis: Why? To be a boxer you need an education.

TG: If you think about it universities have amazing sports facilities, like Loughborough is where all the Olympic people stayed.

Curtis: Yeah I have been to Sheffield and Plymouth – that's where Tom Daley started training and Sheffield EIS the institute of sport – I've been there a few times – that's like where I do some training with Team GB and that.

(Curtis and Ben, Year 8, Engaged group, Bradgate High School).

Training and competing had allowed Curtis to travel around the country to other places beyond the estate. His training was also responsible for him arguing that it is important to have an education to enable him to deal with possible media coverage and for life after his putative boxing career. Unlike his peers, who thought he did not need to bother with education, but can dine off his celebrity status once he makes it – Curtis' views are much more grounded. He realises a boxing career will involve a lot of hard work, sacrifice and discipline. This exchange shows how the negative impact of peer influence can be reduced through

positive role models who provide the accountability and discipline needed to succeed not only in their chosen sport, but in their education and professional relationship with others.

Curtis: In boxing like you have to be clever with your words and there's loads of press conferences and you have to be really clever because people try to say stuff about you, like you might not understand and you got to be clever because of the press and that, you got to make sure you know the history of like stuff and that.'

Because of this accountability to coaching staff, Curtis was able to challenge his peers about their assumptions. The exchange however, shows that peer influence without strong role models and accountability to counter it, is likely to cause some young people to question the need for education in light of a perceived celebrity status. For Curtis, therefore, the link between becoming a professional sportsman, working hard and getting a good education was strong and led him to be focused on doing well at school.

On the whole young people tended to realise the limitations of celebrity and professional sports aspirations, unless there was a real reason not to. This is important because it shows that young people's hopes and aspirations are grounded in what they think and understand to be realistic, rather than being abstract and unrealistic. This means that young people tended to set goals towards (back-up) jobs, which they felt they had a reasonable chance of achieving.

5.6 Immigration and Multiculturalism

The estates in this research have experienced many changes, even in the short lives of these school students, particularly in terms of population demographics. Here, new in-migrations of different ethnic minority groups have been perceived as changing local patterns of employment. For some of the young people in this research this was often regarded as detrimental to their futures.

Young people spoke often about the local effects of immigration and multiculturalism and how they felt the impact of a new reality – migration was changing their communities and the opportunities open to them.

Aaron: The thing is now days you got to work harder because you got all the immigrants coming in...I mean I'm not being racist when I say.

Aden: Somalians and that...

Aaron: Yeah you got all these foreigners coming over and taking all the jobs. And they have replaced people with machines, so everyone is losing out really.

Aden: There are more coloured people in Leicester than there is white

Aaron: It's multicultural (Year 10, Disengaged Group, Bradgate High School).

It is important to note here that there was a degree of political and economic awareness among young people about changes to the area. Immigration was not the only focus for discontent, with structural changes to the economy symbolised by the information revolution also being blamed for the perceived lack of work opportunities.

However, immigration was widely regarded as being the main cause of a lack of opportunities. The phrase 'I am not being racist' was often used by young people when talking about immigration. The use of phrases like this is often as a shield for racism (Bonilla-Silva and Forman 2000). An admission that whilst they realise it is racist and controversial, it is still a view that is important to their understanding of the world. There was also a perceived danger here that an expected flood of new migrants was going to make local employment opportunities not only difficult in the present, but quite possibly untenable and unsustainable for future generations.

Keaton: You know like when we have kids? They aren't going to be able to get jobs, will they?

TG: You reckon?

Keaton: No, cos it's hard to get jobs at the minute, yet alone in 20 years' time, cos like loads of people are moving in – I'm not racist, I'm just saying (Year 10, Disengaged Group, Bradgate High School).

As with Aaron's use of the phrase 'I'm not racist' - Keaton's use reflects the extent to which some young people feel they have an entitlement to jobs based on the fact that they were here first. However, young people did not tend to have a sense of privilege about these jobs. In a depressed employment market there are few jobs that young people actually wanted to do and so it is therefore far easier to blame others for this general lack of opportunity. In other words young people regarded it as their right to have low-status jobs, but they did not really want to work in these jobs.

It is important to consider, as Leicester edges towards becoming one of the first pluralist local authority areas in the UK (outside inner London), how discourses about whiteness and multiculturalism are played out within different communities and how issues of exclusion and inclusion are experienced and articulated locally in ways that shape how young people view the future. In this respect young people spoke about the erosion of jobs within the estate – noting that ‘none of the cleaners at school are white’ (Aaron, Year 10) and a perceived lack of opportunities in non-white areas of the city off the estate. These perceptions and experiences of living in a multicultural city were a real concern to the young people in this research; they felt that opportunities were being eroded, not only through a difficult job market for school leavers, but by a perceived increase in competition from immigration. This added to the feeling among many of the young people in the research that the future was increasingly precarious.

5.7 Precariousness and Fearing the Future

Money, responsibility and my education all falling on top of me like concrete blocks,

I don't want to fail or I'll be living in a shoe box,

(Adrian, Year 8, Bradgate High School)

During the research I initially began by asking young people to think of their aspirations for adult life. I then asked young people about how they *really* felt about their futures. I found that many felt the transition to adulthood was far from simple and would be a difficult and tough experience.

Most young people engendered both positive and negative emotions about the future. Reasons for the negative emotions tended to range from being quite fearful of the unknown, about what their lives might consist of, and concern that the transition towards adulthood will be hard, tough and even frightening. For some, what they would transition to was still unknown, which often led to greater apprehension about the future. In this respect young people tended to associate the future more with risk than with the opportunity to forge for themselves a new and exciting life. This is important because as young people construct and assemble their identities their ability to participate in wider society may be dependent on believing that there are exciting opportunities which are open to them through the opportunity bargain; learning = earning (Brown et al. 2011). The ability to assemble and

manage their lives towards becoming a neoliberal subject is largely contingent on them believing this correlation and that this will lead to an expansive future for themselves, where they are capable of becoming productive citizens (Rose 1999). Instead I found that a fearful outlook about the future tended to affect young people's confidence about the future. My findings suggest that young people held a more pessimistic view about the future. During the research young people were asked to write down how they *really* felt about the future.

Bill: I'm quite frightened coz I don't know what I'm going to turn out to be

TG: What do you mean by that?

Bill: I might move on from my life, make decision with my life and regret it.

(Bill, Year 10, Engaged Group, Bradgate High School)

Others felt that the future would be tough, with increased responsibility being associated with adulthood.

The image shows the word "Tough" written in a cursive, handwritten style in blue ink. The letters are connected, with a prominent loop on the 'T' and a long, sweeping tail on the 'h'. The background is plain white.

Figure 27: How do you really feel about the future exercise - (Aaron, Year 10, Disengaged Group, Bradgate High School)

The image shows the word "Wicked" written in a cursive, handwritten style. A checkmark is drawn over the letter 'i'. Below the word, a horizontal line is drawn, and the word "Tough" is written in a smaller, cursive font underneath the line.

Figure 28: How do you really feel about the future exercise (Aden, Year 10, Disengaged Group, Bradgate High School)

Aden's response suggests he thought the future would be 'wicked' but he also wrote 'tough' in the bottom. Throughout the research Aden seemed to want to impress his mates with laddish behaviour; however there were times when this sense of needing to impress was eroded by moments which showed more of the reality of his life.

Other young people said they were dreading the future:

Leo: I'm dreading the future because even though you got more hopes and dreams I think it's going to get harder.

TG: How do you think it's going to get harder?

Leo: Cos you got to go to university and do more work and got find a job. (Leo, Year 10, Bradgate High School).

Bennett (2004: 421) argues that 'as the worlds of the researched constantly shift and change, their emotions tell stories about newly grasped realities'. I argue that when considering how the future might be, young people's emotions, which engendered both hopes and fears, did reveal how they dealt with the prospects of these new realities. Emotions tended to shape

how young people thought about the future, which may influence the aspirations and decisions they make.

Anxiety about the future tended to be expressed as concern about the difficulties of the transition towards adult life. Many young people felt this would be difficult and restrictive and it would bring with it increased responsibility. Rose (1999: 103) argues that within an increasingly neoliberal world, the ability to market oneself is an important part of becoming a productive citizen. Without the ability to imagine expansive futures which enable the 'choosing self' – the presence of fear and anxiety might affect young people's ability to market and assemble their lives towards becoming a productive neoliberal citizen.

Despite having real concerns about the future, some young people were still excited and hopeful that their lives would be good and it was not uncommon for many of these fearful and negative emotions to be joined with hopeful and positive expectations of the future. Bryant and Ellard (2015) found that, for young people living in difficult and uncertain circumstances, these realities did shape how they thought about the future. Similar to some of the people in this research, their respondents often struggled to see future possibilities and choices open to them and yet many did have hope for a better life that was secure and happy. Understanding why this is the case requires a greater discussion on how 'hope operates in young lives and how it shapes future practice and trajectories' (Bryant and Ellard 2015: 485). How young people engage with different modes of hope will be discussed further in Chapter 7.

Within this research there was therefore evidence of the effects of uncertainty on young people's lives, but equally of hope for the future.

hard , good , excited,
Fun , Cool.
Wild .
Free do whatever I like.

Figure 29: How do you really feel about the future exercise - (Kaydon, Year 8, Disengaged Group, Swithland Wood Community College)

- Nervous.
- Stressful.
- excited.
- ambitious.

Figure 30: How do you really feel about the future exercise – (Leo, Year 10, Engaged Group, Bradgate High School)

good
 exiting
 hard
 challenging

Figure 31: How do you really feel about the future exercise – (Kayleigh, Year 8, Engaged Group, Swithland Wood Community College)

Fred: [I wrote] Ambitious, positive, nervous, legit [legitimate], hardworking, confident.

TG: So, on the one hand you are quite positive...

Fred: But also quite nervous, because if you don't get the job that you have been training for and you want then you may not get a job that you like or are good at.

Hadley: Coz you never know what is going to happen because you got all the plans that are going to happen, but you are not sure because if it don't happen then you are going to have to think of something else.

Fred: Like if someone else is better at the job than you (Year 8, Disengaged Group, Lea Wood College).

Fred's explanation for feeling precarious shows that he does not consider having qualifications as a guaranteed way of getting employment. It also shows his reluctance to believe the neo-liberal argument for an opportunity bargain; (Learning = Earning) and that it will lead to good employment (Brown et al. 2011). Despite feeling positive and ambitious about the future, concerns about employment and the wider transition towards adulthood left young people feeling excited and positive on the one hand and yet paradoxically fearful and negative on the other. Here, perhaps, young people are hopeful for a better life, however the goals by which this is achieved are undefined.

The conversation between Fred and Hadley also reflects a sense of inadequacy and a recurring fear of not being good enough to get the job that they want. Hadley questions the point of planning, with little confidence that success will occur. Starting from a position of fearing failure does seem to shape and colour young people's lives (Bryant and Ellard 2015). Whilst middle class young people and families may start with some sense of entitlement and a confidence about likely success - but may fear it being taken away - the same cannot always be said for those from working class backgrounds (Berlant 2011). In this example, the young people are starting with little confidence about success and therefore they question much more the purpose of planning and the likelihood of success actually happening. Archer et al. (2003) highlight similar findings where young people had feelings of 'not being good enough', which led them to use this as a self-protection strategy to 'opt out' of education to avoid further educational failures (see also Allen and Hollingworth 2013).

Hadley also seems to wrestle with uncertainty in his plans. This is important as it determines what aspirations and goals are set and whether they are deemed to be realistic and achievable. The fact that many of the young people regarded the future as being precarious, particularly in relation to getting work, shows the extent of uncertainty in the labour market in recent years. The relationship between aspirations and precariousness might be regarded as negative or counterproductive. However, I argue that in the process of asking young people to 'raise aspirations,' rather than dismissing uncertainty, it seeks to tackle it through encouraging people to develop the cognitive resolve and the necessary dispositions to adapt and deal with uncertainty in the labour market. The environment of anxiety and precariousness which is gripping our late-modern condition means that how we hope has to change (Institute for Precarious Consciousness, 04 April 2014).

This, I argue, is a key tenet of the neoliberal aspirations agenda. Raising aspirations therefore is a way of engaging with anxiety rather than being paralyzed by it. It gives purpose to hope by

attaching a goal to it – even if that goal seems unlikely or uncertain. However, this is no solution to anxiety as it merely perpetuates it. Therefore, it is important to question the role hope plays in helping young people to construct their futures and how in an age of uncertainty neoliberal principles and practices seek to maintain the hope and aspirations of people [this will be explored further in analysis Chapter 7].

Living in an area of deprivation often left young people at risk of educational failure and fewer local opportunities for work. The following section outlines how young people understand and value education as a means to achieving their future lives.

5.8 Educational Failure and Worklessness

School can be boring,

School can be fun.

Get French and Spanish and shot it with a gun.

(Ben, Year 8, Bradgate High School)

Many young people spoke of the difficulties of attending schools located in areas of deprivation where educational standards are often lower than elsewhere in the UK. The estates in the research often suffered from a legacy of educational failure and a tendency for local people to not value education, because the local cycle of cynicism about educational outcomes has been difficult to break. However, despite this façade of local people not valuing education, it was clear education was indeed regarded as important by many of the young people in the research.

TG: What about education?

Leo: No one takes it seriously – well some people do – but obviously that's what everyone thinks about it, cos no one takes it seriously, but underneath they actually do, but everyone thinks like that.

TG: So you think there's a general assumption but...

Leo: Yeah obviously everyone says that you will get stabbed if you come round here, when it's not actually like that (Year 10, Disengaged Group, Bradgate High School).

The fact that education appears to be undervalued seems to be somewhat problematic as many of the young people did value it and yet this discourse of undervaluing education still tends to be played out and performed at a local level. However, the majority did regard education as vital towards having a successful life and saw that education was the only credible means of achieving employment.

Some, particularly in the Disengaged Year 10 group, did show rather more resistance to education, often critically questioning its appropriateness for their context. And yet they did not out-rightly reject it. Performing well at school was still seen as the only way that they could achieve any kind of successful future.

Jett: Some people care about education.

TG: But not everyone?

Jett: Some people think, oh why bother about education, but some people think that you do need to have one [an education], but it is true though that you need to have some sort of education in your life.

TG: Why do you think some people don't value it?

Jett: Because they will come to school and go what's the point in getting educated and act all like this and think they are sick [good]. Then they will finish school and be like, what am I going to do with my life now? (Year 8, Disengaged Group, Bradgate High School).

This quote suggests that compliance with the dominant way of talking about education on the estate, combined with a fateful lack of forward thinking, results in many young people failing to engage properly in education at school. This helps to maintain a dominant anti-education discourse within the estates. Jett continues by arguing that only after it is too late do people eventually realise the importance of education. The use of the term, 'some sort of education' however, also suggests some non-compliance with the education they receive at the school. This notion of questioning what education was on offer within local schools was picked up by others in the group, who struggled to make the link between how some of what is taught at school was useful to their lives.

Aaron: [Education's] not real. There's no need for it – I'm not saying you don't need education, I am just saying what's the point because half the skills you learn in here, they are going to be useless after school?

TG: What about the stuff that is necessary?

Aaron: Then fair enough – but the teachers teach us some stuff we don't need to know – like they teach us religion, but they don't teach us about gypsos and travellers.

Rick: Yeah, but we have more religious people than we do normal people living in Leicester (Year 10, Disengaged Group, Bradgate High School).

Much like Jett, Aaron realised that there is a need for education, but he also felt that the education on offer was outdated and of no use to young men for their local context, when there were other issues and matters that were deemed to be more immediately pressing, for example, traveller sites nearby and recent encounters and trouble with the traveller community.

Whilst some young people questioned education, there was still the general sense that even though they didn't enjoy it or struggled with grades, schooling was still important to achieving their futures. However, questioning what they were taught revealed evidence of a deep scepticism about the capacity of education to lead to a good job. It also signalled a local rejection of formal learning.

TG: Do people in Bradgate Estate value education?

ALL: No – not at all.

TG: Why's that?

Keaton: Because they can't get jobs

Aaron: What's the point in learning if you ain't going to get a job round here, because what is there to do round here other than being a shop keeper.

Rick: Yes, but you see people on the estate and because they have grown up like that they think its ok to be like that.

TG: What do you guys all think about work?

Aaron: Yeah I would like to get a job, but it depends on what it is.

Rick: Getting a decent job is hard now these days.

Aaron: Yeah not being someone's flipping bitch. (Year 10, Disengaged Group, Bradgate High School).

The sense here is that young people wanted to work, but seem very particular about what they want to do. Aaron's concern about not being 'someone's flipping bitch' might reflect what many feminist commentators argue to be a crisis of masculinity, where young men feel they have lost control of being able to work in traditionally 'male' jobs usually found in industry (McDowell 2000). The nature of Aaron's complaint suggest a sense of being 'de-masculinised' and losing power and identity through working in a low skill monotonous job, which was not seen as worth having. For some young people this led to a development of a problematic relationship with education. In the case of young people like Aaron - place matters. More to the point, *staying in* place matters. As shown earlier (section 5.2), Aaron regarded staying close to family and friends as very important and thus staying on or near the estate was seen as part of his future. Considerations such as future employment came second. It is not that education or work did not matter to him, it is that staying local, close to friends, family and neighbourhood mattered more.

Without 'good' jobs being locally available, the role and purpose of education in its current form was brought into question. It can be argued that Aaron's close attachment to place, when combined with wanting to remain local to be near his family, limited and shaped his options. This led him and others to question the point of learning and the options of subsequently working. Allen and Hollingworth (2013: 513) have considered the relationship that place has in shaping young people's habitus, where young people's dispositions are shaped by 'localised sets of material, social and imagined relations [which] are central in producing young people's sense of place in the world and their possibilities of mobility'. The role of school and family in shaping young people's aspirations cannot be fully understood without considering the geographical context in which they live. It is clear from this research that for young people like Aaron, the desire to stay close to family means that his options are limited by deep attachments to place. Living in an area of deprivation, combined with a lack of various forms of bridging social capital means that few opportunities can exist. This lead to a class-based immobility exemplified by what Allen and Hollingworth (2013: 514) describe as the 'stickiness of place'.

Aarons disengagement with education is not, however, merely an expression of the current economic reality which many young people find themselves in, with limited prospects for the future. It is not just that he struggles to imagine that he will find suitable work for himself in the future. It is likely that his disengagement can also be traced back to how educational attitudes have been reproduced over time within his community and inter-generationally through family and parental involvement in education (Reay 2000). Jett's assertion that 'some

people don't care about education,' suggests an ingrained attitude towards education. It would be easy to conclude that this is a problem of young people's own making, however, this is not the complete story – It is not merely one sided where a particular group cannot be bothered to invest in education. Inequality within education, between different class groups, means that many young people start school life from a positional disadvantage over their more advantaged peers. Education has tended to historically favour those from middle class backgrounds often at the expense of those from working class backgrounds (Reay 2001; 2008; Ball 2003). This positional disadvantage through education continues as young people look for work. What is clear is that some young people in this research tended to acknowledge this problematic relationship.

5.9 Summary

In this chapter I have explored what it is like to live on a white working class estate in Leicester as a young person. I have highlighted some of the social issues that young people face, ranging from educational failure to negotiating the 'estate discourse' that tends to reject the value and purpose of education. This fuses with the generally poor opportunities locally for employment, which leads some young people to reject education outright. I have argued that young working class people have to contend with issues of trying to succeed in tough but improving schools and must look beyond the legacies of educational failure. They do so whilst living in a changing world, both locally through population change, and nationally as the economy restructures towards service sector options.

Whilst negotiating all of these social issues, young people are in a continual state of assembling their lives and carving out their own identities, as different social actors from schools, family and the cultures of local place seek to influence their lives. Young people tended to assemble their lives in various ways using various components. I have highlighted the importance of technology in holding together the social fabric of young people's lives in the present and how these were seen as important parts of young people's identities - almost an extension of the self – where young people have an online platform to broadcast and assemble who they are.

I argue that young people's relationship to others through their family and kinship networks

provided a foundation upon which they assembled their lives. Most notable was how they tended to position themselves in relation to their *friends and family*. I have argued that for young people, the local matters, where friends and family can be said to be the single most important thing in their lives. It is these relationships which offer a sense of security and identity to young people and which anchors them to the estates. The role of bonding social capital might help explain this close connection (Putnam 2000), where fear of the unknown is dealt with by a strong desire to remain close to what is familiar, known and safe. This provided a sense of who they are and their social position with society. It is likely that identification with family also is instrumental in shaping young people's habitus, in what they expect for the future. However, there was clear evidence of young people aspiring for jobs that were very different to that of their parents. This may be because schools have encouraged young people to set very different aspirations. I argue this process of assembling the future out of the present, however, is complex, tangled and fragile. When investigating further these aspirations, which were different from parental occupations, young people tended to be unsure about how realistic these were and often revealed a pessimistic and fearful outlook to the future.

I argue here that in assembling their lives there was often a clash between school expectations and their own habitus and family expectations for the future. For some this was expressed in a sense of feeling torn between family expectations and aspirations to become highly mobile and successful. Some young people concluded that this was a necessary but difficult step in transitioning to adulthood. This tension can be explained through Bourdieu's (2000) concept of a 'destabilised habitus', where young people feel torn between two equally compelling futures (Reay 2015). On the one hand, to remain in the relative safety of what is familiar, where they are close to family and friends but with limited opportunities; or, on the other hand, to leave the relative safety of the estate and head into the unknown towards more educational opportunities (e.g. HE) and a more socially mobile 'middle class' life.

In the following chapter I continue to unpick how schools attempt to influence young people. I critically question government policies and school practices which seek to raise educational standards, narrowing the gap in attainment and raise children's aspirations. I question how these policies and practices seek to shape and assemble young people and how this differs from how young people seek to construct and assemble their own lives. I critique how schools attempt to influence young people's aspirations in the context of government policy which often promotes a deficit discourse which suggests that young people *need* their aspirations

raising. For schools that have to implement these policies, this often comes out as a tension between young people's own hopes and aspirations and the need for schools to be seen to be raising disadvantaged young people's aspirations. This can lead to a range of reactions from young people. For some, a dissonance forms between school's expectations and the kind of futures they aspire to. Yet for others, a complexity and messiness occurs as competing aspirations and expectations make hoping for the future confusing and uncertain.

Chapter 6

'Aim Higher, Aim for the Stars'

The Role of Schools and Home in Shaping Young People's Futures

6.1 Introduction

This chapter charts how schools, and their relationships with local universities, attempt to shape young people's aspirations and futures and how they have responded to the continued focus in government policy that seeks to increase social mobility by raising educational standards, narrowing the gap in attainment and raising children's aspirations (Cabinet Office 2011). It questions the effectiveness of Coalition policies and critically analyses how schools are using these policies to influence their pupils. I consider how schools, in this research, are attempting to create 'aspirational citizens' who are capable of competing in an increasingly globalised and neoliberal job market. This requires rational, self-regulating and enterprising individuals, who are willing to take responsibility for their own skill acquisition and choices (Allen and Mendick 2013; Rose 1999). This chapter, therefore, builds on the first analysis chapter which showed how young people seek to assemble their own lives, to critique how schools also encourage their pupils to assemble their lives and how this differs from young people's own aspirations for adulthood. I seek to question this divide. I also highlight how young people are encouraged to assemble their lives in quite deliberate ways by planning for the future and I flesh out how these take form within young people's lives.

