



**The Aspirations and Expectations of Young People
attending a Welsh-medium and an English-medium
School in the South Wales Valleys**

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DECLARATION

This work has not been submitted in substance for any other degree or award at this or any other university or place of learning, nor is being submitted concurrently in candidature for any degree or other award.

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Date 16/02/2018

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Abstract

This qualitative study explores the aspirations and expectations of fifty-two young people attending a Welsh-medium and an English-medium school in the South Wales Valleys (an area which has undergone significant and economic changes as a result of deindustrialisation). These young people were first interviewed at the start of Year 11 when they were considering their futures after compulsory education. Some of these young people were interviewed again approximately a year after to explore whether they were able to achieve their aspirations and to examine whether their long-term aspirations had changed.

This study illustrates how wider trends such as the contraction of the youth labour market and increasing participation rates in further and higher education as well as transformations in the local labour market have changed the way in which young people understand their educational and employment prospects. Different to some of the young people in Brown's (1987) *Schooling Ordinary Kids* study, all of the young people in this study aspired to stay in some form of education and training after Year 11.

This study also identifies three types of students – The Academic Inheritors, the Academic Strivers and Vocational students – which differ in terms of their orientations to education and occupational futures. There are also variations between these types of students in terms of their social background, educational experiences and the character and usage of their social networks. The different types of students highlight the limitations of accounts which present Rational Choice Theory (associated with the work of Boudon (1974) and Goldthorpe (1998)) and Bourdieu's Cultural Reproduction Theory as opposing/competing explanatory theories.

This study also compared and contrasted the aspirations and expectations of young people who attended a Welsh-medium and an English-medium school. This study shows how school choice has an impact on the social composition of Welsh-medium and English-medium schools in South East Wales, with Welsh-medium schools on average having lower proportions of students from poorer households compared to English-medium schools. School choice provides some explanation for the differences between the aspirations of young people attending the Welsh-medium and the English-medium school in this study.

This study offers a new analysis of the aspirations and expectations of young people finishing compulsory education, in a context of significant social and economic change. It also makes an original contribution by exploring the aspirations of young people who attend a Welsh-medium and an English-medium school – something which has not been explored in depth before by researchers. In addition, this study contributes towards debates regarding the extent that Rational Choice Theory and Bourdieu's Cultural Reproduction Theory are able to explain young people's aspirations and expectations. In attempting to explain differences in student orientations, it also shows that it is extremely difficult to empirically test the relative merits of these theories and as such contributes to existing discussions of educational opportunities and inequalities. This study also has policy implications regarding how key actors such as policymakers and schools can provide support to young people to fulfil and achieve their aspirations.

Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Background	2
Why compare the aspirations and expectations of students attending a Welsh-medium and an English-medium school?.....	6
Policy Context.....	9
The Aims of this Study and Research Questions	12
Structure of the thesis.....	13
Chapter 2: Theorising Young People’s Aspirations and Expectations – a review of the literature	16
Bourdieu’s Cultural Reproduction Theory	17
Rational Choice Theory	30
Discussion.....	35
Chapter 3: Methodology and Research Design	44
Ontological and Epistemological Standpoint.....	44
Research Method, Design and Sample	45
Ethical considerations	69
Transcription.....	71
Analysis.....	72
Discussion	73
Chapter 4: The Research Area: The South Wales Valleys	74
South Wales Valleys: Past	75
South Wales Valleys: Today.....	82
Discussion.....	91
Chapter 5: Welsh-medium and English-medium schools in South-East Wales	94
Medium of Education and Curriculum in Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel and Cwm Mawr School.....	95
Social Composition of Welsh-medium and English-medium schools in South-East Wales	98
The Practices and Outcomes of Welsh-medium and English-medium schools in South-East Wales.....	115
Discussion.....	129
Chapter 6: Aspirations and Expectations after Compulsory Education	133
Staying On: Factors Influencing Students to Aspire to Progress into Post-compulsory Education and Training.....	133
Leaving and Looking for Work? Ambivalence towards Progressing into Post-compulsory Education and Training.....	141
Discussion.....	145

Chapter 7: The Academic Inheritors, the Academic Strivers and the Vocational Students.....	148
The Characteristics of the Academic Inheritors, Academic Strivers and Vocational Students	150
The Educational Experiences of the Academic Inheritors, Academic Strivers and Vocational Students.....	154
What courses/subjects did students want to study after Year 11?.....	171
Which educational institutions did students want to enter after Year 11?	183
Institutional Choice and Language of Study	190
Discussion	196
Chapter 8: Young People’s Long-Term Educational and Career Aspirations and their Spatial Horizons	200
Young People’s Long-Term Educational and Career Aspirations.....	200
Staying Local or Moving Away: Young People’s “Spatial Horizons”	222
Language and Spatial Horizons	229
Discussion	234
Chapter 9: Conclusion.....	237
Summary of Key Findings	238
Policy Implications of this Study	253
Limitations and Future Research	259
Final Thoughts	260
References.....	262
Appendices.....	303

Appendices

Appendix 1: Tables

Table A1.1: Academic Inheritors in Cwm Mawr School

Table A1.2: Academic Strivers in Cwm Mawr School

Table A1.3: Vocational Students in Cwm Mawr School

Table A1.4: Academic Inheritors in Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel

Table A1.5: Academic Strivers in Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel

Table A1.6: Vocational Students in Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel

Table A1.7: Employment rates of Males and Females in the South Wales Valleys and Wales in 2017

Table A1.8: Workplace Employment by industry in the South Wales Valleys, Wales and United Kingdom

Table A1.9: Proportion of Total Workplace Employment in each industry in South Wales Valleys, Wales and United Kingdom

Table A1.10: Average Gross Weekly Earnings in the South Wales Valleys, Cardiff, the Vale of Glamorgan and Wales

Table A1.11: ILO unemployment rates in the South Wales Valleys and Wales

Table A1.12: ILO unemployment rates of 16-24 year olds in the South Wales Valleys and Wales

Table A1.13: Economic inactivity rates (excluding students) in the South Wales Valleys and Wales.

Table A1.14: Proportion of Welsh Speakers in the South Wales Valleys and Wales

Table A1.15: Total of Welsh speakers in Each Age Group in the South Wales Valleys and Wales in 2011

Table A1.16: Proportion of Welsh speakers in Each Age Group in the South Wales Valleys and Wales in 2011

Table A1.17: Proportion considering themselves to be only Welsh in the South Wales Valleys and Wales in 2011 Census

Table A1.18: Highest qualification level of working age adults in the South Wales Valleys and Wales, 2014

Table A1.19: Examination achievements of pupils aged 15 in South Wales Valleys and Wales, 2013/4 academic year

Table A1.20: Destinations of Year 11 students from the South Wales Valleys and Wales in 2004

Table A1.21: Destinations of Year 11 students from the South Wales Valleys and Wales in 2014

Table A1.22: Higher Education Participation Rate by Local Authority between 2006/7 and 2009/10

Table A1.23: The Subjects and Courses that Academic Inheritors in Both Schools Aspired to Study after Year 11

Table A1.24: The Subjects and Courses that Academic Strivers in Both Schools Aspired to Study after Year 11

Table A1.25: The Subjects and Courses that Vocational Students in Both Schools Aspired to Study after Year 11

Table A1.26: The Subjects and Courses that Students in Cwm Mawr School and Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel wanted to Study after Year 11

Table A.1.27: The Careers that the Academic Inheritors Aspired to Gain

Table A1.28: The Careers that the Academic Strivers Aspired to Gain

Table A.1.29: The Careers that the Academic Inheritors Aspired to Gain

Appendix 2: Students' Destinations after Year 11

Appendix 3: Methodological Materials

Interview Guide for First Interview with Students

Interview Guide for Interview with Teachers

Interview Guide for Interview with Parents/Carers

Interview Guide for Follow-up Interview with Students

Coding Framework for Analysis of Interviews with Students

Chapter 1: Introduction

This study explores the aspirations and expectations of fifty-two young people attending a Welsh-medium and an English-medium school in the South Wales Valleys¹. These young people were first interviewed when they were in their final year of compulsory education. Examining the aspirations and expectations of young people who are reaching the end of compulsory education is important because they are making crucial decisions regarding their future. In Wales, young people for the first time face the decision of whether to stay in the education system or leave and alternatively search for employment². If young people choose to progress into further education and training, they also face the choice of what types of subjects/courses they want to study. Subjects and courses are commonly divided into two types – academic and vocational subjects/courses. Academic subjects/courses tend to be associated with abstract and conceptual thought, with GCSEs at Key Stage 4³ and AS and A Levels at Key Stage 5⁴ being the most widely-known and available academic qualifications in England and Wales (Jin *et al.* 2012). Vocational subjects/courses tend to be associated with practical and applied thought and often prepare the learner towards a particular occupation, with examples of vocational qualifications including BTECs, Applied GCSEs/AS and A Levels and NVQs (Jin *et al.* 2012).

Young people who are finishing compulsory education also have to choose in which educational institution they want to study these subjects/courses. Young people may choose to stay in a school setting and study in a sixth form either in the same school that they attended during compulsory education or a sixth form in another school. They may also decide to study in a sixth-form college. Another institution that they may consider entering after compulsory education is Further Education (F.E) College. Although sixth-form schools and colleges cater

¹ The South Wales Valleys and the Valleys will be used interchangeably throughout this thesis to refer to the geographical area of this study.

² While the Westminster Government has recently raised the participation age making it mandatory for students in England to be in some form of education or training up until the age of eighteen, the compulsory age of education is still 16 in Wales, like Scotland and Northern Ireland (Gov.uk 2017a).

³ Key Stage 4 encompasses the final two years (Year 10 and 11) of compulsory education in Wales. Young people usually start Key Stage 4 when they are fourteen years old and finish Key Stage 4 at the end of the educational year when they are sixteen years old.

⁴ Key Stage 5 encompasses the first two years (Year 12 and 13) after compulsory education in Wales. Young people usually start Key Stage 5 when they are sixteen years old and finish Key Stage 5 at the end of the educational year when they are eighteen years old.

mainly for students between 16-19 years old, Further Education Colleges are centres of lifelong learning and have large numbers of adult learners (Thompson 2009). Sixth-form schools and colleges offer a mainly academic curriculum particularly aimed at higher education, but a number of students in these educational establishments study vocational subjects/courses. On the other hand, Further Education Colleges offer a range of academic and vocational courses/subjects, specifically basic skills and pre-vocational courses that intend to enable low achievers to be able to study higher level qualifications (Thompson 2009). There are also a range of training providers and work-based learning providers, which tend to offer vocational subjects/courses and apprenticeships (which enable the learner to earn a wage and work while being trained specific job skills by experienced staff)⁵.

This introductory chapter starts by providing background context to the study in order to illustrate the current circumstances in which young people make decisions regarding their future after compulsory education. By doing this, it will provide justification for exploring the aspirations and expectations of young people today. This chapter will also provide justification for examining the aspirations and expectations of young people who attend Welsh-medium and English-medium schools. This chapter will discuss some of the educational policies that Welsh Government have implemented that aim to help and support young people making the transition from compulsory education to post-compulsory education in order to provide policy context to this study. The aims of this research and the research questions this study seeks to answer will be set out in this chapter. Finally, this chapter will explain the structure of the thesis and will outline the purpose of each chapter.

Background

This study examines the aspirations and expectations of young people finishing compulsory education in a context of significant social and economic changes. The declining size of the youth labour market (Keep 2012) and increasing participation rates in further education (Welsh Government 2016a) and higher education (HEFCW 2012: 45; Department for Education 2016a: 4) over recent decades mean that young people are making choices regarding their

⁵ FE Colleges are involved in providing college-based training for apprentices.

future at a time when increasing numbers of young people are choosing to stay on in some form of education and training after compulsory education. This study will explore the impact these broader trends have on the aspirations and expectations of young people reaching the end of compulsory education.

The research area for this study, the South Wales Valleys, has also experienced significant social and economic changes in recent times. As Chapter 4 will illustrate, the mass closure of coal mines and the decline in other industries such as steel and manufacturing have restructured the local labour market, employment opportunities and neighbourhood life in the area. Earlier research such as Brown's (1987) study, *Schooling Ordinary Kids*, have explored the aspirations and expectations of young people from the South Wales Valleys. Brown (1987) conducted his study in the 1980's when these economic and social changes were starting to take shape. In his study, Brown (1987) discovered that there were clear variations in the orientations of working class students towards education and the labour market as a result of their class location and their responses to the education system. Brown (1987) identified three types of students, the 'rems', the 'swots' and the 'ordinary kids'. The 'rems' considered education and qualifications irrelevant in terms of their future employment ambitions and were orientated towards unskilled manual jobs as they wanted to 'get in' to their working class neighbourhood (Brown 1987: 73). In contrast, the 'swots' wanted to 'get out' from their working class neighbourhood and believed that education would help them to become upwardly mobile and acquire highly-paid, highly-skilled jobs (Brown 1987: 85). Although the third group of students, the 'ordinary kids', did not conform to the demands of the school like the 'swots', they cooperated with teachers to a certain extent and considered that certain subjects and qualifications would help them gain 'tidy' and decent low-entry jobs that would earn them respect from their families and peers (Brown 1987: 90). This study will examine whether these social and economic changes have changed the way in which young people understand their educational and employment prospects and whether the orientations of young people today towards education and labour market are different to the orientations of young people in Brown's (1987) study.

Despite these social and economic changes, inequalities in terms of educational attainment and social outcomes associated with social characteristics such as social class and gender still exist. For instance, statistics indicate that children on Free School Meals (a commonly used indicator of household poverty) still underachieve in education compared to children not on the scheme (Welsh Government 2016b; Department for Education 2015). Furthermore, a higher proportion

of young people on Free School Meals end up as NEETs (not in any form of education, employment or training) (Department for Education 2011⁶). Moreover, a lower proportion of students from low socio-economic backgrounds participate in higher education (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills [BIS] 2016a; Wales Institute of Social and Economic Research, Data and Methods [WISERD] 2015).

With regards to gender, statistical evidence indicates that boys tend to underachieve in education compared to girls (StatsWales 2016a; Department for Education 2015) and lower proportion of men progress into higher education compared to women (WISERD 2015; Hillman and Robinson 2016). Despite this, women are still underrepresented in certain STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) related subjects/courses at Post-16 level such as Physics and Information and Communication Technology (Welsh Government 2016c: 19; WISE 2016). Concerns have also been raised regarding the gender imbalance prevalent in vocational subjects (NAfW (National Assembly for Wales) Children and Young People's Committee 2012: 27-8). With regards to vocational subjects at Post-16 level, women are more likely to choose subjects such as Childcare and Health and Social Care, while boys are highly concentrated in ICT (Information and Communication Technology) and Sports Studies (Jin *et al.* 2011: 93). While women have made some inroads in certain occupations, gender segregation is also prominent in certain sectors of employment. Overwhelmingly, men work in sectors such as scientific-based professional occupations e.g. chemists, physicists and IT professionals, and skilled trades e.g. bricklayers, roofers, plumbers and carpenters (Parken *et al.* 2014). In contrast, women predominantly work in sectors such as "people centred" professional occupations e.g. primary and nursery education teachers, nurses and social workers; and personal services e.g. hairdressers, educational assistants and child-minders (Parken *et al.* 2014: 45-6).

In response to these statistical trends, politicians and policymakers increasingly consider "raising aspirations" as an effective strategy in tackling and reducing social and educational inequalities and enhancing social mobility. For instance, in strategies such as *Rewriting the Future: Raising Ambition and Attainment in Welsh schools* (Welsh Government 2014a) and *Education Excellence Everywhere* (Department for Education 2016b), policymakers outline their plans on how they will increase the aspirations of young people, particularly those from

⁶ This data is based on England. There is no equivalent analysis of Welsh data that has been undertaken.

low socio-economic backgrounds. These statistical trends and policy developments have made it increasingly important for us to understand how the aspirations and expectations of young people from different social backgrounds are shaped today.

This research not only seeks to study the expectations and aspirations of young people but also examines the veracity of existing theoretical accounts about them. Two theoretical accounts which have been influential in previous research which has examined young people's aspirations and expectations are Bourdieu's Cultural Reproduction Theory which encompasses his concepts of economic, social and cultural capital; habitus and field (Bourdieu 1990a), and Rational Choice Theory⁷ which is associated with the work of sociologists such as Boudon (1974) and Goldthorpe (1998). Researchers such as Archer *et al.* (2007) and Ingram (2011) who have mostly drawn on Bourdieu's Cultural Reproduction Theory have argued that ambitions and expectations are a product of deeply embedded class-based dispositions (habitus) which we acquire at a very young age. These researchers also highlight how our aspirations and expectations are shaped by our possession or lack of economic capital (related to our financial and material possessions), social capital (associated with our social networks) and cultural capital (related to our education and cultural knowledge) as well as how we are positioned within different fields such as the education system. On the other hand, researchers adopting a rational choice theoretical standpoint such as Breen and Goldthorpe (1997), Jonsson (1999) and Jackson *et al.* (2007) have argued that aspirations and expectations are the result of rational considerations with young people considering the costs and benefits of the different options available to them when considering their future. These two theoretical accounts are of interest to us because they have been presented as opposing accounts. For some time, there has been a debate with regards to the extent that these two theoretical standpoints are able to explain the aspirations and expectations of young people (Bourdieu 1990b; Sullivan 2002; Goldthorpe 2007b; Lizardo 2008). This study aims assess the merits of Bourdieu's Cultural Reproduction Theory and Rational Choice Theory by examining whether empirical data from the interviews with the young people support or dismiss the explanations that these two theoretical standpoints offer with regards to how young people's aspirations and expectations are shaped.

⁷ Goldthorpe (2007a:163) prefers the term 'Rational Action Theory' as it encompasses all forms of social action. However, as this study focuses on the decisions and choices individuals make during the transition from compulsory education to post-compulsory education, Rational Choice Theory is considered as an appropriate term for this research. In this thesis, I will use the acronym RCT to refer to Rational Choice Theory.

Why compare the aspirations and expectations of students attending a Welsh-medium and an English-medium school?

This study extends previous research by exploring the aspirations and expectations of young people attending a Welsh-medium school⁸ and an English-medium school⁹ in the South Wales Valleys. Welsh-medium schools have been one of the most distinguishing features of the Welsh education system for some time as students are mainly assessed and taught in the Welsh language in these schools. Welsh-medium schools are considered to be a major component in revitalizing the Welsh language, a language which has been in decline and under threat for several centuries (Baker and Jones 2000: 116). In the *Welsh-medium Education Strategy*, the Welsh Government (WAG¹⁰ 2010: 7) states that Welsh-medium education “offers the best conditions for developing future bilingual citizens”. Welsh-medium schools provide children, particularly from non-Welsh speaking families, the opportunity to learn the language. These schools also aim to instil in pupils a sense that the Welsh language is a living language which is used by people on a day-to-day basis. Another ambition of these schools is that pupils will continue to speak the language once they have left school and will passionately feel that they should transmit the language to the next generation.

In certain areas of Wales such as the South Wales Valleys, most parents/carers have the choice of whether to send their children to a Welsh-medium or an English-medium school. This choice is not available to every parent/carer in Wales. Many parents/carers who live in rural parts of Wales have limited choice in terms of their child’s schooling and children tend to attend the local ‘bilingual school’. In these schools, pupils who receive their education through the medium of Welsh attend the same school as those who are taught through the English language (Welsh Assembly Government 2007: 12). The North West region of Gwynedd, where the proportion of Welsh speakers is relatively high, remains the only area in Wales where all

⁸ Welsh-medium schools are defined as schools in which students are taught and assessed in the Welsh language (apart from the subject of English) and Welsh is the day-to-day language of the school (WAG, 2007).

⁹ English-medium schools are defined as schools in which students are taught and assessed mainly in the English Language. However, students study Welsh as a second language up until Key Stage 4 (WAG, 2007).

¹⁰ Since 2011, the devolved government in Wales has been known as the ‘Welsh Government’ (BBC News 2011). Before then, it was known as the Welsh Assembly Government. I will refer to the devolved government in Wales as the ‘Welsh Government’ throughout this thesis. However, the ‘Welsh Assembly Government’ will be included in this thesis when any reference is made to publications from the Welsh Government before 2011.

children attend Welsh-medium primary schools to enable them to fully participate in a bilingual community. The ability to choose between different schools which differ in terms of the medium of instruction is common in other parts of the world such as Republic of Ireland, the Basque Country and Canada.

South East Wales has witnessed a remarkable growth in Welsh-medium education over the last half century. In 1949, three Welsh-medium primary schools were opened for the first time in South East Wales – Tyderwen in Maesteg, Ynys-Lwyd in Aberdare and Ysgol Gymraeg Caerdydd in Cardiff (Thomas 2013a: 27). According to recent figures (Welsh Government 2016d: 5), there are now 64 Welsh-medium primary schools, 2 Welsh-medium middle schools (which educate children from the age of 3 to 16-18) and 9 Welsh-medium secondary schools in the area¹¹. While the first Welsh-medium schools were established to provide children from Welsh-speaking backgrounds the opportunity to receive education in their mother tongue (Lewis 2008: 75), the majority of primary, middle and secondary school children in Anglicised areas such as South East Wales now come from non-Welsh speaking backgrounds (StatsWales, 2016b).

Despite this growth, Welsh-medium schools in South East Wales remain a distinct minority compared to English-medium schools. Based on data from the School Census (Welsh Government 2016d), approximately 12% of primary schools and 10% of secondary schools in South East Wales are Welsh-medium schools. Consequently, parents/carers who choose Welsh-medium education are essentially making an active choice regarding their child's education because English-medium education tends to be the default option for parents/carers in this part of Wales.

As a result of school choice, statistical evidence indicates that Welsh-medium schools have on average, lower proportions of children on Free School Meals (a widely used indicator of household poverty) compared to English-medium schools in South East Wales (Thomas 2013a). This suggests that Welsh-medium schools in South East Wales have on average lower proportion of students from poorer households compared to English-medium schools.

¹¹ Dual Stream Primary schools, where students are able to receive education through the medium of Welsh or English in the same school, are included in these figures.

Although previous studies on Welsh-medium and English-medium schools have examined the factors that motivate parents/carers to opt for Welsh-medium or English-medium education for their child (for example, Williams *et al.* 1978; Bush *et al.* 1981; Packer and Campbell 2000; Thomas 2010; Hodges 2010, 2012) and have explored the impact that these two types of schools have on educational attainment (for instance, Reynolds *et al.* 1998; Gorard 2000), the aspirations and expectations of young people who attend Welsh-medium and English-medium schools has been a neglected area of study. Therefore, this research will compare the aspirations and expectations of young people attending a Welsh-medium and English-medium school in the South Wales Valleys. Moreover, this study will examine the extent that the social background of students and the practices of these two types of school shape young people's aspirations and expectations. It will also explore the extent to which Bourdieu's Cultural Reproduction Theory and Rational Choice Theory are able to help us understand the aspirations and expectations of young people attending a Welsh-medium and an English-medium school in the South Wales Valleys.

Furthermore, when making the transition from compulsory to post-compulsory education, students who attend Welsh-medium schools have the added consideration of the language medium through which they would like to study if they decide to continue in further education and training. As Price (2010: 22) notes, young people around this age are a "critically important cohort" in the revitalization of the Welsh language as they can either continue to use Welsh and contribute towards the resurgence of the language or can use the language less and watch the language become even more threatened. There have been concerns regarding attrition rates with fewer students studying through the medium of Welsh after compulsory education (Baker and Jones 2000; WAG 2010). While a number of studies have examined the factors which influence choice of language of study at higher education level (Williams, I. 1989; Williams 2003; Lewis and Williams 2006; Jones 2010 and Davies and Trystan 2012), only a small number of studies have examined the attitudes of young people towards Welsh-medium study at further education level, for instance, Jones's (2010) research on the attitudes of Year 11 students towards Welsh-medium study at further education level in South-West Wales and Davies and Davies's (2015) research on young people's perspectives towards language of study at post-sixteen further education colleges. This study aims to fill the gap in current research by exploring the aspirations of young people with regards to language of study at post-compulsory level.

Policy Context

As this study is based in Wales, it is important for us to acknowledge that as a result of parliamentary devolution (the decentralisation of certain policy-making powers from Westminster to Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales), the Welsh Government has been responsible for making decisions in a number of policy fields including education since 1999. The aims of the educational policies of the Welsh Government are similar to those of the Westminster Government. A longstanding aim of educational policy for both Governments has been to promote social justice and provide opportunities for individuals to become socially mobile (Welsh Government 2014a; Department for Education 2016b). The Welsh and UK Government consider education as being a central component in creating a highly skilled, knowledge economy – an economy based on the distribution, production and use of knowledge and information (Welsh Government 2012; BIS 2016b). Within these policy documents, it appears that Welsh and UK Government concur with the principles of human capital theory (associated with the work of Schultz 1961 and Becker 1993) and consider enhancing human capital i.e. individual's knowledge and skills, as a means of not only improving the economic prosperity of the individual, but also the nation state. Furthermore, policymakers and politicians in Welsh and UK Government also consider that in today's global economy, economic competitiveness relies on the nation state's ability to utilise individuals' knowledge and skills (Welsh Government 2012; BIS 2016b).

Despite having similar policy aims to the UK Government, commentators such as Mark Drakeford (2007), currently a Welsh Assembly Member and Minister, have argued that the policy principles of the Welsh Government differ to those of the UK Government. Rather than pursuing market-orientated policies of the UK Government, the Welsh Government has shown a commitment towards social democratic virtues such as a preference towards cooperation rather than competition between providers, equality of outcome and progressive universalism i.e. providing universal service to all and additional help for those who need it most (Drakeford 2007). A prime example of this is Welsh Government's reluctance to develop a quasi-market in education, by limiting the number of foundation schools and by not introducing Academies and Free Schools. Recently, in response to Theresa May's proposals of lifting the ban on the

opening of new grammar schools in England, Kirsty Williams (the current cabinet secretary of Education)¹² (quoted by BBC News 2016a) emphasised the Welsh Government's long-standing commitment towards community-based, comprehensive education:

The OECD [Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development] when it came to Wales to report on our education system had many, many critical things to say about the state of our education system, many things that we needed to change but the number one thing that they praised was the fact we have a comprehensive system in Wales and we are dedicated to that.

Parliamentary devolution has resulted in the Welsh Government implementing a set of distinctive educational policies. A prime example is Welsh Government's decision not to raise the compulsory age of education to 18. In 2007 (the year this policy was first announced), when he was Minister for Education, Culture, and the Welsh Language, Carwyn Jones (the current First Minister of Wales), declared that Wales would not take the same approach as England arguing that "encouragement" rather than "compulsion" was the best approach to increasing participation in further and higher education (National Assembly for Wales 2007: 22).

Learning Pathways 14-19 strategy is the Welsh Government's overarching strategy for increasing participation in further and higher education. The fundamental aim of the strategy is to enable young people "to choose Learning Pathways that best suit them – mixing and matching vocational, academic and occupational qualifications and experience" (Welsh Assembly Government 2002: 8). To encourage young people to stay on in education and training, under the Learning and Skills Measure 2009, the Welsh Government has placed a statutory duty on local authorities to widen curriculum choice and offer a minimum number of courses to students between the ages of 14 to 19 (Welsh Government 2014b; Welsh Government 2014c). Furthermore, based on the recommendations in Professor Graham

¹² It is interesting to note that Kirsty Williams, the only Liberal Democrat Assembly Member, was appointed as Cabinet Secretary of Education, after Labour fell short of a majority in the Welsh Assembly elections in 2016 (Wales Online 2016).

Donaldson's report (2015), *Successful Futures*, a new curriculum is being developed in Wales with Welsh Government (2017a) aiming for all schools and settings in Wales using the new curriculum to underpin learning and teaching for children and young people aged 3-16 by 2021. Moreover, the Wales Qualification Act 2015 resulted in the establishment of Qualifications Wales, a new regulator of qualifications in Wales (Welsh Government 2015a), and the introduction of new Wales-only qualifications (BBC News 2015).

The Welsh Government has also gained media attention for implementing distinctive policies in the area of student finance. Different to the UK Government, the Welsh Government like the Scottish Parliament and the Northern Ireland Assembly have kept the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA), a means-tested bursary which is regarded as providing individuals from low-socio economic households a financial incentive to participate in further education (Gov.uk 2017b).

There is also evidence of diverging policies within the policy area of higher education tuition fees. In response to UK Government's decision to increase the cap on the amount universities could charge students to £9000 from October 2012, the Welsh Government announced that it would subsidise the tuition fees of every Welsh-domiciled student who attended a higher education institution in the UK, meaning that students in Wales would pay the same amount that they would before the tuition fees were increased (BBC News 2010). However, opposition parties and representatives from Welsh universities criticized this policy, believing that it was financially unsustainable and funded English universities at the expense of Welsh universities (Evans 2013). Amid these criticisms, the Welsh Government commissioned a review into Higher Education Funding and Student Finance Arrangements which was carried out by Professor Sir Ian Diamond. One of the main recommendations that Diamond (2016) proposed in the review was that the Welsh Government should scrap the tuition fees subsidies given to all Welsh-domiciled students and instead introduce a means-tested maintenance grant (different to the system in England, where maintenance support is based on loans). Diamond's recommendations were supported by the Welsh Government with Kirsty Williams (quoted by Welsh Government 2016e) noting that "[t]he fear of not being able to meet the cost of living on a daily basis puts many off, not the prospect of paying back loans after they are in work". Welsh Government have proposed that changes to higher education funding and student

finance arrangements based on Diamond's recommendations will take place in the 2018/2019 academic year (BBC News 2016b).

The Aims of this Study and Research Questions

The main aim of this study is to explore the factors which shape the aspirations and expectations of young people living in South Wales Valleys. I clearly distinguish between 'expectations' and 'aspirations' in this thesis. Whereas expectations correspond to what individuals believe or think will happen to them in the future, aspirations refer to individuals' desires and ambitions for the future. Moreover, this study will explore whether there are differences between the aspirations and expectations of young people from different social backgrounds as well as between the young men and women in both of these schools. Although other social characteristics such as ethnicity play a significant part in shaping students' educational experiences and in influencing individuals' future expectations and aspirations (Lee 2003), this thesis does not explore issues regarding ethnicity. This is because the sample of this study was white reflecting to some extent the student body of the two schools (see Chapter 5) and the population of the South Wales Valleys (StatsWales 2017a).

While there have been a number of studies which have examined the aspirations and expectations of young people attending different types of educational institutions (for example, Pugsley 2004; Reay *et al.* 2005; Donnelly 2015), this study aims to fill the gap in current research by exploring and comparing in-depth the aspirations and expectations of young people attending a Welsh-medium and English-medium school in the South Wales Valleys¹³. This study will also explore to what extent young people's aspirations and expectations are shaped by the practices of the Welsh-medium and English-medium school in this study and the socio-economic background of parents/carers who send their children to these schools.

Furthermore, this research aims to contribute to current theoretical debates within the sociology

¹³ Although a Welsh-medium school was one of the case studies in Pugsley's (2004) study which examined how different educational institutions in South East Wales shape young people's higher education choices, she did not explore and compare in great depth the impact attending a Welsh-medium and English-medium school had on young people's expectations and aspirations.

of education by assessing the explanatory power of Bourdieu's Cultural Reproduction Theory and Rational Choice Theory. This study also aims to contribute to the existing body of research (for example, Hodkinson *et al.* 1996; Glaesser and Cooper 2014) which has examined the extent that Bourdieu's Cultural Reproduction Theory and Rational Choice Theory are able to help us explain young people's aspirations and expectations.

Therefore, this study aims to address the following research questions:

RQ1: What are the expectations and aspirations of young people in the context of significant economic and social changes?

RQ2: To what extent does social background shape young people's aspirations and expectations?

RQ3: To what extent does gender shape young people's aspirations and expectations?

RQ4: To what extent does school type (Welsh-medium and English-medium) shape young people's aspirations and expectations?

RQ5: To what extent does Bourdieu's Cultural Reproduction Theory and Rational Choice Theory help us to understand young people's aspirations and expectations?

Structure of the thesis

In Chapter Two, I will review the academic literature on young people's aspirations and expectations. This review will also examine Bourdieu's Cultural Reproduction Theory and Rational Choice Theory in further detail and the explanations that they offer with regards to

young people's aspirations and expectations. While these two theoretical approaches are often presented as offering competing explanations for young people's aspirations and expectations, this chapter will illustrate that both theoretical standpoints agree on certain matters.

Chapter Three focuses on the methodology of the study. This chapter provides justification for the research design, the use of semi-structured interviews as a method for collecting data on young people's aspirations and expectations, and the sampling strategy used for this study. It will also make the process of data collection transparent to readers.

Chapter Four describes the field of study, the South Wales Valleys, illustrating how current social and economic conditions of the area are a product of its social and industrial history. By providing an account of the current social and economic conditions of the South Wales Valleys, Chapter Four aims to shed light on the circumstances in which young people's aspirations and expectations are shaped and formed. Chapter Five focuses on the two schools at the centre of this study – Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel (a Welsh-medium school) and Cwm Mawr School (an English-medium school)¹⁴. As one of the aims of this study is to explore to what extent school practices and social background shape the aspirations and expectations of young people attending a Welsh-medium and an English-medium school, Chapter Five will compare different aspects of Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel and Cwm Mawr School such as the social compositions of the two schools; the ways in which the two schools facilitated young people's aspirations and expectations and the educational and social outcomes of students in these two schools. Chapter Five will also explore more broadly Welsh-medium and English-medium schools in South-East Wales.

Chapter Six to Eight present the central findings of this study. Chapter Six concentrates on one of the major decisions that students face when they reach the end of compulsory education; that is, whether to stay in the education system or to leave and to search for employment. This chapter illustrates how changes in participation rates in further and higher education as well as perceptions of local employment opportunities for school-leavers influence young people to want to stay in the education system after compulsory education.

¹⁴ Pseudonyms have been used for the two schools in this study in order to maintain the anonymity of the students and teachers involved in the research.

Chapter Seven focuses on participants' expectations and aspirations with regards to the types of educational pathways they wanted to pursue after compulsory education. Based on students' orientations towards education and their future careers, this study identifies three types of students – the Academic Inheritors, the Academic Strivers and the Vocational students. A detailed discussion of these different types of students will be given in Chapter Seven. It will explore the types of educational institutions that the different categories of students wanted to enter and the types of subjects and courses that they wanted to study after compulsory education. This chapter will also illustrate how factors such as educational experiences and the influence of key actors such as parents/carers, peers and teachers shape young people's orientation towards their educational and occupational futures.

Chapter Eight focuses on students' long-term educational and career aspirations as they play a major role in shaping young people's transition from compulsory to post-compulsory education. As young people give consideration to place when thinking about their long-term educational and career ambitions, Chapter Eight also focuses on young people's 'spatial horizons' (Ball *et al.* 2000) and explores where they envisaged they would live in the future. This chapter will demonstrate how factors such as economic circumstances; the educational and career trajectories of family members; educational performance and local educational and employment opportunities shape young people's long-term educational and career aspirations as well as their spatial horizons. The concluding chapter (Chapter Nine) summarises the findings of the research and discusses the theoretical and policy implications of this study.

Chapter 2: Theorising Young People's Aspirations and Expectations – a review of the literature

One of the objectives of this study is to assess the merits of Bourdieu's notions of capital, habitus and field, and Rational Choice Theory (associated with the work of Goldthorpe (1998)) in helping us to understand young people's aspirations and expectations. I have chosen to assess these two theoretical frameworks because they have been dominant within the sociology of education and have been influential on previous research which have examined young people's aspirations and expectations. Bourdieu introduced and developed the concepts of capital, habitus and field to explain how individuals typically end up in their class of origin. Those who possess social, cultural and economic capital may perceive the transition from compulsory to post-compulsory education as being smooth and seamless as they may have access to certain services and goods (Bourdieu 1986/1997). Bourdieu's (1977a) concept, habitus, illustrates how expectations and aspirations are formed by our observations of the practices and actions of individuals within the family and the community. Habitus may direct us towards making decisions and choices which are similar to the ones made by individuals from similar social backgrounds.

Rational Choice Theorists such as Goldthorpe (1998) contend that individuals make choices based on a cost-benefit analysis of the options which are available to them. From a rational choice perspective, individuals tend to choose the options which will grant them the greatest economic and social rewards. Goldthorpe (1998: 179) advocates a weaker version of rational choice theory for sociology compared to mainstream economics which acknowledges that what we consider to be 'rational choices' are subjective and are based on our beliefs. Despite this, Goldthorpe (1996: 485) asserts that this version of Rational Choice Theory assumes that:

...actors have goals, have usually alternative means of pursuing these goals and, in choosing their courses of action, tend in some degree to assess probable costs and benefits rather than, say, unthinkingly following social norms or giving unreflecting expression to cultural values

This appears to directly contrast Bourdieu's explanation for young people's aspirations and expectations as his concept of habitus implies that young people's cultural norms and values play an important part in shaping young people's aspirations and expectations.

This chapter begins by exploring Bourdieu's Cultural Reproduction Theory, which encompasses his concepts of capital, field and habitus. It will also examine how Rational Choice Theorists explain young people's aspirations and expectations. Throughout, this chapter will refer to studies which have drawn on these theories to explain young people's aspirations and expectations. This chapter will conclude by comparing Bourdieu's Cultural Reproduction Theory and Rational Choice Theory. Although both of these theories have been presented as offering competing explanations for young people's aspirations and expectations, this chapter will illustrate that there are commonalities between these theories.

Bourdieu's Cultural Reproduction Theory

Bourdieu (1976: 110) rejected the meritocratic belief that every talented individual regardless of their background has the opportunity to ascend the social ladder through persistence and hard work in the education system. One of Bourdieu's aims in his research was to uncover the mechanisms that contribute towards social reproduction (Bourdieu 1996: 1). Bourdieu introduced and developed the concepts of capital, habitus and field to explain the process of social reproduction. These concepts will now be explored in greater detail.

Economic, Social and Cultural Capital

Capital, which corresponds to the resources and assets individuals accumulate over time, is a conceptual tool that was used by Bourdieu (1986/1997) to explain the process of social reproduction as possession of capital can provide individuals with access to different resources.

Capital is unequally distributed in society with dominant groups such as the middle class possessing higher levels of capital compared to those from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

Bourdieu (1986/1997) identified three forms of capital – economic, social and cultural. Economic capital relates to the possession of financial or material resources, which may be in the form of money and assets (Bourdieu 1986/1997: 47). Social capital is associated with individuals' contacts and social networks (Bourdieu 1986/1997: 51). The volume of social capital depends not only on the size of our social network, but also on the people who are within our social circles and the types of services that they can offer (Bourdieu 1986/1997: 52). Certain individuals may provide information or access to places or people, which may assist in achieving particular goals.

The final form of capital is cultural capital, which can be divided into three different forms (Bourdieu 1986/1997: 47). Institutionalized cultural capital refers to credentials or qualifications that educational institutions reward to individuals who perform well in the education system. The objectified form relates to the cultural and artistic objects that we possess such as books and pictures. Embodied cultural capital is associated with “long-lasting dispositions of the body and mind” (Bourdieu 1986/1997: 47). It is those who have access to the legitimate culture during early childhood who possess high volumes of embodied cultural capital. Bourdieu and Passeron (1977/2000: 7) argued that the education system serves the interests of the dominant groups or classes in society as the culture of the school reflects the dominant culture in society. Those who have been endowed with cultural capital from their family have more of an advantage within the education system as they have the appropriate skills to succeed. For Bourdieu and Passeron (1977/2000: 11), the school is a mechanism of social reproduction as it is children from middle-class families who tend to possess higher levels of cultural capital.

Habitus

Embodied cultural capital is converted into habitus, which is defined as being embodied “schemes of perception, thought, appreciation and action” (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977/2000: 35). Bourdieu does not regard habitus as a form of capital, but an “integral part of the person ... [which] cannot be transmitted instantaneously” (Bourdieu 1986/1997: 48). Habitus corresponds to a set of “durable” dispositions, which we acquire at a young age from the family and from individuals within our community (Bourdieu 1977a: 72). Habitus not only includes our attitudes, beliefs and our perception of the social world, but is also associated with the way we stand, speak, talk and walk (Bourdieu 1990a: 70). Habitus also has the capacity to generate practice and enables individuals “to cope with unforeseen and ever-changing situations” (Bourdieu 1977a: 72). Habitus is formed by observations of the actions and practices of family members, peers and neighbours who are likely to come from similar social backgrounds. These dispositions persist with us and form the basis of our experiences later in our lives.

Habitus provides us with a sense of who we are and constitutes what are considered to be normal and reasonable behaviours for ‘people like us’. Habitus also has the capacity to:

Engender aspirations and practices objectively compatible with those objective requirements [meaning] the most improbable practices are excluded, either totally without examination, as *unthinkable*

(Bourdieu 1977a: 77, italics in original)

Habitus may prevent us from making certain decisions, which we regard to be unusual for people who are from similar social backgrounds to us. Therefore, habitus has been used by a number of researchers to understand and explain the underrepresentation of certain groups in further and higher education (see below). This is because individuals from the same social background have formed a similar habitus and are likely to act and make similar decisions based on these dispositions.

Field

Another of Bourdieu's concepts which is important in understanding young people's aspirations and expectations is field, which is defined as being "a network, or a configuration, of objective relations between positions" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 97). Individuals are differentially positioned within a field depending on the amount of social, economic and cultural capital that they possess as these resources provides individuals with access to certain goods and services. Habitus provides individuals with a "feel for the game", a sense of how to act in a certain situation, which is based on our past experiences outside and within the field (Bourdieu 1990a: 66). Bourdieu (1984: 101) constructed the formula "[habitus] (capital) + field = practice" to illustrate how habitus and the possession of capital influences the actions of individuals within a given field.

There are several social fields that young people encounter on a day-to-day basis. These fields have the capacity to structure and shape our habitus (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 127). An influential social field is the local neighbourhood and the community which individuals inhabit. As discussed earlier, the actions, practices and behaviour of individuals within the community provides young people with a sense of who they are and how they relate to the social world. In this study, the South Wales Valleys will be the social field under investigation. As Bourdieu notes, "social agents are the *product of history*, of the history of the whole social field" (quoted in Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 136, italics in original). Therefore, for us to understand how the habitus is formed, we need to look not only at personal life histories, but also the collective history of the neighbourhood or community. Chapter 4 will focus on the research field, the South Wales Valleys, and will discuss how historical events have shaped current economic and social circumstances of the area.

In addition, Bourdieu regards the education system as a field as it has rules and procedures which individuals must follow (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 102). For an individual to be able to progress to the next level of education, for instance, from secondary education to further education, they must meet entry requirements and gain certain qualifications. The education

system is also considered as a social field as there are certain scholastic prizes which individuals compete and struggle to win (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 98). The main prizes in the education system are qualifications or in other words, institutionalized cultural capital (Grenfell and James 1998: 20). It is possible for an individual to convert institutionalized cultural capital into economic capital as acquiring certain qualifications improves the prospects of an individual gaining employment when entering the labour market (Bourdieu 1986/1997: 51). The next section will now refer to empirical studies which have drawn on Bourdieu's work to explain young people's aspirations and expectations.

The application of Bourdieu's work in educational research

Educational researchers have drawn on Bourdieu's concept of capital to understand young people's aspirations and expectations. Previous studies have demonstrated that the high levels of economic capital that middle class individuals possess due to the income and wealth of their parents/carers may lead them to believe that the transition from compulsory to post-compulsory education is smooth and unproblematic (Power *et al.* 2003; Davey 2012). As their parents/carers are able to provide them with financial support, middle class students may not be concerned about the costs of continuing with their education. Lack of economic capital may act as a barrier preventing working class individuals from continuing in education as they may not be able to practically afford to continue with their education or they may feel that progressing into post-compulsory education is not a financially feasible option (Norris 2012; McCrone *et al.* 2013).

In the research literature, middle class students are portrayed as having higher levels of social capital compared to their working class peers. Middle class students are able to rely on a wider social network consisting of relatives, neighbours, parents'/carers' work colleagues and friends, which can provide them with advice and support during different points of transition (Ball 2003; Power *et al.* 2003). As individuals within their social circle are likely to have gone to university and may have acquired a well-paid job, middle class individuals may have valuable sources of information which they can turn to when they are making decisions regarding their future. The 'hot knowledge' which is available to middle class students enables

them to make informed decisions regarding their future and makes them aware of the wide range of educational and career options which are available to them (Ball 2003: 85).

In contrast, working class individuals' social capital may be limited to their relatives and neighbours (Greenbank 2009; Heath *et al.* 2010). Studies have shown how the social contacts of certain working class students, particularly young men, may assist them in acquiring low-skilled, manual jobs as their contacts may inform them of local employment opportunities or may 'put in a good word' for them to the employer (see for example, Willis 1977; McDowell 2003; Ward 2015) However, factors such as the contraction of the youth labour market (see Keep 2012) and the longstanding commitment of governments such as the Welsh Government to extend access to further and higher education to individuals from any social background (for example, Welsh Government 2014a) have resulted in growing numbers of young people progressing into further education (Welsh Government 2016a). Individuals from low socio-economic backgrounds who may decide to progress with their education may lack social contacts which they can turn to in order to gain valuable advice to assist them with decisions concerning their education and future careers. The proportion of people within the social circles of working-class young people, who have gone to university and/or who have gained a highly paid, prestigious job may be slightly lower compared to those from middle-class backgrounds. As a result, working class individuals may not be informed of certain educational and employment opportunities (Greenbank and Hepworth 2008: 8). They may also make misguided decisions which may have a detrimental effect on their future. For instance, in their report, *Unleashing Aspiration*, the Panel on Fair Access to the Professions (2009: 7) noted that they came across incidences of certain working class individuals, who were unable to get a place on a course or to follow a certain career pathway due to decisions that they had made earlier in their lives. Although professionals such as teachers and career advisors may compensate for the lack of social capital among working class students, there is evidence to suggest that working class individuals may be reluctant to ask for help and may feel embarrassed or anxious to approach such people (Greenbank 2009: 163-4).

In educational studies, middle class individuals are often categorized as 'high fliers', who perform well in school (Biggart and Furlong 1996; Archer *et al.* 2012; Archer *et al.* 2014). The parents/carers of middle class students may be in a stronger position to support their child with

their education as they are likely to have entered further and higher education. These parents/carers may have the capacity to transmit cultural capital to their children which provides their child with the adequate skills and aptitudes in order for them to succeed in the education system (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977/2000). Moreover, based on survey data, Sullivan (2006) discovered that the cultural capital that middle class students acquire from their parents/carers may have a significant impact on their educational attitudes. Students who gain cultural capital from their parents/carers are likely to regard education as an intrinsic good and as being crucial for self-development as they are likely from an early age to be involved in leisure activities such as reading which demand intellectual abilities (Sullivan 2006: 279). As they continue to perform well in the education system, middle class students may form close and informal relationships with their teachers (Biggart and Furlong 1996: 259). Their positive experience of education, and the praise and encouragement that they receive from teachers may motivate them to continue with their education.

Research often depicts middle class students within the education system as being a ““fish in water””: it does not feel the weight of the water, and it takes the world about itself for granted” (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 127). Middle class students may feel ‘at home’ within the education system as they have become familiar with the dominant culture (the culture which is valued by the education system) during their early childhood. Furthermore, progressing into post-compulsory education is regarded as being the norm amongst middle class families. There is an expectation that like other relatives, young people in middle class families will progress into further and higher education (Power *et al.* 2003). Thus, middle class students tend to perceive the transition from compulsory to post-compulsory education as a natural and inevitable progression.

On the other hand, working class individuals may perceive entering further and higher education as a difficult and challenging step to take. To start with, Bourdieu and Passeron (1977/2000: 74) argued that as they have acquired lower levels of cultural capital compared to their middle class counterparts, young people from working class backgrounds may not have gained the particular skills and attitudes to excel within the education system. Additionally, existing research has illustrated the contrast between the educational field and working-class neighbourhoods (Jackson and Marsden 1962/1986; Ingram 2011). Education and schooling

may have little or no significance to the lives of working-class individuals. Certain individuals from working class communities may be ambivalent towards the education system as they associate their own experience of schooling with distress, pain, anguish and failure (Reay and Ball 1997). Moreover, they may have acquired jobs, which require little or no qualifications. Therefore, working class individuals may regard that their educational performance has not played a major role in shaping their career trajectories.

Working class cultural attitudes towards schooling may have a direct effect on the way young people perceive the role education may play in their lives. Research has discovered that tensions may emerge between parents/carers and children who are educationally successful. In their classic study of working class children in grammar schools, Jackson and Marsden (1962/1986: 132) discovered that tensions emerged between children and their parents/carers as the child progressed through the education system, with parents/carers - particularly fathers - starting to question the role education played in their child's future. Recently, Fuller (2009: 57) also discovered that some of her female working-class participants were encouraged by their parents/carers to leave school and to find work instantly. Furthermore, counter-school cultures in educational research often consist of individuals from working class background (Willis 1977; McRobbie 1978; McDowell 2003; Archer *et al.* 2007). Working class individuals may be subjected to peer pressure and may start to adopt characteristics of the anti-school culture such as truanting, playing up and not making an effort in the classroom in fear of being labelled with the derogatory term of the 'swot' (Brown 1987: 94). Therefore, there is empirical evidence to suggest that cultural messages transmitted by the family, peers and neighbours may result in individuals rejecting education and opposing the authority of teachers.

Other researchers such as Lareau (2011) have also identified social class variations in terms of parenting styles. Lareau (2011: 2) found that generally the middle class parents in her study were engaged in a process of concerted cultivation and attempted to cultivate their children's talents in a concerted and coordinated fashion. They tried to do this by organising, establishing and choosing different activities for their children to participate in such as sporting or musical activities. Another way in which these parents practiced concerted cultivation was by having discussions with their children as frequently as possible in order to elicit their feelings, thoughts and opinions. In contrast, the working class parents in Lareau's (2011: 3) study were typically

not involved in a deliberate cultivation of their children, but were involved in undertaking the accomplishment of natural growth. This meant that children had long stretches of leisure time, were involved in child-initiated play and had daily interactions with family members and relatives. There were also clear boundaries between adults and children among the working class families in Lareau's (2011:3) study. There was a tendency for working class parents to use directives and to tell their children what to do rather than trying to reason with their children and to elicit their children's thoughts and feelings (Lareau 2011: 3). Due to the discussions that they had with their parents, middle-class children had greater verbal agility and larger vocabulary, illustrating how middle class parents are able to transmit skills and aptitudes (or in Bourdieu's (1986/1997) terms - cultural capital) which would enable their children to excel within the education system.

Drawing on Bourdieu's theory of habitus, Lareau (2011: 362) notes that these different parenting styles are aspects of the habitus of these families and that these parenting styles teach children different sets of dispositions or habitus. Lareau (2011: 6) found that children who were exposed to concerted cultivation felt a sense of entitlement. As a result of the enormous stress on negotiation and reasoning in their homes, middle class children were comfortable to make demands on different professionals such as teachers and doctors (Lareau 2011: 7). On the other hand, the working class children in Lareau's (2011:6) research displayed an emerging sense of constraint in their interactions with institutional settings such as schools. Working class children were less likely to try to change interactions to suit their own preferences and were more likely to feel that they were unable to change their situation in schools (Lareau 2011: 6-7). As Lareau (2011: 7) notes, due to these different parenting styles, middle class children are more likely to be able to make the rules work in their favour and gain advantages, which will help them in the future.

Despite being influential in educational research, Bourdieu and educational researchers which have applied his concepts to their work have been criticized for paying too much attention on unequal relations based on social class and neglecting other forms of inequality such as gender inequality (Reay 2004: 436). Yet, Bourdieu did touch upon issues concerning gender in some of his writing. For instance, in his book, *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture*, Bourdieu recognized that women and men are more likely to be directed towards certain

subjects in school by providing empirical evidence which indicates that women are more likely to enrol on Arts courses (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977/2000: 76). According to Bourdieu and Passeron (1977/2000: 78), this is because the family and other social agents such as peers and teachers transmit the message to children that certain subjects require ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ qualities. Francis (2000: 35) also notes that there is a common belief in society that Arts and Humanities subjects are associated with feminine traits such as emotion and subjectivity, while Scientific-related subjects are associated with masculine qualities such as objectivity and reason.

Boys’ and girls’ choices of subjects are heavily influenced by their perception of their future careers. Studies focusing on the decisions that working-class men make regarding their future found that cultural ideas surrounding masculinity have a strong influence on the way they perceive their educational careers and their future. For instance, Willis (1977) identified a group of working class boys, the lads, who attached no significance to education and qualifications as they felt that occupations which require high levels of education, mental labour, were effeminate and regarded these jobs were mainly occupied by ‘pen-pushers’ who made no significant contribution to society. Manual labour was the preferred occupational destination for the ‘lads’ as it was a means for them to emulate traditional masculine qualities such as being strong, tough and active (Willis 1977: 150). Recent studies illustrate that traditional, stereotypical, societal expectations of what it means to be a man still play a role in young men’s lives. For instance, some of the young men in McDowell’s (2003) and Ward’s (2015) recent research regarded gaining employment in industrial, male-dominated jobs as a means of constructing a traditional masculine identity.

Studies on boys from middle class backgrounds have illustrated how middle class boys may also be directed towards traditionally masculine jobs (for example, Archer *et al.* 2014). Different to their working class counterparts, the middle class boys in these studies had aspirations of continuing with their education and progressing into higher education, but still aspired to gain traditional masculine jobs that were related to the Sciences such as being a quantum physicist or studying male-related subjects such as Mathematics or Medicine at university (see Archer *et al.* 2014: 12). As Mac an Ghaill (1994) notes, Science-related subjects

provide boys with a means of fulfilling a masculine role through performance of ‘muscular intellect’, an arrogant and confident display of academic intellect.

Previous studies focusing on young women’s career aspirations have demonstrated how they have a clear sense of what is an appropriate job for a woman (Griffin 1985; Sharpe 1994). Connolly and Healy (2004: 513) highlight that working class women may acquire certain gendered dispositions, which may make them perceive and accept that their futures will consist of “leaving school early, finding local employment and adopting the role of wife and mother”. Aware of the sort of futures ahead of them, many working class girls may decide to adopt more of a sexual feminine role and may pay greater attention to their appearance and to fashion as a means of maintaining their position within the social group and attracting the attention of boys (McRobbie 1978; Archer *et al.* 2007). These studies have shown how investing in such feminine identities may have implications on young women’s educational performance, relationship with their teachers and their perception of their educational future.

Although middle class girls may be orientated towards different occupations, they may still be directed to short lived careers (McRobbie 1978) or female dominated professional occupations such as teaching and nursing (Archer *et al.* 2013: 7). Working class women may regard office work, child care and hairdressing, and middle class women may consider teaching and nursing to be appropriate jobs as these occupational roles fulfil the idealised form of femininity, where girls can dress nice things, ‘work with people’ and not be involved in tough, hard graft, masculine tasks (Griffin 1985; Archer *et al.* 2013).

Yet, researchers such as Skeggs (2004: 29) have suggested that Bourdieu’s concept of habitus does not provide an adequate explanation for the formation of girls’ and boys’ aspiration because girls and boys do not always take up gendered norms and values or adopt traditional masculine or feminine identities. Statistical evidence suggests that men and especially women are choosing subjects/courses and pursuing careers which were once not traditionally associated with their gender (see Crompton 2001; WISE 2016; Welsh Government 2016c). Qualitative studies also provide support to such statistical evidence. For instance, Archer *et al.* (2012: 975) discovered that many of her middle class participants were able to have aspirations

towards scientific careers, but at the same time, were able to balance their interest in science-related subjects with a feminine identity associated with being either 'sporty' or into fashion. However, as Archer *et al.* (2013: 983) note, it may be fairly difficult for working class women to consider a future career in science-related subject as the academic learner identity is commonly associated with middle class students.

Furthermore, recent social and economic changes have cast doubt on the usefulness of Bourdieu's concept of habitus in explaining how young people's aspirations and expectations are shaped (Brown *et al.* 2016). Increasing numbers of young people including those from working class backgrounds are progressing into further education and higher education (Welsh Government 2016a; HEFCW 2012: 45; Department for Education 2016a: 4). Research has also shown that young people from different class backgrounds increasingly consider education as a way of avoiding scarce employment opportunities and as a means of gaining a decent job (Raffe and Willms 1989; Evans 2016a). Therefore, this evidence calls into question Bourdieu's concept of habitus and his assertion that deeply embedded class based dispositions shape young people's aspirations and expectations.

Despite this, researchers have still used Bourdieu's concepts of habitus to explain the higher education choices of young people from different social backgrounds. When making higher education choices, individuals from economically disadvantaged backgrounds are hesitant to apply for a place in prestigious universities (Jerrim and Vignoles 2015). This may be due to the fact that working class children may consider prestigious universities as being exclusively middle class establishments (Reay *et al.* 2005; Evans 2009).

Reay *et al.* (2005) drew on Bourdieu's work to illustrate differences in terms of the choices that young people from different social backgrounds make with regards to higher education. In their study, Reay *et al.* (2005) identified two types of higher education choosers – the contingent and embedded choosers. Whereas the contingent choosers are generally first generation higher education applicants and predominantly come from working class backgrounds; the embedded choosers have a history of higher education participation within their families as their parents and some of their relatives have attended universities (Reay *et al.* 2005: 112). As a result of their social background, while the desire to go to university is a

recent aspiration for the contingent aspiration; going to university is a long term aspiration held by the embedded choosers. Any alternatives to higher education are considered to be unacceptable and unthinkable among the parents of the embedded choosers. Furthermore, there are differences in terms of the social capital that the embedded choosers and the contingent choosers possess. Whereas the embedded choosers are able to turn to their parents and other individuals within their social networks who are able to provide them with valuable information regarding different higher education institutions and courses; the contingent choosers lack contact with individuals who have had experiences of universities (Reay *et al.* 2005: 112). Consequently, the embedded choosers appear to be better informed about the higher education system compared to the contingent choosers. For instance, the embedded choosers are more aware of the status of different universities and courses compared to the contingent choosers. Another difference between the contingent choosers and embedded choosers relates to finance and their spatial horizons (where they envisage they will study) (Reay *et al.* 2005: 112). Due to their socio-economic background, the cost of going to higher education is a key concern for the contingent choosers. Partly due to financial issues, the contingent choosers' spatial horizons tend to be limited and they tend to want to study in universities which are close and commutable from home (Reay *et al.* 2005: 114). In contrast, finance is not an issue for the embedded choosers due to their families' possession of economic capital. As a result, it is expected if necessary that the embedded choosers will move away from home in order to study the 'right' course in the 'right' institution (Reay *et al.* 2005: 120).

Other researchers such as Ingram (2011) and Friedman (2016) have drawn on Bourdieu's work and in particular his concept of habitus clivé (or cleft habitus) to illustrate the impact that educational achievement and social mobility has on working class individuals. Bourdieu (1999: 511) notes that profound changes may produce a painfully fragmented self, a cleft habitus:

...a habitus divided against itself, in constant negotiation with itself and its ambivalences, and therefore doomed to a kind of duplication, to a double perception of the self, to successive allegiance and multiple identities.

In her study of working class educationally successful boys, Ingram (2011: 290) develops the term, 'habitus tug', to illustrate how these boys were torn between two different fields - the field associated with the school and the field associated with their working-class community. Ingram (2011: 288-9) argues that these two fields are incompatible because education often is not respected among working class communities and working class culture generally is often not valued in schools. As a result of the 'habitus tug', the working class boys in Ingram's (2011) study found it difficult to balance their working class identity with a successful learner identity. In his study, Friedman (2016) illustrates how some of his participants experienced a cleft habitus as they became upwardly mobile. These participants either felt that they were not accepted or felt that they did not belong to the class milieu that they had ascended. From the interview with these participants, it appears that these individuals struggled to adapt their habitus to the new conditions that they faced as they became upwardly mobile (Friedman 2016: 141). In addition, these participants also felt a sense of guilt as they felt that they had abandoned their origins by climbing the social ladder (Friedman 2016: 142). These studies show how educational success and upward mobility can be socially and emotionally difficult for working class individuals.

However, others have questioned Bourdieu's theoretical framework by downplaying the role cultural norms and values play in influencing individuals' decisions and choices. Instead, researchers such as Goldthorpe (1998) have advocated the application of Rational Choice Theory in order to understand how individuals form aspirations and make choices concerning their future. The next section will now discuss the principles of Rational Choice Theory and will refer to studies which have drawn on RCT to explain young people's aspirations and expectations.

Rational Choice Theory

RCT proposes that individuals evaluate the options which are available to them and choose the option which will grant them the greatest social and economic rewards. As noted in the

introduction of this chapter, Goldthorpe (1996: 485) makes the case for a weak version of RCT for sociology - one which acknowledges that individuals are not:

...always entirely clear about their goals, are always aware of the optimal means of pursuing them, or in the end do always follow the course of action that they know to be rational.

However, according to rational choice theorists such as Goldthorpe (1996: 485), there is a tendency for individuals to make decisions based on cost-benefit analyses rather than following cultural norms.

Boudon (1974), whose work is associated with rational choice theory, argues that primary effects (which represent educational ability and are considered more broadly by Goldthorpe (1996: 491, italics in original) as “comprising *all* those influences, whether cultural or psychological or genetic” on educational ability) impact on young people’s aspirations and expectations. Based on their review of research, Gorard and Smith (2007) found that one of the main barriers to participation in post-compulsory education is educational attainment. A person must have gained the minimum level of qualifications before they are able to progress to the next educational stage. Individuals eligible for Free School Meals (a proxy of socio-economic disadvantage) tend to underperform in education compared to those who are ineligible for the scheme at GCSE level (Welsh Government 2016b; Department for Education 2015). It is therefore unsurprising that a higher proportion of individuals on Free School Meals are not in any form of education and training (see Department for Education 2011¹⁵) and that a lower proportion of individuals from low-socio economic backgrounds progress into higher education (see BIS 2016a; WISERD 2015). The relatively higher educational attainment of girls at GCSE level (StatsWales 2016a; Department for Education 2015) also contribute to the higher proportion of girls who enter post-compulsory training and education as well as higher education (Welsh Government 2016a; WISERD 2015; BIS 2016a). At the same time, we need

¹⁵ This is based on data from England. No analysis of equivalent data has been undertaken in Wales.

to acknowledge how different social characteristics such as gender, ethnicity and social class intersect and impact on young people's educational attainment (for example, Strand 2014).

Educational ability not only explains participation rates in further and higher education but also may explain patterns in choice of subject. For instance, Jonsson (1999) tested the explanatory power of RCT to understand gender differences in terms of choice of subject. Jonsson (1999: 401) dismisses explanations which have been influenced by Bourdieu, which argue that cultural messages transmitted by other social agents play a significant role in directing young people towards gender-specific subjects. She introduces the term 'comparative advantage' and argues that when making choices in terms of subjects, individuals tend to choose subjects in which they have achieved relatively better grades. Based on a large dataset of pupils in comprehensive schools in Sweden, Jonsson (1999: 398) discovered that there were no significant gender differences in terms of the educational performance of girls and boys in the Sciences. However, when comparing the school marks of pupils in different subjects, Jonsson (1999: 398-9) discovered that boys tended to perform relatively better in the Sciences compared to the Arts and Humanities, while girls were likely to gain comparably better marks in the Arts and Humanities compared to the Sciences. She concludes by arguing that 'comparative advantage' accounts for the higher proportion of girls studying subjects in the Arts and Humanities and for the higher proportion of boys studying subjects in the Sciences (Jonsson 1999: 401).

Nevertheless, educational ability alone cannot explain differences in post-16 participation in education and training. Research which has explored the decisions of individuals who have achieved the same attainment levels has found that those from lower socio-economic backgrounds are less likely to progress into post-compulsory education and to undertake A-Level courses, often considered as the conventional route to higher education (Jackson *et al.* 2007). Therefore, we must also take into account secondary effects, which refer to the choices that individuals make with regards to their future based on the options which are available to them (Boudon 1974). Individuals' decisions may be influenced by their perception of their chances of educational success. This may be based on subjective beliefs of abilities which are not only shaped by previous educational results, but also by the performances of other people from the same social background (Breen and Goldthorpe 1997: 286) and also by the comments that individuals receive from parents/carers, teachers and peers (Brooks 2003). In their study,

Archer and Hutchings (2000) discovered that certain economically disadvantaged students were hesitant to apply for a place in university as they perceived higher education to be a risk. The stories of non-completion in higher education that they heard from other working class peers influenced them to perceive that their chances of succeeding and completing a higher education course was low (Archer and Hutchings 2000: 561). On the other hand, Sullivan (2006: 283) discovered that children of graduate parents/carers tended to overestimate their abilities. Other studies have also suggested that girls may underestimate their own academic potential, particularly in STEM subjects (Sullivan 2006; OECD 2013: 87). Girls' tendency to negatively perceive their own abilities may explain why lower proportion of girls may not choose STEM subjects.

Financial costs and the economic returns of each possible outcome may be another factor that young people consider when making decisions regarding their future (Breen and Goldthorpe 1997: 280). Working class individuals may be more risk averse to certain opportunities as they tend not to have the same levels of financial security and stability as middle class individuals have (Goldthorpe 2003: 235). Research has shown that despite individuals adhering to the human capital belief (associated with the work of Schultz (1961) and Becker (1993)) that educational progression may provide individuals with higher financial returns; many working class individuals may perceive higher education to be a financially unviable option (Archer and Hutchings 2000). Rather than continuing in education, individuals may be attracted by the possibility of earning money instantly by entering the world of work after finishing compulsory education. Transport costs (Green and White 2008) as well as higher education tuition fees (Callender and Jackson 2008) may deter individuals from continuing in further and higher education. Moreover, working class individuals may be reluctant to progress with their education as they may perceive that their chances of gaining a well-paid job after finishing higher education are low due to the saturated graduate labour market and the weakening bond between the education system and the labour market (Archer and Hutchings 2000: 566).

Yet, the amount of economic resources individuals possess and the increase in the cost of education cannot account for gender differences in participation in further and higher education, according to Breen and Goldthorpe (1997). This is because inequalities in economic resources exist between families rather than within families. Breen and Goldthorpe (1997:

296) argue that women's perception of the economic returns of education has changed in recent years. Changes in women's participation in the labour market (see Johnes 2012; ONS 2013) have meant that more women now associate further and higher education with social and financial rewards as they consider that continuing with their education will enable them to acquire highly-paid, socially prestigious jobs. Consequently, increasing numbers of women are now progressing into further and higher education (Welsh Government 2016a; Hillman and Robinson 2016; WISERD 2015). However, studies such as Brine and Waller (2004) and Fuller (2009) have shown that certain working class women may be reluctant to progress into further and higher education due to financial costs. Therefore, there is a need for us to acknowledge how both gender and class may impact on the way individuals perceive their future.

Rational Choice Theorists also acknowledge that individuals' choices may be driven by non-instrumental factors such as "approval, sociability, status, and power" (Granovetter 1985: 586). Individuals may continue in education believing that they will gain respect and social approval from others as becoming upwardly mobile and acquiring a prestigious job are still strong indicators of success in today's society (Pahl 1995; Friedman 2013). However, Rational Choice Theorists such as Boudon (1974) acknowledge social costs such as moving away and losing contact with other members of the community may prevent individuals, particularly from working class backgrounds, from continuing in education. Yet commentators such as Goldthorpe (1996: 495) disagree and instead argue that strong-knit and solidaristic working-class communities have disappeared. Roberts (2001) supports this proposition and argues that this is because the working class have become more disorganised due to factors such as geographical mobility and the decline in heavy industry which formed the basis of working class communities. However, this is debatable with recent research suggesting that despite being aware of the limited employment opportunities in the local area, young people, particularly from working class backgrounds, still desire to stay close to their communities due to strong local bonds and family commitments (Evans 2009; Evans 2016b).

Rational Choice theorists such as Goldthorpe (1996) also concur with Keller and Zavalloni (1964)'s 'positional theory of aspiration'. Rather than considering aspirations as the product of cultural norms and values, Keller and Zavalloni (1964: 69) argue that we should explore the relative aspect of aspirations by looking at how people are positioned within the social hierarchy. As working class individuals are positioned lower in the class hierarchy, they have

more distance to travel in order to reach a socially advantaged position than their middle class peers (Goldthorpe 1996: 490). Empirical evidence based on large datasets indicate that individuals aspire to reach a social position similar to that of their parents/carers and are less inclined to pursue ambitious goals as it may lead to downward mobility (Van De Werfhorst and De Hofstede 2007; Holm and Jaeger 2008). Therefore, working class students may be more inclined to follow safer and more financially viable options such as entering the world of work after leaving school or undertaking vocational education because they believe that choosing these options will maintain their social position and will stop them from ending up in a lower social class position (Goldthorpe 1996: 495).

The ‘discouraged worker’ hypothesis (Raffe and Willms 1989) also provides support to Rational Choice Theory. The discouraged worker hypothesis proposes that when local unemployment rates are high, young people from the area are likely to progress into post-compulsory education to avoid entry into a labour market with limited employment prospects (Raffe and Willms 1989: 559). A wealth of research has demonstrated that there are clear differences in participation rates in different areas, with more people deciding to stay in education in areas of high unemployment (Raffe and Willms 1989; Evans 2016a). Researchers have also noted that the particular situation of the labour market at a particular time may have an impact on the process of decision-making among young people, with some researchers indicating that the discouraged worker effect is prevalent during times of financial recession (Evans 2016a). The discouraged worker hypothesis highlights how both time and place may have a bearing on the decisions that individuals make.

Discussion

This chapter has explored Bourdieu’s Cultural Reproduction Theory and Rational Choice Theory and has also examined existing research which has adopted these theoretical approaches to explain young people’s aspirations and expectations. In the past, there has been a tendency to present both Rational Choice Theory and Bourdieu’s Cultural Reproduction Theory as being two theoretical frameworks which are in opposition with each other. This is not surprising as both Bourdieu and Rational Choice Theorists have critiqued each other’s

work. In the past, Goldthorpe (2007b) has criticized Bourdieu's concept of habitus for being overly deterministic. According to Goldthorpe (2007b: 7), as Bourdieu's Cultural Reproduction theory is one which seeks to explain how social reproduction is achieved, this theoretical standpoint is unable to explain anomalies such as how certain working class individuals have been able to achieve within the education system and have become upwardly mobile. Moreover, Goldthorpe (2007b) dismisses Bourdieu's assumption that the school contributes to social reproduction. Goldthorpe (2007b: 8) points to evidence from Halsey *et al.*'s (1980) large scale social mobility study, which illustrate that educational expansion during the mid-twentieth century resulted in absolute terms to substantial and predominantly upward educational mobility among the working class.

Bourdieu defended the concept of habitus countless times and argued that the concept does acknowledge the role of agency, but at the same time recognizes how agents are also influenced by external structures. For instance, Bourdieu emphasised that:

...social agents will *actively* determine, on the basis of these socially and historically constituted categories of perception and appreciation

(Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 136, italics in original)

In addition, Bourdieu (1990b: 116) also suggested that the same habitus may generate different practices or actions within a certain field. Individuals who originate from similar social backgrounds may act differently within fields such as the education system.

Responding to Goldthorpe's article, Lizardo (2008: 4) argued that Bourdieu (1984) recognised that the education system may transmit cultural capital and has the capacity to modify and change individuals' dispositions. Nevertheless, Bourdieu (1977a: 87) clearly pointed out that the "habitus acquired in the family underlies the structuring of school experiences". Therefore, the habitus, a product of early socialisation, leaves a lasting legacy on individuals and largely influences their educational experiences as well as their aspirations and expectations. Despite

Bourdieu's response to such accusations, it is difficult to conceive how the concept of habitus allows agents to make decisions which deviate from socially deterministic dispositions that they have been acquired from an early age. There was a tendency for Bourdieu to place emphasis on structure rather than agency when he discussed his concept of habitus.

Bourdieu also questioned Rational Choice Theorists' assumptions that individuals make free, informed calculations when making choices regarding their future. According to Bourdieu (1990b: 11), most of the time individuals are unable to act rationally because "time is limited" and "information is restricted". Another criticism from Bourdieu regarding RCT is that it hides the fact that our habitus determines the choices we make (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 124). For Bourdieu, the idea that individuals are making decisions regarding their future based on strategic calculation is an illusion.

Despite some disagreement, it is evident that both RCT and Bourdieu do concur on certain matters. Both theoretical approaches acknowledge that the material circumstances of individuals may assist or prevent them from choosing or aspiring to pursue certain options. Moreover, both theoretical approaches accept that young people's social networks provide them with not only access to certain opportunities, but also may inform them of the options which are available to them. Both theoretical approaches also recognize that individuals' choices are shaped by their perceptions of objective probabilities. As noted earlier, Goldthorpe (1996: 485) argues that the weak version of Rational Choice Theory does not assume that individuals give "unreflecting expression to cultural values". However, in another article, Breen and Goldthorpe (1997: 299, italics in original) state that they do not dismiss the role cultural norms and values play in influencing the aspirations and expectations of young people and argue that cultural norms and values serve as "*guides* to rational action" – an assertion which is not dissimilar to what Bourdieu argues. Bourdieu also noted that certain actions may be the product of rational considerations:

The lines of action suggested by habitus may very well be accompanied by a strategic calculation of costs and benefits

As there are commonalities between Bourdieu's Cultural Reproduction Theory and Rational Choice Theory, it is difficult at times to distinguish between both theoretical approaches. In Chapter 3, I will discuss how I operationalise Bourdieu's Cultural Reproduction Theory and Rational Choice Theory.

Previous researchers have attempted to incorporate both theories in order to understand how young people's aspirations and expectations are shaped. Based on interviews with young people from Germany and England, Glaesser and Cooper (2014) discovered that students were involved in cost-benefit analyses of the options which were available to them. Many of the participants acknowledged that higher education provided them with the means of gaining a high-paid, prestigious job (Glaesser and Cooper 2014: 471). Participants were also aware of the costs of continuing in higher education, not only in terms of the financial costs that were incurred through tuition fees, but also social costs in terms of losing contact with friends and spending less time with family. However, Glaesser and Cooper (2014) stressed that individuals' definition of rational action were shaped by class-based dispositions. Habitus provided individuals with upper and lower boundaries. While most of the participants indicated that they would like to progress to university, some often found certain goals to be unrealistic (Glaesser and Cooper 2014: 471). Lower boundaries provided individuals with a sense of what they considered to be the minimum that they wanted to achieve. Therefore, certain individuals considered that gaining a job which provided them with a salary above the minimum wage was an acceptable goal to attain (Glaesser and Cooper 2014: 474). However, as Glaesser and Cooper (2014) did not interview their participants at different time points, it fails to explore the process of decision-making among young people as it only explored the aspirations of young people rather than the final choices that they made. Neither does it take into account the role that different forms of capital play in shaping young people's aspirations.

Davies *et al.* (2014) also carried out questionnaires to examine to what extent are human capital theory (for example, Becker 1993) and Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital able to help us understand young people's higher education choices. Human capital theory is similar to

rational choice theory as it acknowledges that young people make decisions based on analyses of the financial costs and returns of pursuing certain options. According to human capital theory, individuals are happy to stay on in education and forego earnings because they believe that they will gain higher financial returns by accumulating human capital through education (Davies *et al.* 2014: 807). From their survey data, Davies *et al.* (2014: 820) found that after taking into account of other factors such as expected grades, background, ethnicity and type of school attended, young people who had high expectations of a graduate premium were more likely to express an intention of going to university. According to Davies *et al.* (2014: 820), high expectations of graduate premium is related to cultural capital as young people with high levels of ‘parent/school interaction’ cultural capital i.e. children whose parents discussed their school work with them as well as the impact that their school work had on future employment, were more likely to expect a higher graduate premium. One suggestion Davies *et al.* (2014: 820) provide for this trend is that young people who possess cultural capital may be able to access information which enables them to be confident in their predictions of graduate premiums. Davies *et al.* (2014: 820) conclude that rather than treating human capital theory and cultural capital as being oppositional, we should regard both theoretical standpoints as offering part of the story. Although there are similarities between human capital theory and rational choice theory, it needs to be acknowledged that Davies *et al.* (2014) did not set out to assess all of the principles of the sociological version of rational choice theory, which is advocated by Goldthorpe (1998). Furthermore, as this research only focused on Bourdieu’s concept of cultural capital, it does not examine other elements of Bourdieu’s Cultural Reproduction Theory. Similar to Glaesser and Cooper’s (2014) research, Davies *et al.*’s (2014) study also only concentrates on young people’s aspirations and does not examine the choices that young people make regarding their future.

Hodkinson and Sparkes (1997) also developed a theory of career decision-making under the name of ‘Careership’ theory in which they attempted to integrate both Bourdieu’s work and Rational Choice Theory. Based on findings from their study of young people making career decisions in the context of a youth training scheme, Hodkinson and Sparkes (1997: 33) conclude rather than being technically rational, young people are involved in pragmatically rational decision-making. This means that young people’s decisions are only partially rational as they are also shaped by their emotions and feelings. Decision-making is also a “socially and culturally embedded activity” (Hodkinson *et al.* 1996: 122) and the life histories of the young

people, their family background and culture also influence the choice that they make. Furthermore, young people's choices are opportunistic and are based on fortuitous experiences and contacts. Hodkinson and Sparkes (1997: 34) also note that young people's decisions are bounded by 'horizons of actions', which refers to the space in which actions can be taken and decisions can be made. Opportunities are not 'out there' to be chosen and certain social contacts may make us aware of or help us to find certain opportunities (Hodkinson and Sparkes 1997: 35). Furthermore, horizons of actions are based on what young people perceive is available and what opportunities they consider to be appropriate and suitable. For instance, young people may reject advice from certain individuals such as careers advisors because they are beyond their horizons (Hodkinson and Sparkes 1997: 35). As Hodkinson and Sparkes (1997: 35) note, horizons of actions are not only shaped by opportunity structures in the education system and the labour market, but also by class-based dispositions (*habitus*) which influence what young people consider to be appropriate and suitable courses of action. On the one hand, horizons of actions can either constrain or expand our view of the world and the choices that we can make (Hodkinson and Sparkes 1997: 35).

While integrating both Bourdieu's work and Rational Choice Theory may alleviate certain theoretical gaps, there are certain issues that still need to be addressed. One of the issues with drawing on Rational Choice Theory is that it is difficult to rule out any action as being rational as individuals tend to articulate their aspirations and choices as being rational and strategic as opposed to being random and impromptu. Moreover, other researchers have also argued that it is fairly difficult to establish whether the actions and behaviour of a certain person is associated with a particular *habitus* (Brown 1987: 31).

Furthermore, research examining young people's aspirations and expectations has tended to develop a binary narrative when discussing working class and middle class individuals, and does not take into account intra-class variations which may exist (Davey 2012). Acknowledging that differences may exist within classes in terms of individuals' perceptions of their futures and the decisions that they make is particularly important as social class groups have now stratified and become fragmented meaning that today we are unable to talk about the working class or the middle class as homogenous groups (Roberts 2001). Previous research such as Brown's (1987) study of working class young people in industrial South Wales and

Brooks's (2003) research on middle class students illustrate intra-class variations in terms of young people's aspirations and expectations.

In addition, there is also a tendency for educational researchers who have drawn on Bourdieu's work and RCT to focus on social class and neglect other social categories such as gender, which may have a bearing on individuals' future decisions. To alleviate such theoretical problems, this study will draw on Crenshaw's (1989) concept of 'intersectionality' and will explore how both class and gender may impact on individuals' educational and labour market experiences. Similar to Acker (2006: 51), this research will begin analysis from the "entry point" of class and will explore how gender processes shape class-based practices.

Furthermore, there is a growing body of research for example, Frye (2012) and Baker (2016) which have examined how moral meanings play a part in shaping young people's aspirations. This body of research has shown that young people's perception of what it is to be a good person influence young people's ambitions with young people wanting to pursue educational and career pathways which they consider to be morally sound. The moral dimension of aspirations is not central in Bourdieu's Cultural Reproduction Theory and Rational Choice Theory. Therefore, this piece of research will examine whether moral meanings contribute towards young people's ambitions.

Researchers such as Rees *et al.* (1997) have also stressed the importance of exploring history and place as educational, training and employment opportunities vary across different localities and have changed over time. Researchers such as Raffe and Willms (1989) and Evans (2016a) have discovered that in areas with high unemployment, there is a tendency for young people to progress into further education rather than leave the education system and try to find work. Other studies have also demonstrated that acute economic developments such as financial recessions e.g. the recent financial crisis of 2008, and long-term economic developments such as the contraction of the youth labour market may also shape individuals' aspirations and expectations (see Evans 2016a). Therefore, it is important to take into account the role that time and place play in shaping young people's aspirations and expectations.

To conclude, I will summarise some of the main assertions that Bourdieu and Rational Choice Theorists have made with regards to how young people's aspirations and expectations are shaped. This study will assess the relative value of these assertions in explaining the empirical evidence in this study:

- Young people's level of economic capital determine which options they regard to be financially feasible and unfeasible, according to Bourdieu (1986/1997). Rational choice theorists such as Breen and Goldthorpe (1997) also recognise that young people's economic circumstances shape their aspirations and expectations. Young people tend to choose options which they consider to be financially safe and will grant them the greatest financial rewards.
- Factors such as educational ability (or what rational choice theorists such as Boudon (1974) would term as "primary effects") and perceptions of educational performance shape young people's expectations and aspirations. According to Bourdieu (1986/1997), the level of cultural capital that young people possess, which we mostly acquire during early childhood, impacts on young people's educational performance. Rational choice theorists such as Goldthorpe (1996: 491) recognise that psychological, genetic and cultural factors impact on educational attainment.
- Young people with high levels of social capital (Bourdieu 1986/1997) have access to individuals who can provide them with information regarding certain options. Rational choice theorists such as Goldthorpe (1996) acknowledge that young people's social networks may shape their aspirations and expectations.
- What individuals consider to be "rational" is subjective, shaped by our beliefs and are based on a cost-benefit analysis of the options which are available to them according to rational choice theorists such as Goldthorpe (1998).
- Rational choice theorists consider that cultural norms and values serve as "*guides* to rational action" (Breen and Goldthorpe 1997:299). For Bourdieu, young people's conception of what is rational is shaped by their habitus – a set of durable dispositions which are structured by cultural messages transmitted by the family and other members of their social group (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 131).

The next chapter will now discuss the research design and method of data collection chosen to assess these two theoretical approaches.

Chapter 3: Methodology and Research Design

In this chapter, I will share my reflections on my methodological decisions and provide a detailed account of how this study was carried out in order to increase my accountability to readers of this thesis. The research questions (see Chapter 1) and the two theoretical approaches this study aims to assess (see Chapter 2) have guided my methodological decisions. This chapter will start by discussing the methods of data collection, research design and sample that were selected for this study. It will also provide an account of the fieldwork and how the interviews were conducted, as well as giving an overview of the ethical issues which were considered. The chapter will finish by discussing the process of transcribing and analysing the data.

Ontological and Epistemological Standpoint

When contemplating which method of data collection would be appropriate for this study, a number of factors were considered. One of these considerations was my ontological and epistemological standpoint. Ontologically, I concur with critical realists such as Archer (1998: 195) and acknowledge that there is an “objective” reality which exists independent to us. Social structures and institutions such as the family and the educational system exist which govern and regulate the behaviour of individuals. While critical realists such as Bhaskar (1998: xvi) acknowledge that society does not dictate the actions and behaviours of individuals, this ontological perspective recognises that there is a need for researchers to examine tendencies and patterns in the way people behave and act. A critical realist ontological perspective reflects the two theoretical approaches this study seeks to examine as both Bourdieu’s Cultural Reproduction Theory and Rational Choice Theory assert that they acknowledge the role that structure and agency play in determining action. From this ontological perspective, it is considered imperative for us to explore how underlying mechanisms operate to shape young people’s future aspirations and expectations.

Additionally, I adhere to a form of epistemological constructivism similar to Maxwell (2012: 5). This perspective acknowledges that it is difficult to obtain certain and objective knowledge of our social world because our understanding of social phenomena is interpretative and is shaped by our socially and historically constituted values and beliefs, as well as how we are positioned within society. Despite this, I believe that reflecting on the research process and being aware of the ways in which my values and beliefs impact on data collection and my interpretation of empirical data as well as providing adequate justification for my methodological choices will strengthen the validity of this study. For instance, I am a Welsh speaker; I was educated through the medium of Welsh; I am involved in developing and increasing Welsh-medium provision in Cardiff University's School of Social Science and I am supportive of Welsh-medium education. In conducting this piece of research, I have been aware of my beliefs towards Welsh-medium education. While these beliefs have influenced my choice of study, I have tried to ensure that my methodological choices will increase the rigour and robustness of this research. I have also made sure that the findings of this study reflect the empirical data that I have collected rather than being based on my beliefs regarding Welsh-medium education.

Research Method, Design and Sample

Although researchers who claim to have proved that individuals are rational decision makers (for example, Jonsson 1999; Jackson *et al.* 2007; Holm and Jaeger 2008) tend to use large, quantitative datasets on individuals' outcomes, I felt that qualitative, semi-structured interviewing was the most adequate method to answer my research questions and explore young people's aspirations and expectations. The use of open ended questions in this type of interviewing yields rich, in-depth data and provides the researcher with "windows on the world" (Holstein and Gubrium 1995: 2) of their participants and their perceptions of the social world which may not be as accessible through quantitative methods such as surveys. Another strength of semi-structured interviews is that they provide the researcher with flexibility. Unlike quantitative methods such as questionnaires, the researcher is not confined to asking the same sets of questions in the same sequence (Jones 2004: 257). During the interview, if a participant raises an issue which warrants further questioning, the researcher is able to probe

the participant in order to gain further details. For instance, in this study, a number of the participants talked about wanting a ‘good job’ in the future. Afterwards, I asked students to describe and explain what a ‘good job’ meant to them in order to gain their understanding and definition of a ‘good job’. Participants may also raise issues that they consider to be significant and important, which were not considered by the researcher during the process of designing the research. For example, early on in this study, I discovered that students in Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel had recently been on work experience – something which I was not aware of before I started interviewing students. From students’ accounts, it appeared that their work experience had played an important part in shaping their career aspirations. Therefore, using this approach enabled me to ask participants questions regarding work experience in subsequent interviews.

Interviewing young people at two different time points was considered to be necessary for this study in order to explore whether participants were able to achieve and fulfil their short-term aspirations as well as examining whether their long term ambitions had changed. There is a discussion about students’ destinations after Year 11 in Appendix 2. Studies (for instance, Archer *et al.* 2007; Ingram 2011; Glaesser and Cooper 2014) which have drawn on Bourdieu’s work often conduct one-off interviews with participants which either focus only on students’ expectations and aspirations or their decisions. Hence, these researchers are only able to yield either a prospective or a retrospective account. As Henderson *et al.* (2007: 165-166) note, interviewing individuals at different time points enables researchers to compare the aspirations and expectations of young people with the final decisions that they make and explore whether young people are able to achieve and fulfil their aspirations.

Young people were interviewed for the first time at the start of Year 11 (the final year of compulsory education in Wales) during October and November 2014. During negotiations with teaching staff before the start of the research, it was agreed that this would be an appropriate time to interview students for the first time. As students were nearing the end of compulsory education, the teachers felt that by this time students would have started to think about their future after compulsory education. Furthermore, interviewing students during this time was also considered to be more convenient for the schools, students and teachers. It was felt that teaching staff would be more cooperative and would allow students to leave their lessons in

order to be interviewed because students' workload would be relatively low and there would be fewer exams during this time.

Some of the students were re-interviewed between November 2015 and March 2016 (approximately a year after they were first interviewed). The purpose of the follow-up interviews was to discover the destinations of students after Year 11; to explore the process of decision-making; to find out whether students' decisions were different to the aspirations that they expressed in the previous interviews and to discover if students' long-term ambitions had changed. I felt that it was an appropriate time to interview students because by this time they had enough time to dwell over the decisions that they had made after Year 11.