In the previous chapter, I argued that young people tended to live and think about their lives at a very local scale and that this often informed their aspirations for the future. In this chapter, I argue that this preference to favour the local is often problematic to schools in their attempts to raise the aspirations of their pupils. It is therefore important to critically question how the local is also constructed by schools. Here MacKinnon's (2010: 22) work on 'scalar politics' is useful because:

it is often not scale per se that is the prime object of contestation between social actors, but rather specific processes and institutionalized practices that are themselves differentially scaled.

I argue that the scale at which young people construct their lives is very different to the institution of the school which looks to promote a highly mobile and middle class lifestyle. This often involves moving off the estate. I argue 'the local,' that both school and young people perceive, is actually 'differentially scaled.' For a member of school staff the local tends to be regarded as problematic, as a barrier to success. For young people however, the local is often a secure place, where they seek to construct their futures. This chapter therefore questions how schools engage with the expectations of government policy for social mobility which is often framed at a national scale and how they reconcile this with young people's own localised expectations for their lives.

The Coalition government (2010 – 2015) argued that the UK is an unequal society, where social mobility is needed to help create a fairer and more open society. For the Coalition, social mobility was something to be tackled across a range of ages, through a number of targeted interventions, that span from early foundations years (0-5), through to school years (5-15), transitional years (16-21) and adulthood. To help achieve this the 'Commission for Social Mobility and Child Poverty' was set up in 2010 to report progress back to the government. A key principle of the Coalition's social mobility agenda was that 'merit not background' should be the grounds for social mobility, where "fairness means everyone having the chance to do well irrespective of their beginnings" (Cabinet Office 2011: 11). This meant addressing not only how disadvantage is passed onto the next generation, but also how patterns of advantage are passed on (Cabinet Office 2011). This assumption about needing to address the intergenerational transmission of poverty is, however, problematic. Research has highlighted that within industrialised nations, poverty experienced at childhood is often linked with having fewer changes later on in life. Whilst there is evidence that suggests being poor as a child can lead to poverty as an adult, it is not necessarily the case (Bird 2007). Reasons for poverty are complex and multifaceted. Bird (2007: 4) argues that 'an individual's asset bundle, their capabilities and characteristics, and their power to exercise agency', along with a wide range of other factors, are important in shaping future outcomes.

The Coalition, at the beginning of its term in office, set a course to address three main concerns for schooling (5-15 years old) (Cabinet Office 2011):

- Firstly, to 'raise standards' of education across all schools.

- Secondly, to bring in reforms to improve and ‘narrow attainment gaps’ between educational institutions particularly those deemed as failing (Whitty 2011). Within the UK context failure tends to be measured by attainment at key points in young people’s education. For example, the Coalition pointed out that only 20% of pupils from the poorest families achieve 5 A*- C GCSEs (Cabinet Office 2011). Educational failure can also be seen at an institutional level. Schools which are currently not rated as ‘good’ during their OFSTED inspection are deemed to require improvements in their standards.
- Thirdly, to target those individuals deemed to be lacking the social, emotional and aspirational qualities to succeed within the current economy and therefore need intervention to ‘raise aspirations.’

This three pronged approach, outlined in the Coalition’s report, *Opening Doors, Breaking Barriers* (Cabinet Office 2011), forms the basis for the structure of this analysis chapter. Many of the ways schools intervene in these three areas often involves a level of cross pollination: in some cases interventions might address all three targets. However, for the purpose of this analysis, interventions have been identified in terms of their primary purpose as seen in table 10. The three sections chart how schools attempt to help their pupils achieve and plan for their futures. They critically consider how young people are encouraged to assemble their lives towards a particular ‘neoliberal’ orientation; towards becoming socially mobile, responsible and aspirational citizens. This begins by not only looking to address pupils’ attainment by ‘raising standards’ and to mitigate the effects of deprivation by ‘narrowing the gap’, but by intervening into how young people hope and plan for their futures by encouraging them to set goals towards having ‘high aspirations’.

Table 10: Government policies aimed at raising social mobility during the school years (5-18) and how these fit into school practise

	Government Policy	Bradgate High School	Lea Wood College	Swithland Wood Community College
Raising Standards	<p><i>Devolved power to schools and heads teachers through Free and Academy schools (resisted by all 3 schools in the research)</i></p> <p><i>Improve the quality of teaching</i></p> <p><i>English Baccalaureate</i></p>	<p><i>Introducing new uniform</i></p> <p><i>Focus on soft and academic skills</i></p>	<p><i>Addressing teaching and behaviour standards</i></p> <p><i>Targeting literacy</i></p>	<p><i>Introducing new uniform</i></p> <p><i>Addressing teaching quality</i></p>
Narrowing the Gap in attainment	<p><i>Pupil Premium</i></p> <p><i>Publish 'best practise'</i></p> <p><i>£110 million Education Endowment fund</i></p>	<p><i>Use of Pupil Premium</i></p> <p><i>Challenge the gap</i></p> <p><i>Targeting parents aspirations</i></p>	<p><i>Use of Pupil Premium</i></p> <p><i>Working with parents</i></p> <p><i>Raising aspirations beyond the estate</i></p>	<p><i>Use of Pupil Premium</i></p> <p><i>Improving dialogue with parents over work experience</i></p>
Raising children's aspirations	<p><i>School responsible for career guidance</i></p> <p><i>'Inspire the future' program (talks from members of industry)</i></p> <p><i>National Citizen Service</i></p>	<p><i>Role Models</i></p> <p><i>Motivational assemblies / inspirational photos and poems. New school building</i></p> <p><i>Masterclasses and tasters days and visits to Oxbridge</i></p> <p><i>What university where? exercise and CV writing</i></p> <p><i>Targeted careers intervention</i></p> <p><i>Citizenship and Life skills</i></p> <p><i>Themed learning days</i></p>	<p><i>Careers Program</i></p> <p><i>Outside visitors from industry</i></p> <p><i>Aimhigher Programme to widen participation to HE</i></p> <p><i>Motivational posters</i></p> <p><i>University ambassadors visits to school</i></p>	<p><i>Visits to university</i></p> <p><i>University ambassadors visit school</i></p> <p><i>Imagining the future materially exercise</i></p> <p><i>Life and work skills themed learning days</i></p> <p><i>New school building</i></p>

6.2 Raising Standards in School

Within Leicester City, the move towards giving more autonomy and power to schools and head teachers through Free School status has largely been resisted, with the exception of a few schools. All the schools within this research were under Local Authority control with all three schools making big steps towards raising standards and all being classed as 'good' by Ofsted at the time of research. This reflects a wider change within the city schools which have recently been praised by the Chief Inspector of Schools, Sir Michael Wilshaw, for improvements in standards (Harrison 2013b). This improvement has largely been achieved without the extended introduction of Academy and Free Schools. The schools have looked to raise educational standards in other ways through addressing teaching quality and poor behaviour of pupils.

6.2.1 Improve the Quality of Teaching

The Coalition argued that the quality of teachers is one of the most important ways of raising standards, where having a high quality teacher can often increase GCSE grades by a half when compared to having a low quality teacher (Cabinet Office 2011).

The evidence from around the world shows us that the most important factor in determining the effectiveness of a school system is the quality of its teachers (DfE 2010: 19).

For the Coalition this means selecting teachers who have both the personal and intellectual abilities to teach pupils (DfE 2010). To achieve this potential teachers can only receive funding for teacher training if they have received a 2:2 or above in their degree (Cabinet Office 2011).

Ensuring there were consistent standards in teaching, learning and behaviour was regarded as important to the schools in this study. The reason often given for improvements in the schools was that incoming head teachers had really looked to address the teaching quality and, where necessary, had dealt with underperforming teachers.

I want kids to succeed and I think in this school the majority [of teachers] feel like that, but there are some and the students support that, that don't go that extra mile and

what [Head Teacher] has been doing is getting rid of the people who don't go the 'extra mile' because you need inspirational teachers that are outstanding in the classroom to motivate students to succeed and then once they succeed in the classroom. They are going to succeed in exams and then life – it's a can-do culture – but it takes a long time to weed out the people that aren't buying into the vision if you like, but it is one of the most rewarding jobs in the world, but not everyone feels like that (David, Teacher, Lea Wood College).

In this respect, when David is talking about motivation he is probably referring to a teacher's individual efficacy, which is associated with teacher motivation. Zambo and Zambo (2008: 159) argue that 'teachers with a strong sense of individual efficacy believe they can and do make a difference in the lives of their students and that their students can and will achieve.' This means teachers are likely to spend more time preparing for lessons, set stronger goals and are often more open to new ideas, even in spite of setbacks. I argue that using language like 'weeding out' underperforming teachers suggests the possible existence of a blame culture within the school. When David talks about going the 'extra mile,' it is likely that for teachers who are deemed by the leadership to fail to do this, they can be singled out as having a 'weak' sense of individual efficacy and in the extreme case can lead to dismissal. This formulation places responsibility upon single individuals to motivate pupils rather than regarding it as a wider institutional issue.

Addressing learning and achievement was also highlighted by schools as important to raising standards.

Right, when the Head got here it was very difficult – low achievement, there were no consistent standards and the teaching was poor and [the Head teacher] has set about rigorously working on the quality of teaching and learning, rigorously enforcing strict behaviour codes, uniform, consistent standards (David, Teacher, Lea Wood College).

Within Lea Wood College this also involved targeting literacy levels, which were regarded as a big barrier towards raising aspirations and achieving success.

Raising Aspirations, basically, the biggest block to many students is raising literacy levels, so massive input into that [was required] so that they can access the curriculum in Key Stage 4 [GCSEs] (David, Teacher, Lea Wood College).

Within the schools the relationship between attainment and aspirations was often intertwined and blurred in teaching practice. This of course may well reflect government policy, which has sought to address issues of aspiration and attainment, particularly in previous widening participation policy. Linking aspiration and attainment was also connected and reinforced with widening participation intervention through the local universities in this research.

One WP practitioner argues:

But if we are not also helping those children to get at least a level 4 in maths and literacy, it's [WP Intervention] a waste of time. If those children leave primary school and make the transition into secondary school without making that level, at least level 4, they are sunk. They might as well stay at home... but the thing that we do that is critical to life chance is the maths thing. [Same with] maths at the next level, again, if you don't get GCSE you are stuffed. We did a project last year with Bradgate High School, so we did this in collaboration with the Head of Maths and the Vice Principal, they put together a learning package for 8 weeks in the spring term for a group of pupils who are taking their exams early ... and we worked with the volunteering team here which works out of careers [Career Development Service]. So we have got 15 undergraduates, who have got A-Level maths, to go out into the school to run the projects and they worked with a group of 3 or maybe 4 pupils and the head teacher wrote to the Vice Chancellor and said that out of all of the interventions, the expensive interventions that they had done with these young people, this was the one they felt was most powerful (Jill, Widening Participation Officer, University of Leicester).

The two quotes above both make the link between poor attainments in literacy and numeracy and a need to raise aspirations. This suggests some sort of causality and makes the two inextricably linked.

I have argued in my literature review that aspirations can be regarded as a mode of goal directed hope. In this case, I argue that linking aspirations with attainment is likely to alter how young people hope towards the future. This is because having 'high aspirations' is linked to one's ability to be academically able to achieve the necessary grades. By linking the two this enables schools to shape young people aspirations towards the future, where achieving is vital to being able to fulfil one's aspirations.

This, and the following chapter, questions what happens when young people do not regard this link between attainment and aspiration as important and what happens to aspirations

when young people's own disconnection with education means that they are unlikely to achieve what schools expect of them. This link also means that there is a danger of narrowing young people's aspirations towards the type of future that schools expect them to have (Brown 2011). This is because by giving a value label such as 'high aspiration' to those wishing to attend HE, the result is that all other aspirations become by default lower and inferior compared to those which are positioned towards HE (Watts and Bridges 2006).

6.2.2 Addressing Behaviour Standards

The Coalition at the beginning of its term in office highlighted the perceived impact of poor behavioural standards on pupils' ability to learn, as well being a factor in the recruitment and retention of 'good teachers' to the profession.

The greatest concern voiced by new teachers and a very common reason experienced teachers cite for leaving the profession is poor pupil behaviour. We know that a minority of pupils can cause serious disruption in the classroom... And poorly disciplined children cause misery for other pupils by bullying them and disrupting learning (DfE 2010: 9).

Schools in this research often regarded setting clear boundaries and establishing codes of conduct as important to bringing in improvements in attainment. For Bradgate High School and Lea Wood College, this was achieved in part through introducing a new and smarter uniform.

There was however an acknowledgement that some of the behaviours and attitudes that young people had acquired as a result of living on the estates were not always a bad thing (e.g. their local loyalty and community solidarity (Helen, Teacher, Bradgate high School). However, local patterns of behaviour were sometimes seen by teachers as being problematic and as clashing with the aims of trying to encourage young people to strive towards a socially mobile life and become more outward looking, more aspirational (and more middle class). (Brown 2012)

Our kids are very loyal – they will give us a hard time, but if somebody comes in to visit they will be very loyal – they will be like trying to do the right thing. They do want the school to do well, even though they seem to be fighting against you, minute by minute, and I suppose if you went to their homes they would want to defend their mum – they

wouldn't want you to know that she was an alcoholic and they would try and hide that and make it appear better and protect their family and the things they see as inadequate. And also they like tough love. Whenever we introduce something - like we introduced something last term looking at behaviour in corridors – running and shouting in corridors and using outdoor voices and we have got this big thing now called 'indoor voices.' And we thought what is it going to be like – it's going to be a nightmare - and there are going to be loads of kids and we gave them passes and they get these passes taken off them if they do one of these things that they shouldn't do. And it's just like 90% come on board. They want the school to be nice and to feel safe. You always have a small few, who don't, but it's that loyalty and they want strong guidelines that they don't get at home (Sarah, Teacher, Bradgate High School).

Of interest here is how the school has attempted to change how young people behave in the school buildings compared to how they might behave *outside* of school in this case by getting young people to use 'indoor voices'. This might also be a convenient means of trying to create conforming, courteous and polite individuals that the new post-industrial labour market is looking for (McDowell 2000). Sarah also highlights how young people tend to be very loyal to the school and she makes the link that young people are often very loyal to their families. This family loyalty, however, is based on perceived inadequacy, with the school acting as a 'moralising machine' (Rose 1999). The school is depicted as making up for this deficit, by providing the 'tough love' and strong guidance that young people do not get from home.

In this case, it might be that the loyalty learnt from home is taken into the school environment, but only to a small extent, as the relationship is somewhat fraught between pupils and teachers when young people give teachers a 'hard time.' Here blame has been apportioned to families and yet 'loyalty' might well come from the close knit and insular communities that are found on such estates. Loyalty can be seen as a specific 'local' value and is problematic to some of the other values that schools encourage young people to have. Loyalty engenders collective values of solidarity, which are antithetical to the responsible and aspirational individualism schools are promoting. As such, the onset of the 'moralising machine' is not achieved through authoritarian means or social control, but is met via contestation and critical reflexivity where different values are held (Pykett 2010). As such, I argue that power in this case becomes more of a stalemate with neither side willing to back down. This may help to explain why educational failure persists despite schools making improvements.

6.3 Narrowing the Gap in Attainment

Intervention aimed at narrowing the gap in attainment is particularly targeted at those from disadvantaged backgrounds through the Pupil Premium, which provides schools with additional funding for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds. In attempting to narrow the gap in attainment, Coalition policy attempted to tackle two issues.

First, the intervention sought to address the gap between access to good schools and low performing schools. The Coalition argued that the Pupil Premium would make it more attractive for good schools to want to attract pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds. This is in stark contrast to one of their other aims which is to raise standards of state schools, 'to provide an education which matches the best in the independent sector' (Cabinet Office 2011: 38). This suggests that on the one hand being more likely to attend a 'good' school will help improve individual social mobility (much as with the argument for grammar schools), but on the other, this may not help school communities which are struggling in areas of deprivation to improve on the whole, where the majority of their pupils come from deprived backgrounds.

Second, the Coalition has ensured that head teachers are able to tailor the Pupil Premium to the needs of their pupils, but are also held accountable for their spending. This builds alongside Coalition policy for Free Schools which gives greater autonomy to head teachers. The Coalition argues that the Pupil Premium will 'make it more attractive to open Free Schools in disadvantaged areas' (Cabinet Office 2011: 38).

It is important to analyse how schools have implemented the funding from the Pupil Premium. This section examines a number of interventions which were aimed at challenging the gap in attainment. It also considers how local place comes to shape this gap and how perceptions from 'here,' within the estates, shape how out 'there' appears and vice versa (Ahmed 2006: 8).

6.3.1 The Place-Based Gap between the Estate and 'Out There'

Teachers at the schools were keen to stress the importance of not generalising about pupils; however, young people were often described in a general sense as immobile, fearful and unconfident individuals. For many of the teachers, young people's attachment to the local was seen as being problematic; close attachments to family, friends and the neighbourhood was seen as shaping their lives, preventing them from becoming mobile and independent citizens.

The estates have got an estate culture and they are very insular and inward looking and it takes a lot to break that down and that's what we need to do. And if you talk to people in Bradgate High School, it will be exactly the same – you don't go off the estate. It's best to be a big fish in a small pond than to move out. So it's raising their lives beyond the estate. (David, Teacher, Lea Wood College).

It's the going, the leaving their surroundings. Going into town for some of them is quite scary because they do not leave this two mile proximity. And, you know, they doubt that they can actually achieve - 'Oh it's going to be really hard' (Helen, Teacher, Swithland Wood Community College).

You know it's because that 'doesn't feel safe' and 'it's risky' and 'it might not work' and home and the place they live is what they know and where they feel OK. And maybe they feel confident there and tied to their families (Sarah, Teacher, Bradgate High School).

For the teachers, young people need to think beyond the 'local' and their attachments to family, friends and neighbourhood, to raise their confidence, abilities and lives beyond the close confines of the estate and to reposition themselves outside of such things and feelings of inadequacy. They need to be looking outward, away from the estate, and adopting a new set of values that would enable them to leave and take up opportunities (Massey 2005). However, the previous chapter highlights how young people often feared an uncertain future and of transitioning to adulthood away from the estate. This suggests that moving beyond the estate, for some young people, is a challenge that carries with it multiple difficulties, from anxieties and fears about going to university, to concerns about class identity and educational achievement. Here young people might be afraid of their ability not only to 'fit in' to a middle class institution, coming from a working class background, but also their ability to achieve when at university. It also involves a reorientation in terms of how they assemble their lives and therefore what futures they hope and aspire towards.

Caution should be taken here not to conclude that this is because young people lack the necessary aspirations or they fail to have an effective outlook or self-esteem, but to suggest that for some young people the local estate and the interconnectedness of community is what creates their sense of security and is the means by which they not only assemble their lives, but also set their future hopes; to live happy and fulfilled lives on the estate.

This is in stark contrast to how young people were often viewed by teachers which was often in terms of what they lacked, be it educationally, aspirationally or in terms of mobility or even parenting. For the school, place is very important in a very different way: young people need to be encouraged to raise their aspirations beyond the estate, because place is seen as something that holds young people back. One way in which schools seek to address this tension is by intervening in the emotional wellbeing and social skills of pupils.

6.3.2 Meeting Emotional Needs and Developing Social Skills

The schools in the research placed a lot of emphasis on providing the social, emotional and soft skills which were often perceived as not being taught at home. Ecclestone (2007) traces the influence of the state in intervening in education via emotions, to the New Labour government from 1997. Labour aimed to address issues of emotional well-being by arguing that poor emotional well-being has a negative impact on motivation, success and achievement. By engaging and intervening in the emotional lives of young people with low self-esteem, it is argued that this will help young people realise their potential and improve their educational engagement. Ecclestone (2007) argues that intervention to improve self-esteem has increasingly occurred as the state focuses on managing the emotions of vulnerable people and groups as a governmental strategy (Rose 1999). Such intervention, however, can lead to what Ecclestone (2007: 457) called the 'diminished self' being reinforced. For those groups that are deemed to be at greater risk from the 'difficulties' of life, a link has been made between educational success and emotional wellbeing and with it the idea of an 'emotional deficit' (Furedi 2004).

During their five years in power, the Coalition did not depart from such political interventions. The Coalition argues that "children develop the social and emotional skills that employers are looking for, and the aspirations and expectations that can drive them to succeed in life" (Cabinet Office 2011: 35). This is achieved through developing "the self-awareness, self-esteem and confidence to take decisions and seize control of their future learning and careers" (Cabinet Office 2011: 40). Therefore, how schools are expected to teach, but also to manage the emotions of their pupils is important to consider when looking at how young people think about their futures. This is especially important in light of the previous chapter which showed just how emotive the future can be.

In line with Coalition policy, schools in this study often linked emotions and aspirations.

There are many [barriers to attending HE] – lots and lots. First of all, there's the general view - and I am speaking generally - that university is not for them. It's for other people to go. They have quite low self-esteem, so it's about raising their aspirations beyond the Lea Wood estate (David, Lea Wood College).

Aspirations can not only be regarded as a form of goal directed hope (Webb 2007). It is a mode of hope that can also be regarded as a transformative emotion that imagines the future (Ahmed 2010). I argue that the creation of aspirations as a form of futurised emotion can legitimise intervention in terms of aspiration in the same way as intervention occurs into self-esteem. Hope can therefore be taught (Synder 2002). In the case of social mobility, a deficit or 'poverty of aspiration' is often applied to young people who are socially excluded (Bright 2011), and intervention to counter this is legitimised.

David, in the quotation above, clearly makes the link that for young people to be socially mobile; they need to think about their futures beyond the Lea Wood Estate. In thinking about place, it is important not only to examine how ideas of the local shape the daily lives of young people, but how this also shapes the world beyond the estate. In other words, how what happens 'here' affects how 'out there' is both perceived and experienced (Ahmed 2006). How young people construct their lives is therefore not only contingent on the cultural and social experiences and expectations found within the local estate, but also on how social and cultural values and expectations beyond the estate are expressed and understood by those within the estate.

Kraftl (2008) explores the relationship between self-esteem and hope. This relationship is important when thinking about how young people hope and construct their futures in the mist of the banality of everyday life. Whilst the two are related, Kraftl (2008) also highlights that they are both distinct in and of themselves. Thinking about how they interrelate might therefore help to explain the present link in government policy between young people's emotional self-worth and future aspirations. It might also help to explain how young people think about and construct their futures and how young people's own measures and ideas of self-worth might differ from those found in government policy and among teaching staff.