Locating the research

After an appropriate research method and design were selected, it was necessary to choose a research area for this study. I was interested in carrying out a study on young people living in the South Wales Valleys, an area which is widely considered to be an area of economic and social deprivation largely as a result of deindustrialisation and the decline in manufacturing industry (which will be discussed in further detail in Chapter 4). This was because I wanted to explore issues regarding young people's expectations and aspirations in the context of changing local labour market opportunities as well as changes in the social conditions of the area, which is linked to RQ1 of this study (see Chapter 1). Furthermore, I was interested in examining how young people may have varied aspirations and expectations regarding their futures despite living under similar social and economic conditions.

Once the research location was chosen, I considered which young people I would interview and through which institutions I would gain access to them. Reviewing existing literature on young people's aspirations helped my decision with regards to my sample. Recently, there is a growing body of research which has looked at the higher education choices of young people (for example, Pugsley 2004; Reay *et al.* 2005; Donnelly and Evans 2016). However, this research excludes students who have left the education system before this transition point or have taken an alternative route such as pursuing a vocational course or an apprenticeship. Furthermore, as noted earlier, the compulsory age of education is still 16 in Wales as the Welsh

Government has decided not to increase the participation age of education and training to 18 like the Westminster Government (Gov.uk 2017a). Therefore, I felt there was a need to study the aspirations of young people who were in their final year of compulsory education.

Moreover, little research has looked at the experiences of young people who attend Welsh-medium schools and have compared their experiences with those of young people who attend English-medium schools in South-East Wales. As this chapter and Chapter 5 will illustrate, the language used to deliver the education is not the only difference between Welsh-medium and English-medium schools in South East Wales. There are also variations between the social composition of Welsh-medium and English-medium schools (see Thomas 2013a). Therefore, I chose to study students who attended two secondary schools - a Welsh-medium school and an English-medium school. This enabled me to explore to what extent these two types of school shape young people's aspirations and expectations (see Research Question 4). It also enabled me to examine the extent that the social background and gender of students in the two schools impact on their aspirations and expectations (see Research Question 2 and 3). However, it needs to be acknowledged that the experiences of students who may not have attended these schools regularly or those who were excluded from mainstream education were not captured in this study.

As there are few Welsh-medium schools in South-East Wales, these schools have larger catchment areas compared to English-medium schools. Therefore, I wanted to ensure that the catchment area of the chosen Welsh-medium school also covered parts of the catchment area of the English-medium school. This would mean that the English-medium school in the study would be the local English-medium school for some of the students in the Welsh-medium school. In addition, this would allow me to compare the educational experiences of young people who come from similar areas.

Using pseudonyms to maintain the anonymity of the research area, institutions and participants is common practice in social science research (for example, Ball 1981; Brown 1987). Unlike Evans (2016a), I decided not to name the specific area in which the schools are located. Instead, I have used the broader geographical area of the South Wales Valleys to prevent the schools in

my study, particularly the Welsh-medium school, from being identified. Taking into account Nespor's (2000: 551) comment that the practice of anonymising the names of places separates our findings from a historically and geographically specific location, in the next chapter I will provide a thorough account of how historical events have shaped the present social and economic conditions of the South Wales Valleys.

The real names of the schools and the real names of the participants are also not included in this study in an attempt to preserve the anonymity of the students and teachers involved in the research. Writers such as Walford (2005: 89) have raised concerns regarding anonymity arguing that it may provide researchers with a sense of protection and allow them to write about their participants and research sites in an inaccurate and imprecise manner without being held accountable by others. Mindful of such comments, I have tried my best to provide an honest and valid representation of the schools and what the participants have told me in this research.

Some researchers such as Goldthorpe (2007a: 76) may criticise this study because it is difficult to make generalisations based on two case studies. However, I agree with the viewpoints of researchers such as Hammersley (1992: 86) and believe that my findings may have wider applications. Therefore, I believe that it is justifiable for me to propose that we might expect other young people who attend schools with similar social characteristics to the two schools in this study to have similar experiences to the participants in this study.

Establishing contact with the schools and gaining access to the young people

Selecting which schools would act as case studies for this research was determined by their suitability in terms of the specifications I had set and how convenient they were in terms of travel. After researching several schools, I focused on two schools in particular, Cwm Mawr School (an English-medium School) and Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel (a Welsh-medium school). These schools will be discussed in further detail in Chapter 5. E-mails were sent to the Head Teachers of both schools in June 2014 in order to arrange a meeting with them before the end of the academic year. Although the process of establishing contact with schools has been

portrayed as being arduous by some researchers such as Pugsley (2004), the Head Teachers of both schools replied to my e-mail promptly. A meeting was held with the Head Teacher of Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel, Mr Roberts, and the Deputy Head Teacher, Mr Davies, of Cwm Mawr School (as the Head Teacher was away on that day) at the end of June 2014. This meeting gave teachers the chance to ask any further questions regarding the research. At the end of these meetings, the teachers gave me permission to interview their students and it was agreed that I would contact both of them in September 2014 to arrange interviews.

Arranging a date and a time for the interviews took longer than was expected. Once responsibility for arranging interviews and selecting students was handed to the Heads of Year 11, Mr Jones from Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel and Mr Pritchard from Cwm Mawr School, this process sped up. As it was expected that students' workload would increase as the academic year went by, the schools stated that they wanted students to be interviewed as soon as possible. Students in Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel were interviewed during the first two weeks of October 2014. Certain students in Cwm Mawr School were interviewed before the half-term holiday in October 2014 and the remaining students were interviewed the second week in November 2014 as some students were sitting a Mathematics exam the previous week.

Before fieldwork started, I explained to the Heads of Year 11 that I wanted to interview a sample of students that would be representative of the students in the whole year. Therefore, Heads of Year 11 were asked to select students of different gender, students in different educational sets and students on Free School Meals and non-Free School Meals students. During the second day of interviewing students in Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel, it became apparent that the students that I had interviewed already were mostly from higher educational sets. Furthermore, there were no students on Free School Meals on the list that Mr Jones had supplied. One of the participants also felt that Mr Jones had been selective in his choice of participants for this study. When Mr Jones had asked all of the potential participants to come to his office for a meeting, the student noticed that all of the other students were from higher educational sets. It is difficult to assess whether Mr Jones was intentionally selecting mostly "high achieving" students in the first two days of interviewing because when I mentioned this to him, he responded by saying that his choice was random (Research Diary 8/10/2014). However, afterwards, I was able to negotiate with Mr Jones which types of students would be

interviewed on a day-to-day basis in order to ensure that my sample was fairly representative of the whole year. In Cwm Mawr School, Mr Pritchard provided a list of students who would be interviewed on the first day. Looking at the list, it was clear that there was an adequate representation of students in terms of ability and gender.

Which young people did I interview?

First set of interviews with young people

During the first stage of interviewing, fifty-two students were interviewed (26 in each school). There was an equal representation in terms of gender with thirteen boys and thirteen girls interviewed in each school. In social research, parents/carers'¹⁶ occupations and educational levels have been used extensively as indicators of social background (Marks 2011). Using the Office for National Statistics (2010) NS-SEC (National Statistics Socio-Economic Classification¹⁷) it has been possible to group participants into different occupational groups based on their parents'/carers' occupations. We need to take into account the weaknesses of the ONS NS-SEC. For instance, in the ONS NS-SEC, judges and managers of large restaurants occupy the same class, but may be in different groups if we looked at other criteria such as status or prestige. There are also certain occupations which occupy different class groups in the ONS NS-SEC, but may be in the same class if we looked at the status and prestige of these occupations. Despite this, the ONS NS-SEC and Goldthorpe's class schema (which the ONS NS-SEC is based on) have been widely used by researchers (ONS 2010: 2). Participants have been assigned with the occupational class of the person who has the highest classification in their family (ONS 2010: 3). Adopting Goldthorpe's terms (see Goldthorpe and McKnight 2004: 2), if a parent/carer or parents/carers with the highest classification in the family worked in higher managerial, administrative and professional occupations e.g. lecturer, teacher, nurse and bank and sales manager, the student was assigned to the salariat group; if a parent/carer or parents/carers with the highest classification in the family worked in intermediate occupations

¹⁶ The term 'parents/carers' will be used as some of the young people were living with stepparents or other relatives.

¹⁷ The ONS NS-SEC categorises occupations into different groups based on aspects such as income, economic security as well as authority and control at work.

e.g. police officer and owner of a small business, the student was assigned to the intermediate group and if a parent/carer or parents/carers with the highest classification in the family worked in routine and manual occupations such as cleaners, hairdressers, construction and railway workers, the student was assigned to the working class group. Table 3.1 shows the number of students in each occupational group. Table A1.1 to Table A1.6 in Appendix 1 lists the occupations of the parents/carers of students in Cwm Mawr School and Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel.

Table 3.1: Occupational Class of Participants

	Cwm Mawr School	Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel
Salariat	8	12
Intermediate	7	5
Working Class	11	9

Table 3.2 illustrates the level of education of parents/carers of students in both schools. In Appendix 1, Table A1.1 to A1.6 indicate the level of education each of the parents/carers of students from both schools received.

Table 3.2: Education of Participants' Parents/Carers

	Cwm Mawr School	Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel
2 Parents/Carers have gone to Higher Education	0	2
1 Parents/Carers has gone to Higher Education	6	13
2 or more Parents/Carers have gone to Further Education	6	4
1 Parent/Carer has gone to Further Education	5	5
2 Parents/Carers left school at the end of compulsory education	5	0
No information	4	2

We need to treat this data with caution as certain students did not report some of their parents'/carers' occupations or education. There were some students who were uncertain about their parents'/carers' occupations or education. Some of them may also have been reluctant to report this information as they were embarrassed or ashamed of their parents'/carers' occupation or education. It has been possible to classify all students in this study into different occupational groups because they all reported the occupation of at least one parent/carer. I have no information regarding the educational levels of the parents/carers of six students.

As Table 3.1 illustrates, twenty students (8 from Cwm Mawr School and 12 from Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel) came from salariat backgrounds. Out of these twenty students, two parents/carers of two students in Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel had gone to higher education. Another twelve students in this occupational class (4 from Cwm Mawr School and 8 students from Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel) had at least one parent/carer who had gone to higher education.

Twelve students (7 in Cwm Mawr School and 5 in Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel) were from the Intermediate group. There was less experience of higher education among the families of these students, with only four students (2 in each school) having one parent/carer who had gone to university.

Twenty students (11 students in Cwm Mawr School and 9 students in Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel) were from a working class background. While the majority of the parents/carers of these students had not gone to university, it is interesting to note that two students from Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel in this social class category had a parent/carer who had gone to university.

Although none of the students came from unemployed households, fourteen students (9 from Cwm Mawr School and 5 from Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel) had at least one parent/carer who was not in employment with the majority of them being mothers. The mothers of ten students (8 in Cwm Mawr School and 2 in Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel) were not in employment compared to four fathers (1 in Cwm Mawr School and 3 in Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel). Only one parent/carer of a student from Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel who was not in employment had gone to university.

Looking at Table 3.1 and Table 3.2, parents/carers holding salariat occupations were more likely to have gone to university compared to parents/carers who were in working class occupations or were not in employment. Issues relating to parents'/carers' occupation and education and the impact it may have on young people's expectations and aspirations will be discussed in the findings chapters.

An indicator used widely by researchers and policymakers as a proxy of household poverty is Free School Meals (FSM) Status. This is because parents/carers must receive other forms of benefits such as Income Support and Income Based Jobseeker's Allowance for their child to be eligible for Free School Meals (see Welsh Government 2013a). Table 3.3 and 3.4 outline the number and proportion of students on Free School Meals among my sample, Year 11 and the school population of Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel and Cwm Mawr School.

Table 3.3: The Number and Proportion of Students on Free School Meals in Cwm Mawr School

	Cwm Mawr School				
	Sample		Year 11¹⁸		School¹⁹
	N	%	N	%	%
FSM students	9	34.6	51	33.8	34.2
Non-FSM students	17	65.4	100	66.2	65.8

Table 3.4: The Number and Proportion of Students on Free School Meals in Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel

	Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel				
	Sample		Year 11		School
	N	%	N	%	%
FSM students	7	26.9	25	16.7	14.0
Non-FSM students	19	73.1	124	80.5	86.0

¹⁸ In Table 3.3 and 3.4, data on the FSM ratio of Year 11 is for the 2014/15 academic year (the year that students were first interviewed in this study)

¹⁹ In Table 3.3 and 3.4, data on the FSM ratio of the school population is slightly different as it is only data on the average Free School Meals proportion of the school over three years which is available (in this instance, between the 2013/14 to the 2015/16 academic year).

It is important to note that the proportions of FSM students within my sample in both schools are higher than the figure for Year 11 and the whole of the school.

When we compare the occupational and educational background as well as FSM status of students in the two schools, it appears that more students from Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel come from socially and economically advantaged backgrounds compared to Cwm Mawr School. Within my sample, a higher proportion of students from Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel came from salariat backgrounds (12 compared to 8 students in Cwm Mawr School) and had at least one parent/carer who had gone to university (15 students compared to 6 in Cwm Mawr School). Looking at Table 3.3 and 3.4, there were substantially more students on Free School Meals in Cwm Mawr School compared to Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel in each category. As Chapter 5 will illustrate, this pattern reflects broader trends with regards to the social composition of Welsh-medium and English-medium schools in South East Wales.

I also had information regarding participants' expected grades in order to gain an insight into teachers' perceptions of students' abilities. While I was able to gain information regarding the expected grades of students in all of their subjects in Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel, information regarding the expected grades of students in most of their core subjects (English Language and Literature, Mathematics and Science) was only available in Cwm Mawr School. Therefore, I have only been able to calculate students' average capped points in their core subjects (English Language and Literature, Mathematics and Science as well as Welsh Language and Literature in Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel) for each student using the Database of Approved Qualifications in Wales. Table 3.5 indicates the number of students in each school who were expected to get an average capped point of 40 and above or below 40 as 40 points is equivalent to a C grade in GCSE qualification (which is considered as a pass) and a Pass in a BTEC qualification.

Table 3.5: The Average Capped Point of Students based on Expected Grades in Core Subjects

	Cwm Mawr School	Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel
Average Capped Point of 40 and above	7	15
Average Capped Point of below 40	19	11

It is important to note that the figures in Table 3.5 do not reflect the educational standards of both schools as it is based on students' expected grades and not students' final results. The educational standards of both schools will be examined in Chapter Five. This data is also limited as it only reflects the perceived abilities of students in their core subjects and not all of their subjects. Despite these limitations, Table 3.5 shows that over half of the students (15 out of 26) in Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel were expected to get at least an average of a C or a Pass in all of their core subjects compared to seven students out of twenty-six students in Cwm Mawr School. The higher numbers of perceived potential "high achievers" in Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel may be due to the fact that more students from higher educational sets were chosen to be interviewed in Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel. It may also be due to different practices in terms of the way in which teachers assign expected grades in the two schools. The findings chapters, particularly Chapter 7, will discuss students' perceptions of their educational performance and the impact it has on their aspirations and expectations.

Follow up interviews

Due to time constraints on data collection, it was not possible to re-interview all of the students who had agreed to take part in a follow-up interview. Furthermore, when asked if they wanted to be re-interviewed, some of the students declined. To alleviate these issues, I adopted

a critical case sampling strategy and chose students who I believed would “make a point quite dramatically or are, for some reason, particularly important in the scheme of things” (Patton 1990: 174). When choosing which students I would approach to see if they would still want to be re-interviewed, characteristics such as gender, socio-economic background and educational performance, as well as the aspirations that they had expressed in the first interview and the final choices that they made were considered. Furthermore, students who were regarded as being exceptions to certain trends, for example working class students who were high achievers and had aspirations of going to university, were also considered as potential students who may be re-interviewed.

In total, I re-interviewed 7 students who were in Cwm Mawr School in Year 11 (3 male students and 4 female students) and ten students who were in Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel in Year 11 (4 male and 6 female students). Out of these 17 students, 15 had initially returned to the sixth form of the secondary school they attended after Year 11 (6 from Cwm Mawr School and 9 from Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel), one male student from Cwm Mawr School had gone to college and one female student from Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel was attending a sixth form in an English-medium school. One female student who had initially gone to Cwm Mawr School’s sixth form after Year 11 had dropped out and had started a course with a training provider. While the majority of students who were re-interviewed had returned to sixth form, the destinations of the students who were re-interviewed to some extent reflects the destinations of all of the participants in this study as Appendix 2 will reveal.

Carrying out the interviews

Piloting the study

Before I started interviews with students, I carried out a pilot interview with a student of a similar age to the participants in July 2014. Sampson (2004: 383) illustrates that piloting allows the researcher to assess their research instruments such as interview guides and to adjust them if they are considered to be inadequate in collecting relevant data. The interview was listened to, recorded, transcribed and notes were taken with regards to the improvements that were

needed to be made. For example, after listening to the pilot interview, it was clear that I had not included any questions about the educational trajectories of individuals within young people's communities in the interview guide. During the pilot interview, I realised that I had not included questions about this issue and therefore asked the participant at the end of the interview. Afterwards, I made a note in the interview guide to include a question about the educational trajectories of individuals within young people's communities. It is important to ask such a question in order to assess the explanatory power of the two theoretical approaches - Bourdieu's Cultural Reproduction Theory and Rational Choice Theory – which are central to this study.

Operationalising Bourdieu's Cultural Reproduction Theory and Rational Choice Theory

As noted in Chapter 2, there are some challenges when it comes to assessing whether empirical evidence provides support or dismiss Bourdieu's Cultural Reproduction Theory and Rational Choice Theory. This is because operationalising Bourdieu's Cultural Reproduction Theory and Rational Choice Theory is a difficult task. The main reason is because there are commonalities between these two theories. Therefore, it was important for me to outline what empirical evidence would constitute support for these theories. The table below lists variables used to examine the explanatory power of Bourdieu's Cultural Reproduction Theory and Rational Choice Theory. The list of variables for economic, social and cultural capital; and habitus were largely derived from Bourdieu's work (for example, Bourdieu 1977a; Bourdieu 1990a; Bourdieu 1986/1997; Bourdieu and Passeron 1977/2000; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). Articles from other researchers such as Sullivan (2001), Lareau and Weininger (2003) and Vryonides (2007) were also helpful in operationalising Bourdieu's theoretical concepts. The work of researchers such as Boudon (1974), Goldthorpe (1996; 1998) and Breen and Goldthorpe (1997) were used to operationalise primary and secondary effects, two theoretical concepts associated with the weak version of Rational Choice Theory.

Table 3.6: List of variables used to examine the explanatory power of Bourdieu’s Cultural Reproduction Theory and Rational Choice Theory

Theoretical Concept	Variables
Economic Capital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents/Carers’ level of economic and material resources (e.g. income and wealth) • The extent to which possession or lack of economic and material resources impact on young people’s aspirations and expectations
Social Capital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information and advice from people within our social network • The extent to which this information and advice influences young people’s aspirations and expectations • Access or lack of access to certain educational and employment opportunities through social networks.
Cultural Capital	<p><u>Parental Cultural Capital</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents’/carers’ understanding of school work • Parents’/carers’ ability to help with homework • Parents’/carers’ knowledge of the education system <p><u>Young People’s Cultural Capital</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The degree to which parental cultural capital affects young people’s educational performance
Habitus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The extent to which observations of the actions and practices of family, community members and other

	individuals shape young people's aspirations and expectations.
Primary Effects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The degree to which young people's education attainment impacts on their aspirations and expectations
Secondary Effects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The degree to which young people consider the costs and benefits of a number of options when thinking about their futures. • The extent to which young people's perception of their educational performance shape their aspirations and expectations • The degree to which young people's financial resources (primarily measured by their parents'/carers' income and wealth) affect their aspirations and expectations • The extent to which young people consider the financial costs and financial rewards associated with pursuing certain options in the future • The degree to which cultural norms and values (the messages that are transmitted from parents/carers, community members and other individuals) impact on what young people consider to be "rational" aspirations and expectations.

These variables were considered when designing the interview guide in order to ensure that I would collect data which would enable me to assess the explanatory power of Bourdieu's Cultural Reproduction Theory and Rational Choice Theory

First set of interviews with young people

The first sets of interviews with young people were carried out in the school. Each interview lasted between 20 minutes to an hour and was based on an interview guide covering a list of topics and questions (see Appendix 3). The first set of interviews started with questions regarding their age, languages spoken and nationality in order to gain demographic information. As these questions were regarded as not being difficult to answer, they were considered as a means of establishing rapport with the participant and to make them feel comfortable. After this, the interview guide looked at different social actors such as the family, friends and neighbours. Questions explored the education of participants' family members and whether family members helped and supported participants with their school work in order to explore whether there was evidence to support Bourdieu's (1986/1997) concept of cultural capital. There were also questions which asked participants about the educational attitudes of family members, friends and neighbours to explore whether cultural norms and values played a role in shaping young people's aspirations and expectations. Both Bourdieu and Rational Choice Theorists such as Breen and Goldthorpe (1997) assume that cultural norms and values impact on young people's aspirations and expectations. Another set of questions focused on the school, young people's educational experiences and their relationship with teachers.

The next set of questions explored the aspirations of the participant. As aspirations may be broad, students were asked questions such as "What would you like to do after Year 11?" in order to discover what were their short-term and long-term aspirations. There were separate questions tailored for different aspirations. In order to illuminate the factors which influence students' aspirations, students were asked "Why would you like to...?". I felt that asking an open question would prevent me from asking leading questions. I used a number of different prompts to help students if they found it difficult to provide reasons behind their aspirations. For instance, I asked young people whether their school results was something they had thought about when they were thinking about their future in order to discover whether there was evidence to support or dismiss the assertion made by Rational Choice Theorists such as Breen and Goldthorpe (1997) that educational attainment (or what Boudon (1974) terms as "primary effects") impacts on young people's aspirations. Students were also asked whether money had been something that they had thought about when they were thinking about the future in order

to examine whether possession or lack of economic capital (Bourdieu 1986/1997) influenced their aspirations. This question also enabled me to explore whether there was evidence to support the assumption of Rational Choice Theorists such as Breen and Goldthorpe (1997) that young people evaluate the financial costs and rewards of certain options when thinking about their future. Young people were also asked questions about whether they had received any advice or information from anyone regarding their future to examine the explanatory power of Bourdieu's (1986/1997) concept of social capital. This also would provide evidence which would either support or dismiss Rational Choice Theorists such as Goldthorpe's (1996) assertion that what young people consider to be "rational" depends on the information and advice that they have received regarding different options.

There were also questions in the interview guide which focused on young people's expectations. The purpose of these questions was to explore whether young people's expectations were similar to their aspirations and also to examine the factors which influence expectations. The final set of questions explored spatial aspirations and examined where young people envisaged and wanted to live in the future.

Follow-up Interviews with Students

Before carrying out follow-up interviews with some of the students, I contacted the Heads of Year 11 to discover the final destinations of students after Year 11. After I gained this information, Heads of Sixth Form were contacted in order to arrange interviews with some of the students who had returned to sixth form. Students who had not returned to sixth form were contacted using the contact details that they had given in Year 11 in order to discover their destination. Some of these students either did not respond to my calls and messages as they did not want to take part in the interview or did not receive them because their contact details had changed.

I decided to provide students with a financial incentive by offering them a £5 shopping voucher for taking part in the follow-up interviews. This was because I envisaged that students would

be less willing to give up their free time to take part in the follow-up interviews. It was difficult to arrange follow-up interviews with students. As students in Cwm Mawr School were taught certain subjects in different schools which were part of the same consortium, the Head of Sixth Form, Mrs Edwards, noted that it was difficult to track them down. Therefore, she arranged a meeting with the students that I wanted to interview. Unfortunately, only one of the students turned up to the meeting (Research Diary 10/11/2015). Consequently, I spent several days in Cwm Mawr School's sixth form trying to track students to see whether they wanted to be interviewed. Spending time in Cwm Mawr School provided me with a feel of the day-to-day practices of the Sixth Form and the rest of the School. It was easier for the Head of Sixth Form in Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel to arrange times for me to interview students as most of the students were taught all of their subjects in the School. However, not all of the students who I wanted to interview turned up to the interviews in the sixth form in Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel.

Follow-up interviews with students who had returned to sixth form were carried out in the schools. Students who had not returned to sixth form were given the option of either being interviewed in a place which was convenient for them or over the phone. All of these students chose to be interviewed over the phone. As these students participated in the interview on their mobile phone, there were issues with regards to the quality of the recording as students sometimes lost signal on their phones. To alleviate this problem, I wrote notes during the interview and also asked students to repeat certain sentences if they were not clear. While telephone interviews were more convenient to carry out, not being in the same place as the participant and not being able to see them made it more difficult to establish rapport with them which may weaken the validity of this data. Also, I was not able to observe non-verbal cues such as gestures and actions which add further meaning to verbal communication.

The main aim of the follow up interviews was to examine whether young people were able to achieve their aspirations as well as exploring whether young people's long term aspirations had changed. Students were firstly asked to discuss their results (not their grades necessarily) in the courses/subjects that they studied in Year 11. The interview then focused on students' decisions after Year 11 and students were asked to give their reasons for choosing to pursue a particular pathway. If the aspirations that students expressed in the first interview differed to their final decision, this was explored in the interview. In the follow-up interviews, students were asked

again questions that were aimed at providing evidence which would either support or dismiss Bourdieu's Cultural Reproduction Theory and Rational Choice Theory. For instance, students were asked whether they had received advice from anyone regarding their long-term aspirations to examine the usefulness of Bourdieu's (1986/1997) concept of social capital. Young people were also asked if their GCSE and BTEC results had influenced their transition from compulsory to post-compulsory education to explore the explanatory power of Boudon's (1974) notion of "primary effects".

Language of the interviews

Students in Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel were given the option of having the interview through the medium of Welsh or English. Aware that the official language of Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel is Welsh, I asked Mr Roberts, the Head Teacher of the School, beforehand whether it would be possible for students to be interviewed through the medium of English. Mr Roberts permitted this believing that it would be interesting to find out in which language students chose to be interviewed.

Providing students with the choice of language for the interview was considered as a means of strengthening the validity of the data as I believed that students would be able to articulate and share their thoughts comprehensively in a language that they were comfortable speaking. Apprehensive that students would feel obliged to do the interviews in Welsh as the interviews were conducted on the school grounds, I made it clear to each student before the interviews that they could be interviewed in the language that they found easiest to converse in. However, it is difficult to know whether students decided to be interviewed in a certain language out of obligation or choice. Students may still have felt obliged to be interviewed in Welsh as they could sense from my accent that I am a first language Welsh speaker. Out of the 26 students, 14 students chose to be interviewed in Welsh and 12 students in English. In the follow-up interviews, five students chose to be interviewed in Welsh and five students in English. Issues with regards to transcribing and the presentation of data that was in Welsh will be discussed later in this chapter.

Interviewer effect

The social characteristics of the researcher and the interview setting may impact on the way students express and articulate their thoughts in an interview (Delamont 2002). As I considered myself to be an ‘outsider’ because of my identity as a white, male, North-Walian, Cardiff University PhD student, I perceived that students would be reluctant to open up and share their opinions, and also would be selective in the type of information that they would provide me in the interviews. Although being a Welsh speaker helped me to establish contact with Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel, I felt that my proficiency in Welsh as well as my other social characteristics may have had an effect on my rapport with students in the interviews. In order to alleviate this issue, when I first met students, I did not mention that I was from Cardiff University and told them that I was only interested in finding out what they wanted to do in the future. Aware that carrying out most of the interviews in the school may result in my participants answering in a certain way, I made it clear that teaching staff did not have access to the interviews and anything that they expressed in the interview which would be included in any published material would be anonymous. Despite my efforts, on several occasions when I asked participants if the Heads of Year 11 had explained the research to them beforehand, they responded by saying that the interview was about something to do with university (Research Diary 22/10/2014). This information might have resulted in some participants feeling that expressing an aspiration to go to university would be a socially acceptable answer.

Interview with teachers

As aforementioned, I met the Head Teacher of Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel and the Deputy Head of Cwm Mawr School to negotiate access to students. These meetings also provided me with an opportunity to ask questions regarding the catchment area of the school, the student population and the schools’ curriculum in order to gain background knowledge of the schools.

The Head Teacher, the Deputy Head and the Head of Year 11 in Cwm Mawr School, and the Deputy Head and the Head of Year 11 in Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel were interviewed in July 2015. The main purpose of these interviews was to gain teachers’ perspectives on some of my initial

findings based on the first set of interviews with students. The interviews with teachers, as well as the interviews with parents/carers (discussed below) may be considered as a form of data triangulation, where the researcher collects data from different sources such as interviewing various types of individuals to gain a better understanding of the social phenomena (Denzin 1978: 295). The interview guide for the interviews with teachers can be found in Appendix 3.

Interview with parents/carers

I also wanted to interview the parents/carers of the students. The main purpose of the interviews with parents/carers was to gain their perspective on their children's aspirations and to explore how they may have shaped students' expectations and aspirations. The interview also gave me the opportunity to gain an insight into parents'/carers' own educational experiences and to examine their contribution towards their child's school work. Furthermore, as they had the choice of sending their child to a Welsh or English-medium school, I wanted to examine the process of school choice among these parents/carers. The interview guide for the interview with parents/carers can be found in Appendix 3.

A letter was sent to each of the parents/carers of the students who participated, asking them if they would be interested in being interviewed to discuss their child's future as part of this study. Initially, five parents/carers (4 from Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel and 1 from Cwm Mawr School) expressed an interest in being interviewed. When I tried to contact them, I was only able to get hold of two of the parents/carers from Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel. Interviews were arranged with these parents/carers. During the interviews, these parents/carers were asked whether they knew other parents/carers of students who were in the same year as their child. Through snowball sampling, I was able to interview a further two parents/carers of participants in Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel. Letters were sent to parents/carers of students who participated in the follow-up interview. This enabled me to recruit two parent/carers of student from Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel to take part in this study. A £5 shopping voucher was offered to parents/carers as a sign of gratitude for taking part in the interviews.

A total of six parents/carers of students from Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel were interviewed in this study. None of the parents/carers of students from Cwm Mawr School responded to my letters or my phone calls. Table 3.7 lists the occupational class (based on NS-SEC schema and Goldthorpe's terms), education and proficiency in Welsh of the parents/carers who were interviewed in this study.

Table 3.7: Parents/Carers interviewed for this study

Parent/Carer	School that their child attends	Occupational Class	Education	Proficiency in Welsh
Nia's Mother	Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel	Salariat	University	Welsh Learner
Luke's Mother	Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel	Salariat	University	Non-Welsh speaker
Mark's Mother	Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel	Salariat	University	Welsh Learner
Natalie's Mother	Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel	Working Class	Further Education College	Non-Welsh speaker
Tim's Father	Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel	Salariat	Apprenticeship	Non-Welsh speaker
Charlotte's Father	Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel	Never worked and long-term unemployed	Secondary School	Non-Welsh speaker

As Table 3.7 illustrates, the majority of the parents/carers who were interviewed were mothers. Additionally, most of the parents/carers interviewed came from salariat backgrounds and were university educated. These parents/carers may have been more willing to take part in this study as they felt that they were engaged in their child's education and also considered that their child was performing well in school. Although this sample consists only of parents/carers from Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel and mostly parents/carers from salariat backgrounds, the interview data from these parents/carers has been included in this thesis as I have been able to draw on some interesting insights from this data.

The use of a research diary

I also kept a research diary, in which I was able to write down field notes and also my thoughts and reflections on the interviews. While I was in the schools, I made an effort to 'get a feel' of the schools by walking down the school corridors and exploring the school yard during break and lunch time. I made notes of what I observed in the research diary.

Ethical considerations

Before I was able to start fieldwork, the research had to be ethically approved by Cardiff University School of Social Sciences's Ethics Committee. Researchers widely accept that their research should not cause any emotional or physical harm to their participants (Bulmer 2001; Babbie 2007). Taking measures to control potential harms to participants is important, especially when carrying out research with young people under the age of 16 as they are regarded as being a vulnerable group because of their age (BERA 2011).

An important ethical principle is gaining informed consent from our participants (Piper and Simon 2005: 56). This means that participants have given permission to carry out research

with them based on a clear understanding of the purpose of the research. As the majority of my participants were under the age of sixteen, I felt that it was important to gain not only their assent, but their school's consent and parents/carers' consent as well. Once students were selected for the research, schools were asked to provide age appropriate information sheets clearly outlining the purpose of the research in order for the students and their parents/carers to have a full understanding of the research before they decided whether to participate or not. The contact details of the Heads of Year 11 were given in case any parent/carer or student had any questions regarding the interview. The Heads of Year 11 were able to pass on any questions to me. Parents/carers were also provided with an Opt-Out Form to sign, if they did not want their child or their child did not wish to be involved in the research. Schools were asked to give sufficient time for parents/carers and students to consult with one another before they decided whether to participate in the research or not.

Gaining consent from parents/carers on an opt-out basis was considered to be quicker and convenient as I would not have to wait to receive consent forms. In addition, I felt that gaining consent through this means was ethically sound as I perceived that the questions covered in the interviews were not sensitive. The Heads of Year 11 in both schools did receive Opt-Out Forms and these students did not take part in the study.

In the first set of interviews, students were asked whether they would be interested in taking part in the follow-up interview. If they were interested, students were asked to write their contact details. It was made clear in the information sheet and during the interviews that students did not have to participate in the follow-up interview, even if they had provided their contact details in the first interview.

Punch (2002) notes that the unequal power relations that exist between adults and young people make young people vulnerable in research. In society, young people are expected to please adults. As it is often compulsory for students to take part in activities in schools, I was concerned that students would feel obliged to take part in the study when they were asked by the teacher. To ensure that such a situation would not arise, prior to each interview, I ensured

that I gained the assent of the young person by giving them clear information about the research and clarifying that they were willing to participate.

Parents/carers and teaching staff were also sent information sheets or given information regarding the study before being interviewed.

Holland *et al.* (2004: 23) note that “consent is a process rather than a single act”. Therefore, before every interview, participants were asked if they were happy to participate. It was also made clear in all of the information sheets and before each interview that participation in the study was voluntary and that participants would be able to withdraw from the research at any time if they were unhappy or distressed. As Byrne (2004: 185) notes, it is difficult for researchers to foresee how their participants will react to certain questions asked in the interview. Before I started fieldwork, my supervisors and I looked at the interview guides thoroughly to ensure that questions were not sensitive in their nature.

Participants were interviewed in a public space in order to ensure the safety of myself and my participants. Students interviewed in the schools were interviewed independently. The door remained open, so that members of the teaching staff were able to oversee proceedings. In the follow-up interviews, students who had not returned to the sixth form were interviewed over the phone. Interviews with the teaching staff were also carried out in the school. Interviews with parents/carers were conducted in their work place, in my shared office or over the phone.

Transcription

According to Bailey (2008: 127), “transcription is an interpretive process which is therefore the first step in analysing data”. Transcription involves several judgements such as what details to include and how to represent the data. After consideration, I decided to transcribe interviews verbatim to ensure that nothing was lost and to reduce any claims of bias. As I was interested with what participants had to say rather than the form and structure of the interviews, I did not

pay a great deal of attention to pauses, intonations and the pace of talk. Some of the follow-up interviews were transcribed by other people because of time constraints. I checked that these interviews were transcribed verbatim by listening back to the audio recordings.

Another issue which emerged during transcription was how Welsh language interview transcripts would be presented in this thesis. I adhere to the notion expressed by researchers such as Temple and Young (2004) that translation is not a straightforward technical activity, but one which involves interpretation in order to ensure that the meaning in the original transcription has not been lost in translation. To alleviate this issue, an experienced translator reviewed all the translated interview transcripts included in this thesis and we discussed any translation issues.

Analysis

In terms of analysis, the first thing I did was I read all of the transcripts to become familiar with the data and to ensure that I understood what my participants were saying. Next, I adopted the coding and labelling technique associated with Glaser and Strauss's (1967/1999) grounded theory approach and initially coded the data manually by highlighting pieces of the data and writing relevant themes or categories alongside the text. On the one hand, I coded my data in an inductive manner, staying close to the data as possible as Charmaz (2006:49) advises and identified themes and categories from the data. At the same time, I analysed my data in a deductive manner by examining whether certain pieces of data supported or refuted Bourdieu's Cultural Reproduction Theory and Rational Choice Theory and developed codes based on ideas associated with these two theoretical approaches. Once I had initially coded the data, I started to compare the codes, looking at whether certain codes were subcategories to other codes and also deciding which codes were useful in terms of helping to analyse and make sense of the data.

After a coding framework was developed (see Appendix 3), the transcripts were all imported into NVivo (a Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software). NVivo was considered as being useful in helping to manage and organise the high volume of qualitative data. The

'coding tree' system on NVivo allowed me to organise codes hierarchically and to group certain 'free' nodes (another word for codes) under parent codes (see Bringer *et al.* 2006: 252). For instance, codes for students' short term (after Year 11), long term and career aspirations were made into subcategories of the category 'Aspirations'. Furthermore, NVivo enables users to attach different attributes to particular transcripts. Therefore, it was possible to categorise participants according to social characteristics such as gender and social background and to compare the responses of participants from different backgrounds. Mindful of Coffey and Atkinson's (1996: 12) comments that we should not treat coding and analysis as being synonymous, NVivo was only used as means of storing and retrieving data.

Discussion

In this chapter, I have attempted to provide an open and transparent account of the research process – from considerations regarding methods and research design to considerations regarding the process of transcribing and analysing data. I have also discussed the limitations of my data. However, I have attempted to provide adequate justification for my methodological choices which will hopefully strengthen the validity of my findings in subsequent chapters.

Chapter 4: The Research Area: The South Wales Valleys

This chapter focuses on the South Wales Valleys, the area in which the young people at the centre of this study lived at the time and where the majority of them had been brought up. The South Wales Valleys constitutes the “field” of study (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 92) and shapes the “structure of opportunities” (Goldthorpe 2007c: 81) which young people are confronted with when making decisions regarding their future after compulsory education.

As explained in the last chapter, the rationale for choosing the South Wales Valleys as the research area is because focusing on a smaller geographical area would make it easier to identify the schools in the study, particularly the Welsh-medium school. Although the South Wales Valleys is a term widely used, it is not an officially recognised area. Therefore, like David *et al.* (2004), my definition of the South Wales Valleys is composed of the current authorities of Caerphilly, Merthyr Tydfil, Neath Port Talbot and Rhondda Cynon Taf. While Blaenau Gwent is included in David *et al.*'s (2004: 16) ‘Central Valleys’ area, it has been excluded in this study as the Welsh-medium secondary school for children in this local authority is in the neighbouring borough of Torfaen. Therefore, any current statistics for the Valleys referred to in this chapter will be an average for these four local authorities²⁰. Although there are slight differences between and within Caerphilly, Merthyr Tydfil, Neath Port Talbot and Rhondda Cynon Taf, these authorities share a common history which has resulted in these authorities having similar social and economic features today.

The first section of this chapter provides a historical background to the South Wales Valleys from the eighteenth century onwards. Before this period, the population was thinly scattered across the Valleys and the main form of employment in the area was agriculture, with few employed as industrial workers (John 1995: 3). Furthermore, Welsh was the language which could be heard spoken extensively in the remote farms and villages of the South Wales Valleys (Jenkins *et al.* 1997: 59). This section will trace the social and economic changes that happened

²⁰ Any statistics prior to 1974 will refer to the historic county of Glamorganshire. Unless otherwise stated, any statistics between 1974 and 1996 referred to will be an average based on the preserved counties of Mid Glamorgan and West Glamorgan. The local authorities outside my definition of the South Wales Valleys such as Bridgend, Cardiff, Swansea and Vale of Glamorgan were a part of the old county of Glamorganshire and the preserved counties of Mid and West Glamorgan. It has not been possible to adjust statistics to exclude these authorities.

in the South Wales Valleys including industrialisation particularly in the nineteenth century and the rapid deindustrialisation of the area which started in the twentieth century.

The second section of this chapter will focus on the outcomes of these changes and will outline the current social and economic conditions of the Valleys. It will refer to aspects such as the economy; labour market and educational opportunities; the population; sense of community; national identity and the Welsh language. The main purpose of this section is to make readers aware of the circumstances in which young people's expectations and aspirations are formed. By doing this, it aims to illustrate that young people are making decisions regarding their future in a context of significant economic and social changes, which is associated with RQ1 of this study (see Chapter 1).

The account of the Valleys presented in this chapter has not only been extracted from books, articles and government documents. This account is also based on my own experience of the Valleys, walking around the towns and villages, visiting community libraries, speaking to people in local shops and cafés and talking to community workers. Furthermore, this account of the Valleys has also been shaped by the interview data from the students and teachers in both schools. The information gathered from being immersed in the research field has allowed me to gain valuable information and a better understanding of the area.

South Wales Valleys: Past

The Industrialisation of the South Wales Valleys

The expansion of the iron industry from the 1750's onwards is considered to be the starting point of industrialisation in the South Wales Valleys. Darby's discovery that coal could be converted into coke to blast furnaces provided a cheaper and efficient alternative to timber for the ironmasters of the South Wales Valleys. The supply of iron and coal available in the Valleys and nearby and the increasing demand for iron to create ammunitions for wars such as the

Seven Years' and Napoleonic Wars as well as iron rails for railway construction resulted in the South Wales Valleys dominating the British iron trade by the 1820s (Ince 1993: 3). Iron production in South Wales reached to 223,520 tons of iron, 38.4% of the total output of the United Kingdom in 1826 (Ince 1993: 3). The expanding iron industry stimulated substantial population growth, with for example, Merthyr Tydfil (considered to be the centre of the iron industry in the area during this time) transforming from a small hamlet of around 700 in 1700 to having a population of approximately 46,000 in 1851 (Gross 1992).

However, by the 1850's, ironworks in the South Wales Valleys were finding it difficult to compete against new iron producing areas such as Cleveland, which had larger reserves of cheaper iron ores (Ince 1993: 4). Furthermore, South Wales ironworks had begun to invest in steel production due to Bessemer's invention of an acid steel converter (Minchinton 1969: xxii). As the method of creating steel with iron ores from South Wales proved to be unsuccessful, South Wales Ironworks were starting to import iron ores initially from other parts of Britain and later from abroad (Atkinson and Baber 1987: 13). Consequently, certain companies moved steel and iron production to coastal sites where ores could be imported easily such as the Dowlais company, which decided to construct new works at East Moors in Cardiff in 1891 (Atkinson and Baber 1987: 15). From the twentieth century onwards, ironworks continued to operate in the South Wales Valleys but at a relatively smaller scale.

At the start of the nineteenth century, the coal industry predominantly catered for the iron industry to fuel blast furnaces and for other industries such as copper and tinsplate. But, by the 1840's, coal was increasingly being mined for other purposes such as for steam-engines and for domestic use (Egan 1987: 13). During the second half of the nineteenth century and the start of the twentieth century, the coal industry in the South Wales Valleys expanded rapidly. Annual coal production in the South Wales Valleys grew from 8.5m tons in 1854 to 36m tons in 1898 (Williams 1998: 11) and reached its peak of 56.8m tons in 1913 (Williams, J. 1989: 9). Improvements in the transport infrastructure with the opening of canals, tram roads and railway lines, which connected different parts of the Valleys with coastal ports such as Cardiff during the nineteenth century enabled owners to transport coal more efficiently (Minchinton 1969: xix). "Cardiff became the world's greatest coal-exporting port", according to Thomas (1973:291), with the volume of exports rising from 708,000 tons in 1851 to 10,577,000 tons in

1913. The number of men (as women were prohibited from working in underground mines) who were employed in the South Wales coalfield increased from 73,000 in 1874 to 127,000 in 1898 (Williams 1998: 11) and rose to an all-time high of 271,161 in 1920 (Francis and Smith 1998: 508). By 1921, the South Wales Valleys had become dependent on the coal industry, with over 70% of its male population employed as coalminers (Williams 1998: 27). The coalmines also employed workers in the transport sector, brickworks, coal carbonization plants and breweries.

As the South Wales Valleys' coal industry prospered, a large influx of migrants, initially from neighbouring rural Welsh and English counties and later from other parts of the world such as Ireland, Italy and Spain moved to the area to look for work (Egan 1987: 73). Consequently, the population of the old county of Glamorganshire grew substantially from 231,849 in 1851 to 1,252,481 in 1921 (Williams 1985: 17).