I would suggest that government policy attempts to offer intervention into self-esteem and self-worth to encourage young people to aspire towards more acceptable middle class

lifestyles. This line of thinking can be regarded as promoting a pragmatic, overly logical and universalising form of childhood as a future becoming (Kraftl 2008). Within this grand narrative, self-esteem is important to understanding who one is and what one might become. Kraftl (2008) points to recent debates about how issues surrounding 'self-esteem' have become part of the late-modern condition in which narcissism and self-centeredness pervade and where one's self-identity allows the construction of a narrative for understanding one's own life and future. Kraftl (2008: 86) argues that self-esteem is often regarded as something which corresponds to people's 'ability to achieve what they or society set as goals, now and in the future.' I agree. In this respect I argue that intervention on young people's self-esteem seeks to provide them with the necessary social tools by which to assemble themselves and set goals that are socially acceptable for their lives. It is focused towards achieving what society wants now and in the future, rather than what young people themselves want. When young people set these future orientated goals, I argue that this is what can be constructed as an aspiration. Therefore taking on the acceptable goals of the school (and so of society) equates to raising aspirations.

Where this does not happen, young people can be deemed as 'lacking,' 'immobile,' 'fearful' and 'unconfident' (David, Teacher, Lea Wood School). This approach seems to have little space for allowing what they, [the young people] want, but rather sets a determined course towards helping young people achieve what neo-liberal society wants. How young people respond to this, particularly in relation to planning for the future, will be discussed in the following analysis chapter. However, Kraftl, in his study, points to the way young people adopted a very different understanding of self-esteem, one which was also reflected by young people in my research. In this case the banality and uncertainty of life shapes young people's self-esteem and understanding of the material world.

Kraftl (2008: 87) argues young people's self-esteem appears 'to be an in-between state that effects and affects individuals' embodied and emotional engagement with the world.' He argues that self-esteem can therefore work on 'cognitive and affective levels' and that it is also a 'dynamic' phenomenon' that can fluctuate. Within my own research young people's self-esteem did appear to work on both an affective and cognitive level. On the one hand young people were able concretely to imagine expansive futures and yet these ideas were often diminished by an affective turn as they considered the concrete realities of their lives, shaped by the vulnerability and precariousness of present day experience [see section 5.6]. These everyday occurrences might determine or complicate how young people deal with and think

about the future. If there is a perception of the future, based on fear – does it affect young people’s abilities to hope for the type of future which schools promote to them?

6.3.3 Targeting Parental Expectations

Teachers often argued that there was a need to intervene in the attitudes and values of parents as a means to narrow the gap. Parental influence has long been regarded as the single most important factor in shaping young people’s aspirations and futures, where the state has tried to govern the parent-child relationship through the family unit (Rose 1999). Parents have become seen as central actors in ensuring the academic success of their children. However, this notion is problematic for white working class parents, who despite wanting their children to be happy and well behaved, are often identified by schools as lacking the expectation for their children to gain success both academically and in the labour market (Holloway and Pimlott-Wilson 2011). The influence of class is likely to reflect young people’s own habitus which is developed through various family practices as well as through various social interactions (e.g. within peer group) (Pimlott-Wilson 2011).

For the schools in this research, working with white working class parents formed a large part of their agenda to raise aspirations of children. In Bradgate High School the emphasis for bridging the gap in attainment was placed on parents.

I am doing a project this year at school called ‘challenge the gap’ and I have got a small group of year 8s who are in a very small tutor group of 16 and they are doing all these different activities to see if we can accelerate them... But that’s where the lack of progress is - in that group, and with that group. I am going to meet all their parents right at the beginning of the year on the first day to try and tell them about this thing. Because what I need is for them to be on board, so that they support us in trying to get their kids to come out and do things, because a lot of them [parents] will write excuse notes so that they don’t have to do these things that are challenging and harder.

When I meet them I have got to think about how to get them on board and get them to be kind of our ‘ideal’ parents and one of the thing I was going to say to them was that you need every day to ask them [children], what good things have happened to them in school today, or what are your dreams for your child? So they can talk and let them think about what they want. So if they say ‘Oh, I want them to be really successful’, right you’ve said that- how are you going to get them to do that? I think if they can

hear it at home it's a different thing to them hearing it at school (Sarah, Teacher, Bradgate High School).

There are a number of important things to consider here. First, the role the school places on parents in narrowing the gap in attainment and raising aspirations. The school singles parents out as being one of the key reasons for this gap. By targeting parents' aspirations and trying to make them 'ideal' parents the school is placing considerable responsibility onto the parents. The school seems to share the same opinion as the Coalition (Cabinet Office 2011); it is not enough to merely raise young people's aspirations, parents need to have high aspirations as well. Sarah expects that her intervention might well produce positive responses from parents; that they do 'want them [their children] to be really successful.' Here there is an acknowledgement that parents do want their children to succeed. This supports other research which suggests that parents are well meaning. They often want their children to be happy and well behaved, however this desire for emotional care is often regarded by teaching professionals as not enough and parents from low income backgrounds are often labelled as having 'low aspirations' (Holloway and Pimlott-Wilson 2011). Schools do not necessarily deny that parents are well meaning. However, it is Sarah's follow up question which suggests where the real problem might be for schools; - *'How are you going to get them to do that?'* It might well be that parents lack the social and cultural capital to know how to set expectations for their children, which align with those of the school. Therefore, parental expectations are deemed as being problematic because they are failing to direct their children to adopt the values, attitudes and expectations which accompany a middle class lifestyle (Holloway and Pimlott-Wilson 2011).

Here the school hopes that by intervening in parental expectations, this will also influence young people in a way that schools feel that they are powerless to do. Therefore, getting parents 'on board' is about extending the influence of the school into the home. Parents can be an external means of promoting the school's values and aspirations for its pupils. The extent to which parents are blamed by schools for educational and aspirational deficits is significant. Many of the schools were increasingly regarding educating parents to have the necessary expectations for their children to be part of their role. Instead of blaming parents, Kintrea et al. (2011: 8) argue that much more needs to be done about helping them to understand the different options open to their children and how to succeed by ensuring they 'understand what it will take to fulfil their ambitions'.

Teachers often argued that parents in this research wanted their children to do well. It might be therefore, that asking a rhetorical question is not necessarily going to produce the answer schools want. There are therefore two way of looking at this. First, the values of parents counter what the schools are trying to achieve and this results in them being blamed for failing to have greater expectations for their children. This maintains the idea that parents need to encourage their children to take on values that are somehow different to that of the local estate – that prevalent working class values be transformed to become more acceptable as middle class citizens. The second is that parents simply do not have access to the necessary knowledge to help set expectations for their children and therefore need extra help and guidance.

To summarise, ‘narrowing the gap’ can be regarded in terms of addressing particular place based differences, primarily in areas of deprivation. This often occurs through a dialogue of deficit where parenting, social skills and local cultures and values can be questioned and the necessary intervention implemented in order to make the people who live there more acceptable to society. Schools increasingly regarded it as their responsibility not only to work on raising young people’s aspirations and achievements, but also to target parents to have greater expectations for their children. However, this is often problematic as local working class values, which tend to favour collective identity and family loyalty, can actually challenge some of the individualistic values often promoted by schools.

6.4 Raising Children’s Aspirations

The final objective of the Coalition’s attempts to address social mobility is ‘raising children’s aspirations’. Central to achieving this has been to give responsibility for careers advice to schools. The Coalition has argued that greater emphasis needs to be placed on improving careers advice by ensuring young people receive the advice and guidance needed and by offering more activities that help young people think about their careers.

“We expect schools to offer their pupils information and activities to complement and enhance formal careers guidance, for example: ‘taster’ sessions; open evenings and ‘next step’ events; past students coming into schools visiting to talk about their experiences; employers visiting to talk about their jobs; and mentoring opportunities.”
(Cabinet Office 2011: 40).

The Coalition therefore regards careers advice as central to promoting social mobility. However, with cuts to public services which have seen the effective removal of a 'face to face' careers service for young people, the responsibility for careers provision has moved to schools with little funding allocation (Watts 2013). The result is that schools now have to employ careers advisors to fulfil these expectations (e.g. in Bradgate High School the careers advisor was once employed by *Connexions* but is now employed by the school). This reduction in funding, Watts (2013) argues, is in danger of reducing the quality of advice given to young people. For the schools in this research, there was evidence of trying to bridge the gap in provision to meet the Coalition's expectations. All the schools had clear and tangible interventions that made careers advice a priority and were looking to extend access and intervention throughout each pupil's time at the schools. This fitted into Coalition policy that involves considering extending careers advice to Year 8 pupils (Watt 2013).

The Coalition argued that greater links needed to be made with industry, encouraging employers and their employees to go into schools to talk about their work. This has led to the 'Inspire the future' programme which sought to invite over 100,000 professionals to talk about their careers in schools. Schools in this research tended to embrace this need to introduce relevant role models, often trying to include those from the local area who have developed successful lives, including past pupils, university students and local employers to visit the school to promote their sector.

TG: There are lots of posters around aren't there? - 'I have aspirations'

David: There are going to be even more, but actual quotes from important role models including students, staff, and people outside Leicester etc. So there are loads of them being put together now.

TG: And do you try and work with past students who have made it?

David: Yes, definitely – one comes in as a paired reader now to help from De Montfort University, so there's more role models coming into school to work with students and we have got lots of projects in the pipeline to help with that and to have more adults to come and university students around.

TG: I think when I came here the first time you had people from different professions talking to the young people and they could go round different tables and talk to them individually.

David: Yes that's the careers programme (David, Teacher, Lea Wood College).

The Coalition also points to the need for schools to maintain links with universities, however it stresses that in some areas this is patchy. As with careers advice, greater emphasis has been placed on universities to provide the information, knowledge and experience of what going to university might involve for young people from underrepresented groups (Cabinet Office 2011).

Schools within this research were engaged in a number of different activities which involved partnering with universities both at the school through student ambassador schemes, extra academic initiatives and through visits to universities themselves. These external visits included university experience days, masterclasses and even trips further afield to Oxford and Cambridge University. Schools felt that interaction with undergraduate students would provide their pupils with good role models. Within the three schools there was also evidence of other interventions which sought to raise young people's aspirations. I now turn to look at how the schools seek to raise young people's aspirations, firstly by looking at how schools create motivational and inspiring educational environments, through the use of visual and other motivational techniques and secondly by considering some of the aspiration-raising activities which try to promote 'high' aspirations.

6.4.1 Motivating and Inspiring Young People

Attempts to raise children's aspirations within the study schools involved using visual and motivational techniques. Pieces of pupils' work, photos and posters about the importance of success and aspirations were often seen around the schools as visual prompts aimed at creating the right ethos and inspiring pupils.

On the way out Sarah proudly showed me some of the pictures from the African learning day. Around the school were lots of photos of young people at the school. She said 'We like to use photos of the pupils to inspire them' (Field Notebook 16/01/2013 Bradgate High School).

As I walked around Lea Wood College I saw a number of posters aimed at encouraging young people

One said: '17 days off each year = 1 Exam grade'

Another said: 'siht si tahw sti ekil ton ot evah na noitacude'

'this is what its like not to have an education'

The final poster said:

'I have aspirations, do you?

I have got 12 A*-Cs

My goal is to study law and join the police.

My next step is to go to Sixth Form College to study A-Levels

(With a picture of a pupil)

(Field Notebook 16/01/2015, Lea Wood College)

Here the visual cues and verbal messages aim to challenge issues of educational failure and social exclusion through targeting young people's attendance and how education can be useful to their lives. The final poster, which directly targets aspirations, attempts to open up a silent dialogue with young people to question their motives, goals, achievements and choices as a means of inspiring them towards success. But arguably it also has the effect of trying to normalise success and good exams results and it frames what the school regards as the essence of being successful towards a vision of a responsible, independent individual (Rose 1999).

The location of these posters within the school is significant. Most of the posters, photos and art work were displayed in the corridors or reception areas which everyone passes. Lea Wood College, which had not yet had its *Building Schools for the Future* (BSF) rebuild, seemed to use more posters compared to the other schools, while Bradgate High School relied mainly on art work and photos of pupils to 'inspire' their students. One reason that Lea Wood College might use more posters is that BSF had a utopian ambition which looked to create architecture and school buildings that would inspire children to learn (Kraftl 2012). By putting these visual cues in the arteries of the school, where everyone can see them, they have the effect of continuing the educational environment into spaces that are usually merely functional and narrow spaces where people, typically, are just passing through. They could be seen as trying to 'fill the gap' between traditional academic learning and the sort of soft, life and aspirational skills the posters promote. These spaces operate much like how an advert or billboard fills in a gap. They try to shape young people into responsible and aspirational citizens by taking every

opportunity, in the gaps between lessons, to engage with such issues and ensure their psychological success (Rose 1999).

When considering how visual cues are used to inspire pupils in schools, it is also important to evaluate how the building itself is used. Two of the schools in the study had undergone full or partial rebuilds under New Labour's ambitious 'Building Schools for the Future' programme that aimed to refurbish or rebuild every secondary school in England by 2020 (Den Besten et al. 2011). The third school, at the time of research, was about to enter into a partial rebuild. Kraftl (2012) argues that under BSF new school buildings were designed to have an effect on pupils - to inspire and motivate them. Architectural techniques were used to encourage schools to become catalysts in regenerating disadvantaged communities, in a way that would not only transform attitudes towards education within the schools, but also within the wider community and the nation.

In one of the schools that had had a full BSF rebuild, the young people were very positive about how the school buildings *did* actually make a difference to their lives and education, giving them more confidence and a comfortable learning environment.

TG: Do you think having a new building helps?

Rex: Yeah – it's good to have a new building.

Fred: Yeah it's good to have a good building because it's spaced out. The building – it makes you feel more comfortable learning – like, it gives you more confidence and isn't as scary as other schools, where it's all bricks and isn't very nice.

(Rex and Fred, Year 8, Disengaged Group, Bradgate High School).

Teachers also generally regarded the new building as 'making a difference.' Despite some initial scepticism about how a building might change attitudes and the school community, there was an acknowledgment that it had helped to promote the achievements of the school and to raise its standards.

But, interestingly, when we moved to the new school, when we were going to move, it was kind of linked in my head, well a new school – not that buildings are the things, the people are - but actually having nice buildings helps (Sarah, Teacher, Bradgate High School).

In the school that was still waiting for building work to be carried out, young people expressed little enthusiasm for the possible benefits that a new school building might have for the school community.

Tanisha: If I was Ofsted I would sack [Teacher] and [Teacher] and replace all the computers. I want to leave this school; it just looks cheap and nasty.

TG: You have a new school being built soon, don't you?

Sanya: Yeah

TG: Do you think that will make a difference?

Tanisha: No, not at all – not one bit (Year 8, Disengaged Group, Lea Wood College).

Here, Tanisha argues against the almost utopian nature of BSF and its claims that new and inspiring buildings would transform the school environment, inspire change and radically reform education pedagogy and attitudes (Kraftl 2012). In this particular case, the young people were not so convinced: changing the school building would still result in the same teachers and the same problems that they now encountered. Smyth and Hewitson (2014: 3) argue that such reforms (e.g. to governance or architecture) may bring change, but still ultimately mean that teachers and pupils continue to share the same space for teaching and learning. This can lead to the maintenance of the same inequality in education. For Tanisha, her old school looked 'cheap and nasty', so its aesthetics were important to her. However, she had little belief that having a new building would challenge the embedded educational inequality and unfairness at the school.

This also raised important questions over whether it is possible to 'design out' negative behaviour within new schools or, indeed, whether in the process of building new schools this somehow impacts positively on young people's performance. Does the 'achievement' of having a new school mean that young people feel more encouraged to succeed? It is important to note that Lea Wood College has improved the most in its results recently, out of all three schools, without having completed its BSF building project.

Some pupils from Lea Wood College however felt that a new building might help to change the external image of the school, though they had little expectation that it would actually change standards and experiences.

TG: So you are getting a new school soon? Do you think that's going to make a difference?

Kade: No – coz no one uses that bit.

TG: Why don't you think that is?

Candice: Because they are only going to be classrooms and the only reason they are knocking it down is because it's been up for too long. But it won't really make a difference because it's still only going to be maths classrooms and English classroom and stuff, so I don't really see the difference.

TG: So Blake, what do you think?

Blake: Because it will make us seem more modern and like we aren't a bad school.

Joey: But have we got enough money to do that?

Kade: Yeah, but it's not our money – it's the blooming tax payer!

(Year 8, Engaged Group, Lea Wood College)

Here the sense is that BSF is regarded as a superficial 'cover up' that will make the school look better, without anything actually changing substantially. Within this exchange also comes an echo of the debate about the 'austerity state', in which the country cannot afford such projects anymore, an argument promoted by the Coalition government for ending the BSF program. Then Education Secretary, Michael Gove, argued that BSF was both 'wasteful and bureaucratic' (BBC Website 14 June 2011).

A 'positive' school ethos was also encouraged through the use of short, one line, captions or phrases, and through the use of the school motto.¹¹

Yeah, we have a few sort of things, mantras that we say like, 'Making a positive contribution' and so that's a positive contribution to a lesson or a positive contribution to your community or your school and beyond. So that's one of our things, making a positive contribution is our strap line that we say a lot, although it's not our motto. And then 'best self,' we talk about being your best self, so best self might be around your behaviours and things, but it's also around being the best you can be ... And then we have 'Right time, right place' which is, again, around them being and doing things

¹¹ For reasons of protecting the identity of the schools, precise mottos will not be identified here.

which is quite behavioural really, but it's a nice mantra to have and putting yourself in a position to be about to do the right thing as well – you know, if you are not in school and not on time for your lessons, then you are not giving yourself the best chance for success. So, yeah, we were talking about ethos not so long ago, about whether it was clear to people about what it was in our school. And it's a lot about being the best you can be, but without it being kind of American and whoopy and shouty and things. They hear a lot about it in assemblies and round the school (Sarah, Teacher, Bradgate High School).

It can be argued that such mottos, sayings, visual cues - and even new buildings – are aimed at inspiring young people to reorient their lives in two ways. First, by combatting social anxieties and societal ills (Den Besten et al. 2011) over fears of socially exclusion, educational failure and a 'lost generation,' who are dependent on state welfare. Second, creating self-regulating citizens who are responsible for their own futures by lifting themselves out of poverty (Ruddick 2003) and by gaining the necessary capital to provide for and secure their own futures (Katz 2008: 10).

Ideas of 'best self forward,' 'right time, right place,' 'aim for the stars' and 'making a positive contribution,' all suggest that there is a need to combat the opposite of these things in schools by reorienting feelings of negativity, misplaced aspirations and the sort of non-co-operation that leads to societal anxieties about young people. These simple mottos, sayings and visual aids can act as a means of 'erasing' social inequalities and providing subtle state intervention into young people's lives, whereby nothing is missed; no activity, space or building is beyond the limits of being used to maintain the psychological success of young people. Here a failure not to use the tools available may jeopardise school success (Rose 1999). Young people must therefore adopt such values, or at least be seen to, which in turn brings with it a new set of anxieties. Responsibility for transitioning into adult life is now placed squarely onto the shoulders of young people themselves.

There was evidence that some young people were using these mottos or sayings - or at least the 'wisdom' drawn from them - to regulate their own behaviour and outlook during this research. One such example was 'making a positive contribution'. Here Karl argues that 'positive' people are important in terms of achieving success and getting a job.

TG: What about some of the people [that might help them achieve their futures]?

Karl: Positive people – like if people are always negative then we are all going to think in a negative way but if they are always positive, then you are going to think in a positive way. Like, ‘I’ve got no money...’ But on the other hand, ‘Oh I’ve got no money, I will have to go and get a job’ (Karl, Year 8, Engaged Group, Bradgate High School).

How young people use this ‘wisdom’ to re-orientate responsibility for failure is interesting. Where once it was argued that such ‘responsibility’ was oriented towards a ‘politics of expectation’ where the state was expected to provide for those on the margins, Raco (2009) argues that now a new ‘politics of aspiration’ is in place. The responsibility for having no money, in this case, requires personal effort from the individual to go and find a job. It requires what is regarded as a ‘positive attitude’ that fires up the individual to get themselves out of the problem they are in and to provide *for themselves* the resources on which to live.

6.4.2 *Aspiration-Raising Activities and Setting Goals*

It’s trying to get them to realise that you got to do your A levels, you got to get your degree, you got to get one of these high jobs (Helen, Teacher, Swithland Wood Community College).

At the crux of Helen’s argument is that young people need to be able to make the necessary link in their own knowledge to be able to move between the different transitional stages to be able to get a so called ‘high job.’ I argue that central to achieving this within aspiration-raising activities is a common thread of setting goals towards the future. Raising aspirations was therefore regarded in schools as important to helping young people improve their lives and prospects.

Within the schools studied, a number of aspiration-raising activities were undertaken, however these did not always reflect a hierarchical approach, but rather what Brown (2012) describes as an expansive approach, which seeks to help foster an ‘outwardlookingness’. Drawing on Massey’s (2005) concept of ‘outwardlookingness,’ Brown argues for interventions that help young people to experience possibilities beyond their present experiences by encouraging them to consider what is ‘out there.’ It means helping young people to positively explore other possibilities beyond their ‘own turf’ (Massey 2005: 15), as Sarah explains:

Well, from the moment they come in the door we do things about aspiration and have experiences that lead them to start thinking really early on about what they need to be successful, so we have actual lessons where they actually do that. So for example in Year 7, when they do some research about the dream job they would like to do and then end up writing a CV of them in the future. So they see themselves as successful in the future and applying for that dream job and then they write a letter. So I think we get them to think about seeing themselves as successful in the future and so we do a lot of things and processes that lead them to feel that.

And we do a module called 'Which University, where?' – and they kind of look at where all the universities are in England, because obviously they live a small life and are based themselves very much in the area that they come from. So looking at say where Southampton is and where Liverpool is and how would you get there and looking at trains and buses. And someone came in once and said, 'well not all of them will go to university' and they are missing the point. And the point is that they will see wider, that there's more out there, that they may or may not tap into that... So we do a Year 7 curriculum that's based around skills as well. We place a really big emphasis on futures. And lots of our assemblies are about comfort zones and risks and futures, you know, and being successful (Sarah, Teacher, Bradgate High School).

The perceived impact of spatial influences run throughout this extract, from the micro scale of the school and local neighbourhood, to wider national and global scales. Sarah starts by talking about aspiration-raising interventions that happen 'from the moment they enter' the school. How the school is shaped as being a very 'different' space from that of the estate is also interesting: as a space of aspiration, one where values are encouraged in young people that are somehow different to those perceived to be 'out there' in the estate. The 'What University, Where?' exercise is an example of trying to get young people to think beyond the estate and to broaden their horizons and to 'see wider' and bigger than the 'small life' they live on the estate. The scales here suggest that schools are attempting to get young people to rescale and reassemble their lives beyond that of the estate. The exercise Sarah describes is, however, more than an aspirational exercise because it involves looking at the practicalities of getting to a university and traveling around the country by train or bus. It enables young people to become aware of the wider world.

Green and White (2008) argue that place affects the opportunities that are open to young people in very practical ways through, for example, poor transport infrastructure or someone's

perceived capacity to travel to somewhere. They make the point that what is deemed accessible for one person or group of people might be seen as a location which is inaccessible for another. Therefore place matters and varies between different locations and people.

Exercises that help young people to understand where different cities are located and the navigational skills needed to travel there help young people to broaden their horizons and outlook. This shows the extent to which young people's lives and the practices encouraged by schools are scaled differently. Young people tended to scale and think about their lives at the local scale, whereas schools encourage young people to consider their lives at the wider national level. These differently scaled practices can, at the institutional level of the school, create a dissonance between school expectation and young people's own expectations (Mackinnon 2010). This can be reflected in the schools need to 'raise aspirations.'

Skeggs' (2004) concept of 'plausibility structures' might be useful here when thinking about institutional practice and raising aspirations. Skeggs (2004) argues it is important to consider whether certain lifestyles are outside of young people's field of vision. Aspiration-raising activities might well cause new possibilities to be considered by young people, but merely placing a certain lifestyle into someone's field of vision does not mean they are likely to take it up. Young people need to be able to include such ideas within their field of vision, so that they can incorporate this within the structures of the field of HE. For this to happen I argue that schools are attempting to influence young people's habitus, where young people need to be able to get a 'feel for the game' of university (Bourdieu 2000: 157).

The process of getting young people to imagine their future (in the case of Sarah, by getting them to write a CV), from an early point in young people's time at school is a fundamental part of activities which seek to raise aspirations. This is because it encourages young people to set a goal towards the future – but not just any goal – a 'dream job'. Setting a goal therefore is important because it gives young people a target to aim for. However, in the context of 'raising aspirations' there is a danger that this tends to reflect the very narrow parameters of what are socially accepted as professional and middle class - 'high jobs.' This narrowing of aspirations risks undermining alternative aspirations that young people have that do not include the HE option (Watts and Bridges 2006; Brown 2011).

Swithland Wood Community College used the young people's (apparent) desire for material things as a focus for early 'aspiration-raising' activities in the classroom.

We try to do an activity with them based on money and we were saying, 'Here is your £200 bed sit, this is your £800 nice house, this is your mansion. This is your moped, this is your car, this is your Ferrari' and, like, prices. And we then say 'What do you want out of this lot?' and 'What job do you want?' And we were trying to get them to work out that to have all these nice things that every child wants. Every child wants the designer jeans as opposed to the Tesco basics. But it's trying to get them to realise that you've got to do your A levels, you've got to get your degree, you've got to get one of these high jobs..... (Helen, Teacher, Swithland Wood Community College).

In Swithland Wood Community College, many of the aspirations young people had were indeed focused on material things, such as nice cars. One male participant said: 'I want a yellow Lamborghini,' while his class mates argued - 'How are you going to get that without a job?' For many in this school, which arguably was based in the more deprived of all the estates, the emphasis on material goods and being able to afford lots of nice things was far greater than in the other two schools. And yet, in this case, Kaydon did not know what he wanted to do for a job and so was challenged by his peers.

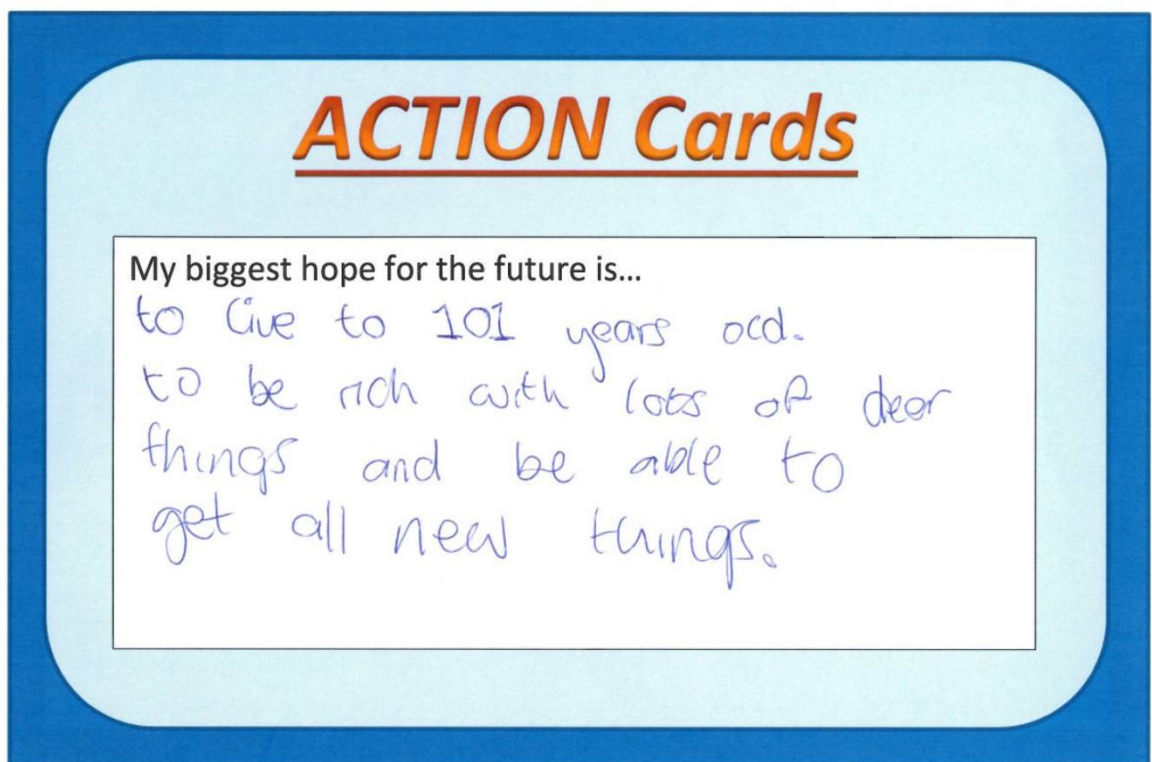


Figure 32: 'My Hope for the Future' exercise (Kaydon, Swithland Wood Community College, Disengaged Group).

ACTION Cards

My biggest hope for the future is... getting
a good job so I can
afford things for me and
my family so every
one is happy and my kids
get what they want.

Figure 33: 'My Hope for the Future' exercise - (Sonia, Swithland Wood Community College, Disengaged Group)

These aspirations seem somewhat out of kilter with those of young people from neighbouring schools who also shared similar backgrounds. In the other two schools, far greater emphasis was placed by students on having 'nice' families and 'good' careers with less emphasis and desire for material goods and wealth (although this was still present).

ACTION Cards

My biggest hope for the future is... that I will be anything I want to do wherever I want to do it. I think this because I won't have to think about whether I can afford it. I know I can do what I want.

Figure 34: 'My Hope for the Future' exercise - (Lance, Year 8, Bradgate High School, Engaged Group)

My biggest hope for the future is... having a happy family.

Figure 35: 'My Hope for the Future' exercise - (Kade, Year 8, Lea Wood College, Engaged Group)

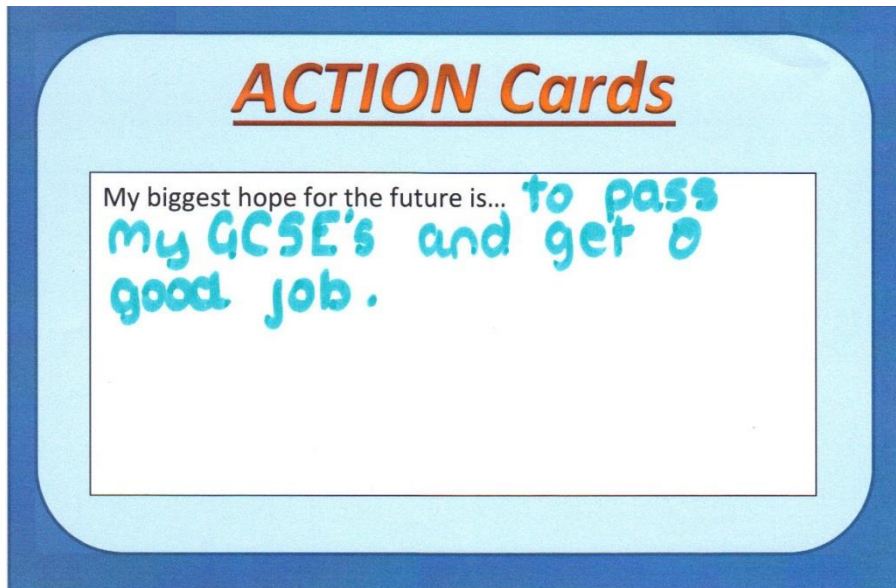


Figure 36: 'My Hope for the Future' exercise - (Kimberley, Year 8, Lea Wood College, Engaged Group)

There could be a number of reasons for this difference. However, I argue that given the fact that Swithland Wood Community College encourages young people to think about the extremes of material possessions, towards that of the super-rich, there is a problematic assumption over what might and should motivate young people. Miller (2008: 4) argues that 'categories create assumptions,' particularly when it comes to material goods. I argue that by promoting particular aspirations towards certain material objects, teaching staff are in danger of creating an assumption that by associating material objects favoured by the super-rich with success, that this will motivate young people to raise their aspirations. This is problematic because not all people fit into nice neat categories and therefore not all assumptions are true. It is also problematic because young people in this example clearly acknowledged and challenged these assumptions as being unrealistic. This was especially the case if individuals did not have a realistic a plan or goal towards achieving such a life. However, from the perspective of the young people, there is still a sense of what is important to them. Despite wanting lots of 'nice things' this aspiration was not held in isolation to other people. The focus of having nice things was to be able to share them with family and loved ones. Miller (2008) argues that it is often how these material objects are ordered around relationships and socialisation that creates social categories. Therefore, focusing on the material will not necessarily lead to aspiration change amongst young people.

In comparison, the other two schools placed more emphasis on careers in their early (Year 7 and 8) aspiration-raising activities (e.g. Writing a CV). This tended to reflect more about what

pupils aspired to become rather than their aspirations for material things. For example, in the Year 10 Engaged Group at Bradgate High School, the topic of conversation turned to car ownership. I asked the boys which car they would one day like. The general answer from the group was: 'Whatever is affordable'. The group reacted to my question as if to say that getting anything too lavish was not a realistic expectation. However, the emphasis on raising aspirations, in both cases, seeks to promote non-working class lifestyles, either through careers prospects or through material acquisition. This I argue is in the hope that by getting young people to 'want' these things, this will help them achieve such lifestyles.

The use of aspiration-raising activities which used imagination and setting goals towards the future was also evident in how universities operate within Leicester, where raising aspirations was also often linked to helping young people set goals towards the future.

We [WP team] run a goal setting workshop and that's quite powerful and the key things are about personal responsibility for your own self and that's about all the sort of things that cuts into self-esteem and confidence and taking charge of your own life. I think young people are often faced with lots of different pathways and it's really confusing, but that goal setting stuff, it gives them a tool kit that they can keep in their heads for ever really, about making fundamental choices about what they do and education is just one bit of it (Jill, Widening Participation Officer, University of Leicester).

Here promoting personal responsibility, through WP intervention, is regarded as important to helping young people gain the necessary self-esteem, knowledge and cultural and social capital. This then enables young people to make the right choices and set the necessary goals to succeed in life. Central to both local universities was the need to help young people to set goals towards the future and to help build young people's dispositions to be responsible for their lives. WP practitioners also spoke about the problematic use of the term aspirations and the association of the term with a discourse of deficit. They often argued that many young people did have aspirations, but sometimes lacked the tools and motivation to achieve their goals.

I mean its [raising aspirations] assuming that they haven't got any aspirations in the first place, because some of the guys know exactly what they want to do and what they want to be, they just need a few tools to help them get there, so they can understand the journey they can go on. I guess raising aspirations; it's difficult to pin it down isn't it? It's enthusing and encouraging students to create goals to start with, if they haven't

got them and then helping and supporting them to learn how to reach those goals. So it's the concept of goal setting and aspiration-raising, in terms of you can achieve these goals and its giving them the skill and knowledge and understanding as to how they go through the journey, in sometimes quite big, exciting and 'get them motivated' ways. Getting them to understand the process of goal setting and having the tools to work out how they can achieve their goals, I think are the twin pillars (Jim, Widening Participation Practitioner DMU).

Helping young people overcome barriers in knowledge and understanding was also regarded as fundamental in helping young people consider HE. Informing young people about the courses on offer, student finance and the HE process more generally was seen as important, where often students lacked the social and cultural capital (Leese 2010) to know where to start and succeed in the process of thinking about university. The role of helping young people to set goals is also seen as vital in the formation of raising aspirations. Therefore the following chapter will question this process from the perspective of the young person. It will ask the several questions:

- How do young people set goals towards the future?
- What does it mean for young people to set goals which are culturally and socially different to those experienced by others from their social background?
- What is society asking of young people when it encourages them to raise their aspirations toward HE?

In summary, assessing how the Coalition set out the role of teachers in 'providing' aspiration involves thinking about the goals teachers expect their pupils to set towards the future. Within schools I argue this is largely at the discretion of the teacher. For those who focus on material goods, this tended to produce a less developed picture of their aspirations for the future in terms of career choice and increased the chances of answering farfetched aspirations for extreme wealth, celebrity status and material goods. For those who focused on career aspirations, certain jobs were deemed to be more realistic than others. Young people tended to shy away from celebrity jobs and were keen to set aspirations towards 'realistic jobs.' However, despite this, a discourse persisted that certain professional jobs such as doctors and lawyers, were within reach and were encouraged by career advisors, despite there being entrenched and persistent underrepresentation in such professions of those from underrepresented groups.

6.5 Summary

In this chapter I have highlighted recent educational policies and reforms introduced by the Coalition Government (2010 – 2015), which have sought to address issues of social mobility and disadvantage through the education system. I have also charted how schools have looked to implement these policies in practice.

For schools, 'raising aspirations' tends to encourage young people to assemble their lives by setting goals toward becoming a particular type of citizen - someone who has the necessary graduate level qualifications, attributes and disposition to succeed as a highly mobile individual; someone who will hope for social mobility towards a middle class lifestyle. In contrast, the interaction of young people's own habitus, with others in their peer group, the connection to the local estates through their family and friends, poor local opportunities and ingrained educational failure, often collide and makes the process of striving towards becoming a highly mobile, neoliberal citizen difficult, and in some cases, undesirable. By encouraging young people to assemble and manage their lives towards becoming a successful, responsible neoliberal citizen, I argue that for schools this takes on the form of various components.

It looks to address *who they are* and *what they become* – particularly in terms of class identity. The clear associations of aspiring towards material objects favoured by the super-rich or towards 'high jobs' regarded as middle class, suggests that the kinds of working class futures which many young people aspire to are not seen to be of equal value compared to the kind of future schools promote. Aspiring for upward social mobility therefore means aspiring to become included within the structures of another class.

I argue that schools seek to help young people to (re)assemble their lives in terms of *relationships to people and place*. For schools, the problematic notion that young people are very loyal to their families is regarded by schools as something which anchors young people to their local communities and close knit social networks. The school attempts to help young people to (re)assemble by trying to get parents 'on board' so that they will push their children to achieve and desire better lives for themselves.

Intervention also seeks to help young people to *(re)scale their lives*. I argue that schools, as institutions, often operate at different scales to their pupils, in terms of how they seek to encourage young people to assemble their lives. This means that schools often intervene to

help young people see themselves in the national context, where young people are encouraged to aspire towards becoming independent, highly mobile middle class individuals. Central to this approach is helping both young people and their parents to set the 'right' expectations and aspirations for the future by addressing emotional, social and aspirational skills.

On the other hand, I argue that young people tend to assemble their own lives at a different scale - the local [see Chapter 5]. The school as an institution is thus differentially scaled to some of its pupils (MacKinnon 2010). As teachers attempt to create a particular type of socially acceptable neoliberal citizen, I argue a dissonance can form between school expectations and those of young people. This, I argue, can reinforce perceptions of educational failure as young people resist and critically challenge school expectations.

In the next chapter I question *how* young people hope and aspire towards their future and the ways in which HE features in their future educational aspirations. I explore what it means for young people to raise their aspirations and to assemble their future lives in relation to university and I question why some young people might struggle or not want to bridge the gap by becoming socially mobile and therefore reject the kind of future that schools promote.

Chapter 7

The Role of Hope and Habitus in Shaping Young People's Aspirations towards Higher Education

'I want to go to uni and fill my dreams,

And it don't feel as far as it seems'

(Adrian, Year 8, Engaged Group, Bradgate High School)

7.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I engage with hope theory to explore young people's future aspirations and investigate their perceptions of university. I critique what society is asking of young people when it encourages them to raise their aspirations towards university and I explore the effects that this expectation has on young people as they construct their future lives.

I argue that, as young people assemble their lives, what emerges can be fractious and fragile as different actors seek to influence their lives. As young people make sense of their life, within the wider world around them, I look at how they piece together their plans for the future from what is culturally expected of them, living in a white working class community, and how these very place-specific expressions and expectations differ from those of the school they attend.

I pay particular attention to how young people formulate their aspirations. I argue that for young people future aspirations are often complex and that the 'raising aspirations' agenda is not necessarily going to solve the social problems which are often cited as affecting young people living in areas of deprivation (e.g. social exclusion, low aspirations, and a lack of opportunities for social mobility). Nor does it mean that young people are somehow devoid of strong and positive aspirations. Rather, I argue that a complexity of aspiration emerges which engenders a range of social issues, experiences and expectations, which young people have to navigate through (Grant, under review). This often makes the process of 'raising aspirations' far more complex than merely changing one's aspirations or plans for the future.

Merely *changing* one's aspirations to attend university may not be enough. This is a problematic assumption because by getting individuals to raise their aspirations, it is often

argued that this will somehow fix all social ills and inequalities. However, this view negates the complexity of young people's lives and the social contexts which shape them. It tends to render these structural factors as mute and irrelevant to the reasons for inequality. Blame can then be placed on individuals for being in emotional and aspirational deficit (Bright 2011); for making the wrong choices, and failing to plan and set goals effectively.

Young people in this research often had strong and ambitious aspirations for their lives. Table 9 [in Chapter 5] shows that for many young people in the sample, their career aspirations are very different to their parents' jobs. The presence of such different aspirations contradicts much of the dominant discourse which effectively 'blames' young people, as individuals, for having a lack of, or 'low aspirations'. In this research young people's aspirations were not narrowly limited to career aspirations. They also included: having families, owning homes, nice cars and traveling the world on holiday. Young people also had aspirations for continuing in education onto Further and even Higher Education. However, young people tended to focus on whether these were indeed plausible and realistic goals, given the material and structural barriers in their lives. Therefore, the extent to which young people regarded these aspirations as concrete and expected them to happen needs to be considered. Were these more abstract ideas and simple wishful thinking that young people knew were unlikely to be realised? If so, why were they able to imagine futures that were different to their parents and then quickly dismiss this projection? This chapter questions how young people come to construct their aspirations. I contend that hope theory can aid our understanding.

The chapter also positions young people's aspirations in relation to their current thinking about university. Whilst some young people did see university as an option and could think aspirationally and hopefully about the future, many others regarded the future as uncertain, difficult, tough and frightening, as evidenced in my earlier comments on precariousness (see chapter 5.6). This created something of a paradox, where hopeful thinking was met with anxiety and fear. Here Bryant and Ellard's (2015) work is useful. They argue that for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, anxiety about the future often shapes their choices. However, this did not necessarily diminish their own personal agency to hope for a better future.

I analyse how this paradox occurs, where hopefulness is too often extinguished by fear and anxieties about the future. I argue that, far from having 'low aspirations', these young people often started out with abstract aspirations which are often encouraged by schools, that reflect the dominant middle class social hope for a professional job and accumulating 'bigger, better

and more' possessions. (Brown 2013: 427). However, these abstract aspirations were often questioned and suppressed by fears and anxieties over how precarious and uncertain the future might be and how realistic or otherwise the opportunity to attend university actually was. This indicates that many young people regard the opportunities promised to them and encouraged by schools to be out of reach, despite aspiring - or at least performing aspiration - towards a middle class life. This analysis therefore questions why this might be the case.

Kintera et al. (2011) question the dominant political rhetoric which links 'low aspiration' with poor achievement and educational success. They argue that many young people, and their parents, do have strong and defined aspirations for the future, with little evidence of fatalism or rejection of work in areas with depressed economies. This is important because the notion of 'raising aspirations' has been part of political discourse for the past two decades. And yet the use of 'aspiration' remains under-theorised (Kintrea et al. 2011). This research supports the proposition that 'low aspirations' are not the primary problem, nor the main barrier to success. Evidence from this research suggests that many of the young people do aspire to go to university. I therefore ask, what are the *actual* barriers which prevent these young people from getting to university?

I also critically question what is being asked of young people by the term 'raising aspiration' and what these initiatives ask young people to do. I engage with Darren Webb's (2007) hope theory to understand some of the complex social and spatial issues which young people have to negotiate in order to become more 'aspirational' in their dispositions. In this respect understanding the expectations which the 'raising aspirations' agenda places on young people helps to shed light on what society is asking of them. I argue that structural inequality makes this process much more difficult for young people from underrepresented groups to achieve. By underestimating the influence of structural factors, I argue that political elites naively assume that changing how someone hopes and plans for the future can level the playing field. Therefore, by understanding the role that hope plays in 'raising aspiration' this helps to reveal the inconsistencies, paradoxes and complexities of the current agenda to 'raise aspirations'.

I begin this chapter by outlining young people's perceptions of HE. Here, I argue that participants often had gaps in their knowledge about the university experience and often applied a class-based understanding of things like student loans. By investigating young people's perceptions of HE, this provides an insight to the kinds of future they might expect and forms the evidence base upon which young people develop their hopes and aspirations for the future in relation to HE. The second part of the chapter explores young people's future

aspirations more closely by using hope theory to interrogate what it actually means for young people when they are asked by schools to 'raise' their aspirations.

7.2 Young People's Perceptions of University

This section looks at some of the perceptions young people have about going to university. I felt it was important, during the research to gain an understanding of what young people knew, or did not know, about university. This helps to explain, as the analysis proceeds, the (mis)information which young people hold about university and which influences them as they plan their futures.

For many, knowledge about university was patchy and limited. Indeed, in some cases young people knew very little about university and life as a student. These gaps in knowledge often led to confusion about university and student life, resulting in a class-based understanding of university students. There were, however, some young people who had family members who had attended university. This often challenged the gaps in knowledge that other young people had of university. I also argue that young people tended to measure and construct their own identity in relation to their understanding. This sometimes led them to question how they might 'fit in' at university (Archer and Yamashita 2003).

7.2.1 Perceptions of 'Typical' Students

Dominant here was a perception of university students being, 'stuck up', 'posh' and 'bookish' even though in most cases these were based on little experience of meeting university students.

Candice: I have seen them when I was on my travels.

TG: What were your impressions?

Candice: Some of them were quite uptight because they act like they think they are the best.

Kimberley: You know when you go and see them – I went with my cousin and she goes to Loughborough [University] and they are ok there – they are not really stuck up there.

TG: Candice, which ones do you think are stuck up?

Candice: Erm... like Loughborough – I was driving past and all you see is people walking out like this – thinking they are the best...

(Candice and Kimberley, Year 8, Engaged Group, Lea Wood College).