However, during the 1920s and 1930's, the coal industry of the South Wales Valleys experienced difficulty. Oil was beginning to replace coal in a number of its uses as it was cleaner, cheaper and easier to handle (Davies 2007: 533). The coal mines of the South Wales Valleys were at a disadvantage compared to other coal mining areas of the UK as well as abroad because mining and exporting coal from the South Wales Valleys had been expensive all along due to the geography and location of the area (Egan 1987: 120). 241 mines were closed in South Wales between 1921 and 1936 (Egan 1987: 120) and the numbers employed in the coalmines decreased by over a half between 1920 to 1939 to 128,774 (Francis and Smith 1998: 508).

During this time, tension started to build up between the coal owners and the miners. This tension erupted in 1926 when the coal owners delivered an ultimatum and announced wage cuts for the miners arguing that it would help them to compete in the global coal market. The South Wales Miners Federation rejected the coal owners' demands and the miners were locked out by the employers (Francis and Smith 1998). With the Trades Union Congress backing down after a week of striking, the miners fought alone for months until the onset of winter forced them to yield, return to work and accept their employers' conditions (Egan 1987: 122). As a

result of the miners' defeat as well as increasing rates of unemployment in the area, people started migrating from the South Wales coalfields to look for better employment opportunities in the new industrial towns of the South and the Midlands as well as Birmingham and London during this period (Williams 1998: 76). Consequently, there was a reduction in Glamorganshire's population from 1,252,481 in 1921 to 1,225,717 at the eve of the Second World War in 1939 (Williams 1985: 17).

Deindustrialisation and Economic Transformation of the South Wales Valleys

Developments after the Second World War in the South Wales Valleys brought about a sense of optimism. To the satisfaction of the miners, the coal industry was nationalised after the Second World War and control of the coalmines was transferred from the coal owners to the State, which established the National Coal Board (NCB) in 1947 (Jones *et al.* 1996). Major steelworks were either opened or expanded after the Second World War in Ebbw Vale and Port Talbot. By 1964, Wales had around 70,000 steelworkers and was creating 29% of the UK's steel (Johnes 2012: 70).

During this period, efforts were also made to regenerate and diversify the economy of the South Wales Valleys. The Special Areas Act of 1934 established the South Wales Valleys as an area of economic assistance for the first time (Osmond 2008: 1). Furthermore, the Distribution of Industry Act of 1945 designated the South Wales Valleys and other economically depressed areas as Development Areas enabling them to offer low rents and rates to companies in order to encourage inward investment (Davies 2007: 597). Consequently, the Valleys witnessed a major growth in the manufacturing sector, with the number of people employed in manufacturing (other than steelmaking) in South Wales increasing from 88,000 in 1935 to 210,000 in 1968 (Humphrys 1972 : 67). These policies as well as South Wales Valleys' proximity to the growth areas of the UK - the South East and the West Midlands - attracted a number of external firms to establish factories and workplaces after the Second World War. External firms were largely responsible for providing the majority of new jobs in the manufacturing sector in Wales during this period, with only 11,700 out of the 34,200

manufacturing jobs created between 1960 to 1965 coming from companies based in Wales (Johnes 2012: 67).

However, this optimism was short-lived. Despite the miners experiencing improved pay and working conditions under the National Coal Board (Ashworth 1986), the coal industry in the South Wales Valleys continued to decline after the War. Factors such as the increasing use of nuclear power, oil and gas, and the poor economic performance of the South Wales coalmines led to the mass closure of pits in the Valleys during the second half of the twentieth century. Between 1959 and 1969, the amount of NCB collieries decreased from 141 to 55 (Johnes 2012: 247) and the numbers employed fell from 93,000 to 40,000 (Francis and Smith 1998: 508). By the end of the 1960's, the manufacturing sector employed nearly twice as many people as the coal and metal industries combined (Humphrys 1972: 76). Mining was also becoming a less desirable occupation during this time, with many miners deciding to leave the industry to find safer, cleaner and increasingly better paid jobs (Johnes 2012: 68). Closure of pits continued throughout the 1970's and 1980's, with just 20,000 miners employed in twenty-eight pits by 1984 (Curtis 2013).

From the 1970's onwards, other industries in the South Wales Valleys were also facing trouble. The steel industry in South Wales, considered important in the post-war economic recovery of Wales, declined during this period as a result of the oil crises of the 1970's and because of increasing international competition (Barber and Mainwaring 1988; Johnes 2012). The numbers employed in steel production declined from more than 70,000 in 1970 to just over 20,000 in 1985 (McNabb and Rhys 1988: 187).

The demise of the steel industry in Wales had a knock on effect on other industries, with Barber and Mainwaring (1988: 207) calculating that steel redundancies carried out in this period accounted for one third of the total unemployment growth. One of the industries that suffered greatly from the contraction of the steel industry was manufacturing. Whereas in 1970, steel production accounted for 30% of the total manufacturing output; by 1985 the figure had decreased to less than 17% of manufacturing output (McNabb and Rhys 1988: 187). Other factors such as the recession of the late 1970's and a fall in industrial investment resulted in

the closure of manufacturing plants and redundancies. Of the establishments which were opened in Wales between 1966 and 1971, 49% were still open in 1984 (McNabb and Rhys 1988: 198). The survival rate of establishments in the same period in West Glamorgan was above the national average at 54%, but much poorer in Mid Glamorgan at 46% (McNabb and Rhys 1988: 198). The number of men employed in manufacturing in South Wales reduced by more than 60000 or 32% between 1973 and 1981 (McNabb and Rhys 1988: 189). Female employment in the manufacturing industry fell by 20200 or 41% during this period (McNabb and Rhys 1988: 189).

In contrast, Wales and the South Wales Valleys experienced a growth in the service industry. Whereas in 1965, the service sector accounted for around 48% of the share of employees in Wales, this figure had risen to over 64% in 1985 (George and Rhys 1988: 234). During this period, employment in the service sector in Wales increased by 93,000 (George and Rhys 1988: 235). The transport sector was the only sector within the service industry which witnessed a decrease in employment in this period partly due to the fall of freight businesses as a result of the decline in the extractive and manufacturing industries (George and Rhys 1988: 243). Although some of the growth took place in the private sector in services such as banking, finance and substantially in retailing, catering and hotels, most of the increase occurred in the public sector in services such as public administration, health and education (George and Rhys 1988: 235).

The demise of certain industries during the 1970's and 1980's meant that miners had fewer alternative employment prospects and were less willing to accept the erosion of their industry. During this period, there was a series of industrial disputes between the National Union of Miners (NUM) and the Westminster Government largely surrounding the issue of pit closures. It culminated with the 1984-1985 miners' strike, considered by many to be the bitterest industrial dispute in British history. Determined to maintain the survival of the coal industry and consequently protect their communities, the miners went on strike for nearly a year until they had to succumb to defeat and return to work (Curtis 2013). After the miners' defeat, the coal industry in the South Wales Valleys collapsed at a staggering rate. A decade after the strike and at the eve of the privatisation of the coal industry, the Government were attempting to close the only deep mine pit in the South Wales Valleys - Tower Colliery near Hirwaun. Believing

that the pit was still profitable, the miners grouped together and took control of the pit with their redundancy money (Francis and Smith 1998: xxviii). Tower Colliery continued to be in operation up until 2008 when the miners were forced to close the pit after the coal had run out (BBC News 2008). Although some open-cast operations and small mines still remain in the South Wales Valleys, the closure of Tower Colliery effectively marked the end of the coal industry in the South Wales Valleys.

By the twenty-first century, the steel industry in South Wales has also almost disappeared. Recently, there has been uncertainty over the future of the steel industry in Wales. In March 2016, Tata Steel announced that it wanted to sell all of its UK steel plants including Port Talbot and Llanwern because of difficult market conditions (BBC News 2016c). Recently, Tata Steel have announced that it will invest in the Port Talbot steel work and has made a commitment to avoid compulsory redundancies on the site for the next five years after union workers agreed to changes to their pension plans (BBC News 2017a). The manufacturing industry has continued to decline as well. As a result of the recession of the early 1990's, employment in manufacturing fell again by approximately 32,000 between 1990 and 1994 (Johnes 2012: 319-320). Between 1997 and 2007, 50,000 factory jobs were lost in Wales, with many companies attracted by the opportunity to provide lower wages, relocating work to developing countries in Eastern Europe and Asia (BBC News 2007). The South Wales Valleys has suffered considerably from offshoring in the manufacturing industry. For instance, 300 jobs were lost when Burberry closed its factory in Treorchy in 2007 (Wales Online 2007) and 337 jobs were lost as a result of the closure of the Hoover factory in Pentrebach, Merthyr Tydfil in 2009 (Wales Online 2009).

Another significant Post-War economic development which has occurred in Wales and the Valleys has been the staggering growth in the female workforce. Whereas only a quarter of women were in paid employment in Wales in 1951 (Johnes 2012: 53), the figure had risen to 47% by 1971 (Johnes 2012: 343). In 2017, 68.1% of women of working age in Wales are in paid employment (see Table A1.7). The corresponding figure is slightly lower in the South Wales Valleys at 66.5% (see Table A1.7). In contrast, the proportion of men of working age in paid employment in Wales has fallen from 90% in 1971 (Johnes 2012: 343) to 74.8% in 2017 (see Table A1.7). The percentage of men in paid employment in the Valleys in 2017 is below

the national average at 73.6% (see Table A1.7). Factors such as changing attitudes towards gender roles and the increase in educational attainment among girls have contributed to the feminisation of the workforce. Crucially, the shift away from the male dominated industries of coal and steel to industries such as the service sector and light manufacturing has created employment opportunities for the women of Wales and the South Wales Valleys (Rees 1999: 7). Despite this growth, there still is horizontal occupational segregation by gender, with women more likely to be concentrated in certain sectors such as Administration, Personal Services and Sales and underrepresented in industries such as Skilled Trades and Process and Plant Work in Wales (Parken *et al.* 2014: 14).

South Wales Valleys: Today

Largely as a result of these historical processes, the South Wales Valleys is now considered by many to be an area of social and economic deprivation. According to the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation of 2014 (the official measure of relative deprivation of small areas in Wales), nearly a third (65 out of 200) of the Lower Layer Super Output Areas in Wales which were ranked the 10% most deprived in terms of income, employment, health, education, access to services, community safety, physical environment and housing were in the South Wales Valleys (StatsWales 2015a). Yet, it needs to be taken into account that there are also socially and economically prosperous wards in the area as well. There appears to be a clear geographical pattern in terms of the level of deprivation in the South Wales Valleys, with the most deprived wards concentrated at the northern rim of the Valleys and the most socially and economically prosperous wards situated near to the M4 corridor (StatsWales 2015b). The remaining section of this chapter will outline the current economic and social conditions of the Valleys, focusing on employment; income; labour market opportunities; sense of community; educational attainment and opportunities; national identity and the status of the Welsh language.

Economic Characteristics

The labour market in the South Wales Valleys has transformed significantly during the last century. The economy of the Valleys is no longer dependent on coal and steel. Recent figures indicate that most jobs in the Valleys are in the service industries, with the proportion of jobs in the Valleys in the service sector being 73.4% (N=160600) (see Tables A1.8 and A1.9). Like elsewhere in Wales, the public sector is the biggest employer of the service industries in the Valleys, with 31.4% (N=68700) (see Tables A1.8 and A1.9) of jobs in the Valleys in public administration, defence, education and health, illustrating how the area's economy is heavily reliant on public expenditure.

The second largest share of jobs within the service industries in the South Wales Valleys are in the private sector in areas such as wholesale, retail, transport, hotels and food, which account for 23.5% (N=51400) (see Tables A1.8 and A1.9) of jobs in the Valleys. Private sector, service industries jobs make up a large proportion of low paid work in the UK (Clarke and D'Arcy 2016). Furthermore, these jobs also demand lower skills from their workforce compared to occupations in other industries and jobs in the public sector (Felstead *et al.* 2013: 28).

On the other end of the occupational spectrum, a relatively lower proportion of jobs (10.3%) (N=22500) (see Tables A1.8 and A1.9) in the South Wales Valleys are in professional, scientific and technical activities; administrative and support service activities compared to Wales's average of 11.9% (N=167300) and the UK average of 17.6% (N=5662100) (see Tables A1.8 and A1.9). Jobs within this sector, according to the ONS (2015a; 2015b) "require a high degree of training" and are considered to be a part of the knowledge economy.

Consequently, the average gross weekly earnings²¹ for 2016 in the Valleys (£567.45) was slightly higher compared to the national average of £565.90 but substantially lower than the average for neighbouring coastal authorities such as Cardiff (£622.40) and Vale of Glamorgan (£619.10) highlighting economic polarisation between areas (see Table A1.10). This is partly

²¹ Gross Weekly Earnings is the amount a person earns before tax is deducted.

because economic developments in South Wales have been concentrated in the capital city of Cardiff and along the M4 corridor, with companies in retail, light manufacturing, electronics and financial services establishing work as transport infrastructure and public amenities are considered to be better in this area (Adamson 2008: 48).

Similar to other parts of Wales and the UK, the South Wales Valleys suffered from the recent recession of the late 2000s and early 2010s with average unemployment (defined by the ILO as people who are without work, are available for work or are seeking work (OECD 2003)) in the Valleys reaching 11.7% in 2011 (see Table A1.11). Unemployment has since declined with the average figure for the South Wales Valleys being 5.8% in 2016 (see Table A1.11). However, the unemployment rate in the South Wales Valleys remains greater than Wales's average (4.6%) (see Table A1.11). It is also interesting to note that unemployment is substantially higher among young people in the South Wales Valleys with 17.2% of those aged 16 to 24 unemployed, reflecting the national trend in Wales (see Table A1.12).

Considered by Fothergill (2008: 5) to be at “the heart of the labour market problem” in the South Wales Valleys, economic inactivity (defined as people who are not in work and are not seeking or available for work apart from students) was higher in the Valleys (23.7%) compared to the figures for Wales (21%) in 2016 (see Table A1.13). According to Fothergill (2008: 7), relatively higher economic inactivity rates in the Valleys can be partly explained by the fact that the competition for limited jobs in the Valleys deters those who are least able or least willing to hold onto employment to look for work.

According to recent figures from the Welsh Government (2013b: 10), the Valleys experienced a net inflow of people aged from 45 to 64 years old between mid-2007 and mid-2011, potentially attracted by affordable housing in the area. Yet partly due to limited job opportunities in the area, there was a net outflow among younger generations aged from 16 to 24 years old (with the exception of Merthyr Tydfil) and aged from 25 to 44 years old (apart from Caerphilly and Neath Port Talbot) during this period (Welsh Government 2013b: 10). Furthermore, figures from StatsWales (2017b) indicate that in 2016, a substantial amount of

the Valleys residents commuted to work to neighbouring authorities and neighbouring cities such as Cardiff and Swansea.

Young people in this study were generally aware of the amount of jobs and types of jobs that were available in the local area. As Chapter 6 and Chapter 8 will illustrate, young people's perception of labour market opportunities in the South Wales Valleys not only shaped their aspirations regarding their future after compulsory education, but also influenced their spatial horizons (where they visualised they would live in the future).

Social Characteristics

Despite these economic conditions, the Valleys is considered to still have a strong sense of community. The dominance of the coal industry during the nineteenth and early twentieth century is regarded as being pivotal in binding the inhabitants of the Valleys together. Jackson (1968: 155) argued that the experience of similar pay and working conditions was instrumental in creating social bonds among the working class such as the coalminers. When the coal industry was at its peak, the South Wales Valleys gained a reputation as being an area of political militancy and engagement, with strong support being shown towards the trade unions and the Labour Party (Egan 1987). Furthermore, the financial hardship which the miners and their families faced particularly during strike action meant that they had to support each other and turn to others within their communities for help (Jackson 1968: 156). A number of institutions such as the chapel, Welfare Institutes, Friendly Societies, local theatrical societies, sporting clubs as well as events such as *Eisteddfodau* (where people competed in a number of arts and literary competitions) and *Cymanfaoedd Canu* (Communal Singing) acted as support mechanisms for the people of the Valleys (Morgan 1981/2002: 72).

However, this representation of community in the South Wales Valleys has been criticised for being over-romanticised and nostalgic. Based on survey data of residents' perceptions of their community, Adamson and Jones (2004) discovered that there had been increasing privatisation of social life in the Valleys between 1995 and 2001. Respondents reported significantly lower

frequency of contact with neighbours and less respondents stated that they were members of a local community group or association in 2001 compared to 1995 (Adamson and Jones 2004: 13). The demise in the coal industry is considered to have contributed to the decrease in the solidarity and togetherness among the inhabitants of the South Wales Valleys. Most of the institutions established during the expansion of the coal industry which brought the residents of the South Wales Valleys together such as the chapels and the Welfare Institutes have now been boarded up. Adamson and Jones (2004: 15) also note that the lack of amenities and services in the area influenced their respondents' perceptions of declining community life. Furthermore, the relatively higher crime rates in the Valleys associated with high rates of unemployment and concentration of poverty in the area (David *et al.* 2004: 113) has also led to a number of individuals believing that the communities of the Valleys have started to erode (see Bennett *et al.* 2000: 5). A number of young people in this study described their local area as being "rough" and noted that drug and alcohol abuse, vandalism and generally crime were problems in their neighbourhoods. However, other students such as Nathan from Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel noted that the reputation of the Valleys as a crime-ridden area did not reflect their experiences of living in the area.

Nevertheless, there is evidence which counters the argument that there has been a decline in community life in the Valleys. For instance, 85% of respondents in Adamson and Jones's (2004: 12) survey reported that the level of community in their area was either 'excellent', 'good', or 'acceptable' in 2001. Most of the participants in this study also felt that there was a strong sense of community where they lived.

Moreover, despite increasing geographical mobility, the communities of the Valleys appear to be relatively stable compared to urban communities with many people staying and living in the Valleys for a long time. For example, Adamson and Jones (2004: 12) found that 45% of their survey respondents had lived in the Valleys for longer than 20 years. This was also the case in this study with all of the participants apart from Lucy from Cwm Mawr School having lived in the area all of their lives.

Based on my own observations and from speaking to different inhabitants of the Valleys, it appears that certain communities in the area are still fairly close knit. In contrast with my

experience of living in Cardiff, the people of the Valleys were very welcoming and would often say “hello” to me as I passed them along the street. People would frequently start conversations with me and ask questions (probably because they wanted to gain information about the stranger who had popped in to their local shops or was drinking tea in their café). However, largely as a result of the closure of the coal industry in the area, it appears that the strong social bonds between the residents of the Valleys have started to weaken.

Welsh Language and National Identity

The South Wales Valleys has experienced a rapid decline in the number of Welsh speakers over several centuries compared to other parts of Wales. According to Pryce (2000: 40), at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the uplands of the South Wales Valleys was still a Welsh-speaking region, apart from Merthyr Tydfil, which was starting to become a bilingual area as the iron and coal industry had started to attract immigrants from outside Wales. By 1901, the proportion of Welsh speakers in Glamorgan had decreased to 43.5%, with only 15.2% of them monoglot Welsh speakers (Aitchison and Carter 2000: 34). The large influx of people, mostly from outside Wales and with no knowledge of the Welsh language, who moved to the Valleys contributed to the demise of the Welsh language in the Valleys during the nineteenth century (Pryce 2000). Nevertheless, many of the people who moved to the Valleys during the industrial expansion made an effort to assimilate and learn the Welsh language (Williams 1985/1991: 176). The people of the Valleys were also responsible for the Anglicisation of the area. During the nineteenth century, efforts were made to deculturate the people of Wales by restricting the use of the Welsh language in public spheres and portraying it as an inferior language compared to English. For instance, developments in the education system such as the Reports of the Commissioners of Enquiry into the State of Education in Wales in 1847 (also known as the ‘Treason of the Blue Books’) and the Welsh Not²² instilled a sense that English was the language of social and economic advancement and Welsh was a backward language (Khelif 1980). Consequently, a number of parents/carers actively did not transmit the Welsh language to their children. Welsh monoglottism disappeared in the twentieth century and the Welsh language persisted to decline in the Valleys, with the proportion of Welsh speakers

²² The Welsh Not was a piece of wood which children had to wear around the neck if they were caught speaking Welsh in school. The child who had the Welsh Not around their neck by the end of the day was severely punished.

falling to 10.1% in 1991 (see Table A1.14). Along with the failure of parents/carers to pass on the Welsh language to their children, outmigration from the Valleys as a result of deindustrialisation contributed to the erosion of the Welsh language in the twentieth century (Aitchison and Carter 2000: 50). Despite the proportion of Welsh speakers increasing in the Valleys between 1991 and 2001 to 13% (see Table A1.14), the 2011 Census was a cause for concern, with the percentage of Welsh speakers in the Valleys dropping again to 11.9% (see Table A1.14).

Even though the proportion of Welsh speakers has declined once more, areas such as the South Wales Valleys have experienced rejuvenation in the Welsh language amongst younger age groups. When we look at the numbers and proportions of the Welsh speaking population within different age bands in the South Wales Valleys in 2011 (see Tables A1.15 and A1.16), it is evident that the greatest percentage and numbers of Welsh speakers are under the age of 19 in the Valleys. For Caerphilly and Merthyr Tydfil, this age group makes up over half of the Welsh speakers in these authorities (see Tables A1.15 and A1.16). The establishment of Welsh-medium nurseries, primary and secondary schools and to a smaller extent the teaching of Welsh as a second language in English-medium schools is largely responsible for the growth in the number of new young Welsh speakers (Aitchison and Carter 2000: 70). However, existing research in the South Wales Valleys (for example, Hodges 2009) and other Anglicised regions of Wales (Geraint 2016) have illustrated how young people tend not to use the Welsh language beyond the school gates largely because English is the dominant language of the community. Consequently, after their time in Welsh-medium schools, many of the students continue to use the English language extensively in their daily lives and slowly start to lose confidence and ability in speaking Welsh. The outmigration of young people from the Valleys to places that they consider to have better employment and educational opportunities is also not helping to maintain the vitality of the Welsh language in the area. Statistical evidence (see Tables A1.15 and A1.16) shows that among older age groups, the proportion of Welsh speakers drop, with for instance a clear gap between the percentage of Welsh speakers aged between 3 and 19 and those aged between 20 and 44. Therefore, these statistics suggest that it is difficult for Welsh-medium schools alone to create new Welsh speakers who live in the area and continue to use the Welsh language after they finish school.

Based on survey data on language ability and affinity towards Welsh, English and British identity, Balsom (1985) constructed the Three Wales Model, in which he divided Wales into three geographical areas – Y Fro Gymraeg, British Wales and Welsh Wales²³. Y Fro Gymraeg, a Welsh speaking and a Welsh identifying area covers the West of Wales including Anglesey, Gwynedd, Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion and parts of Pembrokeshire above the Landsker line. British Wales, an English speaking and British identifying group, consists of constituencies near to the border of England, coastal constituencies in South Wales and areas of Pembrokeshire beneath the Landsker line (Balsom 1985: 5). For Balsom (1985: 5), the South Wales Valleys is distinctive to other parts of Wales and he categorises the area as representing “Welsh Wales” because it is an English speaking, but a Welsh identifying area. In his qualitative study of national identity in the South Wales Valleys, Roberts (1994) also identified a distinctive “Valleys Welsh” identity existing in the area. Despite not being able to speak the language, a number of Roberts’s (1994: 84) non-Welsh speaking respondents still felt that the traditions and characteristics of the Valleys such as rugby competitions and communal singing made them Welsh. Data from the Recent Census of 2011 support Balsom’s (1985) and Roberts’s (1994) propositions and indicate that 72.4% of people in the South Wales Valleys considered themselves to be only Welsh (see Table A1.17). It is interesting to note that in this study, the majority of young people in Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel (20 out of 26 students) and Cwm Mawr School (22 out of 26 students) considered themselves to be Welsh. The other students considered themselves either to be British (4 students from Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel and 1 student from Cwm Mawr School), English (1 student from Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel and 3 students from Cwm Mawr School) or European (1 student from Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel). Most of the participants felt that they were Welsh because they were either born in Wales, had lived in Wales most of their lives or their parents/carers were Welsh. Three of the students in Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel felt that the fact that they were able to speak Welsh made them Welsh. Despite this, we must acknowledge that the South Wales Valleys is not homogenous in terms of language and identity as Balsom (1985) has portrayed.

²³ The boundaries between the different areas in Balsom’s (1985) Three Wales Model may have changed today due to changes in linguistic patterns and affinity towards national identities.

Educational Opportunities

It is widely considered that historically the people of the South Wales Valleys have placed a value on education for its potential in improving one's social and economic conditions. For instance, at the start of the twentieth century, classes were run by the Plebs League and the South Wales Miners Federation provided scholarships for miners to study at Ruskin College, Oxford and the Central Labour College in London (Egan 1987: 107). More recent developments include the establishment of the Universities of the Heads of the Valleys aimed at increasing skill levels by offering a range of learning opportunities for people within the local area with the purpose of contributing to the economic regeneration of the Valleys (UHOVI 2015).

Despite these initiatives, educational attainment still remains relatively low in the Valleys, with the proportion of working age adults in the Valleys who possess no qualifications (13%) higher than the national average of 9.8% in 2014²⁴ (see Table A1.18). It is interesting to note that both parents/carers of five out of the twenty-six Cwm Mawr School students who were interviewed as part of this study had not continued with their education after compulsory education (see Chapter 3)²⁵. At Key Stage 4, the proportion of young people achieving the Level 2 threshold (5 A*-C or more GCSEs or equivalent) including English/Welsh and Maths was substantially lower in the Valleys (51.3% - 45.1% for boys and 57.7% for girls) compared to the figure for Wales of 55.4% (51.4% for boys and 59.7% for girls) in the 2013/4 academic year (see Table A1.19).

Nevertheless, the proportion of students progressing into further education and training has increased substantially over the past decade in the Valleys, reflecting trends across Wales. The percentage of young people in the Valleys who progress into further education and training after Year 11 has increased from 85.7% in 2004 (see Table A1.20) to 95% in 2014²⁶ (see Table

²⁴ With regard to education figures, I have chosen to report either 2014 figures or figures for the 2013/14 academic year as this was the year prior to when students in this study were making the transition from compulsory to post-compulsory education.

²⁵ All of the parents/carers of the Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel students had stayed on in some form of education and training after compulsory education

²⁶ The 2014 figure also includes young people who are in part time education (less than 16 hours a week).

A1.21). The proportion of young people in the Valleys who progressed into further education and training in 2014 is similar to the figure for Wales (95%) (see Table A1.21). During the same period, there has been a sizeable decline in the proportion of young people who progress into employment after Year 11 from 6.8% in 2004 (see Table A1.20) to 1.3% in 2014 (see Table A1.21). Although the percentage of young people who are NEETs after Year 11 in the South Wales Valleys has decreased from 8.2% in 2004 (see Table A1.20) to 3.7% in 2014 (see Table A1.21), the percentage of NEETs in the South Wales Valleys is still slightly higher than the national average of 3.1%.

When we turn to look at the transition from further to higher education, the amount of young people from the Valleys (29.4% for boys and 38.1% for girls) who continue onto university is relatively lower than the figures for Wales (30.6% for boys and 39.6% for girls) (see Table A1.21). Yet, interestingly, Merthyr Tydfil has the highest higher education participation rates for Wales when we combine the rates for males and females. However, as Wright highlights (2014: 24), when measuring only students who are studying Bachelors and Foundation degrees and Certificates of Higher Education students, and excluding students who are studying qualifications lower than Level 4, Merthyr Tydfil no longer has the highest participation for both males and females. This illustrates that the amount of students studying non-degree Higher Education qualifications contributes to the relatively high proportion of students in higher education from Merthyr Tydfil.

Discussion

As illustrated in this chapter, the South Wales Valleys has experienced staggering economic and social changes over the last few centuries. In the nineteenth and early twentieth century, the South Wales Valleys were at the heart of the industrial revolution. During this time, the ironworks and subsequently the coalmines provided employment to a large amount (predominantly male) of the population and led to substantial population growth in the area, with many attracted by the opportunity of work moving to the area. However, largely as a result of the rapid decline and closure of industries such as coal and manufacturing, the South Wales

Valleys is now widely considered to be an area of social and economic deprivation. The economy of the South Wales Valleys is relatively weak, with unemployment rates and economic inactivity rates higher in the Valleys compared to other parts of Wales and the UK. Furthermore, earnings are on average lower in the Valleys partly as a result of the rise in low skilled, low paid work in the area. The problem of crime triggered by poverty, limited access to certain services and amenities and relatively poor educational outcomes are some of the characteristics which make the South Wales Valleys an area of social deprivation. Despite this, it is considered that strong social bonds still bind the inhabitants of the Valleys together. Alongside areas of poverty, there are also pockets of affluence in the South Wales Valleys. There are also vast examples of people who come from the Valleys and who have done well for themselves in a range of different areas including education, business and the arts. Therefore, we need to acknowledge the differences which exist within the South Wales Valleys.

Over the years, efforts have been made to regenerate the area. After the Second World War, there were attempts to diversify the economy of the Valleys. A number of manufacturing companies set up factories and workplaces, and created work in the Valleys during this period. However, by now, a large number of these companies have moved work elsewhere to either areas which have better transport infrastructure or to countries in Eastern Europe and Asia where they can offer lower wages to workers. Additionally, due to the poor performance of its economy, the Valleys receives structural funding from the European Union to create sustainable economic growth and jobs in the area. However, this funding will soon end as a result of the UK's decision to leave the European Union in 2016. The Welsh Government announced the establishment of a Taskforce for the Valleys, made up of Assembly Members and expert advisors, with the aim of developing a fresh approach to delivering real change to the South Wales Valleys (see Welsh Government 2017b). The Welsh Government have also recently announced that it would phase out Communities First programme, a programme aimed at tackling poverty in Wales's deprived communities (BBC News 2017b). In recent years, the Welsh Government have in addition started to develop City Regions such as Cardiff Capital Region (see Cardiff Capital Region 2015) and Swansea Bay City Region (see Swansea Bay City Region 2013) in the hope that these cities will create economic growth to neighbouring boroughs such as the South Wales Valleys by providing employment to their inhabitants.

By outlining the social and economic conditions of the research area, I have established the circumstances in which young people's aspirations are shaped. In the next chapter, I will explore the educational context in which young people make decisions regarding their future by examining the two types of schools which are central in this study – Welsh-medium and English-medium schools.

Chapter 5: Welsh-medium and English-medium schools in South-East Wales

This chapter concentrates on the schools that are central to this study – Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel and Cwm Mawr School – and more broadly Welsh-medium and English-medium schools in South-East Wales. This chapter will start by discussing the day-to-day language of the schools and the curriculum which is offered in Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel and Cwm Mawr School.

One of the aims of this study is to assess the extent that young people’s aspirations and expectations are influenced by social background (see RQ 2 in Chapter 1). There is a widely held assumption that school choice provides a mechanism for ensuring that Welsh-medium schools in South East Wales are ‘exclusive’ and are populated by students who come from privileged, middle class backgrounds. I will assess this assumption by exploring the social composition of Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel and Cwm Mawr School and more broadly Welsh-medium and English-medium secondary schools in South-East Wales by analysing recent statistical data. This section will also draw on the two theoretical approaches that are central to this study, Bourdieu’s Cultural Reproduction Theory and Rational Choice Theory (discussed in Chapter 2), to illustrate how both the context (the circumstances in which choice is made) and process of school choice (how parents/carers make choices regarding their child’s education) contribute to the differences in the social composition of Welsh-medium and English-medium schools in South-East Wales.

Another aim of this study is to examine the extent to which school practices shape young people’s aspirations and expectations (see RQ4 in Chapter 1). Therefore, this chapter will explore the role that Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel and Cwm Mawr School play in shaping and facilitating young people’s aspirations. It will also examine the social and educational outcomes of these schools as well as the outcomes of Welsh-medium and English-medium schools in South East Wales. It is widely assumed that Welsh-medium schools in South-East Wales perform better compared to English-medium schools. I will examine this assumption by analysing data on the educational attainment of Welsh-medium and English-medium schools

in South East Wales. This part of the chapter will also explore debates surrounding the factors which contribute to the differences in the outcomes of Welsh-medium and English-medium schools in South-East Wales.

Medium of Education and Curriculum in Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel and Cwm Mawr School

Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel is classified as a Welsh-medium school as all of the subjects in the school are taught through the medium of Welsh and students are assessed through the medium of Welsh apart from the subject of English and other languages (Welsh Assembly Government 2007: 12). Reflecting trends across South East Wales (StatsWales 2016b), the majority of students (96% according to Mr Roberts, the Head Teacher) come from English-speaking homes. Of the twenty-six Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel students who were interviewed in this study, only four of the students, Angharad, Dafydd, Alun and Chris, stated that one of their parents/carers spoke Welsh and another two students, Nia and Emma, noted that one of their parents/carers or both of their parents/carers had learnt the language.

From my own observation, it appeared that there was a clear divide in terms of language use in the school. While Welsh is the language of the classroom and the language spoken between the teachers, administrators and students; English is the language outside the classroom, with English being spoken amongst students as well as among the kitchen and cleaning staff. It was interesting to observe that along the school corridors some of the students would switch from English to Welsh in the presence of teachers. In their study, Scourfield *et al.* (2006) also found that children and young people in Welsh-medium schools located in neighbourhoods where Welsh language use is low tend to speak English with each other outside the classroom. Scourfield *et al.* (2006: 136) note that whilst some students in Welsh-medium schools may speak English with each other as a form of resistance to the school; students generally consider speaking English to be easier mainly because English is the language that they speak at home and within their communities. Consequently, teachers in Welsh-medium schools situated in areas where Welsh language use is low such as Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel must strictly enforce Welsh language use among their students on a day-to-day basis.

Cwm Mawr School is categorised as an English-medium school as students are taught and assessed through the medium of English (Welsh Assembly Government 2007: 13). The only exception is that students study Welsh as a second language up to Key Stage 4. English is the main language spoken among the students, teachers and staff.

Despite differences in terms of medium of education and the teaching of Welsh as a subject, the two schools follow the national curriculum as set by the Welsh Government as both schools are under local educational authority control. In an effort to widen curriculum choice, under the Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure 2009, the Welsh Government set statutory targets in terms of the number of academic and vocational courses educational institutions would have to offer at Key Stage 4 and Post-16. Both schools were reaching the targets set at the time by providing at least 25 courses, including three vocational courses at Key Stage 4 (Welsh Government 2014b: 11) and providing a minimum of 30 courses, including five vocational courses at Post-16 level (Welsh Government 2014c: 9).

Teachers in both schools felt that this initiative was attracting students to stay in sixth form, with Mr Davies, the Deputy Head Teacher of Cwm Mawr School, noting the following regarding the 2009 Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure:

So, obviously that's going to have an effect on whether the children stay on in [Cwm Mawr] school because in the past... some of them have gone to college to do all sorts of courses and we think we can offer them [these courses] in [Cwm Mawr] school as well.

Mr Davies, Cwm Mawr School

Cwm Mawr School was collaborating with other local educational providers to widen the curriculum at Post-16 Level. For instance, when interviewed in the sixth form, some of the participants in the study from Cwm Mawr School were studying certain subjects in other educational institutions. Collaborating with other local educational providers was proving to be more difficult for Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel. Although they had in the past collaborated with

further education colleges, Mr Roberts, the Head Teacher, argued that collaborating with other Welsh-medium schools was:

...haws i rheoli, haws i drefnu, haws i fonitro ac mae'r colegau yn anodd. Yn benodol, dyw'r ... does 'na ddim darpariaeth trwy Gymraeg [mewn colegau addysg bellach yn yr ardal]

...easier to control, easier to arrange, easier to monitor and the colleges are difficult. Specifically, the ...there is no provision through the medium of Welsh [in further education colleges in the area]

Mr Roberts, Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel

Historically, Welsh-medium provision in further education colleges has been limited (Baker and Jones 2000). Yet, we need to acknowledge that as part of its Welsh-medium Education Strategy (WAG 2010), the Welsh Government has brought in initiatives such as Bilingual Champions in further education colleges to increase the level of Welsh-medium education provision in these educational institutions (Welsh Government 2014d: 7).

However, according to Mr Roberts, it was still a challenge to collaborate with Welsh-medium schools because of the substantial distances between the School and other Welsh-medium schools. Raising similar concerns to the National Assembly for Wales's Children and Young People Committee (2012), Mr Roberts, as well as Mr Davies, the Deputy Head of Cwm Mawr School at the time, discussed how transport costs as well as issues regarding timetabling made it difficult to work with other educational institutions in delivering courses. In their recent study, BMG Research (2013: 6) also discovered that some students were hesitant to study a course in another educational institution as they were reluctant to travel. As a result, both schools were now looking at offering certain courses in the school rather than transporting students to other educational institutions.

Looking at the sixth form prospectuses of both schools, both schools were offering similar amounts of academic and vocational qualifications.

Social Composition of Welsh-medium and English-medium schools in South-East Wales

Reflecting the ethnic composition of the Valleys (StatsWales 2017a), both schools served a predominantly white student body with only 2.3% of students in Cwm Mawr School and 1.3% of students in Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel reporting their ethnic background as anything other than "White-British".

The teachers in both schools stressed that they served socially and economically deprived areas. Despite this, it is widely assumed that students who attend Welsh-medium schools in South East Wales predominantly come from privileged middle class backgrounds because of school choice. Based on the occupation and education of parents/carers of participants in this study, it is evident that more participants in this study from Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel came from socially and economically advantaged backgrounds compared to the participants from Cwm Mawr School as more students from Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel came from salariat backgrounds (12 students compared to 8 students in Cwm Mawr School) (see Table 3.1) and had at least one parent/carer who had gone to university (15 students compared to 6 students in Cwm Mawr School) (see Table 3.2). When we look at Free School Meals (FSM) status (a proxy of household poverty commonly used by policymakers and researchers), a higher proportion of students within my sample and the whole of Year 11 in Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel were on Free School Meals than in Cwm Mawr School (see Table 3.3 and 3.4). At a school level, Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel (14%) had lower proportion of students on Free School Meals compared to Cwm Mawr School (34.2%).

We now turn to look at whether this is a trend across South-East Wales. As information regarding the education and occupation of parents/carers is not accessible, we can only use the

proportion of students on FSM to examine whether there is a difference in the social composition of Welsh-medium and English-medium schools in South-East Wales.

Table 5.1: Average Percentage of Students on Free School Meals in English-Medium and Welsh-Medium Secondary Schools across South East Wales between the 2013/4 and 2015/6 academic year

Local Educational Authorities	Average for all schools (%)	Secondary English-Medium (%)	Secondary Welsh-Medium (%)	Differences between English-Medium and Welsh-Medium (%)
Caerphilly	22.4	23.2	12.8	10.4
Merthyr Tydfil and Rhondda Cynon Taf²⁷	21.9	24.0	13.0	11.0
Neath Port Talbot	24.3	25.6	11.7	13.9
SOUTH WALES VALLEYS	22.9	24.2	12.5	11.7
Blaenau Gwent, Newport, Monmouthshire and Torfaen²⁸	19.8	20.2	12.4	7.8
Bridgend	18.5	18.9	15.2	3.7
Cardiff	22.8	25.4	9.1	16.3
Vale of Glamorgan	14.4	15.4	7.6	7.8
SOUTH EAST WALES	20.6	21.8	11.7	10.1
WALES	17.5			

Source: Welsh Government's My Local School's Website [Accessed: 11/07/2017]

²⁷ The Welsh-medium secondary school for students in Merthyr Tydfil is in the neighbouring borough of Rhondda Cynon Taf. Therefore, the schools within these authorities have been combined to make one category.

²⁸ Prior to September 2016, the Welsh-medium secondary school for students in Blaenau Gwent, Newport and Monmouthshire was in Torfaen. Therefore, the schools within these authorities have been combined to make one category.

When we look beyond both schools, it is evident that Welsh-medium secondary schools across the South Wales Valleys and South East Wales have on average lower percentages of students on Free School Meals compared to English-medium schools in this area (see Table 5.1). The pattern in terms of the Free School Meals of Welsh-medium and English-medium schools evident in Table 5.1 is consistent with the patterns that Thomas (2013a) identified based on data from 2005.

Although Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel's FSM ratio (14%) is substantially lower than the average figure for the Valleys (22.9%) and South East Wales (20.6%), Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel's FSM ratio is higher compared to the average figure for Welsh-medium schools in relatively affluent areas such as the Vale of Glamorgan (7.6%) (see Table 5.1.). The same pattern is evident across all schools in South-East Wales. On average, the proportion of students on Free School Meals is higher in Welsh-medium and English-medium schools situated in socially and economically deprived authorities such as the local authorities of the South Wales Valleys - Caerphilly, Neath Port Talbot, Merthyr Tydfil and Rhondda Cynon Taf - compared to Welsh-medium and English-medium schools in relatively affluent areas such as the Vale of Glamorgan.

Furthermore, there are certain exceptions to this trend with a number of English-medium comprehensives having lower percentages of students on Free School Meals compared to the Welsh-medium secondary schools in the same authority. For instance, the school with the lowest average proportion of students on FSM between 2013/4 and 2015/6 in South East Wales was Cowbridge High School (3.8%), an English-medium school.

More fundamentally, we must treat this data with caution as there are limitations of using FSM ratio to measure the social composition of these schools. It is important to remember that this indicator only covers pupils who are eligible and who are also claiming FSM. A recent Welsh Government report (2013c: 2) discovered that not all eligible families apply for the scheme due to a range of factors such as the stigma attached to receiving FSM. Based on data from England, Hobbs and Vignoles (2010: 685) also found that FSM status does not capture large numbers of low income households as they do not fall under the eligibility criteria. Therefore, as Free School Meals is a measure of household poverty, we can conclude that the general trend is that

Welsh-medium schools in South East Wales have lower proportions of students from the poorest households as they have on average lower percentages of students on FSM. Yet, it is difficult to determine whether Welsh-medium schools are elite educational institutions as information regarding FSM status of students does not tell us anything about the socio-economic characteristics of students who do not claim or are ineligible for the scheme.

School Choice and the Social Composition of Welsh-medium and English-medium schools in South East Wales.

This part of the chapter explores how school choice contributes to the differences in terms of the social composition of Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel and Cwm Mawr School and more broadly Welsh-medium and English-medium schools in South-East Wales. Researchers such as Gorard *et al.* (2003: 183) argue that the housing market and economy as opposed to parental choice primarily affect the social composition of different schools. This is consistent with the marked differences between the FSM ratios of English-medium and Welsh-medium schools in relatively deprived areas such as Caerphilly, Merthyr Tydfil and Rhondda Cynon Taf, and the FSM ratio of such schools in affluent areas such as Vale of Glamorgan (see Table 5.1).

Yet, the housing market and economy alone cannot adequately explain the variation in terms of the FSM proportion of Welsh-medium and English-medium schools. This is because Welsh-medium schools serve larger catchment areas, which include the catchment areas of local English-medium schools. Thus, choice is a key factor which impacts on the social composition of the student population of Welsh-medium and English-medium schools.

Over the past few decades, there have been a number of studies which have explored choice of medium of education in Wales (for example, Williams *et al.* 1978; Bush *et al.* 1981; Packer and Campbell 2000; Thomas 2010; Hodges 2010, 2012; O’Hanlon 2015). This research has focused on parents’/carers’ choice of primary school. This is because it is fairly difficult for children to transfer from an English-medium primary school to a Welsh-medium secondary school as children have to have a certain level of proficiency in Welsh in order to be able to be

educated in a Welsh-medium secondary school²⁹. However, there have been concerns over Welsh-medium attrition rates, with fewer and fewer students being educated through the medium of Welsh as they progress through the education system. The critical juncture is between primary school and secondary school with a number of children transferring from a Welsh-medium primary school to an English-medium secondary school. Recent statistics indicate that in 2007, 20.3% (n=6428) of Year 2 (aged 6-7) students were assessed through the medium of Welsh (Welsh Government 2015a: 22). By 2014, when Year 2 students from 2007 would have been in Year 9 (aged 13-14), 17.1% (n=5540) of Year 9 learners were assessed in Welsh as a first language subject³⁰ (Welsh Government 2015a: 23).