For Candice, this class-based stereotype is engendered through watching how students walk when going past the university. The impression is that students are 'uptight' and strut around the place 'thinking they are best.' This may well reflect an inner insecurity: Candice finds it difficult to identify with middle class students. This results in a classed 'othering,' making potential interactions undesirable. However, Kimberley's experience of Loughborough University is different. She has interacted with people she knows there, possibly dispelling any stereotypes she had. This helps Kimberly to bridge the gap and gain social capital to help her see HE as desirable and enables her to identify with others who are potentially different at university.

For some of the male participants, educated male university students were both an object of contempt, but they also posed a threat to them.

TG: When I say 'university,' what's the first think that comes into your mind?

Aaron: Money

Aden: Posh boys...

Rick: Yeah Money

Aden: Oh are you [TG] in university?

TG: Yes – you can say what you want, I am not going to be offended.

Aden: Like a chav free zone.

Rick: I don't mind people in university, but I just don't like the rich people.

Aden: Faggots and fit girls.

Aaron: That kind of plays in your favour if you think about it, if all the boys are faggots there, then all girls should be single.

TG: So Rick what have you got?

Rick: Posh boys – I can't stand them...

TG: So you think that universities are made up of lots of posh boys, why is that?

Rick: It depends what university you go to.

Keaton: You don't like rich boys.

Aaron: Stuck up...

TG: Why's that?

Aaron: Because they just turn their noses up at you – like they are cocky. Like I don't think it's the girls but the boys, they just think they are better than you.

Aden: Big headed

TG: Have you ever experienced anything like that?

Aaron: No, but if you met one and you didn't like them you would just say something wouldn't you.

TG: What do you think makes them stuck up?

Rick: The way that they act, they look down at you.

(Aaron, Rick, Aden and Keaton, Year 10, Disengaged Group, Bradgate High School).

Of interest here are the two different ideas of 'posh' male students. Firstly this was seen in terms of sexual conquest. The use of derogatory language de-masculinises male students and renders them as no competition to young working class men's ability to attract women. This exchange might also be regarded as a rejection of middle class norms of masculinity. Pascoe (2005) argues that the word 'faggot' might need interrogating beyond being an obvious homophobic insult. She argues that when used as an insult amongst heterosexual males this term might be a way of framing a particular form of masculinity which they aspire to. Calling someone a 'fag', therefore, can become a form of disciplining behaviours which do not conform towards a particular working class male identity. By calling middle class students 'faggots,' Aden and Aaron might be rejecting the middle class masculinity they associate with university. This in turn helps to shape and frame their own ideas of working class masculinity.

However, Aaron later reveals that he perceives male students as 'cocky'; people who 'turn their nose up' and do not accept those from working class backgrounds. Looking past the clearly derogatory labelling, I argue there is a fear of class-based rejection, similar to that of Candice. In this case that 'posh boys' will not want to know working class boys but will rather look down on them. This again reveals the fears that working class young people have around 'fitting in' to a typical middle class university.

Class differences were also argued to be apparent through what university students wear. In an exchange with Rick and Aaron, [used in chapter 4.6.2 p113] Aaron questioned what I meant by 'normal' with regards to what students wear. By asking what girls at university wear, he recognised that, culturally, girls might dress differently at university compared to on the housing estate where he lives. The question of what clothes are culturally acceptable at

university might reflect what can be considered a gap in their knowledge and a lack of bridging cultural and social capital that might enable them to 'fit in' better at university.

7.2.2 Perceptions and Expectations of University Life

Young people had varying expectations about university life. I asked young people what they thought university life would be like across a range of typical encounters and activities students have at university. My findings suggest that these young people knew relatively little about university.

For some there was a gap in what they knew they could study at university and the opportunities that were open to them.

Candice: Can you study taking photos at university?

TG: Yes you can – You can definitely do it at De Montfort Uni. (Candice, Year 8, Engaged Group, Lea Wood College).

Candice also considered studying multiple subjects whilst at university, much in the same way as studying three of four subjects at A-Level. This suggests a misunderstanding of how universities operate. Whilst Candice did want to go to university, this suggests that a potential issue to her gaining access is not so called 'low aspirations' but not having the working knowledge to fulfil these ambitions (Kintrea et al. 2011). Helping working class young people to know what to expect from university is crucial in helping them get to university. By doing so, this will help young people to plan better and eventually to assimilate into university life.

There was evidence in the research of young people thinking about how they might 'fit in' to university life and how university might affect their identity. In chapter 5.4 [Page 144], I highlight evidence from Ben who expressed shock that students took their Xboxes to university. Ben was clearly surprised that people at university had games consoles and this was something important to his identity that he would not leave behind if he went to university. This highlights the potential issues young working class people might have to deal with concerning 'losing yourself' whilst at university (Reay 2001). Here a lack of bridging social and cultural capital might mean, that for Ben, what *is* acceptable at university is largely unknown, leading him to be shocked that playing computer games is included. However, this also shows that should he ever go to university, Ben has a degree of resolve - it will not change

him. By saying, 'I don't care', Ben is asserting that he is going to be himself regardless of what others might think. For Ben, there is a tension between maintaining what Reay (2001: 337) describes as the 'authentic self' and the fear of losing one's sense of identity, where attending university risks becoming and adopting middle class norms.

A sense of not necessarily fitting in was expressed by some.

James: [Holding a photo of characters from the TV series 'Friends'] Meeting new friends that you don't know- new roommates... Yeah new roommates is a good thing but it's kind of bad as well because it's good that you get to meet new people, but it's bad because you might not feel right around them.

Fred: With a new housemate I would say that is good because they could have really good knowledge and they could really like help you out and you can adapt their knowledge.

Rex: With the one going out for beer [talking about a photo of glass of beer] I would say that's good because you might get to know them [roommates] more...

(James, Fred and Rex, Year 8, Disengaged Group, Bradgate High School).

For James, the fear of not 'feeling right' around new people points to a fundamental concern about entering an environment which is culturally different to his current life. Gottfredson (2002: 97) argues that between ages 9-13, 'youngsters become very sensitive to social evaluation.' They start to become more aware of their social background and the effects of class inequality. This emerging awareness might exaggerate young people's fears towards people of other classes and backgrounds. James can see the benefits of going to university but it is balanced by the fear of not 'fitting in' and of not being accepted by others. Here James is assembling his future life based on his current habitus and understanding of the world which is informing his future understanding of the risks associated with not 'fitting in'. For Fred, however, this difference could be turned into advantage. He is aware that by attending university he might need to draw on the cultural capital and knowledge of other students. By 'adapting their knowledge', Fred realises that even though he might not have the necessary social capital to succeed in every aspect of university life, by dialoguing with difference, he is able to draw on the knowledge of others to help deal with any gaps in his own knowledge about university. Therefore, friendships with those from other backgrounds are regarded as valuable assets. Whilst a lack of cultural capital, in the form of knowledge, is often seen as a partial reason for non-participation in HE (Reay 1998), this exchange shows that young working

class people realise that there might be gaps in their knowledge and it might be necessary to draw on the cultural resources of others at university. Fred is therefore being very conscious and proactive in how he is assembling his future life – he has started the process of forming the necessary dispositions towards seeking to extend his own social and cultural capital, which he will need to have to succeed at university.

Whilst many of the young people in this research showed signs of not possessing the necessary social and cultural capital to bridge this divide and perceive HE positively, there was evidence that they acknowledged the importance of bridging social capital. Fred talks about using friends' knowledge to succeed at university, where using others' knowledge could help him to adapt. Putnam (2000: 23) argues that bridging capital can 'generate broader identities and reciprocity'. By being aware of the possibilities of drawing social capital from others, Fred is able to imagine a broader identity for himself, which includes being able to mix with others and make friends in a reciprocal manner.

I was keen to investigate the 'elephant in the room' when talking about university, namely, student tuition fees. Recent research has provided mixed results when exploring the effects of variable tuition fees. For example, Callender and Jackson (2005) argue that students from low income groups are more debt averse compared to those from other social classes. Others, however, have argued that rising fees would actually have minimal effect on students' decisions to attend university. Wakeling and Jefferies (2013: 491) argue that within the UK there is little evidence that students have employed 'economic rationality' when choosing where to study with participation rates to university rising despite rises in tuition fees.

However, for disadvantaged groups in particular where they choose to study might be a factor in keeping costs down. This usually means studying near home (Callender and Jackson 2005). Where people choose to study is potentially impacted by the cost of going to university. This suggests that for people from disadvantaged backgrounds the main issue when thinking about going to university is whether it is affordable in terms of day to day living.

In this research young people's knowledge about tuition fees and student finance was limited; however, this could be due to the age group of this sample which focused on school Years 8 and 10.

Some young people argued that they would want to earn money beforehand, in order to feel like they were 'doing it properly' (Aaron, Year 10, Disengaged Group, Bradgate High School).

This sense of 'doing it properly' could be from a desire to prove to others, and to himself, that he is 'earning it' and might not necessarily be motivated by fear.

The perception of student loans often varied between young people in this study. In general, most young people were concerned about taking on student loans. This concern often revolved around the practicalities of managing a loan.

TG: How would you feel about getting a student loan?

Hadley: I wouldn't want to get a loan because it would be hard to pay it back.

Fred: I would be panicky because how are you going to pay it back.

James: I would just budget, man.

Fred: You would be scared to spend it all though.

(Hadley, Fred and James, Year 8, Disengaged Group, Bradgate High School)

I argue that young people's general wariness about getting loans was often informed by a class-based understanding of debt. The 'panicky' feelings which Fred might feel could be due to stories of the consequences of mismanaging debt from loan sharks, pay day lenders and high-interest pay weekly high street shops. Young people tended to talk about their experiences of 'Brighthouse' (a popular pay weekly store) and there were numerous posters at Lea Wood School telling pupils not to borrow from loan sharks. However, the sheer scale of the size of the loan might also be a contributing factor. In comparison to payday loans, student loans are far greater amounts and so this may be a factor when young people consider taking out student loans.

Whilst the majority of young people in this study were concerned about getting a student loan, for a minority taking out a student loan was considered a risk worth taking. Haultain et al. (2010: 326) argue that young people can have a multi-dimensional view of debt which includes 'fear of debt' and the 'utility of debt.' They argue the two are not necessarily linked and can co-exist at the same time. Therefore, understanding the possible benefits a loan might have towards achieving a university education does not necessarily mean that young people do not have a concern about managing debt. In the following two quotes both Declan and Rex find some benefits to having a student loan, despite sharing some of the misgivings of others in their groups.

Rex: That's good, because you can learn to organise money better. It's good because once you have left university if you didn't do that you would not have much of an idea of how to organise your money and you wouldn't have had any past experience of using money. (Year 10, Disengaged Group, Bradgate High School)

Declan: You've got to take a risk – you've got to invest in it [university]. (Year 10, Engaged Group, Bradgate High School)

For Rex, despite having issues about student loans he is still able to find some concept of utility which may help him develop the long term skills needed to manage money and to deal with having a student loan. Declan on the other hand points to another purpose of a student loan; it is a good investment for the future, but he does acknowledge this carries considerable risk. Where young people were able to assign some sense of utility to a loan this may help them to deal with their fear of loans. Where young people have decided to 'take a risk' and participate in HE, I argue that they are starting to adopt a resolute mode of hope which will help them to bridge the gap to get to university.

In this section, I have argued that the stereotypes young people had of university students and a lack of information about university, might contribute towards reinforcing an understanding of university which is informed by class. This has a danger of limiting how accessible university might be for young people from underrepresented groups, if it is deemed that there are few people like them at university. Closely related to young people's perception of HE, is how they position their own identity against their understanding. This shows that class, although not articulated, is a powerful social marker as young people assemble and access their place within society (Savage et al. 2001). It acts as a benchmark and has implications for young people's ability to imagine themselves going to university, especially if they struggle to identify with universities and other students who go there.

Having explored young people's perceptions of HE, the chapter continues by looking at young people's actual aspirations towards university, in particular, considering how young people use hope to develop their ideas and plans for the future. I argue that much of the evidence in this section, along with the high significance of place and kinship networks at the local level and young people's experiences of education [highlighted in chapters 5 and 6], act as an evidence base upon which young people construct their hope and aspirations for the future.

7.3 The Role of Hope in Shaping Young People's Aspirations towards Higher Education

This section outlines how hope might influence how young people approach developing their aspirations towards HE. In the literature review, I argued that aspiration can be regarded as a mode of goal directed hope which can be regarded in two different modes. Sound hope requires people to set goals that are realistic, plausible and where there is a high probability of them being achieved. Resolute hope, on the other hand, involves setting a goal but the outcome is less certain or probable. This means taking on more risk and requires developing a cognitive resolve to continue even if failure occurs (Webb 2007).

By considering various modes of hope which young people might use, from patient, sound and resolute hope; I argue that the process of 'raising aspirations' is far from simple, but engenders a complexity where different modes of hope, as well as social and spatial factors collide forming a social messiness which young people have to navigate when considering attending university. In this section, I build on previous work which has criticised the use of aspirations in WP policy for undermining alternative aspirations outside of the HE route (Watts and Bridges 2006; Brown 2011). This helps to build an understanding of what happens when young people are asked to 'raise' their aspirations towards university. It also helps to illuminate what happens to young people as the result of rejecting the HE option, where there is often a danger that young people are labelled as having 'low aspirations'.

I start by analysing data from participants who were, at the time of the research, rejecting the HE option; either as something which held no value to them or because they had alternative aspirations outside of HE (e.g. apprenticeship). I continue by exploring how some participants, who were weighing-up thoughts about going to university, negotiated this idea. Then I highlight some of the complexities which occurred as they deliberated their options. To illustrate these various examples I use individual students as case studies. Whilst these are not representative, they do highlight the general sentiment of many of the other participants in the research. I therefore use these case studies, along with evidence from the previous two analysis chapters. In doing so, I question how hope might shape and inform these different aspirations. I also apply factors such as the social, cultural and economic realities and influence of habitus alongside Webb's (2007) hope theory. Table 11 [below] summarises the following discussion about how hope and habitus interrelate as young people make the decision whether to participate in Higher Education.

Aspiration towards HE	Dominant Mode of Hope	Role of Raising Aspirations	Role of Habitus and Social Capital
<p>I don't want to participate in HE because education is of no value to me or my aspirations</p> <p><i>Education is not for me. I question the point of it and it is unlikely to help me get a job</i></p>	<p><i>Patient hope</i></p> <p>Hope is placed in the belief in the goodness of people.</p> <p>Hope is open and not directed towards any goal.</p> <p>Security is found in family.</p> <p>Hope seeks to maintain the status quo, whilst believing that present relationships will be transformed.</p>	<p>Unlikely to have much effect as patient hope is not goal directed. Furthermore the goal has to be valued. Without regarding HE as a goal to value this option is likely to be rejected.</p> <p>Raising Aspirations tends to blame the individual for failing to take on middle class norms to become economically prosperous.</p> <p>This might actually cause young people to become further entrenched in maintaining their current aspirations.</p>	<p>Continuation of a disposition not to value education.</p> <p>Attending HE does not traditionally form part of their habitus and is extremely unlikely to in the future.</p> <p>Bonding social capital enables young people to remain where they are and maintain close attachments to the estate.</p>
<p>I don't want to participate, but instead choose other routes to achieve success</p> <p><i>HE is not for me as I intend to achieve my career through other means e.g. apprenticeships / armed forces</i></p>	<p><i>Sound Hope</i></p> <p>Object of hope is realistic and grounded in evidence. Examples of other people from this social class entering this occupation e.g. mechanic / carpenter.</p> <p>It is more than probable to lead to a well-paid job.</p> <p><i>While there is a risk of failure, experience and evidence suggests this is not an unrealistic goal.</i></p>	<p>Sound hope causes the hoper to question how probable it is for them to go to university.</p> <p>Raising Aspirations to adopt a resolute mode asks the hoper to hope against the evidence of their working class habitus, family expectation, educational experience, structural inequality to develop the necessary cognitive resolve to achieve the goal.</p> <p>Raising aspirations therefore requires young people to convert their sound hope to resolute hope.</p>	<p>Working class habitus supports young people's chosen career aspirations and forms part of the social realities / expectation.</p> <p>Bonding social capital is more likely to be in use here as it is fitting in with social class and contexts.</p>

<p>I Want to participate in HE but question how realistic it is</p> <p>I want to go to university but I question how realistic it is in light of student tuition fees, my ability to get a good job afterwards, my social position and ability to maintain close connections with family, friends and the estate.</p>	<p><i>Sound hope to Resolute hope</i></p> <p>The object of hope to attend university might appear unrealistic and unachievable in light of the evidence and obstacles that confront it.</p> <p>Careful study of evidence. If the probability of failure is too great then the goal will be rejected.</p> <p>If it is a more than fair gamble then the goal is pursued. Choosing to pursue a goal that is perceived to be less than a fair gamble and too risky means hope has been converted to resolute hope. It is therefore likely that aspirations have been raised to HE.</p> <p>Habitus is likely to inform the setting of personal hope goals and provide much of the evidence / experience Young People draw from.</p>	<p>Raising aspirations requires young people to convert their goals from sound hope to resolute hope.</p> <p>To hope against the evidence.</p> <p>By questioning how realistic HE is, young people are failing to convert hope to resolute hope.</p> <p>For those who are willing to take a risk and do convert their goals to a resolute mode of hope, 'raising aspirations' requires young people to hope against the evidence and develop cognitive resolve to continue until the goal is achieved. This cognitive resolve allows the goal to be pursued even if failure occurs in trying to achieve it.</p>	<p>The young person's working class habitus, which does not include going to university, conflicts with this and forms the basis of evidence which causes young people to question how realistic it is.</p> <p>No sense of entitlement to enter HE, but rather an increased risk to personal and social identity.</p> <p>Perceived high chance of failure as few from social class have made it.</p> <p>The young person with a habitus which does include HE tends to understand the risks associated with HE, but it is still perceived to be risky.</p> <p>The young person might ask: Will I get a good job as a result?</p> <p>Bridging social capital is needed to help young people develop resolute hope. However, some young people might suffer from a destabilised habitus.</p>
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Table 11: Summarising the following discussion about the mode of hope and habitus as young people consider their aspirations towards Higher Education

7.3.1 Choosing Not to Participate in Higher Education

The young people in the research who tended to dismiss the HE option fell into two main groups: (i) those who did not value education and saw little point or purpose in continuing and (ii) those who were entering further training that did not require HE (e.g. apprenticeships). For some of the participants who were disengaged with education, the prospect of continuing in HE was not an option they valued. Consider Aaron (Year 10, Disengaged Group, Bradgate High School). Aaron was initially not sure what he wanted to do with his life. He joked about going to prison for murder, but this was not serious. Later he said that he might like to be an engineer, however he had little idea about how this might be achieved. What Aaron wanted the most for the future was a happy life, where family forms a strong part of achieving this.

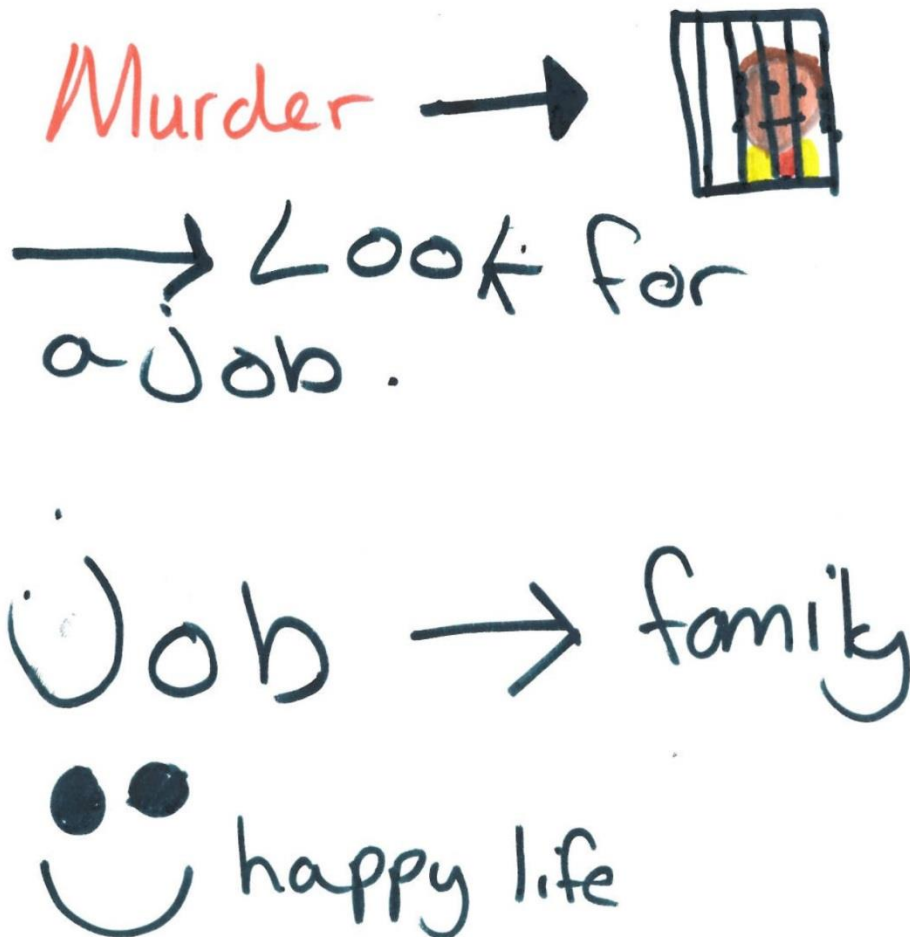


Figure 37: 'Imagine the Future Exercise' – (Aaron, Year 10, Disengaged Group, Bradgate High School)

For Aaron, education was not regarded as especially important to his future:

TG: Does anyone else know anyone who has gone to uni?

Aaron: My mate goes to Oxford.

TG: Do they enjoy it?

Aaron: I think so – it depends what you want to do in life though don't it – it depends. Like I hate school, so why the hell am I going to go to uni!

(Aaron, Year 10, Disengaged Group, Bradgate High School).

Going to university seems pointless to Aaron because he equates it with school and assumes it is going to be merely a repetition of his experiences of education more broadly. Aaron struggles to see how attending university would help him get a good job, which leads him to question, 'what's the point of learning' and the relevance of education for adult life [see Aaron page 158]. This might be compounded by the issues he experiences by living on the estate, where he felt there was a real lack of opportunities and prospects, beyond working 'as a shopkeeper' and being 'someone's flipping bitch' [see Aaron page 162]. For Aaron and many of the other male participants in the Year 10 Disengaged Group at Bradgate High School, these opportunities were being further eroded by multiculturalism and new immigrants because there was a perception that 'they' were 'taking our jobs' [see Aaron page 153].

Aaron's view of Leicester is limited to the estate and the neighbouring Lea Wood estate which he describes as 'shit' and undesirable [see Aaron page 135]. This limits the geographical area where he is prepared to find future employment opportunities to 'round here [Bradgate Estate]' [page 162]. Green and White (2008) argue that these subjective geographies of opportunity are shaped by place and can vary from person to person. As such Aaron's view of education and the opportunities open to him locally, lead him to reject the neoliberal 'opportunity bargain' where learning equals earning (Brown et al. 2011). Aaron's close attachment to the local estate means that there is a danger that he and others with similar views may become constrained by place (Green and White 2008).

Whilst Aaron felt there were few prospects for him on the estate, this did not diminish his desire to remain there. For Aaron, family matters the most in his life, which he describes as 'the main thing' to look after and to move about would mean reneging on his responsibilities towards his family because moving away would risk 'losing everything' [see Aaron page 134]. The importance of family was not just something expressed by Aaron. Being there for one's

family and friends was a recurring theme considered as highly important to most young people regardless of their future aspirations.

Young people, like Aaron, who exhibited what might be regarded by some as having signs of so called 'low aspirations', tended to have less of a concrete idea about their future. Tanisha, for example:

Tanisha: I reckon I am not going to have a future; I reckon I am not going to live to have a future.

Jon: Why would you say that?

Tanisha: Because I cannot think of one.

Jon: So, because you cannot think of one you are not going to have one!

Tanisha: Yeah – most likely.

(Tanisha and Jon, Year 8, Disengaged Group, Lea Wood College).

One way of viewing this is to argue that young people need intervention to 'raise' their aspirations. However, this is somewhat problematic as it isolates aspirations from the rest of life and one's identity, which is shaped by structures of class, gender, ethnicity and place. 'Raising aspirations' towards university can therefore not be done in isolation. Evidence from this research may well show that some young people need extra help with careers guidance to help them set realistic goals towards the future, goals which reflect *their own* aspirations.

For these working class young people, I argue that rather than hoping in a goal directed (resolute) mode towards a middle class life and gaining a professional career after graduating, they hope in an alternative, open mode of hope, that of patient hope (Webb 2007). This form of localised patient hope is informed by the close social networks of family and friends, attachment to place and the limited opportunities which are open to them.

To hope in a patient mode might therefore involve believing that to remain where one is, on the estate, and to be close to friends and family, affords the security of a patient mode of hope. Here there is a belief in the goodness of humanity and of those around. Family might provide this sense of security for young people [see Karl p133]. To hope in this mode assumes that everything will work out in the end, even though the goal or end is often open and uncertain. For Webb (2007: 70), patient hope 'is directed primarily in the direction of other

human beings and is characterised by an expectation concerning their efficacious agency.’ Here, it is relationships between people that matters and the object of hope is to await a transformation of these relationships. For young people, in this research, the family unit was often seen to be centrally important to their lives and to their futures. The sense of ‘being there’ for family was seen by some as more important than getting a job somewhere off the estate [see Aaron p131]. In terms of the future, those who hoped in a patient mode often struggled to imagine what they wanted to do in terms of a career. The future is therefore intrinsically tied up with maintaining their current position by placing their family as a priority over other aspirations.

I argue that when Higher Education is portrayed as a means for working class young people to ‘escape’ their estate lives (Loveday 2014), this may result in aspirations-raising initiatives promoting a future that involves changing certain (present) lifestyles and dispositions. Instead it requires the adoption of new goals and lifestyles which are qualitatively different and aimed towards moving away from home to attend university. However, for young people who hope in a patient mode, their hope for the future involves the exact opposite; the continuation of the present and the rejection of the change which the ‘raising aspiration’ agenda hopes to bring. As such the patient hoper does not set any specific goals towards a different future, off the estate. Hope rather looks towards the continuation of the present. This, however, does not prevent them from hoping in a goal directed manner in other areas of their lives (e.g. for material goods).

For Aaron, the desire to remain close to his family trumps any desire to move off the estate with the lure and trappings of a highly mobile middle class lifestyle. To move off the estate risks moving into the unknown. It risks losing everything. Aaron argues that this might lead to ‘regret’ [page 131]. This mode of hope therefore reinforces the status quo and ensures that one’s security, which is tied up in one’s social network, is maintained.

For young people who hope in this way, it is important to question what the raising aspirations agenda is asking of them. The use of deficit language such as ‘low aspirations’ or ‘poverty of aspirations’ leads to young people being blamed for failing to set goals toward socially constructed, middle class norms to achieve at school, get good A-Levels, and attend university. By blaming young people this also leaves those who are educationally disadvantaged at risk of being labelled for wasting the educational opportunities open to them (Brown 2011). However, blaming individuals who hope in a patient mode for having ‘low aspirations’, might

actually alienate them further from being able to consider university. The pressure to try to help them to change might actually cause their views to become further entrenched as they seek to maintain what they know and deem to be secure.

It is likely for young people from underrepresented groups that 'raising aspirations' towards HE will require them to adopt a resolute mode of goal directed hoping. However, for those who hope in a patient mode, I argue that attempts to encourage 'raising aspirations' towards HE will probably have little effect. This is because if young people are hoping in an open mode, that of patient hope; this does not involve setting concrete goals, but to hope in a resolute mode requires setting goals that the person values. Webb (2007) argues that in setting a resolute goal, this often requires the development of a cognitive resolve to ensure the goal is achieved, even in light of failure. Therefore, the goal not only needs to be valued, but there needs to be considerable drive from the person to overcome barriers or the evidence that stands in the face of that goal. These barriers might present themselves in a number of different ways, such as having to deal with lower educational achievement, coming from a lower socio-economic background, or not having the necessary bridging social and cultural capital to get to university (Putnam 2000). These factors often shaped the lives of all the young people within the research and placed them at a considerable disadvantage when compared to their more advantaged middle class peers.

If a young person hoping in a patient mode does not value HE and does not regard it as beneficial to improving their life chances, then it is unlikely they will hope in a resolute mode and develop the necessary cognitive resolve to deal with the barriers and evidence which presents itself. Ultimately, this will lead to certain outcomes being rejected. Therefore blaming young people for 'low aspirations' is likely to further alienate them from that which the aspirations agenda attempts to achieve.

For other young people, non-participation in HE was not based on educational disaffection, but on having alternative aspirations towards the future where attending Higher Education was not necessary. The majority of these young people aspired to undertake apprenticeships. They can be said to be hoping in a goal directed mode towards their future career.

Figure 38: 'Imagine the Future' Exercise – (Kayleigh, Year 8, Mixed Group, Swithland Wood Community College)



Kayleigh wanted to be a hairdresser and had aspirations to have her own salon, perhaps get married to a rich footballer and have kids. She imagined that her hairdressing career would be achieved through getting an apprenticeship and going to college to train. She also wanted to travel the world and eventually live in Lanzarote with her friend.

For working class young people who did not want to attend university, but had clearly defined goals towards contemporary working class jobs, it is likely that they will be drawing on a sound mode of hope. Here, the evidence, based on the social realities of their lives, makes it easier for them to set goals towards jobs that do not require a university degree (e.g. hairdresser, carpenter, electrician, army etc.). Young people's expectations are closely formed by their own habitus, where going to university is not a key component. By drawing on sound hope, young people are able to set goals towards achieving their careers, confident that there is a more than fair chance of them being able to succeed based on the evidence of other people from within their social class milieu.

University might not necessarily be regarded as a risky option because it may not have formed part of their plan towards achieving their future goal, which can be achieved through a sound mode of hoping. This is achieved by setting realistic aspirations aimed toward contemporary working class jobs. As the benchmark towards university participation amongst 18-30 year olds is set at 50%, it is likely that about half of young people will pursue this type of employment. Like those hoping in a patient hope, young people hoping in a sound mode also tended to value close family networks, however they tended to have more defined ideas about their aspirations.

The aspiration-raising agenda for young people in this category might have the aim of introducing the HE option to them. In terms of young people, who might fit this category, I argue that recent academic scrutiny and criticism of WP by Watt and Bridges (2006) and Brown (2011) might be levied at interventions targeted at this group of young people, who have clearly defined goals for the future. For Brown (2011) the notion of 'raising aspirations' somehow asserts that these alternative aspirations are inferior to the HE route and this therefore undermines alternative options outside of HE. I agree. In practice, however, I argue that 'raising aspirations' initiatives might have two consequences for young working class people. First, it might cause them to solidify their current aspirations and therefore reject the HE option. Or second, it might indeed cause them to consider the HE option, but this might bring with it a number of real and persistent questions as they negotiate issues of potential educational failure and class expectations. This process where young people are asked to 'raise' their aspirations requires the adoption of a resolute mode of goal directing hope. It is within this context that I continue the analysis by looking at those young people in the research who were seriously considering HE.

7.3.2 Choosing to Participate in Higher Education and Weighing Up the Risks

For those who were considering going to university, this genuine desire to attend university was often coupled with questions about how realistic it was for people from working class backgrounds. For example, Blake, who was in the Year 8, Engaged Group at Lea Wood College, wanted to go to university to qualify to be an Architect and although his brother had attended university and obtained a degree, he still questioned how realistic university was for himself. Like most young people in the research, Blake felt a close attachment to his family and did not want to move far if he did go to university.

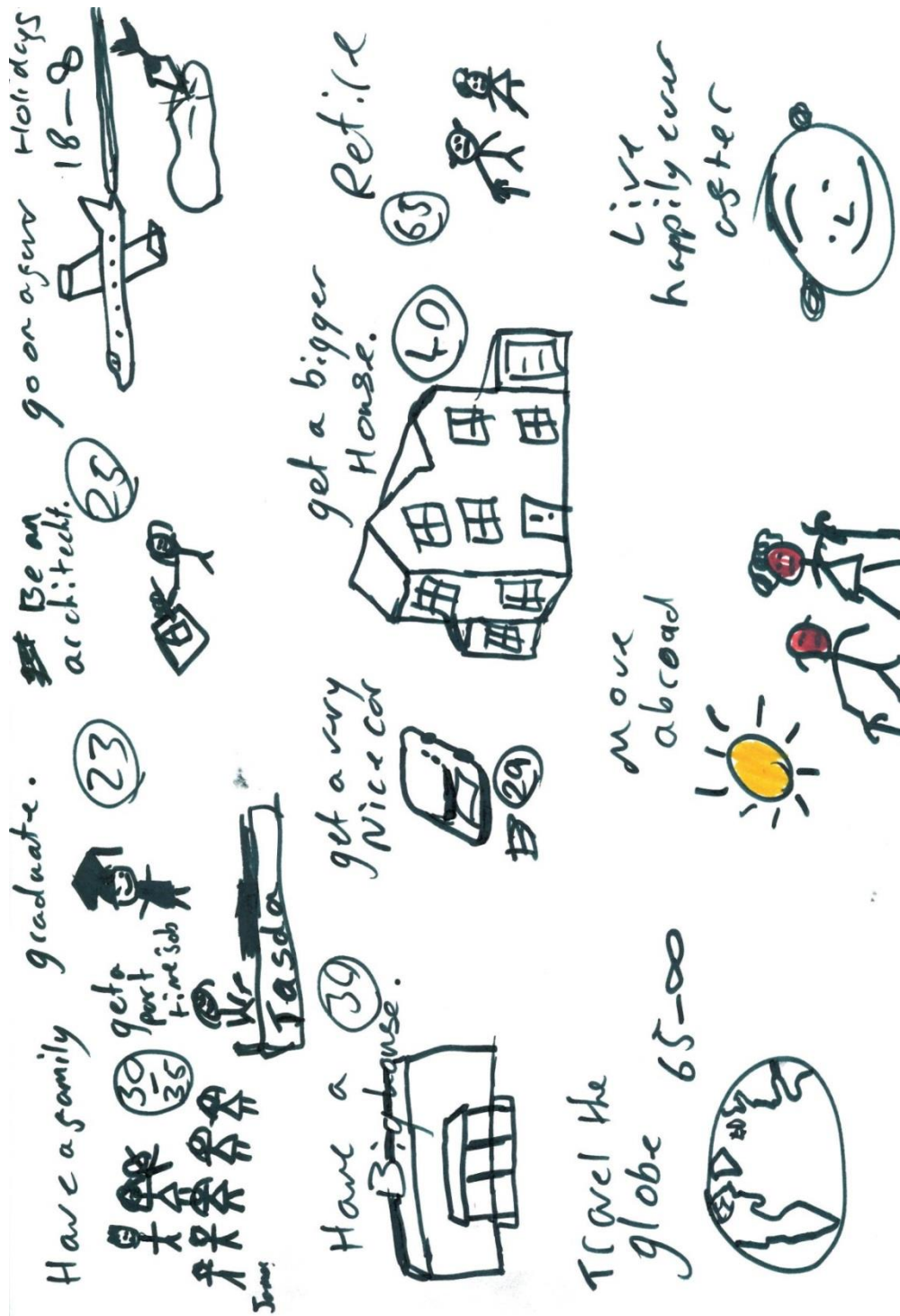


Figure 39: 'My Hope for the Future' exercise - (Blake, Year 8, Engaged Group, Lea Wood College)

For young people in this 'weighing up' group, there was often an expression of interest to attend university, but this was often tapered by some serious concerns about how realistic university was for them. This is reflective of Gottfredson's (2002) stages in career aspirations, where at the age of 13 young people tend to question their aspirations in relation to their

socioeconomic status and determine what careers are realistic for them. For young people in this group, I argue that they are likely to hope in a sound mode when considering their future careers, which are reflective of careers done by others from their social background. However, having been encouraged by schools to adopt a certain neoliberal disposition and to consider more middle class careers that are reliant on being a graduate, many have started to entertain the prospect of going to university. This requires them to adopt a resolute mode of hope.

For such young people a tension exists between hoping in a sound mode, which might see them aspire towards more contemporary working class jobs, and the need to reorient how they might hope towards a resolute mode. This requires them to set goals towards university. The change ultimately involves taking on greater risk. I argue that hope can be informed and complicated by young people's own place based habitus which might inform their educational expectations and their close-knit connection to their family and friendship networks. This I argue creates a complexity for young people's aspirations, which I intend to investigate in this analysis (Grant, forthcoming).

For young people who hope in a sound mode, an important question revolves around the probability of their chosen goal being reached. In this context, by considering HE, young people may start to make a probability estimate on whether it is achievable. I argue that this is often informed by structural inequality and their own habitus which in turn is informed by class, gender, ethnicity and place and which forms the basis of the evidence on which young people are likely to make their decisions. This evidence base is also likely to be informed by the influence of family, educational experience and expectation of HE. If young people conclude that there is a less than fair chance of going to university, then this is unlikely to be something they will set goals towards. Sound hope is thus orientated toward opportunities which are deemed to be probable.

There was evidence in the research of young people considering the risks of attending university and questioning the promises that are frequently attached to it. This ultimately causes many to question how realistic HE is for them. In the following exchange the risk of failure, not getting a good job, and fear of disappointment shaped how some young people thought about their futures.

Blake: I wouldn't want to get my hopes too high.

TG: Why?

Blake: Because if I don't, like when I grow up – say if I like, you know the exams you have at the end of university – if I fail then I would be a bit like – I would have to do them all again.

TG You may have to re-sit them

Blake: I am excited but... what [is] the word where I don't want to get too excited

Candice: realistic?

Blake: Yeah that's it – I don't want to be unrealistic...

...Kade: I put if I got the right jobs after [uni] then I think I will be alright, but then I don't want to be unrealistic

TG: What do you mean by unrealistic?

Kade: Like I don't want to think that I am going to get the best jobs and be rich and stuff.

Kimberley: You want to be hopeful and wish for all that, but you don't want to put your hopes too high so you don't get upset if it doesn't happen. (Blake, Candice, Kade and Kimberley, Year 8, Engaged Group, Lea Wood College).

Many young people did consider aspirations to go to university, but there is a danger that this will not be converted into goals driven by resolute hope. If young people are still hoping in a sound mode, it is likely that they are weighing up the probability of whether being able to attend HE is achievable or not. This means it is important to take a closer look at how the evidence base informs young people's hopes and capacities to set goals.

The social experience and relations that young people are part of might inform what Skeggs (2004) calls their 'plausibility structures'. Skeggs (2004: 139) argues that "choice is a resource, to which some lack access and which they cannot see as a possibility; it is not within their field of vision, their plausibility structure." Where young people are encouraged by schools to choose 'high jobs' that require a degree, it could be argued that aspiration-raising activities act as a means of placing HE within young people's field of vision. This, in turn, allows young people to see what a university degree can offer them through higher earning potential and a better standard of living. It promotes and promises much with the argument that hard work

and academic potential will get young people there (Brown 2013). However, if working class young people do not have a habitus where there is an expectation of going to university, this can rule out HE as a viable option. It means that despite being shown it, young people do not have the evidence from those around them from their own socioeconomic background to help them make the leap and set risky resolute goals towards HE.

The role of habitus here can determine the mode of hope that someone hopes in towards HE. For example, I argue that someone from a middle class background who has a habitus with an expectation of attending university, might adopt a sound mode of hope because there is a more than fair chance of them succeeding at getting into university, based on the social experience of others. However, for someone from a working class background with a habitus which does not have an expectation to attend university, I argue that participating in HE might require developing aspirations and goals that are resolute. These goals are set despite the social evidence which suggests that participating might be risky or unlikely.

Likewise for someone from a working class background with a habitus which does have an expectation to attend university, the process of attending HE might be easier. However, attending might still carry considerably more risk compared to their more privileged middle class peers. For both these two groups the level of risk may vary, but I argue that it still requires them to adopt a resolute mode of hoping.

For Blake, it is likely that, in contrast to the others in the group, he had an (emerging) habitus and set of family values which carries an expectation that he will attend university (Archer et al. 2010). Blake spoke of his brother's university experience studying to be an accountant. Blake therefore understands something of what it means to attend university and the risks of failing. However, Blake's brother was still the first in his family to attend university, so it is likely that whilst Blake is able to see it as a possible option, HE has not been strongly fixed within his habitus and that this one example may not lead to social reproduction of HE and a lasting disposition to attend university. Bourdieu (2005) argues habitus is the result of social experience and history. It may therefore require more than one close person to participate in HE for attending to become normalised for Blake. Furthermore, the effects of peer group may influence his decisions and cause him, like Candice [see page 137], to have a 'destabilised habitus' which is trapped between two equally compelling fields (Bourdieu 2000: 163).

In this respect, Blake is still likely to need to hope in a resolute mode if he is to attend university. His ability to hope resolutely is mitigated by the level of risk he is willing to take. This causes him to question how realistic it is for him, as someone from a working class

background to attend university. Blake is much more aware of the risk compared to others in the group because of his brother's experience at university and subsequently questions his ability to get a good job afterwards to pay off debt. It is also worth noting that this research took place during a period of economic turbulence and recession in the UK which did shape young people's outlook about their futures.

For others in the group who were also considering university, but did not have a habitus or set of family practices which expected them to attend university, it could be argued that their plausibility structure is informing their decision about how probable it is. Here social experience causes them to question how realistic university is. For them, they have little experience of other people they know who are attending university and therefore have a limited knowledge of the risks associated with it. Their opinions and perceptions are therefore highly likely to be shaped by the others in the group. Here, I argue that young people attempt to understand their futures from the perspective of their own habitus which is shaped and influenced in association with others in their peer group. This means habitus can evolve and be shaped beyond the influence of the family unit (Pimlott-Wilson 2011).

Within this group there was a tendency to err on the side of caution. For those for whom HE is within their field of vision but who question the risks associated with HE, such as Blake, this might have the effect of introducing the idea and influencing the rest of the group that HE is too risky and therefore is not a realistic option. This idea then forms part of the evidence of young people's lives which typically leads them to hope in a sound mode. Ultimately, young people might reject transitioning towards a resolute mode of hoping, instead setting goals towards jobs that are seen as more socially fitting for people from their backgrounds.

By asking young people to raise their aspirations and choose a resolute mode of hoping, this requires those from WP backgrounds to deal with and manage risk. It ultimately asks people to take on more risk because the chance of (or perception of) failure is high. It also demands that young people develop the cognitive resolve to continue, even if failure occurs. The development of a resolute mode of hope, and by proxy a cognitive resolve, can be regarded as a form of capital. This is because it helps young people to accumulate the necessary resources needed to change their habitus and disposition towards the social field of education, which includes an expectation to attend university.

Within this research I have identified other aspects of attending university which young people deemed as risky, such as student loans [see section 7.2.2]. A class-based understanding of debt

further helps to explain how young people's social experience can come to shape and form the evidence base which makes them conclude that attending HE is a risky move.

Others emphasised the importance of remaining as local as possible by attending the nearest university to where they currently live. This was thought to minimise the risks associated with leaving the family unit, as some young people were concerned about the level of responsibility which adult life would bring.

Rick: I wouldn't want to move away from home [for university] because then I would have to do everything, so that's why I am going to Leicester [University] (Rick, male, Year 10, Disengaged Group, Bradgate High School).

Blake: First I would graduate from university, no I'd get a part time job whilst I was at university and I will graduate...

TG: So you said you would go to uni to do architecture. Where do you think you will try to do that?

Blake: I think the closest place where they do architecture (Blake, Year 8, Engaged Group, Lea Wood College).

The desire among young working class people to attend a local university has been widely reported by others (Hinton 2011). Such proximity minimises the risk associated with being completely independent. This option does however limit young people's opportunities to local universities. In the case of Leicester there is a choice of two quite different universities, but remaining locally to study does still restrict potential access to specialist or more elite universities such as Oxbridge and Russell Group institutions.

For others, like Candice, there was a sense of feeling torn between being there for her family and leaving them to go to university [see page 134]. Candice concludes that she has to prioritise her own life- it is simply more important. This might suggest that she will adopt an increasingly independent outlook and will break away from being close to her family but this will require her to adopt a resolute mode of hope towards university. However, the risks are real and still pose a significant barrier to her goal of studying photography at university.

Archer et al. (2010: 81) argue that 'emotional and identity discourses... may not necessarily follow smoothly or logically from aspiration.' This means that whilst young people might be

convinced to increase the level of risk they are willing to take on, by raising their aspirations, their emotions and identity add a complexity into the mix. This might lead the young person to doubt their decision. Logical decision-making does not occur in isolation from the emotional and personal costs and consequences young people face. I argue that close attachment to local communities also engenders an emotional cost when thinking about the future. Raising aspirations asks young people to make certain rational choices (towards neoliberal subjectivities) by choosing and setting the necessary goals towards university that should somehow override other emotional and personal concerns. This can lead to a sense of feeling torn, which can therefore create a social messiness especially for those considering university. This tension might be felt the hardest by these young people and is something which they have to negotiate as they weigh up their options.

Therefore, I argue that there exists a complexity to young people's aspirations which is mediated by the mode of hope which young people hope in (Grant, forthcoming). Social expectation and habitus can also shape the mode of goal directed hope young people hope in, as these can form the evidence base upon which young people construct their plans and aspirations for adult life. To hope beyond one's habitus often requires the capacity to manage and adopt more risky plans and a cognitive resolve to ensure completion. If an idea is deemed to be too risky this can result in young people continuing to hope and set goals in a sound mode and ultimately leads them reject the more risky option of university in favour of more secure and realistic contemporary working class jobs.

As such, despite entertaining the idea of raising their aspirations towards HE, the influence of social class expectations, of habitus, a lack of bridging social and cultural capital, localised modes of hope and close attachments to family and the local community, all add to this complexity as young people attempt to construct their future plans.

This is not to say that attending HE is impossible for them, nor that working class young people don't develop the cognitive resolve to get to university. But rather, I have highlighted how this process is complex and messy. Raising aspirations requires greater deliberation towards helping young people deal with this risk, beyond merely asking them to set 'logical' and risky goals towards university.