Yet, there has been little attempt to explore how the process of school choice may impact on the social composition of Welsh-medium and English-medium schools. Choice in terms of medium of education has been often been portrayed in the past as being a decontextualised process. As noted in Chapter 1, those who choose Welsh-medium education are essentially making an active choice as English-medium education is often the default option in South-East Wales because of the relatively higher numbers of English-medium schools compared to Welsh-medium schools in this part of Wales. Furthermore, choice of medium is implicitly presented as being a rational choice by previous research. Rational choice theorists argue that parents/carers make calculations of the costs and benefits of sending their child to different schools and choose the school which will provide their child with the greatest social, academic and economic benefits (see Bosetti 2004). Existing studies on choice of medium of education have focused on the factors that influence parents/carers to opt for either Welsh-medium or English-medium education and have paid little attention to the process underlying choice of medium of education.

Based on data from previous research, it appears that there are four main factors which influence parents'/carers' choice of medium of education in Wales – cultural (related to issues

²⁹ Recently, concerns have been raised over the prospects of children from an English-medium primary school being accepted to attend Ysgol Gyfun Bro Edern, a Welsh-medium secondary school in Cardiff. Some commentators such as RhAG (Rhieni ar gyfer Addysg Gymraeg [*Parents for Welsh-medium Education*]) were worried that Ysgol Gyfun Bro Edern would be unable to cope with these children as they were not fluent Welsh speakers (see BBC News 2016d).

³⁰ However, it needs to be acknowledged that the total number for this cohort had increased during this time from 31,611 in 2007 to 32,354 in 2014 (Welsh Government 2015c: 22).

regarding Welsh language and culture), educational (related to issues regarding the impact that Welsh-medium and English-medium schools may have on the educational performance of the child), economic (the effect that these two types of school will have on children's employment prospects) and situational factors (related to the proximities of the schools). These factors were also discussed by the parents/carers and students in this study as well. Each of these factors will now be explored in detail.

Factors influencing choice of medium in South-East Wales

Cultural Factors

In previous studies, cultural factors are considered to be the main factors which influence parents/carers to opt for Welsh-medium education (Bush *et al.* 1981; Packer and Campbell 2000; Thomas 2010; Hodges 2010, 2012). These studies suggest that cultural factors not only motivate Welsh-speaking parents/carers to send their children to Welsh-medium schools, but non-Welsh speaking parents/carers as well.

This was also the case in this study. All of the six parents/carers of students from Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel interviewed (who were all from non-Welsh speaking background) noted that the opportunity for their child to learn the Welsh language influenced them to opt for Welsh-medium education. For instance, Charlotte's father considered that the Welsh language was an integral part of Welsh culture, saying that him and his wife "think because you're Welsh, you should be able to learn the language". Additionally, most of the students (22 out of 26 respondents) from Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel noted that their parents/carers had chosen to send them to a Welsh-medium primary school because they wanted them to be able to speak Welsh.

However, we need to take into account that participants in this study and other studies may have noted that the Welsh language was a major influence in making them choose Welsh-medium education because they consider it to be a socially acceptable answer. While it is difficult to assess whether participants in these studies were answering in such a manner, we

need to take into account that certain parents/carers may prioritise other factors as opposed to cultural factors.

At the same time, the Welsh language may deter certain parents/carers from sending their children to Welsh-medium schools. Certain parents/carers may not consider the Welsh language to be an integral part of Welsh culture. For instance, one of the students in Cwm Mawr School, Ellie, discussed how her father was reluctant to send her to a Welsh-medium school because “he never learned Welsh and he didn’t think it was important to learn”. Participants from Gorard’s (1997: 26) and Packer and Campbell’s (2000: 594) studies also chose not to send their children to Welsh-medium schools because they believed that these schools foster a divisive nationalism among their students.

Educational Factors

Existing studies have also highlighted how educational factors may persuade parents/carers to send their children to Welsh-medium schools (Packer and Campbell 2000; Hodges 2010, 2012). In these studies, parents/carers have cited the growing evidence of the cognitive benefits of bilingualism (see Baker 2011 for a review of this research) as a reason for choosing Welsh-medium education. In this study, when discussing what motivated her to send her children to Welsh-medium schools, Nia’s mother also noted that:

I was also really conscious about the idea about getting different parts of their [her children] brains working and opening up kind of linguistic pathways and neural pathways that might be benefited by being bilingual.

Nia’s Mother

Furthermore, previous studies have shown that the reputation of Welsh-medium schools as being highly successful educational establishments (which will be examined later in this chapter) may also direct parents/carers towards choosing this type of school (Packer and

Campbell 2000; Thomas 2010; Hodges 2010, 2012). One of the parents/carers in this study, Mark's mother, discussed that her decision to opt for Welsh-medium education for her children was not only due to the Welsh language, but also because of the academic standards of the Welsh-medium school:

Well, primarily it was the Welsh language, but obviously on top of that is that it is a very good school [the Welsh-medium primary school]. If it had been Welsh language and they weren't a very good school, then I would have thought differently about it because the education is just as important to me if not more important than the Welsh language.

Mark's Mother

This extract shows that Welsh-medium schools also have to prove themselves educationally in order to attract certain parents/carers, particularly non-Welsh speaking parents/carers.

Whilst none of the students in Cwm Mawr School discussed this in the interviews, we need to take into account that educational factors may also influence parents/carers to choose English-medium education for their children. Previous studies have demonstrated that certain parents/carers may choose English-medium education for their children because of the educational standards of an English-medium school (for example, Thomas 2013b). There is also evidence that concerns regarding the impact that Welsh-medium education would have had on their child influences parents/carers from non-Welsh speaking backgrounds to choose English-medium education (see Packer and Campbell 2000; Gorard 1997). Non-Welsh speaking parents/carers have also raised concerns about the fact that they would be unable to support their child with their school work if they chose Welsh-medium education as they did not understand Welsh (see Packer and Campbell 2000; Thomas 2013b).

Economic Factors

Similar to the findings from existing research, for example Williams *et al.* (1978) and O'Hanlon (2015), three of the parents/carers (in addition to four of the students in this study) discussed that Welsh-medium education was chosen because it was considered that Welsh proficiency and bilingualism would improve the child's employment prospects. This perception is largely as a result of changing attitudes towards the Welsh language among employers due to language policies and other policy developments such as the recent Welsh Language Measure 2011, which established a Welsh Language Commissioner and has made it a legal requirement for public bodies and certain private organisations to comply with standards relating to the Welsh language. For these parents/carers, Welsh-medium education provides their child with 'linguistic capital' (see Bourdieu 1977b) as they may perceive that the Welsh language will place their child in an advantageous position when looking for work in Wales. Statistical research provides support to parents'/carers' perception, indicating that Welsh speakers are less likely to be unemployed (Blackaby *et al.* 2005: 71) and earn more (Henley and Jones 2005: 317; Blackaby *et al.* 2005: 73; Makepeace and Wass 2011: 86) than non-Welsh speakers, particularly in areas where Welsh language use is low³¹.

Adopting terms from Watson's (1964) ethnographic study, Williams *et al.* (1978: 195) distinguished parents/carers who opt for Welsh-medium education as being 'Burghers' and parents/carers who chose English-medium education as being 'Spiralists', with the former being a person who regards social mobility is restricted to the local area and the latter considering social mobility may involve geographical mobility. Williams *et al.* (1978) discovered that parents/carers who chose Welsh-medium education were less willing for their children's eventual occupation to take them outside Wales compared to parents/carers who had selected English-medium education. Other studies from Gorard (1997: 26) and Packer and Campbell (2000: 594) have illustrated how certain parents/carers opt for English-medium education because they perceive that the benefits of speaking Welsh are restricted to the labour market in Wales.

³¹ However, this does not necessarily mean that speaking Welsh causes Welsh speakers to have higher earnings and to have lower unemployment rates. Other factors such as educational attainment also contribute towards differences in earnings and employment rates. Some of these studies control for some of these other factors.

Three out of six of the parents/carers³² who opted for Welsh-medium education and were interviewed as part of this study noted that they would prefer that their children chose to live quite close to them in the future as opposed to moving far away. However, it appeared that ensuring their children would stay in the local area was not a factor which influenced these parents/carers to send their children to a Welsh-medium school.

It is also interesting to note that all of the parents/carers who were interviewed apart from Charlotte's father expressed concerns regarding the role that the Welsh language would play in their children's future. These parents/carers had aspirations for their children to progress into higher education. Due to the lack of Welsh-medium provision in higher education institutions in Wales (see Welsh Government 2016f) and across the UK, these parents/carers envisaged that their children would be studying their higher education course through the medium of English with Nia's mother noting that she's "always conscious that at some point pretty much they're going to have to shift to learning in English, whether they make that shift at 11 [during the transition from primary to secondary school] or 16 [during the transition from secondary school to further education] or 18 when they go to university". Other parents/carers such as Tim's father also felt that the Welsh language would not play a major role in his children's future as he believed that Welsh language competence was only valued in particular occupational fields:

I think once you leave school and go into the real world...the amount of children who will actually use Welsh is very limited because unless you working for a council or like a utility company based in Wales ... or you work in like Production and you are working for S4C [the Welsh Language Television Channel] or anything to do with the Welsh language...you know, I don't think there's a lot of jobs that require you to speak Welsh.

Tim's Father

Chapter 7 and Chapter 8 will explore how young people in this study perceived the role that the Welsh language would play in their futures.

³² Two of the six parents/carers did not express any preference in terms of where they wanted their children to live in the future. One of the parents/carers expressed that were happy for their child to move away.

Situational Factors

As there are relatively fewer Welsh-medium schools in South East Wales compared to English-medium schools, children tend to have to travel substantially longer distances to their local Welsh-medium school compared to their local English-medium school. Some children have to travel to the neighbouring local authority in order to attend their local Welsh-medium secondary school.

Under the Learners Travel (Wales) Measure 2008, there is a statutory duty for local authorities to provide free transport for students who have to travel 2 miles or more (for primary school students) and 3 miles or more (for secondary school students) to their nearest suitable maintained school, which includes Welsh-medium schools (see Welsh Government 2014e). However, Welsh-medium education in South East Wales remains a logistically inconvenient option for parents/carers and children. For instance, some of the participants in Packer and Campbell's (2000: 590) study had opted for their local English-medium school because they considered it to be convenient from their home. In this study, seventeen out of twenty-six students in Cwm Mawr School noted that their parents/carers had opted for the English-medium primary school because it was the closest school.

However, some parents/carers may opt for Welsh-medium education mainly due to logistical factors. There are some parents/carers who live closer to their local Welsh-medium school than their local English-medium school. Several participants in Evans's (2014: 211) recent study in Porthcawl noted that they had decided to send their children to the Welsh-medium primary school because it was "on the way to work". Three of the students in Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel in this study noted that they or their parents/carers had chosen the Welsh-medium primary or secondary school as it was closer. Nia's mother also discussed that sending them to a Welsh-medium school meant that she could "put them on the bus and dash to work and come back and pick them off the bus... [making] family life more practical".

Exploring the process underlying choice of medium of education

Although parents/carers evaluate the costs and benefits of sending their children to different schools, researchers such as Gewirtz *et al.* (1995) and Butler and Hamnett (2010) have illustrated that parents/carers from different class backgrounds adopt different strategies when it comes to deciding which school their child will attend. These researchers have discovered that while there are certain parents/carers, mostly from higher socio-economic backgrounds, who are active in the process of school choice, there are other parents/carers particularly from lower socio-economic backgrounds, who either find it difficult to understand vast swathes of information regarding different schools or are less inclined to engage in the process of school choice and consequently choose the closest school for their children.

This provides some explanation for the differences in the social composition of Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel and Cwm Mawr School and more broadly Welsh-medium and English-medium schools in South-East Wales. As aforementioned, parents/carers tend to make an active choice when choosing Welsh-medium education due to the larger numbers of English-medium schools in South-East Wales. There may be a number of parents/carers, particularly those from lower socio-economic background, who may not be active or who may be hesitant in exercising school choice in South-East Wales and may opt for the local English-medium primary or secondary school. However, we also need to acknowledge that a number of parents/carers who do opt for English-medium education do exercise school choice and consider a range of schools before choosing a school for their child.

Researchers such as Gewirtz *et al.* (1995) have argued that school choice is not only based on parents'/carers' cost-benefit analysis of different schools. They have also drawn on Bourdieu's notion of economic, social and cultural capital and habitus to explain the differences between the approaches of parents from different social backgrounds when making decisions regarding their child's education. The next section will explore to what extent can Rational Choice Theory and Bourdieu's Cultural Reproduction Theory help us to understand how different parents/carers' make choices regarding medium of education.

The different levels of economic capital (Bourdieu 1986/1997) that parents/carers possess affect which schools they consider to be practical and impractical for them to send their

children to. Rational Choice Theorists such as Breen and Goldthorpe (1997) also consider that financial resources also contribute to the process of decision-making. As noted earlier, some parents/carers are deterred from sending their children to the local Welsh-medium school as it is generally further away from their home compared to the local English-medium schools. On the one hand, the choice to opt for English-medium education on these grounds may be perceived as being rational as it is more of a convenient option and it also saves time and money. However, we also need to take into account how the possession of economic capital/financial resources affects the practicalities of travelling to certain schools. Parents/carers who possess low levels of economic capital/financial resources may find it more difficult to send their children to a Welsh-medium school in South East Wales compared to those who possess higher levels of economic capital/financial resources because they may not have access to a car and may consider public transport costs to be too expensive. Therefore, the lack of economic capital/financial resources may prevent certain parents/carers from sending their children to Welsh-medium schools.

As most parents/carers who opt for Welsh-medium education are not fluent in the language, it is highly unlikely that these parents/carers have been educated in a Welsh-medium school. Existing studies on school choice have demonstrated how possession of cultural capital affects ability to analyse and assess different sources of information regarding schools (Butler and Hamnett 2010; Alegre and Benito 2012). These studies have found that parents/carers who possess cultural capital, predominantly those from higher socio-economic backgrounds, are able to understand and evaluate information from published evidence such as inspection reports and prospectuses because of their education and familiarity with the education system. With regards to medium of education, research has found that published evidence such as inspection reports are important sources of information for parents/carers who opt for Welsh-medium education (see Thomas 2013b: 177). For instance, in this study, one of the parents/carers of one of the students I interviewed, Mark's Mother, noted she had carried out their own research on local schools based on inspection reports before choosing Welsh-medium education for her child:

I did my own research to be honest 'cos I had read their [the Welsh-medium school] inspection report. And I sort of...if I knew people whose children had gone there then I spoke to them and said "What you think?" and that was it really... But, I would

make up my own mind...I read the Inspection Report and it [the Welsh-medium school] was good.

Mark's Mother

At first glance, Mark's mother's choice to opt for Welsh-medium education appears to be based on a cost-benefit analysis of different schools in the area. Based on inspection reports, she chose to send her children to a Welsh-medium school as she considered it to be a "good" school which her children would benefit from attending. At the same time, we could argue that Mark's mother's possession of cultural capital in the form of her familiarity with the education system (she had progressed to university and was now a teacher) enables her to decipher and evaluate information from documents such as inspection reports confidently regarding local schools. We also need to acknowledge that certain parents/carers who opt for English-medium education also may possess cultural capital, thus, enabling them to be able to carry out their own research and decipher and decode published information prior to making a choice regarding their child's education.

On the other hand, existing studies have found that parents/carers who lack cultural capital may find it difficult to be able to analyse and assess published information because of their educational background and unfamiliarity with education system (Gewirtz *et al.* 1995). As a result, these parents/carers tend to rely more on what they hear from individuals in their social network rather than what is written in published materials (Ball *et al.* 1995/1997).

The social networks of individuals may play an important part in shaping parents'/carers' choice of medium of education. Both Rational Choice Theorists such as Goldthorpe (1996) and Bourdieu (1986/1997) (who would use the term 'social capital') consider that social networks influence our choices and decisions. Existing studies have found that one of the main sources of information regarding Welsh-medium schools for parents/carers are people within their social network such as friends and other parents/carers (Packer and Campbell 2000; Hodges 2010, 2012; Thomas 2013b). As Ball and Vincent (1998:380) note, there are many different 'grapevines' to which parents/carers have access to and access to particular 'grapevines' are not only structured spatially, but also are based on social class relations with individuals tending to mix with other 'people like us'. The social class differences in the social networks

identified in such studies on school choice may explain the differences in the social composition of Welsh-medium and English-medium schools. Certain parents/carers, who opt for Welsh-medium education, may have gained knowledge about Welsh-medium education from an extensive social network which includes other parents/carers from higher socio-economic backgrounds and parents/carers who have sent their children to Welsh-medium schools. The same may be said about certain parents/carers who have considered a range of schools before opting for a particular English-medium school.

In contrast, for some parents/carers, particularly those from lower socio economic backgrounds, their social network may be limited to other parents/carers and neighbours from similar socio-economic backgrounds who may influence them to send their children to the local English-medium school. In this study, it is interesting to note that more of the students from Cwm Mawr School than Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel reported that their parents/carers had chosen to send them to the English-medium primary school because family members and friends of the family had also attended these schools. Future research needs to explore in further detail the role that different types of social networks play in shaping choice of medium of education.

Previous research has also demonstrated how the social composition of the school may play a decisive role in the process of school choice (see Gewirtz *et al.* 1995; Reay and Ball 1997). This research has shown that parents/carers want to send their children to a school where their children will have classmates from similar social backgrounds. Knowing that their children will attend a school which is different to the one that other children in the area attend may deter parents/carers from sending their children to a Welsh-medium school. For example, studies have shown that parents/carers choose English-medium schools because they feel that this type of school provides a base for neighbourhood friendships and prevents their children from being ostracised (Packer and Campbell 2000: 590; Thomas 2013: 169). Evidence also suggests that the assumption that Welsh-medium schools are schools which are populated by the middle classes may play a role in discouraging parents/carers from sending their children to these types of schools (see Packer and Campbell 2000: 591).

In contrast, parents/carers particularly from middle class backgrounds may be motivated to send their children to schools which have middle class intakes because they believe that being with children from socially and economically advantaged backgrounds will be a benefit for

their children's education and will prevent their children from ending up in the 'wrong groups' (Gewirtz *et al.* 1995: 34). For instance, one of the parents/carers in my study, Luke's mother (a recently qualified nurse), who had opted for Welsh-medium education, referred to the social composition of the local English-medium primary school at the time:

I think where we lived at the time when Luke was younger... the catchment area would have been a rough school and I just didn't want him to go to that school because there were so many children from the local council estates that used to go that school. I didn't want them to go into that school... so that's why I chose for them to go to a Welsh [medium] school.

Luke's Mother

In the extract above, Luke's mother discusses how she considered the local English-medium primary school to be 'rough' largely because of the catchment area of the school. She talks about the types of students who she envisaged attended this school –“children from the local council estates”. As McKenzie (2015:20) notes, popular representations promoted by certain media outlets and politicians depict estates as “sites of wrongness”, populated by people who lack aspiration, moral values and work ethic which are needed to become a successful citizen in today's society. For Luke's mother, sending her children to a Welsh-medium school would prevent her children from becoming associated with children who may have a negative impact on their schooling. Yet, as discussed already, there are certain English-medium schools, which have similar or lower proportion of children on Free School Meals in comparison to Welsh-medium schools. These English-medium schools may attract certain parents/carers because of their socially and economically advantaged intakes.

The above evidence illustrates that parents/carers from all social backgrounds evaluate the costs and benefits of sending their children to different schools based on their perception regarding the social compositions of different schools, providing support to Rational Choice Theory. There is also evidence which support Bourdieu's notion of habitus and to a certain extent Rational Choice Theory (which recognise that cultural norms and values shape what we consider to be 'rational' choices) as it highlights that to a certain degree, there are class

differences in terms of parents'/carers' perceptions regarding the social compositions of schools.

The next section will now examine the practices and outcomes of Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel and Cwm Mawr School, and more broadly Welsh-medium and English-medium schools in South-East Wales.

The Practices and Outcomes of Welsh-medium and English-medium schools in South-East Wales

It was evident that the social composition of students and the socio-economic characteristics of the catchment area posed challenges to both of these schools. Based on accounts from interviews, it appeared that engaging with certain parents/carers was proving difficult for teachers in Cwm Mawr School. Previous research has demonstrated that the degree to which parents/carers are involved and engaged in their child's education has an impact on students' educational outcomes (Jeynes 2011). For instance, Mr Davies, the Deputy Head of Cwm Mawr School, noted that:

There's a big push from us as a school to look at how we are engaging with the parents and trying to engage with them more as well. Some of our children... our parents have had sort of mixed experiences in school themselves. Obviously as a school we've made the progress... so, some of those parents who may have come here say 20 years ago... and some of them have had not always the most positive sort of experiences of school, so it's trying to sort of work with the parents in terms of "Look - the school has changed. It's a completely different place to what it was"... and also trying to engage with those parents more because some of them are quite reticent to actually engage with the school at different points.

Mr Davies, Cwm Mawr School

Here is an extract from an interview where both Mr Jones (the Head of Year 11) and Mrs Thomas (the Deputy Head) discuss parents/carers of students who attend Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel:

***Cyfwelydd:** Oeddech chi'n sôn eich bod chi'n gweithio gyda rhieni. Sut brofiad ydi hynny yn yr ysgol yma?*

***Mr Jones:** Mae rhieni yn gefnogol iawn iawn yn yr ysgol yma. Mae tueddiad...wel... dyw rhai rhieni 'falle... 'di nhw ddim yn llwyr gyfarwydd ar broses academiadd. Mae 'na tueddiad i rhai ohonyn nhw falle ffonio lan a di nhw ddim yn deall y sefyllfa'n llwyr.*

***Mrs Thomas:** Mae e achos mae nhw'n meddwl bod eu plentyn bach nhw... bod Siôn iddyn nhw 'falle yw y plentyn mwyaf galluog yn y byd a dim cweit yn deall bod e [eu plentyn] ddim yn gallu neud TGAU Cyfrifiadureg neu TGAU Gwyddoniaeth Trifflig achos bod e ddim cweit yn cyrraedd y lefelau cywir ac mae angen egluro wedyn bod e jyst ddim yn dewis hollol rhwydd i wneud...i ni hefyd gorfod sicrhau bod plant o rhan eu llwybr dysgu nhw yn mynd mewn i'r llwybr cywir... fel bod nhw ddim yn bennu lan yn wneud una'i pynciau sydd lot rhy anodd iddyn nhw neu ar yr ochr arall bod nhw ddim yn wneud pynciau sydd lot rhy hawdd iddyn nhw... bod digon o her, ond digon o cynhaliaeth hefyd. Felly, mae'r broses o egluro pethau fel 'na weithiau'n anodd gyda rhai rhieni.*

Interviewer: You mentioned that you work with parents. What is this like in this school?

Mr Jones: Parents are very very supportive in this school. There is a tendency...well...some parents are not maybe...they are not entirely familiar with the academic process. There is a tendency for some of them to maybe phone up and they don't entirely understand the situation.

Mrs Thomas: It's because they think that their small child ... that Siôn maybe to them is the most ablest child in the world and don't quite understand that they [their child] can't do GCSE Computing or GCSE Triple Science because they don't quite reach the correct levels and it needs to be explained then that it's just not a totally easy choice to make...we also have to ensure that children as part of their learning pathway enter the

right path...so that they don't end up doing either subjects that are a lot too hard for them or on the other side that they don't do subjects that are a lot too easy for them...that there is enough challenge, but sufficient support as well. So, the process of explaining things like that sometimes is difficult with some parents.

Mr Jones and Mrs Thomas, Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel

In the above extracts, there are clear differences in terms of the relationships that Cwm Mawr School and Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel have with certain parents/carers. In Cwm Mawr School, Mr Davies notes how certain parents/carers may be ambivalent towards the education system and may be reluctant to engage with the school because of their own negative experiences of schooling. His comments are supported by evidence from existing studies such as Reay and Ball's (1997) study. In contrast, according to Mr Jones and Mrs Thomas, despite some parents/carers lacking cultural capital in the form of knowledge and information regarding how the education system works, parents/carers of students in Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel are "very very supportive", implying that they are ready and willing to engage with the school. As illustrated earlier in this chapter, choosing Welsh-medium education involves most parents/carers making an active choice regarding their child's education. As parents/carers are likely to have made an active choice to send their children to these schools, Welsh-medium schools in South-East Wales such as Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel are less likely to have parents/carers who may be hesitant to engage with the school compared to certain English-medium schools, particularly those located in deprived areas such as Cwm Mawr School. Yet, ensuring that the correct information is communicated to parents/carers is still an issue for the teachers in Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel.

Despite difference in terms of parental engagement between both schools, similar to Cwm Mawr School, Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel still faced challenges because of the socio-economic characteristics of the catchment area, as Mrs Thomas highlights:

Dani ddim yn cael lot o broblemau disgyblaeth ac ati ac mae presenoldeb y disgyblion ar y cyfan yn dda iawn. Beth i ni yn gweld yw effaith rhai o'r problemau cymdeithasol sydd yn achosi... wel... yn rhoi heriau ychwanegol i'n disgyblion ni. Jysd i rhoi

enghraifft... mae rhieni gyda salwch meddwl, rhieni sydd yn marw'n ifanc... nifer o blant sydd yn colli rhieni, cyfran eithaf uchel o blant sydd yn sal eu hunain. Ie - problemau cymdeithasol yr ardaloedd [dalgyrch yr ysgol] sydd yn ein bwrw ni fwyaf.

We don't have a lot of discipline problems and so on and the attendance of students is on the whole very good. What we do see is the effect of some of the social problems which cause...well... provide additional challenges to our students. Just to give you an example... some parents have a mental illness, parents who die young...a number of children lose their parents, an extremely high proportion of children who are ill themselves. Yeah – social problems of the [catchment] areas [of the school] is what hits us the hardest.

Mrs Thomas, Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel

How do Cwm Mawr School and Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel shape and facilitate young people's aspirations?

In the past, Careers Wales (an all-age, bilingual, publicly funded careers service established at the start of parliamentary devolution) played a major part in providing advice and guidance to students regarding their future in Wales. Similar to other schools in Wales, Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel and Cwm Mawr School had an independent careers advisor that was employed by Careers Wales. However, recent cuts to Careers Wales funding have meant that Careers Wales have had to cut back on the services that they provide to schools in Wales including Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel and Cwm Mawr School. For instance, Careers Wales no longer organize work experience placements (Estyn 2014: 12). Furthermore, one-to-one career interviews with a Careers Wales advisor are now targeted to pupils who are thinking of leaving education and training at 16 and who are at risk of becoming NEETs (Estyn 2014: 12).

This was also the case in this study. Students on Free School Meals or at risk of leaving the education system were likely to have had a one-to-one meeting with a careers advisor in both schools. Although some of the other students had taken their own initiative and organised a meeting with the career advisor themselves, most of the students discussed how they had only

received presentations from Career Wales advisors. In these presentations, it appeared that the career advisors had only provided students with general advice regarding their future such as “*i cadw opsiynnau ni ar agor* [to keep their options open]” (Amy, Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel) and to “do what you enjoy [after Year 11]” (Hannah, Cwm Mawr School) rather than guidance specifically related to their educational and career aspirations. While most of the students who had received a one-to-one meeting with the career advisor found it to be helpful, some of the other students were less positive about the meeting, feeling that the career advisor had not provided them with accurate information related to their educational and career aspirations.

As a result of the cutbacks to Careers Wales’s provision, teachers in Cwm Mawr School and Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel discussed how they had more of a responsibility to provide advice and guidance to their students. Teachers in both schools noted how they were having conversations with Year 11 students regarding their future “*er mwyn gwneud siwr eu bod nhw’n cymryd llwybr sydd yn llwyddiannus* [to make sure that they take paths which are successful]” (Mr Jones, Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel). Teachers also discussed that they held certain assemblies and lessons such as Personal and Social Education which focused on students’ futures. Both schools were also running mentoring programmes for students across different years, particularly for those students who were considered to be underachieving. School trips to different parts of the world were also considered by the teachers in both schools to be beneficial in “broadening the horizons of pupils” (Mr Pritchard, Cwm Mawr School).

Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel and Cwm Mawr Schools also had links with local universities as well as other universities in Wales, which included post-1992 universities as well as Redbrick and Russell Group universities. Some of the students had gone on visits with the schools to these universities. Representatives from certain universities and certain organisations related to the higher education sector had also visited the schools to give talks to students. The two schools were also a part of the Seren Network program. The Seren Network Program (a network of regional hubs designed to support Wales’s brightest sixth formers to achieve their academic potential and gain access to leading universities) was established following Paul Murphy’s (Wales’s Oxbridge Ambassador) recommendation in his report, which looked at ways of tackling the decline in Welsh applications and admissions to Oxford and Cambridge Universities (Welsh Government 2017c). Two of the students, Amy from Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel and Peter from Cwm Mawr School, had been chosen to be a part of the Seren Network Program.

When they were in sixth form, Amy and Peter were receiving lessons outside of school with other students on a particular subject from a university graduate. Students from both schools also reported how the school had brought in individuals from different industries to provide advice and guidance regarding particular occupations.

While these schools provided students with advice and guidance regarding a range of different pathways, teachers in both schools admitted that “*dy’n ni’n annog i nhw [myfyrwyr] fynd i Chweched [yr Ysgol]* [we’re encouraging them [students] to go to sixth form [of the School]]” (Mr Jones, Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel) as “the more kids we get back, the more money we can get and the more things we can run for them” (Mr Lewis, Cwm Mawr School). This resonates with findings from a recent Estyn report (2014: 12), which discovered that the information provided by schools particularly with sixth forms, tended to be biased as teachers tried to retain students after Year 11.

Furthermore, teachers in both schools found the increasing pressure to provide educational and career advice and guidance to their students difficult. Mr Pritchard, Head of Year 11 in Cwm Mawr School, discussed how the pressures of the national curriculum and qualifications made out-of-lesson contact time with students such as providing career advice “quite limiting”. Mr Jones also noted that:

I ni wastad yn trio annog iddyn nhw fod yn blaengar a jyst edrych i beth mae nhw moyn wneud yn y dyfodol, ond, mae fe’n anodd... yn enwedig o rôl fi, mae popeth wedi anelu at llwyddiant yn yr arholiadau TGAU.

We always try to encourage them to be pro-active and to just look at what they want to do in the future, but, it is difficult... especially from my role, everything is aimed at success in the GCSE exams.

Mr Jones, Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel

While students may access career information via other sources such as websites and telephone services, recent research from Howieson and Semple (2013: 298) found that direct contact with careers advisers is still important for young people, particularly students who may not have

contact with individuals who are able to provide them with valuable and accurate information regarding their future.

This section has illustrated that there were no clear differences in terms of the messages that teachers in both schools were promoting to students in relation to their aspirations and expectations. The next section will explore the educational performance of Cwm Mawr School and Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel as well as Welsh-medium and English-medium schools in South-East Wales.

The Educational Performance of Welsh-medium and English-medium schools in South East Wales

In South-East Wales, Welsh-medium schools have a reputation of being relatively higher performing educational establishments compared to English-medium school. In the past, academics such as Reynolds and Bellin (1996) and Reynolds *et al.* (1998) have also claimed that Welsh-medium schools perform better compared to English-medium schools in South East Wales, pointing towards statistics which show that Welsh-medium schools in South East Wales have higher attainment rates compared to the Welsh average. Based on limited data (six inspection reports on Welsh-medium schools and thirty-eight inspection reports on English-medium schools, and classroom observations in two Welsh-medium and English-medium comprehensive schools), Reynolds *et al.* (1998) conclude that particular school processes and practices are responsible for the higher academic standards of Welsh-medium schools with higher incidences of effective teaching methods such as appropriate use of time and the quality of instruction being practiced in Welsh-medium schools compared to English-medium schools. Additionally, Reynolds *et al.* (1998: 25) argue that it is possible to find more committed teachers in Welsh-medium schools because throughout their history, they have had to prove themselves in order to persuade parents/carers, particularly from English-speaking backgrounds to send their children to these schools. Reynolds and Bellin (1996:19) also note that with the involvement of the Urdd (a youth organization aimed at promoting the Welsh language and culture), Welsh-medium schools offer more extra-curricular activities compared to English-medium schools. These extra-curricular activities may provide pupils and teachers

the opportunity to build informal and closer relationships with each other and for children to have a positive attitude towards education.

We can examine whether the reputation of Welsh-medium schools reflects empirical evidence by exploring recent statistical data on the educational performance of schools within South-East Wales. The mean of the average capped points score at Key Stage 4³³ between 2013/14 and 2015/16 academic year has been chosen as an indicator to measure students' attainment. Average capped points score at Key Stage 4 is considered to be a better indicator compared to the proportion of students who achieve the level 2 threshold (5 GCSEs or equivalent) including English/Welsh and Maths at Key Stage 4 as it takes into account most of the subjects that the students study and the grades that they have achieved in these subjects. The mean of the average capped points score at Key Stage 4 of schools in the 2013/14, 2014/15 and 2015/16 has been calculated as it allows me to explore the relationship between proportion of children on Free School Meals and educational attainment, which will be examined later in this chapter.

Between 2013/14 and 2015/16 academic year, the average capped points score of Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel was higher (355.0) than the figure for Cwm Mawr School (337.1). Table 5.2 illustrates the average capped points score at Key Stage 4 for Welsh-medium and English-medium school in each of the local authority in South East Wales.

³³ Average capped points score is the average of all of the students' eight best results in Key Stage 4 subjects in the school. A glossary by the Welsh Government (2014f) notes the number of points that are allocated to different grades achieved for different qualifications.

Table 5.2 Average Capped Points Score at Key Stage 4 of Welsh-medium and English-medium School for South East Wales 2013/4 to 2015/6 academic year

Local Educational Authorities	Average	Secondary English-Medium Average	Secondary Welsh-Medium Average	Differences between English-Medium and Welsh-Medium
Caerphilly	332.4	330.6	355.8	-25.2
Merthyr Tydfil and Rhondda Cynon Taf	353.9	351.7	363.1	-11.4
Neath Port Talbot	358.3	357.4	367	-9.6
SOUTH WALES VALLEYS	348.2	346.6	362.0	-15.4
Blaenau Gwent, Newport, Monmouthshire and Torfaen	339.2	339.3	336.9	2.4
Bridgend	352.9	351.1	367.4	-16.3
Cardiff³⁴	339.5	336.8	360.7	-23.9
Vale of Glamorgan	361.1	360.6	364.7	-4.1
SOUTH EAST WALES	348.2	346.8	359.4	-12.6
WALES	346.1			

Source: Welsh Government's My Local School's Website [Accessed: 11/07/2017]

The average capped points scores of Welsh-medium schools (359.4) are higher than those of English-medium schools (346.8) across South East Wales. Furthermore, the average capped points score is higher in Welsh-medium schools than in English-medium schools across all of

³⁴ Ysgol Gyfun Bro Edern, a Welsh-medium secondary school, has not been included in this table as the school has no data on average capped points at Key Stage 4 as it was opened in September 2012.

the local authorities in South-East Wales, with the exception of Blaenau Gwent, Newport, Monmouthshire and Torfaen. It also needs to be acknowledged that certain English-medium schools have higher average capped points score than some of the Welsh-medium schools in South East Wales. For example, the school with the highest average capped points score in South East Wales between the 2013/14 and 2015/16 academic year was Cardiff High School (384.7), an English-medium school in Cardiff.

Yet, relying on such crude data does not provide us with a valid picture of the educational standards of secondary schools in South East Wales. Gorard (2000) provides a counterargument to Reynolds *et al.*'s (1998) and others' claims suggesting that the higher educational standards of Welsh-medium schools are largely due to the socio-economic characteristics of the school intake rather than particular school processes. It is important to note that in 2006, Reynolds retracted his earlier assertion regarding the educational performance of Welsh-medium schools. Based on analysis of the educational attainment of schools in Wales between the academic year of 1999-2000 and 2004-5, Reynolds (cited by Blake 2006) found that whereas the attainment levels of schools within the non-Welsh medium sector had increased, the attainment levels of Welsh-medium schools had declined during this period. Reynolds (quoted by Blake 2006) concluded that Welsh-medium schools had become "complacent" and were finding it difficult to cope with "a higher-than-ever proportion [of students]... from non-Welsh speaking and more deprived backgrounds, including a rising proportion with special educational needs".

We can examine whether the differences between the educational attainment of Welsh-medium schools and English-medium schools in South East Wales can be explained by variation in the social composition of these schools by performing a simple linear regression looking at the relationship between Free School Meals ratio and the Average Capped Point Score of schools.

The Relationship between Average Capped Points Score at Key Stage 4 and Free School Meals Ratio (%)

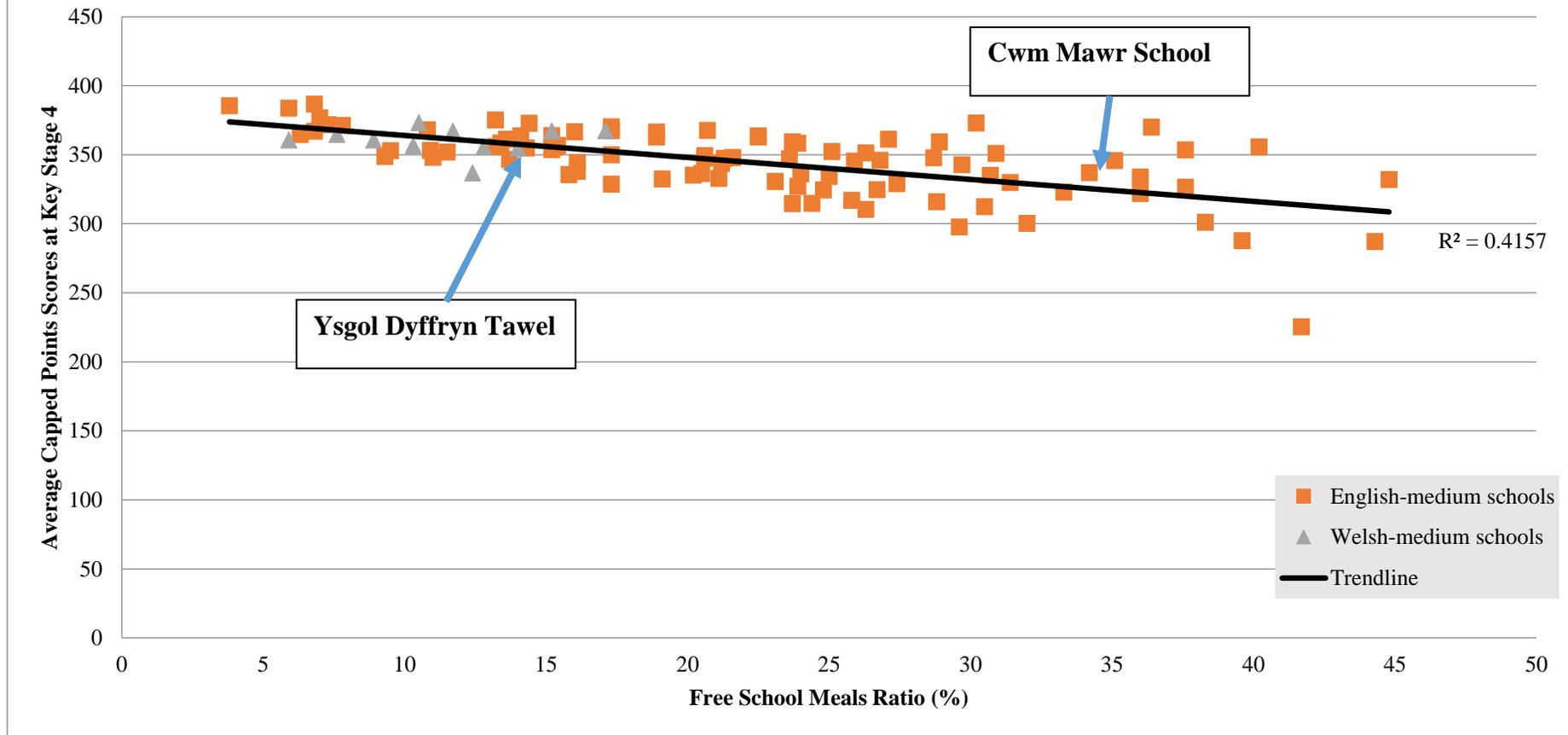


Chart 5.1. The Relationship between Average Capped Points Score and Free School Meals Ratio of Welsh-medium and English-medium Schools in South East Wales

To start with, it is worth noting that the range of Free School Meals ratio is smaller in Welsh-medium schools than English-medium schools (see Chart 5.1). Whereas the Free School Meals ratio for English-medium schools ranges from 3.8% to 44.8%, the range for Welsh-medium schools is between 5.9% and 17.1%. While there is clear socio-economic polarisation among English-medium schools, the free school meals ratio of Welsh-medium schools appear to be quite similar.

It is also clear from Chart 5.1 that there is a negative correlation between educational attainment and level of poverty among schools in South East Wales. As the percentage of students on Free School Meals increases, the Average Capped Points Score decreases. The Free School Meals Ratio fairly strongly correlates with the Average Capped Point Score, with the R^2 being 0.4157 meaning that the Free School Meals ratio accounts for approximately 42% of the variance in the educational attainment of these schools.

However, we need to acknowledge that the free school meals ratio does not account for the remaining 58% of the variance in educational attainment of schools in South East Wales. Certain Welsh-medium and English-medium schools are outliers and either outperform or underperform compared to what they are expected to perform based on their Free School Meals ratio. With regards to the two schools in this study, while Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel is close to the trend line, Cwm Mawr School is outperforming compared to what it is expected to perform based on its Free School Meals ratio. Therefore, additional factors such as the other social characteristics of students e.g. ethnicity and gender, and factors related to the school such as the quality of teaching and relationship between teachers and students may contribute to the variance in the educational attainment between schools.

The Destinations of Students in Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel and Cwm Mawr School after Year 11

With regards to students' destinations, Mr Lewis, the Head Teacher in Cwm Mawr School, reported that:

50%... well 60% of them will come back to form six [of Cwm Mawr School] studying a range of courses ... obviously AS Levels going on to A Levels. We've also got Level 1 and 2 courses... around 20% of them go onto bona fide apprenticeship...There's another 10% who seem to then drift off to college...and then there's a small group then of around 5% of the kids who seem to end up in employment with their parents in some shape or form. And then there are still a small... a very small group of kids at the bottom who end up as NEETs unfortunately, so, I would say out of year group of 150, you would get about 2 or 3 or 4 kids who are not in employment or training by the end of Year 11.

Mr Lewis, Cwm Mawr School

Mr Lewis discussed that Cwm Mawr School faced a battle in encouraging their students to progress into some form of education and training after Year 11.

In the past, there wasn't the desire to carry on with full time education or training [in Cwm Mawr School]...In a school with around 17% or under [of children who are on Free School Meals], you'd get almost 80-90% of children would stay on in form six because it's a given... that's what their parents have experienced and that's what the children want to do. We've had a battle to create this kind of environment here [in Cwm Mawr School] because when I started here 5 years ago, there was only 40% of kids who would go onto A Levels and stay in school or training. The rest of them disappeared. It's a big battle in schools like this, but I think we're starting to get there.

Mr Lewis, Cwm Mawr School

According to Mr Lewis, in the past, children from Cwm Mawr School, particularly those from low-income households did not stay in the education and training system as they and their parents/carers did not have aspirations of continuing in further education and training as it was not the norm among their families. For Mr Lewis, the socio-economic background of the parents/carers and students of Cwm Mawr School contributes to the challenge that the school faces in ensuring that students progress into full time education and training after Year 11.

When asked about the destinations of students in Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel after Year 11, Mr Roberts, the Head Teacher, noted the following:

Mae tri chwarter ohonyn nhw [y myfyrwyr] yn dod yn nôl fan hyn [i'r chweched dosbarth yn yr ysgol]... mae dewis fyny 'da nhw os ydi nhw am neud tri Lefel A neu tri AS i ddechrau a'r Bac [Y Fagloriaeth Gymraeg]...neu mae rhai yn wneud pynciau galwedigaethol a'r Fagloriaeth Gymraeg... ac wedyn mae'r 25% sydd ddim yn dod yn nôl...fe wnewn nhw gyd i golegau lleol...