7.4 Summary

In this chapter I have argued that the majority of young people in the study lacked a grounded understanding of what it means to study at university. This resulted in a class-based understanding of universities and of university students which often resulted in an 'othering' of students. This led some young people to express a concern that they might not 'fit in' at university. This tended to be more acute for those who had little or no contact with students or graduates.

For young people for whom university was not considered a viable option due to either close attachments to local place and kinship networks or education disaffection, I argue that they tended to hope in a patient mode. Here their future aspirations were often bound to the local estate and limited by both real and imagined subjective geographies of opportunity (Green and White 2008). For other young people who felt that university was not an option for them, they tended to favour opportunities that did not require attending university (e.g. apprenticeships). For these young people it is likely that their aspirations reflect contemporary working class jobs and they are likely to set goals using a sound mode of hope.

For those who were seriously considering going to university it is likely that their dominant mode of hoping is also through a sound mode of hope. In thinking about raising their aspirations towards university, I argue that they will need to adopt a more risky, resolute mode of hope. However, whilst some young people might have had their eyes opened to the potential benefits of university, the process of 'raising aspirations' is not necessarily going to translate into young people attending. Evidence from this research highlights how social experience and habitus shape how young people hope and set goals towards the future. Many of the young people were in a process of weighing up and questioning how realistic going to university was and were engaged in the complex process of deciphering how they might 'incorporate the structure of the field' of HE within their lives (Bourdieu 2000: 143). In short, it is the process by which they try to 'find their place' within the field (Bourdieu 2000: 143). Furthermore, I argue that the decision to attend university is complicated further by their close attachments to place and kinship networks which pull young people back towards wanting to remain close to friends and families.

These influences combined to create a complexity to aspiration in which young people not only have to navigate the mismatch in expectations between how they set goals from sound hope to resolute hope, but also in how they deal with the social messiness of the prospect of

leaving the estate and their friends and family. Bourdieu's (2000) concept of a destabilised habitus is useful here as it helps to explain the sense of tension young working class people often feel when engaging with two very different but attractive social fields (Reay 2015).

Aspiration-raising intervention, therefore, seeks to change how young people make decisions and set goals towards university. However, these goals are often more risky and require young people to hope in a different and more determined resolute mode of hope towards the future. Raising aspirations is also a process which is in danger of failing to deal with the various other complexities which young people struggle with, which often dwarf the notion of changing how young people set plans for the future. This, ultimately, carries the danger of young people questioning how realistic going to university is for them and ultimately rejecting it as a future option.

Chapter 8

Conclusion

8.1 Introduction

In this thesis, I investigated how a sample of young working class people, living in Leicester, hope, aspire, and plan toward the future and the potential role that HE might have in their educational aspirations. In my introduction, I posed the problem of low participation rates among those from white working class backgrounds and the associated problem of educational failure. I outlined how politicians have attempted to address these related issues through interventions to 'raise' aspirations and standards in schools. I also problematized how these interventions have often been regarded by politicians as a 'fix-all' solution to these social issues and inequalities. I argued for the importance of undertaking research in a provincial city like Leicester, which despite being a regional centre has one of the worst graduate retention rates in the country. This may indicate low graduate level employment opportunities (e.g. graduate fast track schemes). I also positioned the research within wider government policy which suggests careers advice should start at an earlier age – from school Year 8 (age 12/13)- the starting age of participants in my research.

In my policy and literature review chapter, I considered how life has changed for young people in England and what it means to transition towards adulthood. I outlined recent changes to secondary education and the HE system and positioned my research in relation to WP interventions. An important focus of the thesis was on how schools use aspiration-raising intervention to influence young people, but also what it means for young people themselves to 'raise their aspirations' as they transition towards adulthood.

In my theoretical framework chapter, I outlined how I would use Bourdieu's (1987; 2000) concept of habitus and Webb's (2007) hope theory to explain how aspirations are understood within society. I identified from the literature on young people's aspirations that more research was required that investigated the relationship between how young people hope and the factors which influence their individual dispositions (Pimlott-Wilson 2011).

In my methodology chapter, I describe how I used group workshops that drew on participatory and creative methods in three different secondary schools in Leicester. Each school was selected because it was located in or close to deprived and traditionally white working class communities. All the schools in this study have made great improvements in educational standards in recent years and all were keen to help their pupils explore what university could offer them. I undertook group workshops with young people which explored various issues from their schooling and perceptions of education, to what it means for them living in their communities. I also explored their perceptions and expectations of university.

I sought to investigate these themes using three interconnected research questions about working class young people's aspirations for future education, their perceptions and expectations about HE, and how schools and universities seek to help those from underrepresented groups consider the HE option.

1. What are young people's aspirations for future education and adult life and what influences them?
2. What are young people's perceptions and expectation of Higher Education?
3. How do schools and universities in the research help those from underrepresented groups consider the Higher Education option?

I want to try and draw some conclusions in relation to all these three questions in the following sections.

8.2 Contribution to Knowledge

My thesis built on existing research about young people's aspirations to gain an understanding of the educational and future aspirations of working class young people in Leicester. Much of the research conducted into WP has tended to focus on older age groups, at the end of secondary school (school Year 11), and in further education (school Year 12 and 13). This current research extends knowledge by focusing on a younger cohort in school Years 8 and 10.

It has built on research in Sociology and Geography which has highlighted how many of the structural factors - of class, ethnicity and gender - shape young people's aspirations. My research has critically considered how hope, as a personal cognitive function, is shaped by

structural factors *and* personal dispositions (*habitus*). It has interrogated the notion of ‘low aspirations’ which politicians ascribe to many working class young people from areas of deprivation. I have argued for a combined analysis of structural factors and the cognitive role that hope has in shaping young people’s dispositions towards the future. By doing this, my research has provided a greater understanding of how working class young people perceive university and how this influences their capacity to hope and set goals, as aspirations, towards university.

My thesis has also made a contribution by empirically testing the educational philosopher Darren Webb’s (2007) hope theory. This has largely remained untested against empirical data (Webb 2014). By investigating the role that different modes of hope have in ‘raising aspirations’, my work helps to understand what it means to ask young people to raise their aspirations towards university. This approach enabled me to highlight the social cost and consequences of this policy and the reasons why politicians seem so motivated to raise the aspirations of individuals they deem to be out of kilter with the demands of the UK labour market. This insight allowed me to analyse how people might use hope in various ways in relation to their (potential) future participation in HE. It also allowed me to suggest some of the complexities which surround the process of ‘raising aspirations’.

8.3 Research Findings

8.3.1 How Young People Assemble their Lives

In my research I have been interested in understanding how young people assemble their lives and what influences them. My aim here was to understand how young people assemble their present lives, but also what kind of futures they imagined for themselves. I investigated a wide range of agencies which might influence them, including: family, place, schools, peer group, material goods and I have considered how these affect young people’s own agency to hope and plan for their lives (Research Question 1).

Young people of course assemble their present lives in various ways. The majority of young working class people in my study had a close affinity to their local community and neighbourhood. They regarded attachments to friends and family as very important. This made remaining on the local estate a very attractive option (even for those considering going to

university). Here, young people who expressed a desire to attend university often felt torn between being there for their family and leaving in search of an increasingly independent life. Close connections to their local communities through the relationships young people had there, often complicated their future aspirations. For these young people, technology through various mediums such as phones, laptops, tablets and game consoles were an important social glue that helped them to maintain their relationships.

For others, these strong place based connections made educational opportunities outside of their close knit community seem unattractive. For others, there was often a clear disparity between what was often coined by school teachers as the ‘estate culture’ and young people’s own views. This can be summarised through Table 12.

	Assumed ‘Estate Culture’	Young people’s stated opinions
Education	Education is not valued and no one wants to learn or get a good education.	Education is important and is the only way to achieving a good life for oneself.
Employment	Nobody here wants to work or get a job.	Hard work is important to securing a good future and being a responsible person.
Celebrity Status	Everyone here is looking to get rich quick and find celebrity status.	Celebrity status requires hard work, effort and commitment.
Council Estates	Estates are violent and no-one wants to go there.	Estates are full of friends, families and community. Working class communities are full of positive attributes (e.g. loyalty, collective identity).
Aspirations	Young people here are disengaged, apathetic and lacking aspirations.	Young people are active resistors critically questioning the world around them. or Young people are ambitious and have strong and well defined aspirations to do well at school and continue in education.

Table 12: Table showing the difference between the assumed ‘estate culture’ and young people’s alternative views.

Young people in this study often challenged the idea of an 'estates culture' by expressing their own personal views on neighbourhood life. These views were not necessarily held in a binary form as shown in the table – some young people did acknowledge the existence of an 'estate culture,' even if they resisted it. I have highlighted that this shows how various discourses circulate within schools, perpetuated by teachers and pupils alike. It shows the way in which stereotypes are dealt with by young people on an everyday basis. Do they live up to them or do they challenge them? I have shown evidence of both of these outcomes occurring, but it is problematic to assume that all young people who live on a deprived housing estate adopt the 'estate culture.' I have argued that young people often resisted this view and attempted to provide an alternative narrative for their own lives.

Young people tended to assemble their futures with similar priorities of maintaining close links with their families and, as a proxy, with the estate itself. For those who did want to go to university, usually they did not want to go far, so that they could remain close to their families and friends.

Young people's projected life histories were composed of jobs which were often very different to those of their parents. These jobs often required or would benefit from having a university degree. Young people often spoke of the importance of gaining a good education which was seen as vital to achieving a good job and a successful life (regardless of the employment outcome). For example, a good and successful life was not always regarded as going to university and gaining a professional job. For some, a good and successful life comprised of being happy, having a family and being in secure employment. Young people, therefore, often tended to regard having their own family as a central aspiration - having kids, getting married and becoming grandparents. They imagined futures which included travel and holidays around the world. In terms of material possessions, these young people tended to aspire towards house and car ownership and had a desire to earn money to buy lots of 'nice' things.

Whilst young people in this study were often able to think about and imagine the future in quite expansive ways, they also tended to express caution about the reality of these aspirations being achieved with many (paradoxically) talking about how fearful and uncertain they were about the future. The evidence here shows that young people were able to imagine expansive lives that were very different to their parents. This suggests that young working class people were engaging with intervention to 'raise aspirations' towards particular careers and educational pathways. However, I found that young people in this study often questioned how realistic these expansive aspirations were for themselves.

A small minority, within the Disengaged Groups, did struggle to assemble their futures in any great detail. Some often struggled to imagine the type of expansive future their peers had, often expressed as being unsure about what their future might look like and spoke largely about the fears and uncertainty they had about the future. This might be because they struggled to think about their future lives in terms of setting clearly defined goals. This might also be influenced by the mode of hope they adopt when thinking about the future.

I have argued that young people often assembled their lives in very different ways to what schools encouraged. For some this took the form of a dissonance towards school expectation and for others this engendered a complexity of aspiration, where they often felt torn between what schools and teachers expected and their own habitus, influenced by expectations from their family, friends and their local community (Research Question 1).

8.3.2 Schools and Raising Standards and Aspirations

In this research I have critically investigated how schools in Leicester attempt to meet government policy to 'raise standards,' 'narrow the gap' in attainment and 'raise aspirations' (Research Question 3). I have argued that Leicester schools have attempted to *raise standards* and *narrow the gap* in attainment by addressing:

- teaching and behaviour standards
- a deficit of emotional and 'soft' social skills
- low aspirations amongst parents

Narrowing the gap in education attainment has been central to both New Labour and the Coalition. For many of the teachers in the research, the local neighbourhood where young people lived was often regarded as being problematic, where local reputation and an 'estates culture' was seen as barriers to raising standards. The comparison between the estate and places 'out there' (places off the estate) meant that for many of the teachers involved it was important to get young people to raise their aspirations to look beyond the local area. Local communities were, therefore, widely spoken about in terms of having a deficit. This is problematic because young working class people's identities are often deeply bound up in the estates in which they live. Although teachers encouraged young people to reorient their lives towards more middle class norms, I found evidence that young people were resisting this encouragement.

These two visions of what young people should expect for their lives shows that school practice is scaled differentially to how young people orientate their lives. Schools promote a future scaled towards a national focus, one which encourages young people to become successful neoliberal citizens, who are capable of competing in a national and global labour market. Young working class people, on the other hand, orientate their aspirations towards more localised expectations for the future (MacKinnon 2010). Not all young people resisted their school's aspirations for them; however I have shown that the process of achieving the school's ambition for them to become successful neoliberal citizens is far from simple. This is because it asks young people to re-orientate their lives, which can have issues for young people as they negotiate issues of identity (e.g. becoming more middle class) and how this affects their emotional relationships to others from their local neighbourhoods, especially if this requires them to become more mobile and move away from their local community (Research Question 3).

The focus on blaming parents for a perceived deficit of aspiration can be regarded as particularly problematic. This is translated as leading to low attainment at school. Teaching staff increasingly regarded part of their responsibility as inspiring parents to push their children towards success: a subtle form of governance through the family unit (Rose 1999).

Schools have also attempted to raise young people's aspirations by:

- Using motivational sayings and visual cues to inspire learning and aspirations
- Building aspirational and inspiring places into new school architecture
- Aspiration-raising activities and interventions
- Developing links with role models and HEIs

The use of motivational sayings and visual cues and even new school buildings attempt to create aspirational citizens by using every opportunity and space to advertise this message to young people, turning once functional artilleries of the school into spaces of aspiration to maximise psychological success (Rose 1999). The creation of the aspirational citizen, where aspiration is deemed to be lacking, requires the school to intervene, to teach hope and promote the necessary aspirations to achieve success. Intervention has tended to target how educational inequality is passed down from one generation to another (Research Question 3).

One way in which politicians have attempted to tackle this inequality is through intervention which seeks to raise 'low aspirations'. However, I argue intervention which seeks to raise

aspirations is problematic and that it will not necessarily solve problems of educational inequality. This is because aspiration-raising intervention:

- 1) Tends to reinforce the need for young people to orientate their lives towards [acceptable] middle class norms (Brown 2011).
- 2) Assumes that everyone who has the ability should aspire towards HE and by proxy a 'high' professional graduate career.
- 3) Asserts that HE is the best means of achieving social mobility (Brown 2013).
- 4) Has a tendency or danger of not valuing alternative aspirations outside of the HE route (Watts and Bridges 2006; Brown 2011).
- 5) Fails to understand the complexities of young people's strong emotional links to family, place based connections and social identities which inform and complicate educational aspirations (Brown 2011; Grant under review).

8.3.3 Young People's Aspirations towards Higher Education

To gain an understanding of young working class people's perceptions and expectation of university, I positioned the research to try to discover what they did know about university and whether they could see it being part of their futures. My findings revealed that these young people had significant gaps in their knowledge about university and what to expect (Research Question 2). This was perhaps not surprising as many of the young people did not know anyone attending university. For those who did know someone (e.g. brother, cousin or aunt), there was a marked difference in their levels of knowledge and expectations of university.

I examined young people's various aspirations towards HE and whether they regarded university as helpful for achieving their future plans (Research Question 1). For some young people, university simply was 'not for them'. Choosing not to participate was due to not valuing education and therefore not wanting to continue in education. For others, their reason for not wanting to attend university was often because they were able to achieve their future

career plans through other means (e.g. apprenticeships). For other young people there often was a genuine desire to participate in HE, but this came with serious concerns about how realistic going to university is for those from their social background. I found that ultimately this risked them limiting their aspirations to more traditional working class jobs. Young people were therefore not lacking aspirations to attend university, but they did question the promises associated with HE. Many articulated fears over how risky going to university was. These concerns included:

- Being sceptical about their ability to get a good job to pay off student debt
- Being inclined to not believe that learning = earning
- Being under-prepared for what to expect from university
- Being fearful of the unknown

Going to university was clearly not for everyone. For some, their ambitions and aspirations could be achieved through other means, such as an apprenticeship. Still for others, there was a tendency towards actively resisting education, where they saw little benefit of continuing in further or Higher Education. For these young people, the label of 'low aspiration' might easily be applied. However, they tended to make the case that university was not for them because:

- They hated school, so would probably hate university
- They were struggling at school and so were unlikely to get good enough grades
- They did not want to leave their family, friends and their close-knit communities

Whilst they did not have aspirations towards university, these young people often did have strong and clear alternative aspirations towards finding employment locally (even if there were no concrete job) to be close to their friends and families and eventually having families of their own.

For all these young people, it is likely that the dominant mode of hope they adopt and their habitus informed how they thought about and constructed their futures. Young people tended to hope in two different modes towards the future: patient hope and sound hope.

For those who tended to hope in a patient mode, I have argued, typically, that they did not value education and saw little relevance in going to university. In this case, young people tended to place great emphasis on relationships in their community with their friends and family. They also thought about their lives at a very small local scale, often expressing an affinity and loyalty to the local estate and their family. Whilst they regarded few employment

opportunities to exist by staying local, the object of hope was placed in a belief that everything will work out in the end. Patient hope is an open-ended way of hoping (Webb 2007). These young people are therefore not hoping towards the future using a goal directed mode of hope. I argue that in this case, raising aspirations will have little effect for this group because they are not hoping in a goal directed way. They cannot raise their sound (goal directed) mode of hope, towards a resolute mode of hope, by virtue of the fact that they are hoping in an open (non-goal directed) mode. This might explain why there was little evidence of being able to articulate any concrete plans for the future.

For those who decided that university probably was not for them, but did have clear plans for the future – I argued that they hope in a sound mode. This is because they can reasonably expect their aspirations to be fulfilled by hoping for a traditional working class job. This is because it is reflective of the social norm of others from their social background.

For those seriously considering going to university, but had concerns, I have argued that they also hope by setting their aspirations and goals using a sound mode. This is because when faced with the evidence of others from their social background and habitus, there is a default position to hope and aspire towards similar kinds of lifestyles. I argue that in the process of raising aspirations, this requires them to transition towards a resolute mode of hope. Young people's capacity to achieve this will determine on whether they are able to bridge the gap to get to university – especially if they are the first in their families to attend (Research Question 1). My research also explored the relationship between how young people hope and how their habitus influences their plans and aspirations for the future. I have shown that an exploration of how young people use hope in the process of aspiration-raising intervention is important. Equally young people's dispositions and habitus continue to shape how they hope and what they hope for towards the future. The following section discusses further how hope and habitus interrelate when raising aspirations to university.

8.3.4 The Role of Hope and Habitus in Raising Aspirations to University

I have argued that the process of raising aspirations towards university demands that young people hope in a mode which allows them to set goals which are outside of their habitus and social experience (Research Question 1). Here, raising aspirations can be regarded as a form of hope which sets risky goals towards the future. I argue that WP attempts to help young working class people to set goals and develop a cognitive resolve towards attending university.

Many young people from working class backgrounds (in my research), tend to hope in a sound mode – regardless of whether they wanted to attend university or not. This means that they hope towards particular lifestyles which are informed by their habitus – in this case towards traditionally working class jobs.

Habitus can be seen then as the starting block because it aids young people's understanding about where they start from in any given field. It is influenced by a range of factors from class, gender, ethnicity, place, peer groups and family. It is not set or predetermined, but can be changed through pedagogic means (Bourdieu 2005). 'Raising aspirations' can be regarded as intervening, through pedagogic means, to get young people to change their habitus and to introduce HE within their field of vision. For those from working class backgrounds - irrespective of whether they have a habitus or set of family practices where there is an expectation that they will attend university – I have argued that this requires them to change how they consciously hope.

When someone makes a decision about a goal, based on their habitus, this is not made using a conscious, cost benefit analysis of the decision. Habitus, therefore, does not calculate the chance of success. Therefore, to hope in a very deliberate and conscious way using a resolute mode goes against one's habitus. To hope in a resolute mode means to develop the cognitive resolve to continue to pursue a goal even if failure occurs. It is to pursue a much more risky goal compared to one which is set using sound hope and supported by one's habitus. In terms of what this means for young people; 'raising aspirations' towards university involves adopting a resolute mode of hope by suppressing the fear and concerns that they have and relentlessly pursuing that goal even if it is seen as being unrealistic. Resolute hope, in this respect, can be regarded as a form of capital because it helps young people to compete and achieve their goals towards accessing university. Likewise, when hoping using a sound mode, this enables young people to maintain their position within the field. This leads them to reject the risky option of going to university and maintains the status quo, resulting in them aspiring towards traditional working class jobs (Research Question 1).

By bringing together Bourdieu's (1987b) concept of habitus and Webb's (2007) modes of hope into dialogue with each other, I have extended the theories of both. I have highlighted how hope can be regarded as a form of capital that enables young people to gain the necessary dispositions and schemas to change or reform their habitus. In developing a resolute mode of hope, by raising their aspirations, young working class people are, in theory, able to

incorporate the structures of the field of HE into their lives. I have, however, suggested that this is far from simple and that social identities and attachments might cause a complexity as young people look to raise their aspirations. This is to say that it is not merely about making the right choices, setting the right goals, developing a cognitive resolve and working hard to achieve the goal. This will not necessarily bring success. I have argued that young people's existing habitus and class identity complicates the process of raising aspirations. This I argue is often forgotten within popular political discourse.

8.4 Policy and Practice Implications

I have argued that giving a value to aspirations, such as 'high' and 'low' is problematic because it tends to elevate HE over other aspirations. This was particularly the case when, under New Labour, WP policy absorbed a 'politics of aspirations'. This risked young people aspiring towards something they are not comfortable with or want for their lives. The use of 'low' aspirations suggested that certain lifestyles were no longer suitable within a modern day context. The move away from this, under the Coalition government, with the ending of publicly funded WP intervention, should be welcomed. However, within wider government policy the use of aspirations continues. In this respect 'high' aspirations can be regarded as a form of disciplining young working class people's aspirations so that they will align themselves to neoliberal values to become responsible and socially mobile citizens. These policies are concerned with encouraging individuals to adopt an aspirational subjectivity.

Whilst the link between high aspirations and HE is no longer explicitly contained in government policy, I argue that it is still translated in many secondary schools as best practice. Attaching a value to aspirations, when promoting HE, should therefore be carefully considered both by WP practitioners and teaching staff, as it continues to send a message to young people that aspiring towards HE is valued above other aspirations. Evidence from this research suggests that what is upheld as a 'high aspiration' often varied from school to school. In one of the schools young people were encouraged to 'raise' their aspirations by aspiring towards nice and often lavish things which are only available to the super rich. Here I argue that there is a danger of a disconnect occurring where young people are so far removed from such a lifestyle that they are unable to set any concrete and achievable goals.

For the other two schools which placed much more emphasis on focusing on high aspirations towards graduate jobs, there was evidence of teaching and careers staff steering young people

away from what might be deemed as 'unrealistic' jobs (e.g. professional footballer) towards graduate jobs which are, in many respects, also 'unrealistic' for those from underrepresented groups (e.g. Doctor). However, young people tended to have a clearer understanding of what they needed to do to achieve these goals. Care needs to be taken to ensure that what is being promoted is indeed within young people's reach and can be translated into achievable and realistic goals.