Three quarter of them [the students] come back here [to the sixth form in the school]...the choice is up to them if they are going to do three A Levels or three AS to start with and the Bac [The Welsh Baccalaureate] or some do vocational subjects and the Welsh Baccalaureate... and then the 25% that don't come back...they will all go to local colleges...

Mr Roberts, Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel

Mrs Thomas also reported that:

Un o'r pethau i ni yn falch iawn ohono fe fan hyn [yn Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel] yw am o leiaf y tair mlynedd diwethaf, does dim NEETs wedi bod gyda ni [ar ôl blwyddyn 11].

One of the things we're very proud of it here [in Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel] is for at least the last three years, no NEETs have been with us [after Year 11].

Mrs Thomas, Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel

Mrs Thomas felt that it was the work of the school and other agencies such as Careers Wales that had ensured that none of the students in Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel became NEETs after Year 11. At the same time, we need to acknowledge that the socio-economic characteristics of the students of Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel as well as the active choice that parents/carers have made to

opt for Welsh-medium education in the first place may contribute to none of the students in Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel becoming NEETs in the last three years.

Despite this, there have been concerns over attrition levels with fewer students studying through the medium of Welsh after compulsory education (see Baker and Jones 2000; WAG 2010). The factors which impact on students' decisions regarding language of study after Year 11 in this research will be explored in detail in Chapter 7 and Chapter 8.

Discussion

While Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel and Cwm Mawr School share similar characteristics (both schools are state run, follow the national curriculum and are located in deprived areas), this chapter has established that there are clear differences between both schools, which are beyond medium of instruction and the official language of the schools. The first major difference relates to the social composition of the schools. Based on analysis of Free School Meals ratio, on average, a lower percentage of students were on Free School Meals in Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel compared to Cwm Mawr School. This trend is evident across the South Wales Valleys and South East Wales. However, there are certain English-medium schools such as those situated in affluent areas which have lower Free School Meals ratios compared to Welsh-medium schools. Furthermore, the Free School Meals ratio of schools varies across different local authorities, with on average, English-medium schools and Welsh-medium schools in socially and economically deprived areas of South East Wales such as the local authorities of the South Wales Valleys having higher proportion of students on Free School Meals compared to Welsh-medium and English-medium schools in socially and economically affluent areas such as the Vale of Glamorgan (see Table 5.1).

Yet, we must be aware of the weaknesses of using Free School Meals status as a proxy of social and economic disadvantage. Crucially, Free School Meals status does not tell us anything about the socio-economic background of students who are ineligible or do not claim Free School Meals. However, Free School Meals status does provide a reasonable measure of family poverty. Therefore, while it is difficult for us to state that students from Welsh-medium schools

come from privileged backgrounds based on the data that is available, it is fair for us to conclude that Welsh-medium schools have lower proportion of students who are from poor households. Although there are other indicators to measure socio-economic characteristics such as parental occupations, household income or aggregated measures of socio-economic status for the area in which an individual lives, these indicators are fairly inaccessible compared to FSM ratio and still have weaknesses (see Gorard 2012).

This chapter went on to explain the differences between the Free School Meals ratio of Welsh-medium and English-medium schools such as Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel and Cwm Mawr School. Along with the economy and housing market, parental choice is a major factor which contributes to the differences in the social compositions of Welsh-medium and English-medium schools. In order to understand how parental choice of medium of education impacts on the social composition of the schools, we need to acknowledge the social circumstances in which choices regarding medium of education are made. As there are fewer Welsh-medium schools in South East Wales, parents/carers who opt for Welsh-medium education in South East Wales are likely to have made an active choice with regards to their child's education primarily because they are making a choice which is different to the decisions made by other parents/carers within their neighbourhoods. Yet, we should not colour all parents/carers who opt for English-medium education as being uninvolved in the process of school choice. While some parents/carers who send their children to English-medium education may not have made an active choice, there are parents/carers who exercise their choice and choose to send their children to English-medium schools, particularly to English-medium schools which have a good academic reputation or are located in relatively affluent areas.

We also need to take into account of the process of choice of medium of education. This chapter illustrated how four major factors – cultural, educational, economic and situational – impact on choice of medium of education in Wales. Furthermore, what is considered to be the “best” school is not only based on strategic calculations of the advantages and disadvantages of the school which are genuinely available and reachable to parents/carers. The uneven distribution of cultural, social and to some extent economic capital expands the choices available for certain parents/carers and constrains the choices of other parents/carers, particularly those from low socio-economic backgrounds, in terms of medium of education. Habitus also plays a role in

decisions concerning choice of medium of education as deeply embedded dispositions may shape the way in which parents/carers and children perceive different aspects of the schools as well as the relative importance of certain factors.

The second main difference between the two types of schools relates to educational outcomes. Based on analysis of recent statistics on Average Capped Points Score, Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel had on average higher educational attainment rates than Cwm Mawr School, reflecting trends across South East Wales. Again, there are certain English-medium schools that outperform Welsh-medium schools in terms of educational attainment.

This chapter examined whether differences with regards to the educational outcomes of Welsh-medium and English-medium schools in South East Wales are down to school processes and/or the socio-economic characteristics of the students who attend such schools. Examining whether school processes and socio-economic background of students have an impact on the educational outcomes of students who attend Welsh-medium and English-medium schools is important for this study as both Bourdieu (see Bourdieu and Passeron 1977) and Rational Choice Theorists for example, Breen and Goldthorpe (1997), consider that educational attainment plays a role in shaping young people's expectations and aspirations. It also relates to RQ2 and RQ4 (see Chapter 1) of this study which seek to examine the affect that social background and school type have on young people's aspirations and expectations. With regards to school processes, based on accounts from interviews with teachers and students, there did not seem to be major differences in terms of the activities, advice, guidance and the subjects/courses that were offered by Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel and Cwm Mawr School. With the cutback in Careers Wales services, there was increasing responsibility on teachers in both schools to provide advice and guidance to students. There did not appear to be major differences in terms of the messages that were transmitted by the schools to students with regards to their future. Teachers and students who were interviewed discussed how the schools held activities and provided guidance regarding a range of pathways including higher education and vocational routes. In terms of the impact of social composition, as Chart 5.1 illustrates, there is a fairly strong negative correlation between educational attainment and the Free School Meals ratio of schools indicating that the differences in the social composition of schools

contribute to the variations in terms of the educational performances of Welsh-medium and English-medium schools.

The following chapters will now explore in more detail the aspirations of young people from Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel and Cwm Mawr School who participated in this study. These chapters will compare the aspirations of young people who attended Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel and Cwm Mawr School. These chapters will also explore the extent that social background and school practices shape the aspirations and expectations of young people in this study.

Chapter 6: Aspirations and Expectations after Compulsory Education

When they were first interviewed, young people in this study were on the verge of completing compulsory education (which is still the end of Year 11 in Wales). For the first time, these young people faced the decision of whether to progress into some form of education or training after Year 11 or to leave the education system entirely and to look for work. This chapter focuses on young people's aspirations and expectations with regards to this decision. This chapter explores the factors which contribute towards students aspiring to stay on in some form of education and training and looks at what deters students from aspiring to look for work after compulsory education. It also examines what makes certain students consider employment as a potential pathway after Year 11. In order to understand students' aspirations for their lives after compulsory education, the wider context (national and UK trends in relation to young people's transitions from compulsory to post-compulsory education) and the local context (how social and economic conditions of the locality shape young people's transition after compulsory education) need to be taken into account. This chapter will also illustrate how recent economic and social changes have changed young people's orientation towards education and work.

Staying On: Factors Influencing Students to Aspire to Progress into Post-compulsory Education and Training

All of the young people in this study expressed a desire to participate in further education or training. This contrasts with the aspirations that some of the young people in Brown's (1987) study expressed such as the 'rems' who were orientated towards skilled manual jobs (which did not require higher education) after compulsory education. This section will explore the factors which have contributed towards changes in young people's orientation towards education and work.

The Wider Context: Changes in Further Education and Training Participation Rates

Students' aspirations towards continuing in education and training appeared to be based on cost-benefit analyses of options after compulsory education, providing support to the assertions of Rational Choice Theorists such as Goldthorpe (1998). Further education and training were considered by students as helping them to achieve their long term ambitions of gaining a good job. A good job was generally considered by the vast majority of students as "something that earns you a lot of money and something that you enjoy" (Ryan, Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel). It was clear that participants including Elliott regarded that progressing into post-compulsory education and training would improve their labour market prospects.

The more education you have, the better jobs you can get.

Elliott, Cwm Mawr School

Elliott's above comment reflects the main premise of human capital theory associated with the work of Schultz (1961) and Becker (1993). As noted in Chapter 1, this premise is heavily promoted by politicians and policymakers in Welsh Government and UK Government (*White Paper: Further and Higher Education (Wales) Bill* (Welsh Government 2012) and *Success as a Knowledge Economy: Teaching Excellence, Social Mobility and Student Choice* (BIS 2016b)). It was evident in this study that students adhered to this prevailing human capital discourse and considered that staying in education and training and accumulating further qualifications would improve their employment and income prospects.

The particular timeframe in which the young people in this study faced decisions regarding their future after compulsory education contributed towards their aspirations to continue in education and training. At the time, reflecting trends across other parts of the UK (Skills Development Scotland 2015), the majority of young people in Wales were progressing into post-compulsory education and training. In 2014 (the year prior to when participants were making the transition from compulsory to post-compulsory education), the percentage of 16-18 year olds who were in some kind of education and training stood at 80.1% (see Welsh

Government 2016a). Certain educational policies which have aimed to widen young people's access to further education and training as well as changes in the youth labour market (which will be discussed later in this chapter) are factors which have resulted in increasing the participation of young people in further education and training. Young people in this study were aware of these trends and felt that staying in education and training would improve their chances of being able to compete against others in today's labour market.

I think it's good to have A Levels nowadays 'cos it's harder to get jobs now and if they [employers] see that you got A Levels then it makes it a lot easier for you to probably get a job... say for example, a job is looking at two people and maybe one's got good GCSEs results, but maybe he didn't do anything further on and the other one has got good GCSEs but also had A Levels, maybe they'd choose the person who's got the A Levels as well 'cos it's all extra grades. They look at A Levels as more valuable than GCSEs.

Peter, Cwm Mawr School

As the quote from Peter illustrates, students understood the positional aspect of the competition for a livelihood (Hirsch 1977; Brown 2000). Young people in this study acknowledged that their prospects of gaining a job in the future were not only based on employers' judgements of their capacities of doing the job by looking at their credentials, but also was dependent on how they stood relative to other candidates. Therefore, due to increasing participation rates in post-compulsory education and training, young people in this study recognised that they had to stay on in education and training and gain further qualifications in order to stay ahead of the game in today's labour market.

Students from different social backgrounds, including those from working class background such as Rhiannon and Craig noted that their parents/carers had aspirations for them to progress into further education and training after Year 11. It also appeared that their parents/carers as well adhered with the human capital notion that 'learning equals earning'.

Interviewer: What do your parents think of education?

Rhiannon: They really want me to get a really good education, so I can leave school and get a really good job. They said “You can do what you want in life, but I really want you to have a good education”. So, they’re pushing me a lot to get a good education.

Rhiannon, Cwm Mawr School

Craig: Very good...that I need education to get a job, so, it’s very important.

Craig, Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel

Despite certain students having parents/carers who had left the education system at the end of compulsory education, participants understood that their circumstances were different to their parents/carers and recognized how qualifications were determinants of their likelihood of gaining a good job.

Well, my Dad said when he was in school it wasn’t so much about the grades. It’s obviously changed over the years. He didn’t have to go to university or college to get a good job. But, over the years now, you have to have a good education and better qualifications to get a job.

Nathan, Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel

Several parents/carers in this study also felt that the relationship between educational qualifications and employment was stronger today than it had been when they were in school. This is exemplified in the quote below, where Luke’s mother (who had recently gone to university) discusses her parents’ and other people’s attitude towards education when she was younger:

Academically I think I could have gone to uni [university] when I was younger but I don't think my parents pushed me when we were younger to go to uni. It was a case of when you're 16 you get a job, so... education was not really important all those years ago.

Luke's Mother, Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel

It is evident that changes in the youth labour market over the past decades have played a major part in changing people's attitudes towards the education system. As discussed earlier, the pull factors of further education and training such as the perception among young people that progression into post-compulsory education will bring them greater economic rewards has partly contributed to the decline in the number of young people who enter the world of work after compulsory education. Young people are also pushed to stay in the education system due to the lack of jobs available for school leavers. As Keep (2012: 2) notes, developments within the labour market such as employers' preference for older workers, mass migration/immigration, ongoing casualisation and the need for workers who can manage themselves between multiple jobs/locations have contributed to the scarcity of jobs available for young people.

The human capital discourse was also promoted by the two schools, with teachers discussing how they were encouraging their students to stay in some form of education and training after Year 11:

Since I've been with the year group back in... when they were in Year 8... I've sort of obviously stressed during assemblies and so on, the importance of education... the value of education in their future careers and what they want to do. I've really sort of pushed that as much as I possibly can.

Mr Pritchard, Cwm Mawr School

Mae fe'n rhan o'r ethos i ni'n sefydlu yn y disgyblion bod... i ni wastad yn trio esbonio iddyn nhw bod hi'n anodd iawn i gael swyddi dyddiau yma. Mae angen i nhw sicrhau bod y sgiliau a'r hyfforddiant gyda nhw.

It's a part of the ethos that we establish in the pupils that... we are always trying to explain to them that it is very difficult to get jobs nowadays. They need to ensure that they have the skills and training.

Mr Jones, Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel

The two schools were also making an effort to ensure that their students would progress into education and training after compulsory education, specifically returning to the sixth form of the schools. Both schools had an open door policy in terms of entry into sixth form and accepted students even if they had not achieved the level 2 threshold at Key Stage 4³⁵ (considered to be what is required in order to progress into post-compulsory education and training). The messages from parents/carers and teachers appeared to influence students to aspire to progress into Post-16 Education and Training.

The Local Context: The Role of Local Employment Opportunities for School Leavers

Students' aspirations towards progressing into post-compulsory education and training were also shaped by local employment opportunities. As discussed in Chapter 4, largely due to rapid deindustrialisation over the last century and the recent decline in the manufacturing industry, unemployment rates in the South Wales Valleys have been persistently higher compared to other parts of Wales and the UK. Young people in this study were aware of the state of unemployment in the Valleys, with over two-thirds of participants (35 out of 52) noting that local job opportunities were limited. Teachers such as Mr Pritchard considered that unemployment in the area played a role in discouraging students from looking for work after Year 11:

³⁵ The Level 2 threshold is equivalent to 5 A*-C GCSEs or other equivalent level 2 qualifications (Qualifications Wales 2017).

The high unemployment rates in this Valley... that is obviously a factor. The fear of the pupils not having anything when they leave school at Year 11...not being able to walk into a job or sort of further qualifications, so that will obviously have an impact on the decisions that they make.

Mr Pritchard, Cwm Mawr School

The fear of ending up in unemployment if they were to leave the education system was expressed by certain students such as Lucy.

I feel like if I get good grades now and get good grades in the future, I'd be able to make enough money to do what I want to do or have a good life and support like say for instance, if I have any children, I'd be able to support them instead of staying on the dole or something.

Lucy, Cwm Mawr School

Certain parents/carers such as Charlotte's father also considered that staying on in education was a means of avoiding scarce employment opportunities:

Interviewer: And why did you want her [Charlotte] to get a bit more education?

Charlotte's Father: I think the more education you get it's better for you. You get a better understanding. I'd rather them stay in school than finish school and not do nothing. This way she's achieving what she needs to.

Charlotte's Father, Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel

It appears in these accounts that when considering their future or their children's future after compulsory education, young people and their parents/carers compare and evaluate the costs and benefits of progressing into further education and training with the costs and benefits of

leaving the education system and looking for work. Staying in the education system was considered by students and parents/carers in this study to be a financially viable option and as a means of avoiding entering a local labour market which lacked jobs, replicating findings from other studies such as Raffe and Willms (1989), Biggart and Furlong (1996) and Evans (2016a).

However, we could also argue that these aspirations reflect how students and parents/carers perceive morality and their sense of what it is to be a “good” person. As noted in Chapter 2, recently, researchers such as Frye (2012) and Baker (2016) have explored the role that moral meanings play in shaping young people’s aspirations. In the above accounts, there is a clear distinction made between what students and parents/carers consider as qualities of a ‘good’ person such as “staying in school” (Charlotte’s Father) and “get[ting] good grades” (Lucy) and what they consider as traits of a ‘bad’ person such as “finish[ing] school and not do[ing] nothing” (Charlotte’s Father) and “staying on the dole” (Lucy). These perceptions reflect wider and broader societal perceptions regarding employment and unemployment. As Sennett (2004) notes, whereas characteristics associated with work such as self-sufficiency, giving back to others and responsibility gain respect from others in society; unemployment is associated with negative traits such as dependency, idleness and laziness. Therefore, it is evident that through these moral meanings, young people and their parents/carers set up boundaries in terms of their aspirations with certain trajectories considered desirable and others as undesirable. Due to the negative moral connotations of unemployment, young people and their parents/carers considered that staying on in education was more of a morally sound route as opposed to leaving the education system and potentially not finding work.

In terms of young people’s perception of the labour market, it was not only the lack of jobs that deterred students from wanting to leave the education system after Year 11, but also the types of jobs that they envisaged would be available to them when they left school. Students were aware of the nature of the labour market in their local area as discussed in Chapter 4. When asked what jobs were available locally, students tended to report jobs mostly in the service industry within the private sector such as working in a shop, restaurant or a café. Empirical evidence indicates that these jobs tend to be low-paid and low skilled (Clarke and D’Arcy 2016; Felstead *et al.* 2013: 28). The types of jobs that students considered were available for school-leavers did not seem to fit with their specifications of a good job. Luke’s extracts below

illustrates the way in which students perceived the job opportunities in their local area for school leavers:

Interviewer: What kind of jobs are available [in the local area]?

Luke: Don't think there would be very like major jobs [in the local area]...probably jobs such as McDonalds and working in the newsagents and the local shops and things like that. You're not gonna get major jobs when you're 16.

Luke, Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel

Luke's discussion of the lack of 'major jobs' in the local area suggests that students aspired to progress into post-compulsory education and training because of their perception that there was a lack of well respected, decent jobs for school leavers in the local area. In the interview data, it was clear that the 'discouraged worker' effect (Raffe and Willms 1989) to some degree had an impact on all of the participants in this study. The relatively higher unemployment rates in the area as well as the lack of meaningful and well-paid jobs that were available to school leavers in the South Wales Valleys directed students towards continuing in post-compulsory education and training.

Leaving and Looking for Work? Ambivalence towards Progressing into Post-compulsory Education and Training

Although all of students expressed an aspiration of staying on in education and training after Year 11, three of the students had also expressed that they had considered employment as a potential pathway after Year 11. Two of these students, Nathan and Craig attended Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel and one of these students, Ellie, went to Cwm Mawr School. Yet, it needs to be acknowledged that there may have been more participants who did think about finding work after Year 11 but may have not reported this in the interview due to my social characteristics and the social setting of the interview.

There was a sense of uncertainty among these students regarding their prospects of progressing into further education and training. These students had lower expectations of progressing into further education compared to other students in this study. These three students were not considered by the school as being high achievers and these students were in relatively low educational sets. As Ellie's extract below illustrates, it was their perception of their educational performance which made these students question their ability of being able to progress into further education and training, providing support to Breen and Goldthorpe's (1997) assertion that young people's expectations and aspirations are the product of cost-benefit analyses:

Interviewer: And do you think you'll be able to firstly go into sixth form?

Ellie: Ermm... I'm not too sure because like I think I would need to get good grades to get in there to show you are able to do it. So, I don't know.

Ellie, Cwm Mawr School

Although both schools operated an open door policy in terms of entry to sixth form, it appears that Ellie still remained ambivalent about the prospects of progressing into further education and training believing that she wouldn't get "good grades" to be able to achieve in sixth form.

Another characteristic which these students shared was that they came from working class backgrounds. It is worth noting that both Craig and Nathan noted that their mothers had gone to university. Based on these students' accounts, it appeared that their parents/carers held similar beliefs to parents/carers of other participants about the education system and considered that it would play an important role in their child's future. However, there was evidence to suggest that the parents/carers of these three students were more receptive to the idea of their children leaving the education system and looking for employment after Year 11:

Interviewer: What kind of things do your parents say about the future?

Ellie: We've talked about it and they said like if I get a job, then I don't have to like stay on in sixth form. But, if like I want to, I can stay on and then get a better education.

Ellie, Cwm Mawr School

This extract above shows how different parents/carers set various boundaries in terms of their aspirations for their children. As noted in Chapter 2, Glaesser and Cooper (2014) developed the concepts of upper and lower boundaries to illustrate how the perceptions of individuals from different social backgrounds of what are acceptable and realistic goals differ. Whereas upper boundaries refer to what individuals consider as desirable but realistic goals; lower boundaries refer to what individuals consider as the minimum that they want to achieve in life (Glaesser and Cooper 2014: 472). The extract above demonstrates that Ellie and her parents' lower boundaries differ to the lower boundaries of other young people and their parents/carers. While other parents/carers had rejected early entry to employment as a possible option after compulsory education, based on Ellie's account, it appeared that her parents were open to the idea of her leaving the education system and looking for work after Year 11. It is reasonable to argue that Ellie's aspirations and her parents' acceptance of her aspiration of gaining employment after Year 11 is based on cost-benefit analyses as it would mean that Ellie would earn money instantly. At the same time, her parents' educational and employment trajectories (both of her parents worked in working class occupations and her mother left the education system at the end of secondary school³⁶) may have influenced Ellie's aspirations.

Furthermore, through their social networks, two of these students, Nathan and Adam, appeared to have access to employment opportunities after Year 11 that other students appeared to not have. Adam had recently gone on work experience in his auntie's jewellery shop. He had enjoyed his time on work experience and considered working in the jewellery shop to be a "good job" as he did not find it challenging. Although Nathan did express an aspiration of going to sixth form after Year 11, he also discussed the prospects of working on the railways with his father after Year 11.

³⁶ Ellie was unsure of her father's educational history.

Nathan: ...my Dad and my Mam are thinking about after I leave school to start off on like little jobs as I work to get money and stuff... to work on the [railway] tracks for a bit...have a part time job like three times or four times a week...stuff like that.

Interviewer: So, you're talking about maybe looking for a work after you finish school?

Nathan: Yeah.

Interviewer: Rather than going to sixth form?

Nathan: Well like I said it depends on my grades. You can go loads of directions by the time I leave school.

Nathan, Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel

Teachers from both schools such as Mr Jones discussed how certain students entered employment after Year 11:

Cyfwelydd: Oes 'na unrhyw fyfyrwyr ym mlwyddyn 11 eleni wedi sôn am... o bosib mynd i fyd gwaith ar ôl blwyddyn 11?

Mr Jones: Ermmm.... mae ambell un sydd yn mynd i gweithio gyda rhieni, so, mae teulu rhieni sy'n gweithio. Mae tad un yn gweithio fel plastrwr...cwmni ei hun gyda fe. So, mae cwpl yn mynd i gweithio gyda teulu neu mae tad-cu gyda cwmni adeiladu. So, mae ambell un, ond dim lot.

Interviewer: Are there any students in Year 11 this year who have mentioned about... possibly entering the world of work after Year 11?

Mr Jones: Ermmm....a few are going to work with parents, so, the family of parents work. The father of one of them works as a plasterer... he has his own company. So, a couple of them are going to work with family or the grandfather has a building company. So, there are a few, but not a lot.

Mr Jones, Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel

These above excerpts replicate findings from McDowell's (2003) and Ward's (2015) research and provides support to Bourdieu's (1986/1997) notion of social capital as they illustrate how individuals within the social networks of certain young people may be able to provide them with access to low entry employment. As these accounts show, certain young people may be in contact with individuals who may be able to provide them with a job either because they own their own business or by providing a 'good word' to their employers. Furthermore, these extracts imply that while there are some employment opportunities for young men in male dominated trades such as plastering or working on the railways, access to low entry employment for young women are severely limited.

Discussion

One of the main findings from this chapter is that in contrast to some of the participants in Brown's (1987) research, all of the young people in this study expressed an aspiration of staying on in some form of education and training after Year 11 regardless of social background. This chapter examined the factors which influence young people to want to progress into further education and training after Year 11. Supporting Evans's (2016a) recent arguments, this study discovered that young people's aspirations and expectations with regards to the decision of whether to stay on in education and training or to leave and look for work were shaped by wider narratives and trends as well as the economic context of the local area. The prevailing human capital discourse (the idea that investment in skills and knowledge increases one's employment prospects) and increasing rates in post-16 education and training nationally in recent years influenced students to want to stay on in further education and training after Year 11. Local employment opportunities also played a role in influencing students' aspirations. High unemployment rates, scarce employment opportunities and the lack of meaningful, well-paid jobs in the South Wales Valleys deterred young people from wanting to enter the world of work after Year 11.

While the majority of young people had rejected early entry into employment as a possible option after Year 11, there were three students who were considering looking for work after

Year 11. To some degree, their educational self-concept had made them ambivalent towards progressing into further education and training as they felt that they would not be able to succeed if they continued in the education system, supporting the assertions of Rational Choice Theorists such as Breen and Goldthorpe (1997). Furthermore, it appeared that some of the young people who were considering looking for work had access to employment opportunities through their social networks, illustrating how social capital (Bourdieu 1986/1997) may shape young people's aspirations.

On the surface, young people's aspirations in this study were based on evaluations of the options which were available to them after compulsory education. Young people aspire towards continuing in education and training as they consider that it will provide them with greater economic rewards compared to leaving and looking for work. At the same time, there is a moral aspect to young people's aspiration, with young people and their parents/carers regarding staying on in education and training as more of a moral pathway (a route which is associated with an individual who shares the qualities of a 'good' person) compared to leaving the education system and potentially becoming unemployed after Year 11. Bourdieu and Rational Choice Theory do not place an emphasis on the moral dimension of aspirations in their theoretical accounts.

This chapter has also illustrated that the boundaries that young people and their parents/carers set in terms of what they consider to be acceptable goals differ. While some of the young people in this study had dismissed early entry into the labour market, there were some participants in this study who had thought about potentially looking for work after compulsory education. The young people who had considered entering the world of work after compulsory education were from predominantly working class backgrounds. It appears that the employment trajectories of their parents/carers had influenced these young people to consider looking for employment after Year 11. This evidence provides some support to Bourdieu's (1977a) notion of habitus as it suggests that young people's boundaries are shaped by their observations of the actions of family members. It also provides support to proponents of Rational Choice Theory such as Breen and Goldthorpe (1997:299) who also acknowledge that cultural norms and values may impact on what we consider to be 'rational' choices with regards to our future.

The next chapter will now examine the types of educational pathways that young people wanted to enter after compulsory education.

Chapter 7: The Academic Inheritors, the Academic Strivers and the Vocational Students

The last chapter established that although some of the young people in this study had considered looking for work after Year 11, all of them had aspirations of staying on in some form of education and training after compulsory education. Yet, there were variations in terms of the types of institutions and courses that students wanted to progress into after Year 11. There were also differences in terms of young people's motivations for staying on in further education and training which were related to their long term aspirations.

It has been possible to generate a typology of students based on young people's orientation to their educational and occupational futures. Three types of students were identified in this study – the Academic Inheritors, the Academic Strivers and the Vocational students. The orientations of young people in this study are somewhat different to the types of students that Brown (1987) identified in his study of young people from the South Wales Valleys. These categories are not fixed or static and it is possible for young people to move from one category to another. Appendix 2 will explore whether young people's orientations changed when they made the transition from compulsory to post-compulsory education.

Like the 'swots' in Brown's (1987) study, the Academic Inheritors and the Academic Strivers were academically orientated. Their motivations for wanting to stay on in further education was because they had aspirations of going to university in the future.

Interviewer: What would you like to do after you finish Year 11?

Dafydd: Well... I'd like to go to sixth form and study Maths, Physics and Chemistry and then I'd like to move on to university.

Dafydd, Academic Inheritor, Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel

Interviewer: What would you like to do after you finish Year 11?

Emily: I would like to stay on [in sixth form] to do my A Levels and then I think I'd love to go to university as well.

Emily, Academic Striver, Cwm Mawr School

However, as the extracts above illustrate, there were differences in terms of the aspirations and expectations of the Academic Inheritors and Academic Strivers. While the Academic Inheritors' aspirations of going to university were concrete and they generally had high expectations of achieving this ambition, the Academic Strivers were more ambivalent about the prospects of going to university and these students' expectations of progressing into university were lower compared to the Academic Inheritors. Like the Inheritors in Bourdieu and Passeron's (1979) study, the Academic Inheritors were predominantly from salariat backgrounds and they had at least either a parent/carer who had gone to university. On the other hand, there was little or no history of higher education among the immediate families of the Academic Strivers. This chapter and the following chapter (which focuses on young people's long-term aspirations) will illustrate that the term 'Strivers' has been chosen to describe these young people as they are likely to face further barriers and obstacles compared to the Academic Inheritors in terms of achieving their aspirations of going to higher education.

In contrast, similar to the 'ordinary kids' in Brown's (1987) study, the Vocational students were vocationally orientated. Vocational students had either not considered or had dismissed higher education as a possible option in the future and instead aspired to enter employment after further education and training, as the extract below illustrates.

Interviewer: What would you like to do after finishing Year 11?

Tom: I want to go to sixth form to study Engin... erm... Mechanics and ermm... some A Levels probably. Then, I probably want to get a job.

Tom, Vocational Student, Cwm Mawr School

But, whereas the ‘ordinary kids’ did not rule out further education where it was linked to an apprenticeship (which includes hairdressing or basic secretarial skills) (Brown 1987), the Vocational students generally felt that staying on in further education rather than leaving the education system at the end of compulsory education would increase their chances of gaining what they considered to be a ‘good’ job.

This chapter starts by providing further details about the characteristics of the Academic Inheritors, the Academic Strivers and the Vocational students. It will also compare the numbers of Academic Inheritors, Academic Strivers and Vocational students in Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel and Cwm Mawr School. This chapter will also explore the educational experiences of these different types of students and will look at the impact it had on their expectations and aspirations. The chapter will move on to focus on the short-term aspirations and expectations of the Academic Inheritors, Academic Strivers and Vocational students by exploring the types of subjects/courses and the educational institutions that these students aspired to progress into after Year 11. This section will also examine how considerations regarding the language of study impacted on the types of institutions that students in Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel wanted to enter after compulsory education. Throughout, this chapter will explore the extent that students’ motivations for wanting to stay on in post-compulsory education and training were influenced by their social background (linked to RQ2), gender (linked to RQ3) and by school processes (linked to RQ4).

The Characteristics of the Academic Inheritors, Academic Strivers and Vocational Students

Although the study’s sample is relatively small, there is a clear difference between the number of young women and men in each of the different groups. If we combine the numbers for both the Academic Inheritors and Academic Strivers (students who were academically orientated), it is evident that there were higher numbers of female Academic Inheritors (N=10) and female Academic Strivers (N=10) compared to male Academic Inheritors (N=5) and male Academic

Strivers (N=6) (see Table 7.1). There were greater numbers of male Vocational students (N=15) compared to female Vocational students (N=6) (see Table 7.1).

Table 7.1 Number of Male and Female Academic Inheritors, Academic Strivers and Vocational Students

	Males	Females
Academic Inheritors	5	10
Academic Strivers	6	10
Vocational Students	15	6

As this chapter and Chapter 8 will illustrate, gender differences between the number of young men and women in each of these groups may be due to factors related to their educational performance and their long-term educational and career aspirations.

The three different types of students cut across the two schools in this study. Table 7.2 explores the number of Academic Inheritors, Academic Strivers and Vocational Students in both schools.

Table 7.2 Number of Academic Inheritors, Academic Strivers and Vocational Students in each school

	Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel	Cwm Mawr School
Academic Inheritors	10	5
Academic Strivers	6	10
Vocational Students	10	11

Although there is little variation in the number of Vocational students in the two schools, there is a difference in the number of Academic Inheritors and Academic Strivers with higher

numbers of Academic Inheritors in Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel (N=10) than in Cwm Mawr School (N=5) and a greater number of Academic Strivers in Cwm Mawr School (N=10) than in Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel (N=6).

Table 7.3 and 7.4 illustrate the educational and occupational background of the Academic Inheritors, Academic Strivers and Vocational Students.

Table 7.3 History of HE participation among Academic Inheritors, Academic Strivers and Vocational Students³⁷

	HE Participation among Parents/Carers	No HE participation among Parents/Carers
Academic Inheritors	15	0
Academic Strivers	0	16
Vocational Students	5	16

³⁷ Tables A1.1 to A1.6 in Appendix 1 outline the educational background of the Academic Inheritors, Academic Strivers and the Vocational students in Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel and Cwm Mawr School.

Table 7.4 Occupational Background of Academic Inheritors, Academic Strivers and Vocational Students³⁸³⁹

	Salariat	Intermediate	Working Class
Academic Inheritors	13	2	0
Academic Strivers	5	2	9
Vocational Students	3	7	11

These tables illustrate that there are clear differences in terms of the occupational and educational backgrounds of students. Whereas all of the Academic Inheritors had at least one parent/carer who had gone to university and the majority of them were from salariat backgrounds (13 out of 15 students) apart from two who were from intermediate backgrounds; the Academic Strivers and the Vocational students came from predominantly non-higher education backgrounds (all 16 of the Academic Strivers and 16 out of 21 Vocational students) and around a half of them were from working class backgrounds (9 out of 16 of the Academic Strivers and 11 out of 21 Vocational students). The above tables suggest that the educational and occupational background of parents plays a part in shaping students' orientation towards staying in further education and training. This provides some explanation as to why there were substantially higher numbers of students identified as Academic Inheritors in Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel compared to Cwm Mawr School (see Table 7.1). As discussed in Chapter 5, parental choice contributes to higher numbers of young people coming from socially and economically advantaged backgrounds in Welsh-medium schools such as Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel in South East Wales.

³⁸ Participants have been assigned with the occupational class of the person who has the highest classification in their family (ONS 2010: 3).

³⁹ Tables A1.1 to A1.6 in the Appendix outline the occupational background of the Academic Inheritors, Academic Strivers and the Vocational students in Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel and Cwm Mawr School.

The Educational Experiences of the Academic Inheritors, Academic Strivers and Vocational Students

I also had information regarding all of the participants' expected grades in their core subjects (English Language and Literature, Mathematics and Science as well as Welsh Language and Literature in Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel). I have been able to calculate students' average capped points in their core subjects for each student using the Database of Approved Qualifications in Wales. Table 7.5 illustrates the number of Academic Inheritors, Academic Strivers and Vocational Students in each school who were expected to get an average capped point of 40 and above or below 40 as 40 points is equivalent to a C grade in a GCSE qualification (which is considered to be a pass) and a Pass in a BTEC qualification.

Table 7.5. The Expected Grades of the Academic Inheritors, Strivers and Vocational Students

	Average Capped Point of 40 and above			Average Capped Point of below 40		
	Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel	Cwm Mawr School	Total	Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel	Cwm Mawr School	Total
Academic Inheritors	10	3	13	0	2	2
Academic Strivers	5	4	9	1	6	7
Vocational Students	0	0	0	10	11	21
Total	15	7	22	11	19	30

It is important to stress that although the figures in Table 7.5 do not reflect the actual educational performance of participants, they do provide us with a sense of how teachers in both schools perceived the abilities of the Academic Inheritors, Academic Strivers and Vocational students. It is interesting to note that more of the students in Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel (15 out of 26 students) were expected to get at least on average a C or a Pass in all of their core subjects compared to students in Cwm Mawr School (7 out of 26 students). As noted in Chapter

3, the higher numbers of perceived potential “high achievers” in Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel may be due to a range of factors such as the way in which the Head of Year 11 of the School chose students to take part in this study and also the way in which teachers assign expected grades to students in both schools.

Despite this, it is evident that majority of the Academic Inheritors (13 out of 15 students) and over half of the Academic Strivers (9 out of 16 students) were expected to have at least an average of a C or a Pass in all of their core subjects (see Table 7.5). All of the Vocational students in Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel and Cwm Mawr School were expected to have on average grades below a C or a Pass in all of their core subjects.

Table 7.6. The Expected Grades of Female and Male Students in Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel and Cwm Mawr School

	Average Capped Point of 40 and above	Average Capped Point of below 40
Female Students	14	12
Male Students	8	18

Differences in the expected grades of male and female students in Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel and Cwm Mawr School (see Table 7.6) provide some explanation for the differences in terms of the numbers of young men and women who were identified as Academic Inheritors, Academic Strivers and Vocational Students (see Table 7.1) The relatively higher expected grades of girls within the sample reflect statistical evidence at a school level (collected through the Welsh Government’s My Local School’s Website - mylocalschool.wales.gov.uk) and national level (see StatsWales 2016a), which indicate that girls generally outperform boys in the education system. Yet, it is important to note that not all of the Academic Inheritors and the Academic Strivers were considered by their teachers to be high attaining students.

The next section examines the educational experiences of the Academic Inheritors, Academic Strivers and the Vocational students. The first part will explore the commonalities and

differences in terms of the educational experience of the Academic Inheritors and Strivers before examining the educational experiences of the Vocational students. It will also explore how the educational experiences of these different groups of students shaped their aspirations and expectations.

The Educational Experiences of the Academic Inheritors and Strivers

The Academic Inheritors and Strivers were the students who were most supportive of the values held by the school. These students considered education to be relevant for their future employment prospects. Also, some of the Academic Inheritors and Strivers considered education to be an intrinsic good and referred to their enjoyment of learning. As will be apparent later, there was no evidence that the Academic Inheritors and Strivers in Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel were more sympathetic to the school's Welsh language ethos compared to the Vocational students.

As noted earlier, the Academic Inheritors and Strivers were likely to be considered by their teachers to be high attaining students. Due to their educational performance as well as their attitude, the Academic Inheritors and Strivers tended to describe their relationships with teachers as being strong, with certain students such as Holly discussing the informal nature of their relationship with teachers:

Interviewer: How is your relationship with the teachers?

Holly: Good, yeah. I get along with all the teachers. I have a good laugh in class. It's not so much like we all just sit there. It's like a good laugh and we get on with them really well.

Holly, Academic Striver, Cwm Mawr School

Based on the interview data, it is difficult to pinpoint what contributed to the Academic Inheritors' and Academic Strivers' educational performance. Three students from Salariat backgrounds (1 Academic Inheritor from Cwm Mawr School, 1 Academic Striver from Cwm Mawr School and 1 Academic Striver from Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel) mentioned how their parents/carers had or were considering paying for an after-school tutor in order to help them with their schoolwork, illustrating how parents'/carers' possession of economic capital/financial resources may contribute towards students' educational performance.

Among the Academic Inheritors, there is also evidence to suggest that the endowment of cultural capital from their parents/carers may have contributed towards their educational performance. The fact that the Academic Inheritors had at least one parent/carer who had gone to university indicates that their parents/carers possessed institutionalised cultural capital (Bourdieu 1986/1997) in the form of higher education credentials. Yet as Sullivan (2001: 895) points out, parental education is not a sufficient proxy for cultural capital as it does not demonstrate how children inherit cultural capital from their parents/carers. Furthermore, educational credentials do not necessarily reflect the skills and abilities of an individual. Along with parents'/carers' understanding of how the education system works, other studies have used parents'/carers' understanding of their child's school work and their ability to help with homework as measurements of cultural capital (see Lareau and Weininger 2003). In the first set of interviews, young people were asked whether their parents/carers understood their school work and whether they helped them with their homework. In Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel, some of the students who were from non-Welsh speaking backgrounds reported that their parents/carers did not understand their school work as their parents/carers did not understand the Welsh language. Despite this, these students noted that once they had translated and explained what their school work meant, their parents/carers were able to help them. While most of the Academic Inheritors and Strivers felt that they did not require help from their parents/carers anymore with their school work, it is interesting to note that it was only the Academic Strivers who noted that their parents/carers were unable to help them with their school work as they did not understand the work.

Interviewer: Do they help you with your homework?

Daniel: No.

Interviewer: Is there a reason why they don't help you?

Daniel: They don't know what to do.

Daniel, Academic Striver, Cwm Mawr School

Some of the Academic Strivers such as Amy were able to turn to other people such as members of their extended family if they required help with their homework.

Cyfwelydd: Ac ydyn nhw'n [rhieni] deall dy waith ysgol? Ydyn nhw'n [rhieni] helpu ti efo dy waith ysgol?

Amy: Fel arfer, na. Ond os fi angen help, dwi mynd i yncl fi.

Cyfwelydd: Pam wyt ti'n mynd at dy yncl?

Amy: Achos fel arfer fi angen help gyda Maths ac roedd e'n mynd i brifysgol i wneud Maths.

Interviewer: And do they [parents] understand your school work? Do they [parents] help you with your school work?

Amy: Usually, no. But if I need help, I go to my uncle.

Interviewer: Why do you go to your uncle?

Amy: Because usually I need help with Maths and he went to university to do Maths.

Amy, Academic Striver, Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel

The unequal distribution of cultural capital (Bourdieu 1986/1997) provides some explanation as to why certain Academic Strivers such as Holly were finding the work in secondary school becoming more difficult and why certain Academic Inheritors such as Dafydd felt that they were coping with their work:

Interviewer: And how well do you think you're performing at school compared to other students?

Holly: Like some people are like quite better at things ... like they grasp it more easily. I take like a while to grasp certain subjects. But once I've got it, I know what to do and how it works and that.

Holly, Academic Striver, Cwm Mawr School

Interviewer: How do you find... how is secondary school?

Dafydd: It's O.K. It's pretty good. I feel the... like... they're a bit slow. Like some of the... we could be taught much more advanced stuff like now, but, we're not really. We're just taught data handling and stuff like that [in the Sciences], which isn't that relevant to anything.

Dafydd, Academic Inheritor, Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel

Gender may also explain Dafydd's and Holly's different perceptions of school work. While working hard in school and being interested in school work is generally considered to be at odds with dominant conceptions of masculinity (Willis 1977; Ward 2015), researchers such as Mac an Ghail (1994) and more recently Archer *et al.* (2014) have also shown that there are different ways of 'doing' masculinity, with being able to demonstrate 'muscular intellect', a confident display of academic intellect, counted as one of them. It is interesting to note that it was only male Academic Inheritors and Strivers who considered that school work was not challenging.

Yet, similar to the elite university students in Brown *et al.*'s (2016) study, it generally did not appear that the endowment of cultural capital had resulted in the Academic Inheritors feeling a sense of 'effortless achievement' (Bourdieu and Passeron 1979) within the education system. Based on their accounts, the Academic Inheritors felt that their educational achievements were due to hard work and graft in their school work.

Interviewer: What sort of things do they [teachers] say in parents' evening?

Grace: That I work hard and that I'm an open member of the class and I'm willing to put across ideas.

Grace, Academic Inheritor, Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel

Interviewer: And how do you find secondary school at the moment?

Peter: Yes good. The work is getting harder as we're in Year 11 as we go on. But, I'm coping well. I'm finding it fine.

Interviewer: So, you're finding that you're coping in school?

Peter: Yeah, definitely getting the work done at home straight away and planning everything out and you're not getting lost in any work then, so, yeah... fine.

Peter, Academic Inheritor, Cwm Mawr School

The educational performance of the Academic Inheritors and the Strivers may also be a product of strategic calculations. Academic Inheritors and Strivers held the meritocratic belief that working hard and making an effort would lead to educational and labour market success.

Interviewer: How well do you think you're performing at the school at the moment?

Daniel: I think I'm performing pretty well.

Interviewer: Why do you think you're performing pretty well?

Daniel: I think it's because I do my work. I don't mess around as much as everyone else.

Interviewer: Why don't you mess around as much as everyone else?

Daniel: Because I want to get good qualifications, so, I can get a good job.