I have uncovered how 'raising aspirations' is a complex and risky process which often asks young people to set goals that are beyond their comfort zone. This, I argue, might cause them to question how realistic going to university is. It is therefore important to ask, whether young people are indeed right in questioning whether university is a realistic option. This is made more palpable by the current economic and political climate of austerity and low growth and the emergence of recent reports which suggest that social mobility in the UK has stalled (SMCPC 2014). I have highlighted that there is a growing body of evidence which suggests that there are not enough employment opportunities to keep up with graduate aspirations (ONS 2013; CIPD 2015). This suggests that for those who do currently go to university, namely young people from the aspiring middle class, there is little problem of aspiration, but as just under half of all graduates are underemployed, there is a problem of a lack of job opportunities. This means that for many graduates their aspirations are being frustrated. Clearly something needs to change.

It might be that to find employment graduates will need to limit their aspirations towards jobs that they do not aspire to. In doing so, I argue this redefines what constitutes a graduate job. The expectation that a degree leads to a better standard of living where learning = earning has seemingly been fractured by the recent (2008) economic down turn leading to an opportunities trap (Brown et al. 2011). For graduates who are having their aspirations frustrated, this expectation of a better life can lead to a phenomenon Berlant (2011) has called 'cruel optimism.' Therefore, it might well be that young people, from working class backgrounds, are correct in their impulse to question whether it is realistic given the prospects for graduates. Adopting this assumption ultimately means that many highly able and ambitious working class young people will continue to aspire for working class jobs.

It is clear from this research and other research projects looking at young people's aspirations (e.g. Kintrea et al. 2011; Cummings et al. 2012) that able and ambitious working class young people do have strong and clear aspirations to attend university (Grant 2014). In my research the majority of participants (particularly those in year 8) had not had any formal WP

intervention from HEIs and yet a sizable number aspired to go to university. I have highlighted how those who did have a genuine desire to attend university often questioned how realistic this was for 'people like them'. I argue that rather than looking to raise aspirations, schools and WP intervention should (re)focus their attention on helping young people to deal with this question: Is University realistic? This question takes the onus away from the individual and what they might lack, towards tackling some of the deep rooted questions young people have about HE. Widening participation intervention should therefore refocus away from raising aspirations and focus on helping make university achievable and realistic for young people – in other words not looking to help young people question *whether to go* but *how to achieve it*.

In many respects many WP activities already try to do this through the use of goal setting tasks. However, I am arguing for something less superficial, something which is less logical, less individual and which takes into account the real complexity of setting goals towards university as a young person from an underrepresented group. The focus on raising aspirations in government policy to date, has largely failed to understand these complexities which I have outlined in this thesis. WP practitioners often acknowledge this complexity, however more needs to be done to understand it and help young people to deal with it.

I argue that one way of achieving this might be through addressing WP intervention through schools as a long term project through the introduction of *learning communities*. This would involve small groups of young people, who have the potential to go to university, meeting regularly (e.g. termly) and voluntarily with a mentor (e.g. youth worker / PhD student) who helps to facilitate the group.

One issue I identified through the research was young people's close attachment to the local. Being seen to raise one's head above the parapet and talk about leaving the local neighbourhood, yet alone going to university, was sometimes dismissed by others in the group. It would seem that making that clear cut step, which might be at odds with one's peers, is therefore extremely difficult for young people as they manage their own expectations with that of others. Widening Participation as learning communities however would attempt to match likeminded people in groups which would meet regularly and voluntarily to discuss their future career plans. This would be a place where young people could identify and explore any concerns they had about university and carry out personal research to help answer their questions. Over time, through the process of journeying with likeminded people the idea of going to university might seem less daunting for young people. Furthermore, groups could

meet up with other groups to share their ideas from within the same school and between other local schools. This could provide cross pollination of ideas.

My research has shown that where young people have positive experiences of meeting students and of seeing university campuses that this does go a long way in dispelling exaggerated ideas about stereotypes which young people might hold about HE. University Experience days are therefore extremely important, but I argue that they are limited in what they can achieve and need to be used as part of a broader more holistic approach which provides space for young people to not only discover what university is like but to provide space for them to air their concerns and fears and also tries to help young people to resolve them. The solution should ideally come from within those taking part in the learning community. The onus here is on the journey that the learning community makes rather than on promoting individualised virtues. The ability to set individual goals is potentially pointless when it come against the peer pressure and localised expectations which young people felt so torn by in this research. Learning communities could provide the collective support needed to make this transitional step towards university.

My research has highlighted the continued need for young people to gain a greater understanding of what university is like and what they can expect from it. There is also a need to work on the kinds of stereotypes that young people have of university and to help young people understand the full diversity of the student body. This could be challenged naturally as the learning communities exchange ideas and thoughts with other groups. Learning communities could also help young people to develop the life competency skills they might need at university (e.g. handling money) (Grant 2014), help young people get to grips with the actual process of applying and getting to university (e.g. filling out application forms) (Kintrea et al. 2011) and develop the necessary academic skills needed to succeed at university.

Government policy should also reverse the decision to withdraw economic support for those from lower socio economic backgrounds, in the form of a targeted student maintenance grant, as this only adds to the level of debt these young people need to take on and adds to young people's concern about how realistic university is. Evidence from this research shows that young people were often concerned about the effects of student debt on their ability to go to university. As young people approach applying for HE more needs to be done to help them to understand the student loan system and how it might differ from less reputable loan companies. There should also be a clear and consistent policy towards student loans with a

government commitment, with cross party support, towards providing a clear and transparent commitment to future generations. Finally, government policy should also turn its attention to more radical ways of ensuring there is enough capacity within the labour market, so that young people's aspirations, regardless of background, are able to be made realistic.

8.5 Future Research

There are several related areas which would benefit from further study. By researching those working class people from public housing estates who do make it to university, against the odds, further research could continue to empirically test Webb's (2007) hope theory to consider the modes of hope which students employ as they navigate their way to, through and out of university. Here, research could focus on testing whether students have drawn on a resolute mode of hope and whether this acted as a bridge towards entering university (Kettley 2007). There is also scope for exploring how hope as a form of capital is adopted by young people as part of building this bridge to university.

Further research could also look at how graduates from WP backgrounds deal with entering the employment market. Is social mobility achieved within the current economic climate and do they have to continue hoping in a resolute mode even when they enter the graduate jobs market? Indeed, what are the conditions under which social mobility can occur? Without sustained economic growth or radical policies which see the socio-economic redistribution of wealth – social mobility might be unlikely. What, therefore, are the implications for working class graduates who often start from a positional disadvantage having attended more 'difficult' schools, often entering university with lower A-Level grades, and are less likely to attend an elite university? Does this place them at a continued positional disadvantage even after attending university? These are important questions to be addressed.

Further research of this nature could continue to test how the individual dispositions of young people from working class backgrounds are influenced by hope and how the process of drawing on a resolute mode of hope does, indeed, allow such people to achieve a university degree - and whether, ultimately, this achieves the promise of social mobility.

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Appendix

Appendix 1: Initial Email to Schools

Dear,

My name is Thomas Grant. I am currently undertaking a PhD researching young people's aspirations towards Higher Education. The research will be carried out in three schools in Leicester and aims to work with young people who have the ability to attend university but are at risk of being excluded from the process.

Students taking part in this research will be taken through a process of identifying their future aspirations for beyond compulsory education and how these can be achieved. The research shall help young people explore what a university degree might open up for them and shall look to challenge any myths or preconceptions that currently prevent young people from considering the Higher Education option.

I aim to conduct workshops with young people in years 8 and year 10 and will draw on participatory methods.

The research is being funded by the ESRC and is working closely with the widening participation outreach team at the University of Leicester.

I am happy to hold research sessions at a time thought convenient and suitable by the school so they do not disrupt pupils' studies.

The research will involve gaining parental approval for pupils to be involved and will also gain consent from students themselves. All data obtained shall remain anonymous and confidential and will be stored on password protected computers and storage systems.

Prior to starting my PhD I have been working as a Street Based Youth Worker for Leicester City Council working with young people at risk of Anti-Social Behaviour. I also have an enhanced police check from the Criminal Records Bureau.

Please can you email me back with a response whether your school would be interested in taking part in this research and if possible if I could visit you to discuss the project further.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Thank you for your time.

Yours Faithfully

Thomas Grant

Appendix 2: Information Sheet and Consent Form for Young People

My name is Tom Grant. I am a post-graduate student at the University of Leicester based in the Geography department. I am carrying out some research looking at what young people here want to do when they leave school.

I'm looking for people to take part in 4 small group sessions. Mostly it will be you telling me what you want out of life. Getting involved might help you to think more about your future once school has finished. We will also do some stuff about what it is like to live around here – so I'm looking for some local rappers, actors and even budding photographers!

If you agree to take part in this research please fill in the consent form and you will be given this information sheet to keep. The sessions will be audio recorded (sound only). Members of the group will come up with some ideas about what we should do each week.

You can leave the group at any time and you can also withdraw from the research whenever you like without giving reason. But once you get involved I think you will find it enjoyable. I may feedback general themes to the school about the research; however I will not quote by name anything you said, unless you say something that makes me concerned for your welfare or safety. I will also hide your name when writing about the research.

Finally, I hope you will have a bit of fun and take part in the research to say in your own words how you feel about your future and your community. If you have any questions about this research please ask me before the discussion group begins.

(Copy for Participant)

Consent Form for Young People

Please tick the boxes and sign at the bottom to indicate you understand the purpose of the research.

I have read the information letter and understand what it means.

I understand that I can stop taking part in the research if I choose to.

I agree for my words to be used by the Researcher in his thesis.

I give permission for the research to be audio recorded (Sound only).

Your name (Please Print): _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 3: Information Sheet for Teachers / University Staff

Young People's Future Aspirations Research

Information Sheet for Teachers / University Staff

My name is Tom Grant; I am a Postgraduate Research Student at the University of Leicester. I am doing some research to look at what young people think about their futures and how this relates to Higher Education.

If you agree to take part in this research please fill in the consent form and you will be given this information sheet to keep. The interview will be audio recorded (sound only).

You can withdraw from the research whenever you like without giving reason and I will also hide your name when writing about the research.

(Copy for Participant)

Consent Form for Teachers / University Staff

Please tick the boxes and sign at the bottom to indicate you understand the purpose of the research.

I understand that I can stop taking part in the research if I choose to.

I agree for my words to be used by the Researcher in his thesis.

I give permission for the research to be audio recorded (Sound only).

Your name (Please Print): _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 4: Information Sheet and Consent Form for Parents/Carers

Young People's Future Aspirations Research

Dear Parent/Carer,

My name is Tom Grant; I am a Postgraduate Research Student at the University of Leicester. I am doing some research to look at what young people think about their futures and how this relates to Higher Education.

I would like to ask your permission to allow your child to take part in series of 4 workshop sessions at ***School*** starting from ***Date***. These workshops will be aimed at helping young people think more about their futures once school has finished.

If your child feels uncomfortable they can leave the research at any time and I will hide all names when I write up the research. The workshops will be recorded (sound only). The data shall be kept secure.

The research will involve students contributing ideas about what should take place in the workshops. One possibility may involve young people taking photos with a disposable camera, for a week in between taking part in the workshops, to explore what is important to them about living in their neighbourhood. Please be assured that whilst the young people will be asked to look after the camera if it is lost or damaged your child will not be responsible for replacing it.

No photos will be taken of young people during the workshop itself.

I am working with ***teacher*** at ***school***. If you have any concerns please contact who will pass on your contact details and I will be happy to answer your questions. If you give permission, please sign the form and return it to ***teacher***.

Yours Faithfully

Thomas Grant-----

Please tick the boxes and sign at the bottom.

I give permission for my Child to take part in a group workshop for this research.

I understand that my Child can leave at any point during the research.

I give permission for the research to be audio recorded (sound only).

I agree for my Child's words to be used in the Researcher's Thesis.

Child's name: _____

Parent/Carer's name: _____

Parent/Carer's signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix 5: Imagine the Future Exercise

My Hope for the Future:

Imagine that you have retired from work. Either write or draw what your life has been like and what has happened to you.

Start from the time that you leave secondary school and spread your story out over the whole of your life.

Appendix 6: Interview Schedule for WP Practitioners

What are the key aims or priorities of WP at Leicester?

What do you understand by the term raising aspirations?

How does the university aim to help young people to think about their aspirations? Do you have any examples that work well?

What are the key messages that you try to get over to young people?

What do you think are the main barriers towards young people from underrepresented groups coming to university?

Do things like gender and class play a role in WP?

How do young people find coming into quite a middle class environment?

How does place ie where people grow up shape how they view university?

What does the university do for students from WP backgrounds to help them fit in?

What has the impact of tuition fees been on YP?

Young people in my research seem quite anxious about transitioning and taking on responsibility, does WP address any of these issues?

How do young people perceive university compared to school?

Why is WP so important to the image of the university?

How is the university perceived locally?

Appendix 7: Interview Schedule for School Teachers

How does the school help young people think about their futures?

What ethos and values do you promote?

What has helped the school to improve in recent years?

How are those who are driven and want to achieve helped to succeed?

What are the main barriers which stop young people from going to University?

What do you understand by the term 'raising aspirations'?

Question about the relationship the school has with local universities

Question about the role of families in shaping educational aspirations

Question about the influence of place/ local neighbourhood

Appendix 8: Ethics Form



RESEARCH ETHICS REVIEW

Section I: Project Details

1. Project title:	Educational Aspirations in Place and Beyond Place: A critical evaluation of widening participation policy and practice in Leicester and Leicestershire
Statement of Research Purpose	This research shall critically engage with widening participation policy and practice to research the educational aspirations of young people from school years 8 and 10 who live in areas that have low participation rates to Higher Education and shall consider the ways in which the Universities in Leicester can better meet the needs of such young people.
Project Aims/ Research questions:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) To engage with young people about their educational aspirations and to consider the role place has in shaping these ambitions. 2) To explore young people's perception of Higher Education and how universities can better respond to their interests (particularly that of the University of Leicester to local young people). 3) To consider if there are any cultural, political or economic factors that shape young people's decisions about applying for Higher Education
Proposed methods:	The researcher will undertake an ethnographic study in three schools. One in the city and two in the county (middle and upper schools), initially using participant observations as a means to build trust with the participants. Following this, 4 workshops will be carried out based on a democratic form of Participatory Action Research to engage young people in the research process. In total there will be 8 groups of young people with 6 participants in each workshop. Participant observations shall continue throughout the research period and will be recorded using a research diary. Focus groups will also be used after widening participation events to gauge the impact that attending such events has on young people.
Method of recruiting	Participants will be recruited preliminary through schools with help from a gatekeeper who will help the researcher

research participants	identify suitable participants and then on a pragmatic basis as the young people gain parental approval and consent. The research will also approach local youth clubs as a means of widening the remit of the research however this shall follow the same process as in schools.
Criteria for selecting research participants	Participants must attend schools where the catchment area has a low participation rate to Higher Education. Two year groups shall be researched (years 8 and 10). Within each year group there shall be two groups. One group shall be selected because they are engaged in the education process but may be at risk of being excluded from the process of entering Higher Education. The second group shall seek to work with young people who whilst being highly able academically are largely disengaged with education which could risk their ability to progress onto Higher Education at a later stage. All participants should receive free school meals.
Estimated number of Participants	48-60 young people.
Estimated start date	01/10/2012
Estimated end date	30/06/2013
Will the study involve recruitment of participants from outside the UK?	If yes, please indicate from which country(s). No

Section II: Applicant Details

2. Name of researchers (applicant):	a) Thomas GRANT b) c) d) e)
2b. Department:	Geography

3. Status:	Postgraduate Research
4. Email addresses:	a) b) c) d) e)
5a. Contact addresses:	A b) c) d) e)
5b. Telephone numbers	a) b) c) d) e)

Section III: For Students Only

6. Module name and number or MA/MPhil/PhD course and department:	Geography (Soc Sci) Research
7. Module leader's/Supervisor's name:	Dr Gavin Brown
8. Email address:	gpb10@le.ac.uk
9. Contact address:	Geography Department, University of Leicester, University Road. Leicester LE1 7RH.

Section IV: All Research Applicants

Please outline below whether or not your research raises any particular ethical issues and how you plan to address these issues.

Informed Consent:

Participants taking part must be informed about the purpose of the research and how the findings shall be used. This is particularly important in workshops to ensure that participants understand that they have a right to withdraw from the research without giving reason. As the participants will all be under 18, consent forms will be sent home to gain parental/ carer approval to participate. Participants themselves shall be informed through an information sheet and poster and also asked to consent to take part in the research. For participant observations initial consent shall be gained from the school and teaching staff before informing pupils. However gaining consent over a larger group of people may not always be practical such as observing people in a playground. In this case Angrosino (2007) argues the use of participant observations is permissible in public spaces where the researcher blends in, however this would not be done without gaining permission from gatekeepers and senior staff members.

Access and Structures of Compliance:

To carry out research in schools permission needs to be gained from a gate keeper to allow access to the young people and to help identify suitable participants and deal with administrative details such as room bookings. The nature of the schools being studied where pupils can be disruptive may mean that school requires a teacher to be present during the workshops. This may have an effect on what young people say about the school however this will have to be acknowledged as a potential variable when analysing the data.

Privacy and Confidentiality:

The identity of participants and the schools involved in the research shall remain confidential in order to protect individuals and institutions. Pseudonyms names shall be used for participants and schools with careful consideration given to make sure no information is revealed that could give away the identity of participants or schools through unique personal or institutional details. Although the research will not conceal the wider geographical location (Leicester and Leicestershire) that the schools are in, it will be careful not to reveal actual geographic locations or identities that can be attributed to schools. Pseudonyms will be selected for neighbourhoods that do not bear any relation to any places found in Leicester. The name of the school will reflect the name of the surrounding area. For example if the neighbourhood is called 'Green Hill Park,' the school shall be called 'Green Hill Park High School.' Anonymity of young people shall be secured by using pseudonyms that no one involved in research has and will try to be respectful of gender and race when choose appropriate names. The research shall also be careful not to include any key places where the young people 'hang out' that might make certain people identifiable.

Methodologies and Issues of Power:

Traditional methods of research that rely on well-defined verbal and intellectual skills such as questionnaires and interviews can intimidate young people and not provide the best set of results (Valentine 1999). To address this a Democratic PAR methodology shall be used that allows young people to express themselves in a way they feel they are comfortable with and should help them feel more at ease about participating in research.

Dissemination and Advocacy:

When carrying out research it is important to consider how the data generated is interpreted and how the voices of the young people involved are heard in ways that allow for personal and social transformation that go beyond tokenistic consultations with young people (Valentine 1999). Many of the young people involved in the research may already be suspicious of attempts that seek to alter what they value and in some cases actively resist. Alderson (1995) argues that research with young people must come from a position where young people are generally concerned about the issue and want to be involved in the consultation process. By using a PAR approach the hope is that young people will take greater ownership of the research process as many of the ideas will come from them. However, for those who are at risk of become disengaged with the education process the danger is that they will be doing this because the school has identified them as at risk. Therefore care needs to be taken to ensure that young people's views that differ from the aim of the research are valued and disseminated in the research findings. Howard et al. (2002) argue that it is important that participants are made aware of the researcher's ideas about social change so to uncover any concealed conceptions of social change. As a researcher with a background in youth work and an appreciation and value of education, I realise that there is often a tension between understanding and accepting where many young people come from in terms of rejecting formal education and the true benefit that education can offer them. This tension is often reflected in the relationships youth workers have with local schools where they often side with the young people to avoid being seen as an authority figure and part of the establishment and rather than challenging any ingrained cultural assumptions about education merely goes to entrench them further. Therefore my position in terms of social change is that HE is of great benefit for those who have the potential to do so and where widening participations attempts to address such imbalances that occur between social groups, this is commendable. However, I also acknowledge that HE is not for everyone and that other life courses are possible and should equally be valued by society. My view of social change through this research is that young people get a better idea of who they are by identifying their talents, imagination and creativity and be able to identify if HE can indeed help them to achieve this.

Child Protection:

It is important that whilst working with vulnerable people I hold a criminal record check. For the purposes of this research there shall be no lone working with young people. It is also important that I am aware who the school's child protection officer is and that I do not promise to keep confidentiality if issues surrounding child protection and abuse emerge.

Storing Data:

Data shall be stored on password protected computers and storage devises (USB Stick) and will be kept for up to 7 years before being deleted. Any data which has a paper trail shall be transferred onto computers before being destroyed.

Are you using a Participant Information and Informed Consent Form?

If YES, please paste copy form at the end of this application. YES

Have you considered the risks associate with this project? YES

Now proceed to the Research Ethics Checklist..... Section V

Section V: Research Ethics Checklist

Please answer each question by ticking the appropriate box:

	YES	NO
1. Does the study involve participants who are particularly vulnerable or unable to give informed consent? (e.g. children, people with learning disabilities, your own students).	YES	
2. Will the study require the co-operation of a gatekeeper for initial access to the groups or individuals to be recruited? (e.g. students at school, members of self-help group, residents of nursing home).	YES	
3. Will it be necessary for participants to take part in the study without their knowledge and consent at the time? (e.g. covert observation of people in non-public places).		NO
4. Will the study involve discussion of sensitive topics (e.g. sexual activity, drug use)?		NO
5. Are drugs, placebos or other substances (e.g. food substances, vitamins) to be administered to the study participants or will the study involve invasive, intrusive or potentially harmful procedures of any kind?		NO
6. Will blood or tissue samples be obtained from participants?		NO
7. Is pain or more than mild discomfort likely to result from the study?		NO
8. Could the study induce psychological stress or anxiety or cause harm or negative consequences beyond the risks encountered in normal life?		NO
9. Will the study involve prolonged or repetitive testing?		NO
10. Will financial inducements (other than reasonable expenses and compensation for time) be offered to participants?		NO

11. Will the study involve recruitment of patients or staff through the NHS?	NO
12. Does this research entail beyond minimal risk of disturbance to the environment) If yes, please explain how you will minimize this risk under section IV above).	NO
13. Have you gained the appropriate permissions to carry out this research (to obtain data, access to sites etc)?	YES
14. Measures have been taken to ensure confidentiality, privacy and data protection where appropriate.	YES

If you have answered 'yes' to any of the questions 1-12 or 'no' to questions 13-14, please return to section IV. All Research Applicants' and ensure that you have described in detail how you plan to deal with the ethical issues raised by your research. This does not mean that you cannot do the research only that your proposal raises significant ethical issues which will need careful consideration and formal approval by the Department's Research Ethics Officer **prior to you commencing your research**. If you answered 'yes' to question 11, you will also have to submit an application to the appropriate external health authority ethics committee. Any significant change in the question, design or conduct over the course of the research should be notified to the Module Tutor and may require a new application for ethics approval.

Declaration

Please note any significant change in the question, design or conduct over the course of the research should be notified to the Departmental Ethics Officer and may require a new application for ethics approval.

I have read the University of Leicester Code of Research Ethics. - YES

The information in the form is accurate to the best of my knowledge and belief and I take full responsibility for it. - YES

I understand that all conditions apply to any co-applicants and researchers involved in the study, and it is my responsibility to ensure they abide by them. - YES