Daniel, Academic Striver, Cwm Mawr School

Emma: [Discussing her friend] ...She could revise a lot more. Whereas when it comes to exams, she doesn't really think it's important. She just thinks that things are going to be O.K when she leaves school...it doesn't really matter how she did in school...whereas it really does matter. The effort you put in especially in Year 10 and 11... it really counts when you leave school and want to go to college and things like that and university.

Emma, Academic Striver, Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel

Their educational set, expected grades, the feedback that they received from teachers and their results in previous examinations provided the Academic Inheritors and Strivers with a sense of their educational performance. As most of the Academic Inheritors and some of the Academic Strivers felt that they were performing well in school, these students tended to have relatively high expectations of achieving their aspirations of progressing into sixth form and higher education:

Interviewer: Do you think you'll be able to go to sixth form?

Anthony: Yeah.

Interviewer: And why do you think you'll be able to go to sixth form?

Anthony: Because they say if you've got the grades that they're looking for to get to sixth form they'll accept you and so far I've got the grades they need.

Anthony, Academic Striver, Cwm Mawr School

Cyfwelydd: *Ydych chi'n teimlo byddech chi'n gallu mynd i Brifysgol?*

Nia: *Wel, rwy'n credu rwy'n gallu mynd i Brifysgol. Mae gennai graddau da a dwi'n credu gyd sydd angen i mynd i brifysgol yw cael dau Lefel A sydd yn fel hafal i dau E neu rhywbeth fel 'na ac yn y blaen, felly, rwy'n credu rwyf yn gallu cyflawni hynny yn digon haws.*

Interviewer: Do you feel that you will be able to go to university?

Nia: Well, I believe that I can go to university. I've got good grades and I believe all that is required to go to university is getting two A Levels which are like equal to two Es or something like that and so on, so, I believe I can achieve that easily enough.

Nia, Academic Inheritor, Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel

Yet, it is interesting to note that 7 of the Academic Strivers (1 from Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel and 6 from Cwm Mawr School) as well as 2 Academic Inheritors from Cwm Mawr School were expected to have on average grades below a C or a Pass in their core subjects (see Table 7.5). As discussed earlier, the unequal distribution of cultural capital may explain the high numbers of Academic Strivers within this group of students. It is interesting to note that the majority of these students were girls (6 out of 9 students). These students were aware that they were not performing as well compared to other students.

Interviewer: How well do you think you're performing compared to other students in your classroom?

Jo: I think I'm performing... Yeah, I think I'm performing O.K. You know I'm happy with most things. I want to work on more because I'm not thinking my performance is great. But, I think it's O.K. I think it's good.

Jo, Academic Striver, Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel

Interviewer: How about compared to other students in your year... in your whole year?

David: I feel in the middle. Like I'm just getting it done. I'm not ahead. I'm just at the pace I'm supposed to be.

David, Academic Striver, Cwm Mawr School

Due to their educational performance, some of these students such as Jo, an Academic Striver, had relatively lower expectations of progressing into further and higher education.

Interviewer: Do you think you'll be able to go to sixth form?

Jo: I'm not sure.

Interviewer: Why are you not sure?

Jo: I don't know. I think it depends on my results in my exams now. So, I'm not going to say yes because I really don't know.

Jo, Academic Striver, Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel

Despite this, these students still had aspirations of progressing into further and higher education. Chapter 8 will explore the factors that shaped these students' long-term aspirations of going to university.

The Educational Experiences of the Vocational Students.

Different to the Academic Inheritors and Academic Strivers, none of the Vocational students appeared to intrinsically value education. Yet, the Vocational students still held an instrumental orientation towards school, considering that staying on in some form of education and training would improve their chances of gaining a decent job. Similar to the 'ordinary kids' in Brown's (1987) study, these Vocational students appeared to at least comply with the demands of the school and the teachers for example, by putting the effort into their work and working hard in school. Based on students' accounts, due to their compliance to the school's requirements, the Vocational students tended to get along with most teachers if not all of the teachers. Yet, different to the Academic Inheritors and the Academic Strivers, it appeared that the relationships that the Vocational students had with teachers were far more distant as Hayley demonstrates in the below extract:

Interviewer: Are there any teachers that you like? Can you think of an example of a good teacher?

Hayley: I don't really not like any of them. They're alright like. It's just teachers - innit.

Interviewer: How is your relationship with the teachers?

Hayley: Fine - they're just teachers to me. We just come in to school and they just teach us and that's it.

Hayley, Vocational Student, Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel

Certain Vocational students described their relationship with teachers as being weak and fraught. Some of the Academic Inheritors and Strivers did admit that they disliked certain teachers. However, the Academic Inheritors and Strivers were generally more positive about their relationship with teachers compared to these Vocational students. One of the main factors which contributed towards the fracturing relationships that these Vocational students had with teachers was their attitudes towards education and the teachers. These Vocational students did admit that they had displayed resistance towards education and the authority of teachers, particularly in the early years of secondary education. According to the existing literature, differences in family and school practices is a major factor which contributes towards students' resistance to the school (see McFarland 2001). In Bourdieu's terms, we could argue that a child with a habitus (formed largely by our observations of the family and the community) that is not closely aligned with the culture and ethos of the school is likely to resist education and the teachers' authority. Studies which have looked at counter-school cultures have found that the low value that peers, parents/carers and community members tend to place on education influences working class students to attach no significance to education and qualifications (see Willis 1977; Connolly and Healy 2004).

As noted in Chapter 6, participants generally reported that their parents/carers encouraged them to stay on in some form of education and training after Year 11 as their parents/carers considered that the accumulation of qualifications would increase their child's prospects of gaining a decent job. However, there were variations in terms of the long-term aspirations that parents/carers of the Academic Inheritors, Academic Strivers and Vocational students had for their children. As Chapter 8 (which focuses on young people's long-term aspirations) will

illustrate, to a certain extent, children's long-term educational and career ambitions were shaped by their parents'/carers' aspirations for them.

Several students reported that some of their friends, classmates and members of their community demonstrated little respect or placed little value on education. Such individuals did not appear to influence certain participants' educational attitudes, particularly the Academic Inheritors and Strivers. For instance, John, an Academic Striver, noted that some of the people within his neighbourhood called him a 'spoff'⁴⁰. However, as the extract below illustrates, John seemed to be unfazed by this label:

Interviewer: And how does this [being called a spoff by people from the community] make you feel?

John: Doesn't bother me because I'm going to be having a good life while they be on the dole on street corners. Doesn't bother me.

John, Academic Striver, Cwm Mawr School

Yet, there was evidence that some of the classmates and friends of Vocational students did impact on educational performance, with for instance, Charlotte discussing how some of her friends distracted and prevented her from doing school work. Charlotte notes that as a result, her educational performance faltered.

Charlotte: ...Yn blwyddyn 7 ac 8, oedd fi'n failio Maths, Cymraeg a Saesneg. Wedyn, oedd mam wedi ffonio [yr ysgol] i symud fi o ffrindiau achos dyna beth oedd y problem. Oedd ffrindiau fi'n effeithio ar gwaith fi achos oedd nhw'n distractio fi trwy'r amser...

Cyfwelydd: ...Wnes di ddeud bod dy ffrindiau'n distractio ti?

Charlotte: Achos nhw oedd yr unig ffrindiau rwy'n cael achos roedd fi'm yn hoffi pawb arall yn blwyddyn fi...

Cyfwelydd: Pam bod dy ffrindiau di yn distractio chdi?

⁴⁰ Similar to geek, nerd and swot, spoff is a derogatory term attached to individuals who are regarded as working hard and performing well in school, but are considered to have no social life or skills outside school.

Charlotte: Roedd nhw jyst yn chwethin a jysd deud jocs trwy'r amser. Ond o fi cael y stŵr [oddi wrth yr athrawon] a nid nhw.

Charlotte: ...in Year 7 and 8, I was failing Maths, Welsh and English. Then, my mum phoned [the school] to move one of my friends because that was the problem. My friends were affecting my work because they were distracting me all the time...

Interviewer: ...You said that your friends were distracting you?

Charlotte: Because they were the only friends that I have because I didn't like other people in my year...

Interviewer: Why were your friends distracting you?

Charlotte: They were just laughing and just saying jokes all the time. But, I was having the row [from the teacher] and not them.

Charlotte, Vocational Student, Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel

John's and Charlotte's responses to some extent appear to be based on cost-benefit analyses. Despite being called a spoff, John prioritises his education over gaining the approval of certain members of his community as he considers that he will have a "good life" compared to them because of his educational performance and attitude towards school. During the early years of secondary education, Charlotte appeared to be more concerned with gaining the approval of her friends as opposed to doing well at school even if this did affect her educational performance.

Yet we must take into account that Academic Strivers such as John as well as Academic Inheritors reported higher levels of contact with individuals who were supportive of the education system. In contrast, Vocational students such as Charlotte reported higher levels of contact with individuals who had negative or ambivalent attitudes towards education and school. When discussing individuals they knew who placed little or no value to the education system, Academic students, particularly the Academic Inheritors, often referred to individuals

who either lived in other neighbourhoods or friends who were in lower educational sets. Meanwhile, the Vocational students often referred to individuals who lived in their neighbourhood or friends and classmates who were in the same educational sets as them. Therefore, it is evident that the different levels of contact that young people in this study had with individuals who were either very supportive or had little respect towards the education system shaped their attitudes.

Students' perceptions of the way in which their teachers treated them also contributed to the nature of the relationship that students had with their teachers. For instance, certain Vocational students such as Hannah reported that they generally did not get along with teachers because they considered that some of the rules and demands that teachers set were unfair and unjust.

Interviewer: How are you finding secondary school?

Hannah: I hate it. I've never liked school really.... It's just... I hate it. I don't like it.

Interviewer: Is there a reason why you don't like school?

Hannah: It's just.... I don't know. It's just the people here. The teachers are one of the main things. But, other than that it's not too bad.

Interviewer: What is it about the teachers?

Hannah: I don't know. They just don't communicate with you properly. They treat you like rubbish and then they expect you to respect them back. And then when you don't, then you get penalised for it. It's stupid. If you don't do something right, you get massive massive row and everything and it's just stupid. And they go nuts over stupid things. It's just stupid here.

Interviewer: Like what?

Hannah: You're not allowed to wear scarves to school. You got to wear certain jackets. In the winter, you can't have like... It's stupid. You can't have like fur on your hood or something. They'll take your jackets off you. It's just stupid. Some of the things they've done here is childish like. You'd think you would be treated like more mature...

Hannah, Vocational Student, Cwm Mawr School

Later in the interview, Hannah noted the following about her educational performance:

Interviewer: How well do you think you're performing at school?

Hannah: Alright, I suppose. Sometimes, I'm like... I can't be bothered and I know I can do better. But then at other times, I do really try.

Hannah, Vocational Student, Cwm Mawr School

Hannah's resistance towards the school and the authority of teachers may be due to the sharp contrast between "weakly-framed, person-oriented contexts such as those within students' homes" and "strongly framed and positional settings characteristic of many...secondary schools" (Aggleton 1987: 69-70). This provides some explanation as to why certain students from not only low socio-economic backgrounds but also higher socio-economic backgrounds (who generally have parents/carers and other people within their social network who hold positive attitudes towards the education system due to their educational and occupational backgrounds) such as Hannah may express resistance towards schooling and teachers. Hannah's relationship with her teachers provides evidence which calls into question Bourdieu's (1977a) notion of habitus as it illustrates that social background does not play a large part in shaping Hannah's relationship with her teachers.

Relationships between teachers and students may also weaken as a result of classroom interactions. Similar to young people in Gillborn and Youdell's (2000) research, participants in both schools in this study felt that teachers' favouritism was based on perceived ability, with teachers favouring and providing more attention to students in higher educational sets over those in lower educational sets. While this was mainly expressed by students in relatively lower educational sets, students in relatively higher sets such as Rebecca also felt that teachers favoured students based on perceived ability:

Interviewer: Do certain teachers favour certain students over others?

Rebecca: Yeah - like I'm in top sets and I can tell that the top sets are like favoured more than the lower sets. Like most of the top sets are obviously getting Cs and above

and then the bottom sets are like getting Es, Fs and Gs, but they focus more on us, which is...I don't see the point in that.

Rebecca, Academic Striver, Cwm Mawr School

It is evident from the above extract that Rebecca does not understand why teachers pay greater attention to her and her other classmates in “top sets” compared to those in the “bottom sets”. Yet, there were some students such as Emily, an Academic Striver from Cwm Mawr School, who regarded that the greater attention that teachers gave to students from higher educational sets was to a certain extent justifiable because “they’re more likely the ones that are going to pass”. On the other hand, other students, mainly female students, felt that students who were confident in the classroom or who misbehaved were given more attention by teachers. This evidence is supported by a body of evidence (see Beaman *et al.* 2006 for a review of this research) which indicates that boys dominate teacher-student interactions within the classroom because of their confidence or misbehaviour⁴¹. As a result, female students such as Alice, an Academic Inheritor, from Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel, sometimes felt “intimidated” in the classroom. Despite a lack of consensus among participants within this study with regards to teachers’ treatment of particular groups of students, we need to take into account that negative attention or a lack of attention may lead to disillusionment among students and consequently result in them showing resistance towards schooling.

With regards to their educational performance, all of the Vocational students in Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel and Cwm Mawr School were expected to have on average below a C or a Pass in their core subjects (see Table 7.5). These students were also placed in lower sets. A range of factors contributed towards the Vocational students’ relatively poor performance in education. As noted above, factors such as their educational attitudes and the relatively weak relationship that they had with teachers provide some explanation towards the Vocational students’ relatively poor performance in education.

⁴¹ However, other researchers have argued that gender only partially explains differences in classroom interaction. Other factors such as ability may also contribute to differences in the participation of students in the classroom, with for example, Myhill (2002: 347) finding that underachievers were the “reluctant participators” in the classroom.

The Vocational students' educational performance may also be due to a lack of cultural capital (Bourdieu 1986/1997). As noted earlier, 16 out of 21 of the Vocational students had no history of higher education participation within their immediate families. Furthermore, some of the Vocational students also noted that their parents/carers did not understand their school work and were unable to help them with their homework.

Largely due to their performance in previous assessments and exams, some of the Vocational students felt that they were less academically able compared to students in higher sets.

Interviewer: How well do you think you're performing at school compared to other students?

Michael: Compared to other students, I think I'm doing rubbish because some of my friends get like Bs, As and A*s and then there's me with Ds.

Michael, Vocational Student, Cwm Mawr School

Cyfwelydd: Sut wyt ti i gymharu â myfyrwyr eraill yn dy ddosbarth di?

Charlotte: Dwi ddim yn gwybod. Rwyf ddim yn like yn dda, ond dwi ddim yn gwael. It's like tua'r canol.

Interviewer: How are you compared to other students in your classroom?

Charlotte: I don't know. I'm not like good, but I'm not bad. It's like around the middle

Charlotte, Vocational Student, Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel

Their educational self-concept (Breen and Goldthorpe 1997) resulted in some of the Vocational students having relatively lower expectations of progressing into post-compulsory education and training.

Interviewer: Do you think you'll be able to go to sixth form?

Nicola: I want to, but I don't know. I'd want to do it.

Interviewer: You're not sounding too sure?

Nicola: No, I don't know. It depends if I get the marks I want and grades I want.

Nicola, Vocational Student, Cwm Mawr School

However, as Chapter 8 will illustrate, higher education appeared to be a step too far for these students and certain Vocational students had rejected higher education as a possible option in the future.

The next part of this chapter explores the types of subjects and courses that the Academic Inheritors, Academic Strivers and the Vocational students wanted to study after Year 11. It will examine how factors such as educational experience, long-term aspirations, social background and gender shape young people's ambitions regarding the subjects/courses they wanted to study after compulsory education.

What courses/subjects did students want to study after Year 11?

Within this sample, there appeared to be a clear academic and vocational/practical⁴² divide in terms of the types of subjects and courses that the Academic Inheritors, Academic Strivers and Vocational students wanted to pursue after Year 11. Academic Inheritors predominantly wanted to study academic, AS/A Level subjects such as Biology, Maths, Geography, English Literature, Chemistry, French, History and Sociology after Year 11 (see Tables A1.23 and A1.24). Although the Academic Strivers wanted to study Academic subjects as well, it is interesting that certain Academic Strivers aspired to study vocational/practical based subjects

⁴² Hallam *et al.* (2008: 182) define practical subjects as subjects in which "learning outcomes, generally, are not based on written materials".

such as Child Care, Physical Education and Travel and Tourism (see Table A1.24). Meanwhile, the Vocational students generally aspired to study vocational and practical courses such as Public Services, Health and Social Care, Hairdressing, Plumbing, Carpentry, Physical Education and Art or wanted to pursue an apprenticeship such as in Construction or Aircraft Engineering (see Table A1.25). The higher numbers of Academic Inheritors in Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel meant that generally more students in Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel wanted to study academic subjects as opposed to vocational/practical subjects (see Table A1.26).

It appears that participants' aspirations with regards to studying certain subjects/courses after Year 11 were based on their evaluations of different subjects/courses. One of the main reasons that students gave for wanting to study a particular subject was that they were interested in the subject⁴³. The long term ambitions of the students (which will be discussed further in Chapter 8) also impacted on the types of subjects that they aspired to take, with students aspiring to study subjects that they felt would be relevant in terms of their futures, primarily their future educational and career trajectories⁴⁴. Moreover, students' aspirations towards studying certain subjects was also dependent on their educational performance and students were either likely to express a desire to study subjects in which they had excelled or wanted to study subjects that they had not studied before, but felt that they would be able to perform well in⁴⁵. The relationship students had with teachers was another factor which influenced students' aspirations with regards to studying certain subjects/courses. Having a positive relationship with the teacher attracted them to want to study that subject⁴⁶. Having a negative relationship with a teacher deterred them from wanting to study the subject⁴⁷. We will now explore in more detail the Academic Inheritors', Academic Strivers' and Vocational students' aspirations with regards to the subjects/courses that they wanted to study after Year 11.

⁴³ 25 out of 52 students expressed an interest in the subjects that they aspired to study

⁴⁴ 26 out of 52 students felt that the subjects that they aspired to study at post-compulsory level would be relevant in terms of their future.

⁴⁵ 14 out of 52 students wanted to study a subject at post-compulsory level because they felt that they would be able to perform well in that subject.

⁴⁶ 3 students in this study noted that getting along with the teacher who taught that subject was one of the reasons why they wanted to study a particular subject.

⁴⁷ 5 of the students noted that they did not get along with certain teachers who taught particular subjects. These students did not express a desire to study these subjects

The Subjects/Courses that the Academic Inheritors and Strivers wanted to study

Generally, the Academic Inheritors and Academic Strivers wanted to study academic subjects. To some extent, this was because they considered that these subjects were relevant to their future in terms of enabling them to study the courses that they wanted to study in university as well enabling them to pursue their career aspirations.

Interviewer: And why would you like to choose these subjects [Maths, Chemistry and Physics]?

Dafydd: Because they fit with my...what I want to be when I'm older. They're like...and those are the qualifications I'll need to go and study the ones [courses] I want [to study] in university and that kind of stuff.

Dafydd, Academic Inheritor, Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel

Cyfwelydd: Pam wyt ti eisiau aros yn y chweched dosbarth?

Natalie: Dwi eisiau wneud Lefel[au] A.

Cyfwelydd: Pam wyt ti eisiau wneud Lefel[au] A?

Natalie: Oherwydd dwi eisiau mynd i brifysgol a gwneud Law.

Interviewer: Why do you want to stay in the sixth form?

Natalie: Because I want to do A Level[s].

Interviewer: Why do you want to do A Level[s]?

Natalie: Because I want to go to university and do Law.

Natalie, Academic Inheritor, Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel

Despite this, there were slight differences in the numbers of Academic Inheritors and Strivers who wanted to study academic subjects. While a desire to study academic subjects was overwhelmingly expressed by Academic Students (see Table A1.23 and A1.24); some of the Academic students, particularly the Academic Strivers, aspired to study practical/vocational based subjects/courses. (see Table A1.24). The differences in the types of subjects/courses that Academic Inheritors and Strivers wanted to study were partly due to cost-benefit analyses with students aspiring to study subjects/courses that they were interested in, felt they would perform well in and considered were relevant with regards to their futures.

At the same time, students' social networks provide some explanation for the differences in the types of subjects/courses that the Academic Inheritors and Strivers aspired to study after Year 11. Some of the Academic Strivers in particular discussed how their parents/carers were happy for them to make their own choices regarding the future after Year 11.

Cyfwelydd: Beth mae dy rhieni di eisiau chdi wneud ar ôl gorffen blwyddyn 11?

Amy: Mae nhw jyst yn gadael fi cario ymlaen [gyda] beth bynnag fi eisiau gwneud.

Interviewer: What do your parents want you to do after you finish Year 11?

Amy: They just let me carry on [with] whatever I want to do.

Amy, Academic Striver, Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel

Interviewer: Do you know what your parents would like you to do after you finish Year 11?

David: Whatever I choose

David, Academic Striver, Cwm Mawr School

In contrast, it appeared that the parents/carers of Academic Inheritors in particular such as Tamsin took more of an active role by helping their children to choose certain subjects/courses after Year 11.

Interviewer: Do you talk about school work with your parents?

Tamsin: Yeah - quite often.

Interviewer: What kind of things do you talk about with your parents?

Tamsin: Like...my Dad usually asks me like...for when we were picking our subjects [in Year 9] for school...he was like trying to help me like decide what I want to be when I am older... and then he was like trying to say like what my best subjects were to like lead off from ...to go into doing that then when I'm older... into sixth form and then into uni [university].

Tamsin, Academic Inheritor, Cwm Mawr School

Some of the Academic Inheritors such as Angharad discussed how their parents/carers had directed them in the past towards choosing academic subjects as opposed to vocational/practical subjects.

Cyfwelydd: Felly, byse ti wedi dewis pwnc arall yn hytrach 'na Hanes [ym mlwyddyn 9]?

Angharad: Ie...ond... oni moyn wneud Celf neu rhywbeth ond roedd Dad yn dweud fy mod i angen un pwnc ysgrifenedig.

Interviewer: So, would you have chosen another subject instead of History?

Angharad: Yeah... but... I wanted to study Art or something but my Dad was saying that I needed one written subject.

Angharad, Academic Inheritor, Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel

As this extract illustrates, certain parents/carers of the Academic Inheritors such as Angharad's Dad guided their children towards academic subjects and discouraged them from studying subjects/courses which they deemed to be less academic as they considered that academic courses/subjects would help their child in the future. This provides support to Whitty's (2001) comments that certain middle class parents/carers self-exclude their children from particular parts of public education such as vocational subjects/courses as they deem these types of subjects/courses to be 'unsafe' in educational and social terms. On the one hand, it could be argued that Angharad's Dad's perceptions of Art (considered to be a practical subject/course) is a product of cost-benefit analyses. Recent research supports Angharad's Dad's assumptions regarding the future value of academic and practical/vocational subjects. For instance, Hayward and Hoelscher (2011) and Vidal Rodeiro *et al.* (2013) discovered that students studying vocational and practical subjects/courses tend not to apply or go to elite and socially prestigious universities such as Russell Group universities compared to those pursuing academically orientated subjects/courses. At the same time, it could also be argued that Angharad's Dad possessed cultural capital (Bourdieu 1986/1997) in the form of his familiarity with the education system because of his participation in higher education. Angharad's Dad's possession of cultural capital may have made him aware of the relationship between academic subjects/courses, vocational subjects/courses and the types of universities that young people enter.

While it must be remembered that the sample of this study is relatively small, it is interesting to note that despite widespread concerns over the underrepresentation of women in STEM subjects at Post-16 level (Welsh Government 2016c; WISE 2016), certain female Academic Inheritors and Strivers in this study aspired to study these types of subjects (see Tables A1.23 and A1.24). However, there was still some indication of segregation in terms of the number of male and female Academic Inheritors and Strivers who aspired to study certain subjects/courses. While some of the male Academic students wanted to study other STEM subjects such as Physics (1 Academic Inheritor) and Information Technology (1 male Academic Striver), none of the female Academic students expressed an aspiration to study these subjects, mirroring broader trends across Wales (Welsh Government 2016c) and the UK (WISE 2016). On the other hand, female Academic Strivers and Inheritors overwhelmingly

wanted to study subjects such as English Literature, and Sociology compared to male students (see Tables A1.23 and A1.24), reflecting patterns across the UK (WISE 2016).

The patterns which are evident in this study with regards to gender and aspired subjects/ choice are to some degree the product of cost-benefit calculations. As noted above, factors such as interest and students' perception of their educational performance shaped their aspirations with regards to the courses and subjects that they wanted to study. It could also be argued that these patterns are due to cost-benefit calculations because they are related to the career aspirations of male and female Academic Inheritors and Strivers. As will be discussed in further detail in Chapter 8, students to a certain extent rationalised their career aspirations noting that they wanted to pursue certain careers because they were interested in these types of jobs and considered these jobs to be well-paid jobs. When discussing what subjects they wanted to study, the male and female Academic students did not allude to societal discourses which align Mathematics and Science with masculinity and the languages, the arts and the social sciences with femininity (see Francis 2000). Despite this, these discourses are still prominent in our society and may shape albeit in a subtle way students' aspirations with regards to the types of subjects/courses that they wanted to study. The fact that certain subjects/courses and certain occupations are still dominated either by men or women reinforces the idea that certain spheres of the education system and the labour market are male and female preserves.

The Subjects/Courses the Vocational students wanted to study.

The Vocational students expressed a preference towards studying vocational and practical subjects as opposed to academic courses (see Table A1.25). Their preference towards these types of subjects was partly shaped by their perception of their abilities, with certain Vocational students considering that they were more practically minded rather than academically minded. At the same time, the Vocational students considered that the subjects/courses that they wanted to study would enable them to pursue the intermediate and working class occupations that they aspired to gain in the future.

Interviewer: And turning to you, so what would you like to do after you finish Year 11?

Rhiannon: I would like to go to college to do a course on Health and Social Care...to actually be able to have a qualification to actually work with disabled people 'cos it's what I'm like aiming to do.

Rhiannon, Vocational Student, Cwm Mawr School

Interviewer: Why would you like to study a plumbing course?

Ryan: Because I'd like to do plumbing 'cos it's a thing I'd like to do and the income [you receive for being a plumber] is quite a bit as well. So, I'd like to do that.

Ryan, Vocational Student, Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel

The Vocational students' career ambitions will be explored in further detail in Chapter 8.

Vocational students also expressed more interest in practical/vocational based subjects rather than academic subjects such as Charlotte who wanted to study a Teaching Assistant Course. After Year 11, Charlotte chose to study a Teaching Assistant course. In the extract below, Charlotte discusses why she decided to study a Teaching Assistant course.

***Charlotte:** Mae jyst yn gwahanol i bopeth fel Hanes, Cymraeg a Saesneg. Mae jyst rhywbeth ble ti'n gallu mynd mas a peidio poeni am ysgol tan un diwrnod.*

Charlotte: It's just different to everything like History, Welsh and English. It's just something where you can go out and not worry about school for one day.

Charlotte, Vocational Student, Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel (Follow-up Interview)

It is evident in the above extract that being able to “go out” on a work placement and having hands-on experience of work as opposed to doing written work in the classroom was what attracted Charlotte towards wanting to study a Teaching Assistant course as opposed to wanting to study academic subjects/courses.

Teachers also shaped students’ aspirations and decisions with regards to the subjects that they wanted to study. For instance, Sam, a Vocational student from Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel, discussed how in Year 9, he was discouraged from studying certain subjects by teachers.

Cyfwelydd: A wedyn pam wnes di ddewis Sgiliau Byd Gwaith [ym mlwyddyn 9]?

Sam: Roedd fi eisiau cymryd Tech Gwyb [Technoleg Gwybodaeth] ond roedd nhw [athrawon] rhoi fi mewn Sgiliau Byd [Gwaith] instead. So, wnes i wneud hynna.

Interviewer: And then why did you choose Skills for the World of Work [in Year 9]?

Sam: I wanted to take IT [Information Technology] but they [teachers] put me into World [Work] Skills instead. So, I did that.

Sam, Vocational Student, Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel

There was also evidence of teachers guiding students towards certain subjects in Cwm Mawr School as well. It was not only Vocational students who were directed towards certain subjects. For example, in the follow-up interview, Chloe, an Academic Inheritor, discusses how her teachers had encouraged her to choose BTEC Science rather than A Level Chemistry. However, in Chloe’s case, it appears that the decision to study BTEC Science is a joint decision between her and the teachers which is different to Sam’s situation, where it appears that teachers were steering him towards choosing Skills for the World of Work.

Interviewer: So when you were thinking about what you wanted to do after Year 11, did anyone provide you with advice or say anything to you or might have had an influence?

Chloe: Well I did speak with Mrs Edwards [head of Sixth Form]... particularly with the Science because I was ... I like Chemistry but it's not like my strong, strong point... I tend to like subjects I'm not very good at... There was BTEC [Science] as well where you do like Biology, Chemistry, and Physics all in one. So, I was kind of mixing between that and that. I spoke to my Science teacher, the Head of Science, and Miss Edwards and they were like "Well I think the best thing for you would be to take the BTEC because..." not because of "Oh...you're not good enough" kind of thing but because with how I work personally as well... I'm a bit of a stress head. We thought it would be better for me to take the BTEC one. So, I did. I'm glad I took it.

Chloe, Academic Inheritor, Cwm Mawr School (Follow-up Interview)

This is common practice in schools across the UK, with other studies (see Ball 1981 and Gillborn and Youdell 2000) finding that teachers were channelling students towards "appropriate" subjects based on students' abilities. Similar to the findings in these studies, it is evident from Chloe's and Sam's extracts that students who teachers perceived would struggle in "academic" subjects were encouraged to be more realistic and choose subjects of a "lesser" academic standing such as BTEC subjects.

Teachers in this study such as Mrs Thomas from Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel justified this practice, arguing that it was a means for teachers to ensure that "*fel bod nhw [myfyrwyr] ddim yn bennu lan yn wneud una'i pynciau sydd lot rhy anodd iddyn nhw neu ar yr ochr arall bod nhw ddim yn wneud pynciau sydd lot rhy hawdd iddyn nhw* [so that they [students] don't end up doing either subjects that are a lot too hard for them or on the other side that they don't do subjects that are a lot too easy for them]". While this is understandable, we need to recognise that channelling students towards certain subjects may have a negative impact on students' educational self-concept. BTEC subjects, the types of subjects that students such as Sam and

Chloe were steered towards, are widely perceived as being low status courses/subjects as they are not universally recognised by higher education institutions (Hodgson and Spours 2014: 478). Students in this study also held this perception, considering BTECs to be inferior compared to academically-orientated qualifications such as GCSEs and A Levels.

Interviewer: How are you finding doing a BTEC rather than doing GCSEs?

Chris: I prefer to do coursework. It's better. But, obviously GCSEs are better to have than BTECs I'm guessing, so, but I'd prefer to do coursework than sit my exams.

Interviewer: Why do you think that GCSEs are better than BTECs?

Chris: I'm not sure. Just everyone says that they are.

Chris, Vocational Student, Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel

Interviewer: Ermm... how do you feel about doing GCSEs and doing BTECs?

Harry: I think BTECs are not very good. I don't see the point in them. I'd rather do GCSEs.

Interviewer: Why don't you see any point in doing BTECs?

Harry: Cos they're no good, are they? I don't think, they are.

Interviewer: Any good for the future or...?

Harry: No good for the future. There's no point having them.

Harry, Vocational Student, Cwm Mawr School

As such, this assumption regarding BTEC subjects may have contributed to Vocational students feeling that they were less academically able compared to other students.

Gender differences with regards to the types of subjects and courses that students wanted to study were more visible among the Vocational students compared to the Academic Inheritors

and Strivers, supporting concerns raised by commentators in the recent report by the NAFW Children and Young People's Committee (2012: 27-8). While some of the male Vocational students expressed an aspiration to study Construction, Carpentry, Aircraft Engineering/Engineering and Plumbing, none of the female Vocational students reported that they wanted to study these subjects (see Table A1.25). Whereas female Vocational students wanted to study Childcare/Teaching Assistant courses, Health and Social Care and Hair and Beauty, none of the male Vocational students expressed an aspiration to study these subjects (see Table A1.25).

Like the Academic Inheritors and Strivers, the differences in the types of subjects/courses that female and male Vocational students wanted to study were partly the result of cost-benefit analyses. As discussed above, the Vocational students were interested in the subjects that they wanted to study and felt that they would be able to perform well in these subjects. The Vocational students also considered that the subjects that they wanted to study were relevant to their future career aspirations. Chapter 8 will discuss young people's future career ambitions in further detail.

We also need to take into account that prominent societal assumptions of what are traditional "masculine" and "feminine" traits may also have influenced the male and female Vocational students to want to study a particular subjects. Whereas displaying bodily strength and being active are traditionally considered to be traits associated with masculinity (see Willis 1977), nurturing, caring and other activities associated with housework such as cooking and cleaning are considered to be "feminine" skills (Jackson and Scott 2002). The influence that presumptions regarding traditional feminine and masculine qualities have on the aspirations of Vocational students will be explored in greater depth when we explore their long-term aspirations in Chapter 8.

The next section will now explore in which educational institutions students wanted to study these subjects after Year 11.

Which educational institutions did students want to enter after Year 11?

Table 7.7: The Aspired Post-16 Educational Institutions of Students of the Academic Inheritors, Academic Strivers and Vocational Students⁴⁸

	Academic Inheritors	Academic Strivers	Vocational Students	Total
Sixth Form	14	16	12	42
F.E College	1	1	13	15
Apprenticeship⁴⁹	0	0	3	3
Independent Fee-Paying College	1	0	0	1

As Table 7.7 demonstrates, the majority of the Academic Inheritors, Academic Strivers and a large number of the Vocational Students had either expressed a desire or had considered staying in the school's sixth form after Year 11. One of the main reasons given by students for wanting to return to sixth form was because they considered that this institution provided them with a sense of familiarity as they would remain in the same school, would be taught by the same teachers and attend lessons with students they knew – a factor that other researchers such as Keys and Maychell (1998:25) have also identified. Furthermore, as discussed in Chapter 5, due to the cutbacks in Careers Wales provision, there is now more responsibility on teachers to offer advice and guidance to students with regards to their future. Consequently, teachers in both schools noted that they were encouraging students to stay on in sixth form in order to retain students. Fifteen students in this study expressed an aspiration or had thought about going to a Further Education College after Year 11. The majority of these students were Vocational students (13 students). A further three male Vocational students aspired to pursue

⁴⁸ As certain students noted that they wanted to enter more than one educational institution after Year 11, the totals do not add up to the number of participants in the study. For a breakdown of the different educational institutions that students wanted to enter, please see Appendix 2

⁴⁹ As noted in Chapter 1, FE Colleges provide college-based training for apprentices.

an apprenticeship with a work-based learning provider after Year 11. One of the Academic Inheritors from Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel, Nia, also had aspirations of either going to sixth form or an Independent, fee paying College after Year 11.

The Educational Institutions that the Academic Inheritors and Strivers Wanted to Enter after Year 11

All of the Academic Strivers and almost all of the Academic Inheritors (14 out of 15 students) had considered or wanted to stay in sixth form. Due to their educational performance and their relationship with teachers, certain Academic Inheritors and Strivers discussed how some of their teachers had encouraged them to stay on in sixth form. Furthermore, the fact that most of their friends were considering progressing to sixth form incentivised these students to stay on in sixth form.

The Academic Inheritors also regarded the school's sixth form as being educationally superior compared to F.E colleges. Although F.E colleges offer AS and A Level courses, there was a feeling among some of the Academic Inheritors such as Tamsin that sixth form would better prepare them for going to university.

Interviewer: So firstly, why would you like to stay in sixth form?

Tamsin: Because I feel like it's more beneficial towards me and the subjects I want to take and it's more like A Level basis rather than colleges is more... like my mother went [to college] and she was like "For the stuff that you want to do, it's saying to you to do higher levels". Whereas some colleges... they do really do good courses, but it wouldn't suit me so she was like "Best option is to stay on [in sixth form]" because I would have more chance of getting into university and better grades.

Tamsin, Academic Inheritor, Cwm Mawr School

As Tamsin's extract illustrates, certain people within their social networks influenced Academic Inheritors to consider sixth form to be better compared to F.E colleges in educational terms. This is also evident in the extract below from an interview with Mark's mother, the parent of another Academic Inheritor. In the extract, Mark's mother explains why she considered that Mark would be better suited in sixth form rather than in a Further Education College after Year 11.

He [Mark] needs the sort of focus and drive and ethos of school as opposed to college... seeing what I've seen with friends' children, where they've been like Mark and been clever and done really well in GCSEs and then gone to college and been left to their own devices and failed. I'm glad that Mark is still in that sort of school environment where the pastoral care and the nurture is still there and the teachers are still there driving them forward... and I think some children... the tertiary colleges are important for them perhaps to do the... not so academic subjects. I think that is important. But, I know for Mark and doing his A Levels, it is important that he's in school.

Mark's Mother, Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel

The extracts from the interview with Tamsin and Mark's mother reflect broader trends with regards to social class and participation in Further Education Colleges. In his recent quantitative research, Thompson (2009) found evidence of middle class self-exclusion from F.E colleges, with middle class students, particularly those that were high achieving, less likely to be in F.E colleges compared to their working class counterparts. To some degree, middle class self-exclusion from F.E colleges is a product of cost-benefit analyses. Tamsin considers that sixth form would provide her with more of a "chance of getting into university and [getting] better grades". Mark's mother considers that the ethos of the school's sixth form and its nurturing atmosphere would help her son to progress to university as opposed to the independent nature of F.E Colleges. Furthermore, in both extracts, Mark's mother and Tamsin consider that F.E College would not be suitable because they consider that they cater for students who are pursuing vocational as opposed to academic pathways. At the same time, we could argue that the possession of social capital and cultural capital (Bourdieu 1986/1997) may also result in self-exclusion from F.E Colleges among the Academic Inheritors. It is evident in the above extracts that Tamsin's and Mark's mother's perceptions regarding Further Education

Colleges are shaped by what they have heard from others in the social networks. Furthermore, Mark's mother's cultural capital in terms of her familiarity with the education system may also have made her aware of the assumption that F.E colleges are educational institutions which are better suited for "other people's children" (Richardson 2007: 411).

As noted earlier, one of the Academic Inheritors, Nia, was also considering going to an independent, fee-paying college in addition to sixth form. Nia was considering a number of independent, fee-paying colleges in the area which specialised in academic subjects, were high in the league tables and geared students towards gaining places in socially prestigious universities such as Cambridge and Oxford. As her parents were unable to afford and justify paying the tuition costs, Nia was applying for a scholarship to attend these college. Similar to the other Academic Inheritors, Nia's aspirations of going to an independent, fee paying college was on the one hand based on cost-benefit analyses as she considered that these types of educational institutions would enable her to achieve her aspirations of gaining a place in a socially prestigious university compared to other educational institutions. However, when she was interviewed, it also appeared that Nia's mother had also influenced Nia's aspirations of going to an independent, fee-paying college.

...well, last summer we were looking at where were the best sixth forms because if she wants to do really well...where's the best sixth form for her to go to in terms of giving her the right support and the best possible outcomes. So, last summer partly inspired... partly because like a good friend of mine who lives in England... her husband had a private education and so that's always been kind of like part of their conversation, so, on the periphery of our conversations, there's always been some good friends of the family... where that's part of the ordinary conversation and I think that being part of that conversation made it possible last summer when we looked at league tables and things and when the league tables come out...you get the state schools and the private schools...and when the league tables came out, we said well let's have a look and see where's best. And it just happened that the best performing not necessarily educationally or socially or anything else, but the best performing sixth form is in Cardiff in the entire UK. Although, they're very Science focused, but at the time Nia was very Science focused. So, we looked at their admissions process and stuff and then

having looked at that and started having conversations about it, somebody said “Oh, you should look at”... Atlantic College. Atlantic College is another kind of like an alternative sixth form system where they do the International Baccalaureate⁵⁰

Nia’s Mother, Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel

In the above extract, it is clear that Nia’s mother like some of the other parents of the Academic Inheritors, played an active role in terms of helping her child to make a choice regarding her future. The extract above shows how Nia’s Mother was able to use her cultural capital in the form of her familiarity with the education system to decipher different sources such as league tables in order to help Nia make decisions about the educational institutions she would attend after Year 11. At the same time, Nia and her mother were able to gain information regarding different educational institutions through social contacts, illustrating how the possession of social capital may shape young people’s aspirations. Therefore, while on the one hand Nia’s aspirations of studying in an independent, fee-paying college is based on cost-benefit analyses, we need to take into how Nia’s social contacts and her mother’s familiarity with the education system may also have influenced her to want to study in an independent, fee-paying college, providing support to Bourdieu’s (1986/1997) notion of social and cultural capital.

Although some of the Academic Strivers considered sixth form was better than F.E colleges, they often referred to the fact that sixth form offered them a sense of familiarity that F.E colleges didn’t rather than the educational standards of these two educational institutions. As noted above in the discussion on subject choice, the parents of the Academic Strivers appeared to take less of an active role and were happy for their child to make their own choices regarding their future.

⁵⁰ For more information regarding the International Baccalaureate, please see the International Baccalaureate website - <http://www.ibo.org/>

The Educational Institutions that the Vocational Students Wanted to Enter After Year 11

Twelve of the Vocational students had considered studying in the school's sixth form after Year 11. There was evidence to suggest that the widening of curriculum choice at Post-16 level in both schools as a result of the Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure Act 2009 (as discussed in Chapter 5) was influencing certain Vocational students to consider sixth form as a possible option after Year 11. A number of the Vocational students were aware of the new subjects and courses (mostly vocational courses) that the schools were offering and cited this as a reason for them wanting to stay in sixth form.

Interviewer: What would you like to do after finishing Year 11?

Nicola: I want to stay on [in Cwm Mawr School's Sixth Form]. They're going to put a new hairdressing course in now up here [Cwm Mawr School's Sixth Form]. So, if it wasn't for like that... I think if I stuck to hairdressing then I would have gone straight to college and did it there 'cos it wouldn't have been like no hairdressing stuff here [Cwm Mawr School's Sixth Form].

Nicola, Vocational Student, Cwm Mawr School

Despite these recent developments, thirteen out of twenty-one of the Vocational students had considered studying in a F.E College after Year 11, with a further three male Vocational students from Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel wanting to study an apprenticeship. For some of these students, the school's sixth form did not offer the courses that they wanted to study after Year 11, illustrating how institutional choice is related to subject choice. For others such as Rhiannon, F.E College was considered to provide them with a fresh start.

Interviewer: Why wouldn't you like to go to sixth form?

Rhiannon: Ermmm... personally, I've just had enough of this school now. I just really want to get my exams over and done with and try something new...not be stuck in the

same school for another two years. Because I've noticed... 'cos my friends... the people I call friends in school... they're all the people I hang out with all the time. I mean like my friends - they wanted to do like other things. They wanted to try other things. They wanted to leave school and do other things which is kind of what made me feel like I want to do that because they seem to be doing well. Why can't I do well? I want to try these new things and yeah I just don't really want to stay in this school any longer. I've just had enough now. It's nothing bad with this school. I've just personally just had enough. I just want to get all of these exams over and done with and actually try something else because I know just being stuck in this school for another two years is just... the death of me probably.

Rhiannon, Vocational Student, Cwm Mawr School

In Rhiannon's extract, it is evident that her friends have been influential in shaping her aspiration of going to a F.E College. Moreover, what is striking is how she perceives that continuing in sixth form would be "the death of me". Their distant relationships with the teachers and poor educational performance (which were discussed earlier in this chapter) were factors which directed Rhiannon and other Vocational students towards going to a F.E College. In their recent study, Fuller and Macfayden (2012) also found that negative experiences of school and teachers were factors which motivated students to go to a F.E College.

As noted earlier, three male vocational students in Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel aspired to do an apprenticeship with a work-based learning provider in fields such as Construction and Aircraft Engineering. Their aspirations for wanting to do an apprenticeship appeared to be based on cost-benefit calculations. These students aspired to do an apprenticeship which would train them up to do the particular occupation that they wanted to do in the future. Furthermore, the fact that they would earn money whilst being trained was another reason why these students wanted to do an apprenticeship.

Institutional Choice and Language of Study

It also needs to be taken into account that there were differences in terms of the types of educational institutions that students from Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel and Cwm Mawr School wanted to enter after Year 11 (see Table 7.8).

Table 7.8: The Aspired Post-16 Educational Institutions of Students from Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel and Cwm Mawr School⁵¹

	Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel	Cwm Mawr School
Sixth Form	19	23
F.E College	8	7
Apprenticeship	3	0
Independent Fee-Paying College	1	0

As Table 7.8 illustrates, the number of students who wanted or had considered remaining in the same school and entering sixth form was slightly higher in Cwm Mawr School (23 out of 26 participants) compared to Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel (19 of the 26 participants). One of the factors which explains this difference is the fact that students in Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel had to also consider in which language they would study subjects/courses after Year 11. Choosing to stay in the Sixth Form of Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel meant that students would have to study through the medium of Welsh. Whilst there has been an increase in terms of Welsh-language provision provided by Further Education Colleges and Work-based Learning Providers partly due to the Welsh Government's Welsh-medium Education Strategy (see WAG 2010), Welsh-language provision in these educational institutions is still substantially lower compared to the provision in Welsh-medium Schools (Duggan *et al.* 2016: 50). Therefore, students who enter F.E colleges

⁵¹ Like Table 7.7, the totals do not add up to the number of participants in the study as certain students expressed an aspiration of entering more than one educational institution after Year 11. For a breakdown of the different educational institutions that students wanted to enter, please see Appendix 2

or are trained by Learning Providers in Wales are likely to receive their education and training through the medium of English.

Students were aware of the impact choosing a particular institution would have on their language of study at Post-16 Level. For students such as Luke and Mark, being able to continue studying through the medium of Welsh was an important factor that made them consider progressing into the sixth form in Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel.

***Cyfweilydd:** Pam wyt ti eisiau aros yn y chweched dosbarth?*

***Mark:** Ymm... wel achos mae o yna. Dwi'n gwybod pobl...mae na rhai sydd wedi mynd o [flwyddyn] un ar ddeg i coleg ac mae coleg agosaf i fi yn y dref leol ac mae nhw wneud e mewn Saesneg... mae nhw'n dysgu'n Saesneg. So bydde'n eithaf galed i mynd o TGAU yn Cymraeg a cael y graddau mewn Cymraeg i fynd i dysgu termau Saesneg, so mae'n fel dwbl y gwaith rili. Mae rhaid dysgu'r geiriau hefyd... y termau pwysig. So, os ydw i'n aros fan hyn [yn Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel], byddai'n gallu gwneud y Lefelau A yn Cymraeg a bydd e'n haws i fi.*

Interviewer: Why do you want to stay in Sixth Form?

Mark: Umm... well it's here. I know people... there are some who have gone from [Year] Eleven to college and the closest college to me is in the local town and they do it in English...they teach in English. So it would be very hard going from GCSEs in Welsh and getting grades in Welsh to going to learn English terms, so it's like double the work really. You must learn the words as well...the important terms. So, if I stay here [in Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel], I will be able to do my A Levels in Welsh and it will be easier for me.

Mark, Academic Inheritor, Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel

Interviewer: Firstly, why would you like to go to sixth form?

Luke: Because I think if I go to college it's just going to be a waste of time really because I've learnt know all my...every year I've been in school I've spoken Welsh. So, I'll find it difficult in English to start off with [if I go to college].

Luke, Academic Inheritor, Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel

In the above extracts, it could be argued that Luke and Mark are making cost-benefit analyses of their options with respect to language of study, supporting Goldthorpe's (1998) assertion regarding decision making. Continuing in Sixth Form and studying through the medium of Welsh is regarded as a better option for Mark and Luke as they expect that studying in a F.E College would be hard work and arduous as they would have to learn new vocabulary and terminology in English.

Only a minority of respondents referred to cultural factors and expressed a desire to continue to study in Welsh because they considered that it was important to maintain the vitality of the Welsh language:

Nia: Wel, mae gennai dau fanteision... [o astudio yn] Cymraeg oherwydd fyddai'n gallu datblygu sgiliau iaith fi'n well ac fydde fe'n aros yn fy nghof ac hefyd oherwydd mae'n pwysig i cadw'r iaith yn fyw...

Nia: Well, I have two advantages... [of studying in] Welsh because I will be able to develop my language skills better and it will stay in my memory and also because it's important to keep the language alive

Nia, Academic Inheritor, Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel

Language choice also influenced Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel students to consider studying in a F.E college after Year 11. Although the majority of the Academic Inheritors and Strivers in both schools aspired to enter sixth form, Emma, an Academic Striver, was also considering going to a F.E college and Nia, an Academic Inheritor, was also thinking of going to an independent fee-paying college. Being able to study subjects through the medium of English was a factor

which directed these students towards wanting to study in an educational institution that was different to Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel's sixth form. In the extract below, Emma explains her rationale for wanting to go to an FE College:

Interviewer: What does your mother want you do?

Emma: She wants me to stay in sixth form and do my A Levels in Welsh. But, I want to go to college to do my A Levels in English.

Interviewer: So, why does your mother want you to carry on in sixth form?

Emma: I think that... I'm not sure, but, she wants me to find out more information before I make a decision for when I leave school. But, I'm pretty sure that's what I'm going to do. I think she just wants me to think it over more first.

Interviewer: Why would you like to go to college instead of sixth form?

Emma: Because once I've done my A Levels I hope to go to medical school and that will be in English. I thought that it would just be easier to know something in English. If I do A Level Biology and Chemistry in English in college, it would be just easier for me when I go to medical school then instead of doing my A Levels in Welsh and not really understanding anything when I go to medical school.

Emma, Academic Inheritor, Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel

Evident in the above extract are the conflicting ambitions of Emma and her mother. Although her mother would like her to stay in sixth form and continue studying in Welsh, Emma is leaning towards going to a F.E college and transferring to studying through the medium of English after Year 11. However, according to Emma, her mother recognises the increasing autonomy she has in making choices regarding her educational future. Whilst parents/carers were highly involved in choosing the medium of education at primary and secondary school level, it appears that choices regarding language of study at Post-16 level rested firmly on the shoulders of the child. Furthermore, it appears that Emma's aspiration of going to a F.E college is also strategic and is influenced by her long term ambitions of going to university. She is aware that Welsh-medium provision in higher education institutions is limited and believes that

transferring from Welsh to English at the end of compulsory education would better prepare her linguistically for university. Concerns over the lack of Welsh-medium provision at higher education level were also held by other Academic students, particularly Academic Inheritors, who were considering continuing in sixth form.

Interviewer: *Sut wyt ti'n teimlo ynglŷn â hyn [astudio trwy gyfrwng y Gymraeg yn Chweched Dosbarth]?*

Sophie: *Mae'n gwneud synnwyr achos dwi mewn Ysgol Gymraeg, ond, efallai bydd e ddim yn rili gweithio allan i fî os fî eisiau mynd i Llundain [yn y dyfodol].*

Interviewer: How do you feel about this [studying through the medium of Welsh at Sixth Form]?

Sophie: It makes sense because I'm in a Welsh-medium School, but, it might not really work out for me if I want to go to London [in the future].

Sophie, Academic Inheritor, Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel

Interviewer: How do you feel that you have to study the subjects in Welsh in this school?

Dafydd: I think it's a good thing if you plan to stay in this country for like to work and stuff like that. If you don't plan to stay in this country... it's kind of irrelevant really if you did it in Welsh because there's one other place on the planet that speak Welsh apart from Wales.

Dafydd, Academic Inheritor, Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel

Similar to the participants in Davies and Trystan's (2012: 157) study, the Academic students displayed an acute awareness of the amount of Welsh-medium provision in higher education institutions across Wales and the UK. Academic students such as Sophie and Dafydd also considered that the Welsh language would be irrelevant in terms of their futures as they imagined that they would move out of Wales in the future in order to find better employment and educational opportunities.

The Vocational students who aspired to study in a F.E college or wanted to do an apprenticeship after Year 11 were also aware that they would be studying these programs through the medium of English. Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel did not offer training for apprentices nor did they offer some of the vocational courses/subjects that these Vocational students wanted to study. Despite this, the Vocational students who recognised that they would have to go to a F.E college to study their course or do an apprenticeship with a learning provider did not express concern over transferring from the medium of English to Welsh. Nevertheless, for certain Vocational students such as Hayley and Ryan, language had played a part in shaping their aspirations with regards to the educational institutions that they wanted to enter after Year 11.

Interviewer: Is there a reason why you would study it [the course in a F.E college] in English?

Hayley: I think English is easier to understand. Like sometimes Welsh is like quite hard to understand... I don't think many people talk Welsh, really...not many people use the language... I don't think.

Interviewer: In... around where you live?

Hayley: Yeah, well like you see some people say "Oh, yeah. I can speak Welsh. Speak Welsh to me." But then other people don't really know Welsh. Most people don't know Welsh... I think.

Hayley, Vocational Student, Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel

Interviewer: How would you feel about studying plumbing in the English language?

Ryan: Alright. Yeah - I don't know if I would've done it in Welsh because most of my clients will have been... you know... my customers will be able to speak in English and not Welsh. So, I'd be better off doing it in English.

Ryan, Vocational Student, Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel

It is evident that a number of factors have directed Hayley and Ryan towards considering studying their courses in English. In the first extract, Hayley cites lack of confidence in her proficiency in Welsh as a reason for her wanting to go to a F.E. College. Also, it appears that the linguistic context of the area has influenced their aspirations towards going to a F.E. College. In the long term, these students aspired to gain intermediate and working class occupations such as being a plumber or a retail assistant and perceived that they would stay in their local area (see Chapter 8). Due to the low proportion of Welsh speakers in the local area, these students considered that proficiency in the Welsh language would not be useful in the future as they did not think they would have to use the language in their aspired careers. Like the Academic Inheritors and Strivers, it appears that these Vocational students evaluated the costs and benefits of studying courses/subjects in different languages.

Discussion

This chapter explored the three different types of students – the Academic Inheritors, the Academic Strivers and the Vocational students – that were identified in this study. These students had different orientations towards education and work compared to the types of students that Brown (1987) identified in his study of young people in the South Wales Valleys. Although both the Academic Inheritors and Academic Strivers were academically orientated and had aspirations of going to university after Year 11, the Academic Strivers were more ambivalent and had lower expectations of going to university compared to the Academic Inheritors. The third group of students, the Vocational students, had either not considered or had rejected the idea of going to university and instead wanted to gain employment after further education and training.

This chapter established that educational performance played a role in shaping young people's aspirations and expectations after compulsory education. Although variations in students' educational performance may have been due to innate ability or intelligence; exploring how biological factors impact on students' attainment and achievement in school is beyond the scope of this research. However, this chapter illustrated that parents/carers from higher socio-

economic backgrounds such as the parents/carers of Academic Inheritors in this study are able to use their economic capital/financial resources and are able to transmit their cultural capital to help and support their children with their education. Students were well aware of their educational performance in the school and how they compared to other students. Young people's educational self-concept played an important part in shaping their expectations and aspirations, with for instance, Academic Inheritors generally having relatively higher expectations of progressing into further and higher education compared to certain Academic Strivers and Vocational students. This chapter also illustrated how the educational attitudes of the Academic Inheritors, Academic Strivers and Vocational Students were based on cost-benefit analyses. The Academic Inheritors and the Academic Strivers held the meritocratic belief that doing well in school and progressing into university would improve their chances of gaining the salariat jobs that they aspired to gain. Meanwhile, particularly in the past, the Vocational Students had rejected education and the authority of teachers either because they wanted to gain approval from their peers or because they did not agree with some of the rules that teachers had set in school. Furthermore, cultural norms and values play a role in shaping young people's educational attitudes, backing Bourdieu's (1977a) notion of habitus and to a certain extent the assertion of Rational Choice Theorists such as Breen and Goldthorpe (1997: 299, italics in original) that cultural norms and values are "*guides*" to rational action. The differences in the educational attitudes of the Academic Inheritors, Academic Strivers and Vocational students may be explained by the fact that the Vocational students were more likely to have contact with individuals who did not value education compared to the Academic Inheritors as well as some of the Academic Strivers. Their contact with individuals who showed little respect towards the education system influenced some of the Vocational students to reject education and the authority of teachers particularly in their early years of secondary school.

This chapter also illustrated that there were differences in the types of subjects/courses that the Academic Inheritors, Academic Strivers and Vocational students wanted to study after Year 11 as well as variations in terms of the types of educational institutions that they wanted to study these subjects/courses. Whereas the Academic Inheritors generally wanted to study Academic, AS/A Level subjects/courses, some of the Academic Strivers and most of the Vocational students wanted to study practical/vocational subjects/courses. With regards to educational institutions, while the Academic Inheritors and Academic Strivers generally

envisaged that they would study subjects/courses in the school's sixth form, the majority of young people in this research who had considered progressing into a F.E college after Year 11 were Vocational Students.

Students' aspirations regarding subjects/courses and educational institutions were to some extent based on cost-benefit analyses. Factors such as interest and enjoyment; relationship with teachers who taught these subjects/courses, perceptions of ability and relevance to their future educational and career aspirations shaped young people's aspirations regarding studying particular subjects/courses. In terms of educational institutions, familiarity was a major factor which influenced the majority of students to want to progress into the sixth form of the school. Furthermore, the subjects/courses that were offered by different educational providers shaped students' aspirations in terms of the subjects/courses that they wanted to study after Year 11. The Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure Act 2009 has contributed to a widening of curriculum choice in Cwm Mawr School and Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel, with both schools offering more vocational courses at sixth form than they had done previously. However, there were certain students who were considering going to a Further Education College after Year 11 because the subjects/courses that they wanted to study was not offered in the schools.

Students in Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel also had the added consideration of language of study when thinking about which educational institution they wanted to enter after Year 11. Cultural factors did to a certain extent impact on the aspirations of some of the Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel students with some of them expressing an aspiration of studying subjects/courses through the medium of Welsh after compulsory education because they considered it was important in order to maintain the vitality of the Welsh language. Yet, it appeared that young people's long-term educational and career aspirations had a major influence on whether they wanted to study their subjects/courses through the medium of Welsh or English after Year 11. For instance, some of the Academic Inheritors and Academic Strivers expressed concerns about studying their subjects/courses through the medium of Welsh in further education as they were aware of the low Welsh-medium provision in higher education and envisaged that they would be studying through the medium of English in higher education. Some of the Vocational students envisaged that they would be studying subjects/courses through the medium of English in a F.E college

or would do an apprenticeship with a learning provider in English. These students generally were willing to study these courses in English. Some of these Vocational students felt that they were less able in Welsh than in English. These students also felt that the English language would be more relevant in terms of their futures compared to the Welsh language because of the low proportion of Welsh speakers in the local area.

At the same time, it was evident that people within young people's social network had also shaped their aspirations with regards to subjects/courses and educational institutions after Year 11. It was evident that the parents/carers and the other social contacts of the Academic Inheritors in particular were directing them towards studying academic subjects and staying on in the sixth form, perceiving these subjects and educational institutions to be superior compared to vocational subjects and F.E colleges as they would better prepare and improve their chances of going to university. Teachers also played a role in influencing students' aspirations in terms of the subjects and courses that they wanted to study, with Vocational students, in particular, noting how certain teachers had prevented them from studying certain subjects in the past based on their perception of their abilities. Students' relationship with teachers also played a part in shaping their aspirations in terms of the educational institutions that they would enter after Year 11. For instance, students who felt that their relationship with teachers were weak and fraught expressed an aspiration of attending a F.E college after Year 11. Therefore, while students' aspirations with regards to studying certain subjects/courses and entering particular educational institutions are based on cost-benefit analyses, we also need to take into account how certain actors shape what young people consider to be "rational" actions.

While this and the previous chapter have examined students' ambitions after Year 11, the next chapter will explore young people's long-term educational and career aspirations.

Chapter 8: Young People's Long-Term Educational and Career Aspirations and their Spatial Horizons

As the previous chapters have illustrated, young people's long-term educational and career aspirations play a major role in shaping their transitions from compulsory to post-compulsory education. Therefore, this chapter focuses on young people's long-term ambitions. This chapter will start by outlining what young people wanted to do in the long-term future. It will move on to examine the factors which contribute towards young people's long-term educational and career aspirations. When discussing their imagined futures, it was evident that young people's long-term ambitions were closely entwined with 'spatial horizons' (Ball *et al.* 2000) – where they imagined they would be living in the future. This chapter will therefore explore the relationship between young people's long-term educational and career aspirations, and their spatial horizons.

Young People's Long-Term Educational and Career Aspirations

As discussed in Chapter 7, young people's motivation for wanting to progress into further education and training differed. The main motivation of the Academic Inheritors and Strivers for progressing into post-compulsory education and training was that they considered it as enabling them to achieve their aspirations of going to higher education. Yet, while the Academic Inheritors' aspirations of going to university were concrete and they had relatively high expectations of being able to achieve this ambition, the Academic Strivers' aspirations of going to university were more tentative and they had lower expectations of being able to achieve this goal. In contrast, the Vocational students had either not considered or had rejected higher education as an option for their future. Instead, these students had aspirations of gaining employment and regarded post-compulsory education and training as a means of improving their labour market prospects when they looked for work afterwards.

As noted in Chapter 7, there were clear differences with regards to the social characteristics of these types of students. While all of the Academic Inheritors had either a parent/carer who had

gone to university, all of the Academic Strivers and the majority of the Vocational students (16 out of 21 students) predominantly came from non-higher education backgrounds. Whereas the Academic Inheritors predominantly came from salariat backgrounds (13 out of 15 students); around a half of the Academic Strivers and Vocational students came from working class backgrounds (9 out of 16 of the Academic Strivers and 11 out of 21 of the Vocational students). This suggests that the educational and occupational background of parents/carers has an impact on the long-term educational aspirations of young people.

The next section of this chapter explores the factors which shaped the long-term aspirations and expectations of the Academic Inheritors, Academic Strivers and the Vocational students.

The Long Term Aspirations of the Academic Inheritors

The Academic Inheritors had firm aspirations of going to university in the future. Their aspirations of going to university appeared to be based on cost-benefit analyses, providing support to proponents of Rational Choice Theory such as Goldthorpe (1998). The Academic Inheritors generally associated higher education with financial rewards, believing that going to university would increase their chances of gaining a well-paid job. The Academic Inheritors also considered that going to university and getting a degree was vital in order to gain the types of jobs they were interested in and had ambitions of gaining. The Academic Inheritors predominantly aspired to be employed in salariat jobs - jobs which tend to require higher levels of educational qualifications - such as Barrister, Chemical Engineer, Doctor, Pharmacist and Teacher - (see Table A1.27). Echoing findings from Holdsworth's (2009) study, along with economic factors, the desire to experience university life was another reason why Academic Inheritors wanted to progress into higher education. This is exemplified in the extracts below from interviews with two of the Academic Inheritors, Luke and Peter.

Interviewer: What are your reasons for wanting to go to university?

Luke: Well, first of all to get the degree and the job. But then, there's other aspects to it...like the night life and everything like that... just... it's an experience isn't it,

so...I'd rather go have an experience... be more independent for myself rather than live with my mother and father till I'm 23... I'd rather be more independent for myself... I would.

Luke, Academic Inheritor, Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel (Follow-Up Interview)

Interviewer: What are your reasons for wanting to go to university?

Peter: To get a degree... I think a degree would be... it would help me with my chances of getting a good job later on in the future... better money. I think it would be a very enjoyable experience... a once in a lifetime experience where you can meet new people... learn even if you do a degree in a certain thing and you don't want to do that after the degree...you've learnt a load of new things... interesting. So, I think it would be a really really good experience.

Peter, Academic Inheritor, Cwm Mawr School,

While Peter notes that learning about a particular subject is another factor which influenced his ambition of going to university, it is interesting to note that the Academic Inheritors made little reference to the intrinsic value of learning when discussing their aspirations of progressing into higher education. The Academic Inheritors' perception of the purpose of higher education reflects broader societal trends. As Brown *et al.* (2011: 145) note, the increasing competition for graduate jobs as a result of increasing participation in higher education has resulted in a shift in the way in which students conceive education and learning from inquisitive learning (driven by an interest in knowledge and learning for its own sake) to acquisitive learning (where education is considered as a means of gaining qualifications and credentials which will provide access to well-paid, high skilled jobs).

As noted above, the Academic Inheritors regarded that higher education would enable them to fulfil their aspirations of gaining a salariat job. The Academic Inheritors rationalised their career aspirations, considering that such salariat jobs were relatively well-paid occupations and occupations that they were interested in. For instance, Angharad, an Academic Inheritor from

Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel, discussed how she was interested in becoming a Vet because of her interest in animals. Other Academic Inheritors such as Natalie from Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel (who wanted to become a Solicitor) also referred to the status and prestige associated with these occupations.

Parental educational and occupational background also contributed to the long term educational and career aspirations of the Academic Inheritors. As pointed out earlier, the Academic Inheritors had at least one person within their immediate family who had gone to university and the majority of them came from salariat backgrounds. The parents/carers of the Academic Inheritors held strong aspirations for their children to progress into further and higher education. For instance, when she was interviewed, Mark's mother (a parent/carer of an Academic Inheritor) noted that when she had been discussing with her children about their futures, discussions were focused on higher education:

I've always said to my children... there's never been any question of them not sort of doing the best they can...doing well in their GCSEs... and you know when we talk, we talk about going to university. There's no other route really and they haven't come up with another. If they came up with another alternative which was O.K, then it would be fine. But, there wouldn't be an alternative of Evan saying to me now "Well, actually I don't want to go back to school next week. I want to go and work in Asda". He knows that...well he wouldn't want to do that, but I know... he knows that that wouldn't even be an option.

Mark's Mother, Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel

It was also evident that parents/carers of the Academic Inheritors also had aspirations for their children to gain salariat jobs. For example, in the extract below, Chloe discusses how her father approved of her aspiration of becoming a teacher:

Interviewer: And what do your family think of your plans for the future?

Chloe: They don't really talk about it. Usually, I'm the one who talks about it and then they feed back to me 'cos I'm always like "I want to do this. I want to do that." but... yeah, they're really happy I guess... I think it's 'cos it's [teaching] seen as a professional kind of job. So, they're like "Oh yeah... that would be good" kind of thing. But, they're happy.

Interviewer: Why?

Chloe: It's like a...kind of a well-paid job. I think my Dad...if I said like I wanted to be a hairdresser, he might be like "What?! No.". I don't want to be a hairdresser...just saying. It's [teaching] a well-paid job and I think knowing me as well he thinks it [teaching] would be good for me because of the type of person I am...

Chloe, Academic Inheritor, Cwm Mawr School (Follow-up Interview)

The above quotes from the interview with Chloe and Mark's mother illustrate how progressing into higher education and gaining a salariat job was not only an ambition held by the child, but also a family aspiration, replicating findings from Pugsley's (2004: 86), Power *et al.*'s (2003) and Bathmaker *et al.*'s (2016) studies which have examined the aspirations of young people from middle class backgrounds. As discussed in the previous chapters, both students and parents/carers are involved in boundary work in terms of aspirations, placing boundaries in terms of what educational and labour market trajectories are considered as being acceptable and unacceptable. As illustrated in the interview extracts of Mark's mother and Chloe, certain parents/carers of Academic Inheritors deemed alternative pathways to higher education and gaining a salariat job as being undesirable for their child.

Three of the Academic Inheritors also had older siblings who had participated in higher education. There were also another two of the students, Luke and Peter, who had a parent/carer who had returned to education and was currently at or had recently gone to university. Aware that their parents/carers and/or siblings had participated in higher education shaped their aspirations of going to university.

Interviewer: And when did you decide you wanted to go to sixth form?

Peter: Well, I've seen my brother go to sixth form and I've seen him and he thought it was good... like he went through it all and I thought well he's gone on to do university and do what he wants to do now... so maybe I should do what I want to do like and go through sixth form and work hard and then I'll get where I want to be then.

Peter, Academic Inheritor, Cwm Mawr School

While higher education was considered by the Academic Inheritors as a rational choice in financial and social terms, it is evident in the above extracts that their social background played a large role in influencing their aspirations. Although it is difficult to conclude that the Academic Inheritors' aspirations of going to higher education was a product of deeply embedded dispositions as several parents/carers and siblings of the Academic Inheritors were the first generation to go to university, it was clear that higher education was becoming the norm among families of the Academic Inheritors.

Although their parents/carers may not have been in the particular occupation they aspired to gain, the Academic Inheritors wanted to gain jobs which were similar to their parents'/carers' jobs in terms of aspects such as income, economic security as well as authority and control at work. As noted earlier, the Academic Inheritors were also in contact with individuals who had jobs in their aspired careers. For instance, Luke's uncle was a pharmacist and Karen's neighbour worked as a forensic scientist. Being in contact with such individuals to some extent shaped the career aspirations of the Academic Inheritors.

It appeared that the Academic Inheritors were aware of different educational and career opportunities. Several of the Academic Inheritors also recognised the hierarchy which exists between different higher education institutions, noting that certain universities are considered to be more prestigious than others. This meant that several of the Academic Inheritors expressed an aspiration of going to what they considered to be good universities, with for instance Nia noting that she wanted to go to "*unrhyw un o'r [Prifysgolion] Russell Group* [any of the Russell Group [Universities]]"⁵². While Nia's mother reported that her daughter had

⁵² The Russell Group "represents 24 leading UK universities which are committed to maintaining the very best research, an outstanding teaching and learning experience and unrivalled links with business and the public

gained information about these universities through her own research, she also noted that the fact she was in contact with “people in the periphery who have been to or are familiar with that kind of academic world” may have made Nia aware of these universities, illustrating how possession of social capital (Bourdieu 1986/1997) may provide us with access to individuals who can provide us with valuable information and advice related to our future.

There was also a sense that the Academic Inheritors were aware of what was required of them in order to be able to study certain courses/subjects in university and to be able to pursue their aspired careers. For instance, there was awareness among the Academic Inheritors of what subjects that they had to take in further education in order to be able to study their aspired university course. For instance, Luke, an Academic Inheritor from Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel, understood that he had to take Chemistry and Biology at A Level to be able to study Pharmacy in university. When he was interviewed, Luke discussed how his mother (who had gone to university) took an active role and helped him decide which subjects to choose in sixth form by providing him with advice and guiding him through certain websites in order to gain information:

Interviewer: What things did she [your mother] say [regarding what subjects to study in sixth form] then?

Luke: She was just telling me what I enjoyed the most... what she thought. She was telling me to think “Why should I take out [certain subjects]? How was it going to help me in the future?” and stuff like that... and that’s what we considered and we went on the internet and had a look at all these different websites and it just helped a lot.

Luke, Academic Inheritor, Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel (Follow-up Interview)

It is evident how Luke’s mother’s possession of cultural capital in the form of her familiarity with the education system enabled Luke to gain valuable and accurate information which would

sector”, according to its website (see Russell Group 2017). Russell Group universities are considered to be prestigious universities, with these universities tending to perform relatively well in league tables (Russell Group 2016).

help him to make informed decisions regarding his future.

The Long Term Aspirations of the Academic Strivers

Similar to the Academic Inheritors, the Academic Strivers had ambitions of going to university in the future. Like the Academic Inheritors, the Academic Strivers' aspirations of going to university appeared to be based on cost-benefit analyses. In general, they felt that going to university would provide them with greater economic rewards and would increase their chances of gaining the types of jobs they wanted to gain in the future. Like the Academic Inheritors, the Academic Strivers generally aspired to gain salariat jobs such as Architect, Chiropodist, Geneticist and Lawyer (see Table A1.28). In the extract below, Amy refers to the economic advantages of higher education when discussing her aspirations of going to university.

Cyfwelydd: Beth yw dy rhesymau 'di dros eisiau mynd i brifysgol yn hytrach na chwilio am waith ar ôl chweched dosbarth?

Amy: Mewn y long term, mae'n gwell achos fi'n gwybod ti'n cael mwy o arian a stuff a hefyd fel fi'n gweud... y stwff fi eisiau gwneud [yn nhermau cyflogaeth]... fi'n gorfod cael gradd yn y lle cyntaf. So, fi'n gorfod mynd i brifysgol really.

Interviewer: What are your reasons for wanting to go to university instead of looking for work after sixth form?

Amy: In the long term, it's better because I know you get more money and stuff and also as I said... the stuff I want to do [in terms of employment]... I need to have a degree in the first place. So, I have to go to university really.

Amy, Academic Striver, Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel (Follow-Up Interview)

In contrast to the Academic Inheritors, the Academic Strivers came from families with no history of higher education participation, with nine out of fifteen of them coming from working

class backgrounds. Despite this, based on students' accounts, the parents/carers of the Academic Strivers also had aspirations for their child to progress into university and to gain a salariat job. On the one hand, working class parents'/carers' aspirations for their child appeared to be based on cost-benefit evaluations as they associated higher education with financial rewards and social mobility. Furthermore, working class parents'/carers' ambitions for their child to progress into further and higher education were also shaped by their own experiences of school and the labour market, as exemplified by the quotes from Rebecca and Jo:

Interviewer: How do you know that your mother wouldn't let you leave [school]?

Rebecca: Because she left and she regretted it and she didn't do any sort of education after Year 11 and she regretted it... because she can't really do anything now. She wanted me to stay and do my A Levels.

Rebecca, Academic Striver, Cwm Mawr School (Follow-up Interview)

Cyfwelydd: A beth ydi dy rheswm di dros eisiau mynd i brifysgol yn hytrach 'na chwilio am waith ar ôl chweched dosbarth?

Jo: Achos roedd fy mam wedi gadael yr ysgol yn eitha' gynnar a ma' hi hefyd...trwy bywyd hi yn dweud pa mor... doedd hi ddim... os oedd hi'n gallu mynd nôl, bydd hi'n newid hynna [ei dewis hi i adael ysgol yn eitha' gynnar] achos bydde hi wedi cael addysg fwy gwell. A dyna'r peth... dwi ddim eisiau... dwi isio mynd yn bell. Ie - dwi isio mynd yn eitha' bell yn bywyd fi... so dyna pam.

Interviewer: And what is your reason for wanting to go to university rather than looking for work after sixth form?

Jo: Because my mum left school very early and she also...throughout her life has said how much...she didn't...if she could go back, she would change that [her decision to leave school very early] because she would have had more of a better education. And

that's the thing... I don't want to...I want to go far. Yes - I want to go very far in my life... so that's why.

Jo, Academic Striver, Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel (Follow-up Interview)

It is evident in the above extracts that Rebecca and Jo are aware of the sense of regret that their mothers feel for leaving school before the end of compulsory education because it has restricted their employment prospects. It appears that this sense of regret has motivated the mothers of these participants to discourage their daughters from following the same educational and career pathways as them. While the Academic Strivers' educational ambitions do challenge the notion that our aspirations are the product of our habitus as these students wanted to pursue educational and career pathways which were different to their parents'/carers' career and educational trajectories, it is still important for us to acknowledge how the social background of the Academic Strivers still played a part in forming their aspirations. As Lehmann (2016: 23) notes of working class students, "rather than signalling a break from their class background, the[ir] decision to study at university... [is] based on a very strong reflection of it". Reflecting on their parents'/carers' educational and labour market trajectories and their experience of work, some of the Academic Strivers in this study considered that higher education would provide them with a means of becoming upwardly mobile as it would open up better employment opportunities in financial and social terms compared to their parents'/carers' occupations.

Although their parents/carers had not participated in higher education and most of their parents/carers were in working class jobs, some of the Academic Strivers were in close contact with people who had gone to university and who were in salariat jobs such as relatives and friends of the family. Being in contact with people who had participated in higher education and were also in salariat jobs had influenced the Academic Strivers' aspiration of going to university.

Interviewer: And how does it make you feel that your cousin has gone to university?

Anthony: It just makes me want to be like him, I guess...follow his footsteps and get what I want out of it.

Anthony, Academic Striver, Cwm Mawr School

Interviewer: And how does this make you feel that other people have gone to university?

Emily: It's something I've always wanted to do... I like to try new experiences and meet people, so, it's something I've wanted to do, so I think I would do it. With them telling me it's good as well, I think I definitely want to try and get in.

Emily, Academic Striver, Cwm Mawr School

Despite sharing the same aspirations, it appeared that the Academic Inheritors were more informed about educational and career opportunities compared to the Academic Strivers. While some of the Academic Inheritors were aware of what was required of them in order to be able to achieve their long-term ambitions, some of the Academic Strivers seemed to be perplexed with regards to what they had to do in order to achieve and fulfil their educational and career aspirations. For instance, Rebecca admitted that she found the process of applying to go to university difficult to understand:

Interviewer: What about going to university? Do you know what you will have to get in order go to university?

Rebecca: I've had a look. It's hard for me to understand. It's all UCAS points and all stuff like that and I just... I don't understand it. I don't know.

Rebecca, Academic Striver, Cwm Mawr School (Follow-up Interview)

Although we need to acknowledge that Rebecca was in Year 12 (a year prior to when she would start to apply for different universities) when she was interviewed, there are clear differences in terms of how Academic Strivers such as Rebecca and Academic Inheritors such as Luke and Nia (see above) understand the higher education system. We could argue that the lack of close

contact with individuals who have gone to higher education or in Bourdieu's (1986/1997) terms, lack of social capital, may explain the puzzlement that Academic Strivers such as Rebecca had about applying for different universities.

Furthermore, there were differences in terms of the ways in which the Academic Inheritors and Strivers perceived their future. While the Academic Inheritors' aspirations of going to higher education were firm and concrete, the Academic Strivers generally appeared to be ambivalent about the prospect of going to higher education. Academic Strivers such as Tim from Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel expressed concerns when they discussed the possibility of going to higher education:

***Cyfweilydd:** Sut wyt ti'n teimlo am hyn... dy fod ti'n un o'r rhai cyntaf [yn dy deulu di] i fynd i chweched dosbarth ac o bosib yn un o'r cyntaf i fynd i brifysgol?*

***Tim:** ...Wel... dwi yn poeni mewn ffordd oherwydd mae fy teulu fi wedi bod yn llwyddianus heb cael y cyfleusterau prifysgol a dwi'n ofni mynd i prifysgol a cael fy hun mewn llawer o debt a wedyn ddim cael swydd i dod mas gyda neu cael swydd neu gweithio mewn swydd sydd yn mynd nowhere i fod yn onest gyda chi. Dwi'n ofni amdano arian i fod yn onest... ariannu'r brifysgol ac be sydd yn digwydd os dwi'n cymryd cwrs a wedyn mynd mewn am cwrs a dwi ddim yn hoffi fe. Wedyn, bydd angen symud i cwrs arall a wedyn mae arian yn dod lan. Fi yn poeni i fod yn onest gyda chi.*

Interviewer: How do you feel about this...that you are one of the first [in your family] to go to sixth form and possibly one of the first to go to university?

Tim: ...Well... I do worry in a way because my family have been successful without having the university qualifications and I do worry about going to University and getting myself into a lot of debt and not having a job to get out of or getting a job or working in a job that goes nowhere to be honest with you. I fear about money to be honest... funding the university and what will happen if I take a course and then go into a course and I don't like it. Then, there would be a need to move to another course and then the money goes up. I do worry to be honest with you.

Tim, Academic Striver, Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel (Follow-up Interview)

As we can see in the above extract, Tim is worried about the debt that he would incur if he was to go to university. He is also concerned that going to university would be worthless as he would end up in “a lot of debt and not having a job to get out of”. Tim’s response is to a certain extent rational and is supported by statistics, with for example statistics from the BIS (2016c: 13) highlighting that the percentage of graduates between 21 and 30 years old in highly skilled employment has decreased over the last decade. Factors such as the recent recession (where high skilled employment decreased in general during this period) and increase in the number of graduates (which has increased the competition for highly skilled jobs) has contributed to the decline in the proportion of graduates in highly skilled employment.

Tim also refers to his parents’ educational and career trajectories. Based on Tim’s account, neither of his parents went to university and it appeared that there was little history of higher education among his family. Yet, Tim notes that his “family have been successful without having the university qualifications”. For instance, Tim’s father was a sales manager for an international company. Tim also suggested that his parents were financially well off, by noting that “*dwi’n ffodus oherwydd mae rhieni fi â arian i... cadw fi yn yr ysgol a prynu fi popeth dwi angen ac eisiau* [I’m fortunate because my parents have money to...keep me in school and buy me everything that I need and want]”. In the extract above, it is clear that Tim has thought about the financial costs and financial rewards of either going to university or not going to university, providing support to both Bourdieu and Rational Choice Theorists such as Breen and Goldthorpe (1997) who recognise that possession of economic capital and financial considerations impact on young people’s aspirations. There is also evidence in Tim’s extract to provide some support to Bourdieu’s concept of habitus and the notion that our aspirations are formed based on our observations of the actions of people within our social circles such as family members and neighbours. It also needs to be taken into account that rational choice theorists such as Breen and Goldthorpe (1997) also recognise that other social actors also shape what we consider to be “rational” choices.

The Career Aspirations of Female and Male Academic Inheritors and Strivers

While the sample of the study is relatively small, it is interesting to note that certain Academic Inheritors and Strivers, particularly the females, were aspiring to gain occupations which were once gender-specific. For instance, similar to the female participants in Archer *et al.* (2012)'s research, several of the female Academic students in this study noted that they wanted to gain medicine-based occupations such as Doctor (one female Academic Inheritor) Pathologist (one female Academic Striver), and Geneticist (one female Academic Striver) as well as occupations within the legal profession such as Lawyer/Solicitor (two female Academic Inheritors and one female Academic Striver) (see Tables A1.27 and A1.28). In the past, these types of occupations were male-dominated as it was assumed that these occupations required “masculine” traits such as scientific expertise, numeric abilities, abstract reasoning and detachment (Witz 1990; Davies 1996).

Despite this, there were differences in the number of male and female Academic Strivers and Inheritors who aspired to gain certain professional occupations. For instance, whereas three of the female Academic students in this study aspired to pursue nursing related careers, none of the male Academic students in this study reported that they wanted to pursue such careers (see Tables A1.27 and A1.28). Furthermore, substantially higher numbers of female Academic students in this study wanted to become teachers (three female Academic Inheritors and four of female Academic Strivers), particularly at primary school level compared to one of the male Academic students. Moreover, while the male Academic students aspired to gain particular scientific-related occupations such as Chemical Engineer (one male Academic Inheritor) and Innovator (one male Academic Inheritor) as well as information technology based occupations such as Games Designer (one male Academic Striver), none of the female Academic students expressed an aspiration to gain such careers.

To a certain extent, the career aspirations of the male and female Academic Inheritors and Strivers mirror wider patterns with regards to the types of professional jobs that men and women enter today. In the last few decades, women have increased their representation in certain professional occupations (see Crompton 2002). For instance, Parken *et al.* (2014: 43-

44) recently discovered that there was a gender balance in professional occupations such as those within the medical profession e.g. medical practitioners, pharmacist, opticians and dentists, and the legal profession e.g. solicitors, lawyers and judges in Wales. A range of factors including changing attitudes towards gender and employment; the increasing educational performance of females and the removal of barriers which excluded women from certain types of professional occupations have contributed towards women making inroads in certain professional occupations (Rees 1999; Crompton 2002). Despite this, there remains horizontal gender segregation in certain professional occupations. For instance, more “people centred” professionals occupations such as primary and nursery education teachers, nurses as well as other jobs such as social workers are occupied overwhelmingly by women in Wales, which suggests that men have made little movement into traditionally female professional occupations (Parken *et al.* 2014: 44). On the other hand, overwhelmingly men as opposed to women are in scientific-based professional occupations such as chemists, physicists and IT professionals (Parken *et al.* 2014: 43-44). While there has been some progress with regards to gender and access to certain types of professional occupations, these statistics as well as the career aspirations of the male and female Academic students in this study illustrate that certain professional occupations are still gender specific.

As noted above, the career aspirations of the male and female Academic Inheritors and Strivers are to a certain extent the product of cost-benefit analysis as they considered the occupations that they wanted to gain in the future to be well paid and interesting. However, we also need to take into account how societal messages regarding ‘appropriate’ types of work for men and women may play a role in directing students towards professional occupations which are associated with their particular gender. In particular, the Academic Inheritors knew people such as family members, neighbours and friends who worked in the particular occupations that they aspired to gain. Hearing these individuals’ employment experiences influenced these students’ ambitions of gaining these particular occupations. It is interesting to note that when discussing people they knew in particular occupations, students referred to individuals of a particular gender. For instance, whereas Academic Inheritors and Strivers who aspired to gain scientific related occupations such as Chemical Engineer and information technology based occupations such as Games Designer often referred to men who were employed in such occupations; Academic Inheritors and Strivers aspiring to gain “people centred” occupations such as teachers and nurses often referred to women who were employed in such occupations.

While the Academic Inheritors and Strivers did not discuss this in the interviews, it needs to be acknowledged that the fact that certain professional occupations are still dominated by men and other professional occupation are still dominated by women may influence young people to consider that there are still certain jobs which are considered “appropriate” for men and certain jobs which are considered “appropriate” for women. This provides support to Bourdieu’s notion of habitus and to a certain extent the assertions of Rational Choice Theorists such as Breen and Goldthorpe (1997) as it illustrates how cultural norms and values still have an influence on the career aspirations of young men and women.

Long Term Educational and Career Aspirations of the Vocational students

With regards to the long-term ambitions of the Vocational students, these students were considering looking for work after they finished their further education course as opposed to going to university. In general, the Vocational students had either not considered or had dismissed higher education as a possible option in the future. The Vocational students’ dismissal of higher education was based on cost-benefit analyses to some extent. As discussed in Chapter 7, based on their performance in previous exams and assessments, the Vocational students generally considered that they were not performing as well compared to other students. While the Vocational students were generally hopeful that they would progress into some form of education and training after Year 11, some of the Vocational students such as Rhiannon considered higher education was out of their reach as they felt that they would not be able to achieve the grades needed to go to university.

Even though my Dad would like me to go to university, I just don’t feel like it would be a thing for me. I would do it, but I don’t doubt myself... but I don’t feel I could get the highest grades like Bs and As to actually get into university. I could try my best, but I don’t think... personally, I don’t think I’m capable of doing that.

Rhiannon, Vocational Student, Cwm Mawr School

Despite her father wanting her to go to university, Rhiannon's perception of her abilities which were based on her educational performance made her consider higher education as an unrealistic possibility in the future. This provides some support to the assertion of rational choice theorists such as Breen and Goldthorpe (1997) that individuals' education self-concept and how they perceive their chances of success if they pursue certain educational pathways contribute to the way in which young people perceive their future.

Furthermore, Vocational students such as Harry and James, who came from non-higher education backgrounds, had rejected higher education as an option in the future because they considered it to be a financial risk:

Interviewer: And you were saying that you wouldn't like to go to university? Is there a reason?

Harry: Well, my father's friend he went there. He's overqualified and he's in loads of debt. But, I just want to go to the RAF.

Harry, Vocational Student, Cwm Mawr School

Interviewer: Do you know if some of your friends want to go to university?

James: I think all of them want to go there. I just don't think anyone really can afford it.

James, Vocational Student, Cwm Mawr School

As noted earlier, these students' ambivalence regarding higher education are based on cost-benefit analyses of future options. Replicating findings from previous studies such as Archer and Hutchings (2000), working class students in this study appeared to be more financially risk averse compared to students from salariat and intermediate backgrounds because of their families' financial position and the relatively low levels of economic capital that their parents/carers possessed. Certain Vocational students such as James and Harry considered that

the financial costs of going to university outweighed the benefits of higher education participation. For instance, Harry refers to his father's friend being "overqualified and full of debt". Similar to Tim, these Vocational students were also aware that the graduate labour market is now saturated due to the expansion in higher education.

Instead, the Vocational students aspired towards gaining mainly intermediate and working class occupations such as Carpenter, Builder, Plumber, Carer, Nursery Assistant and Hairdresser after further education and training (see Tables A1.29). Vocational students' aspiration of gaining these types of jobs appeared to be based on evaluations of past experiences such as their experience of part time jobs and work experiences. Like the Academic students, the Vocational students considered these types of jobs to be interesting and well paid. Vocational students were also directed towards these types of jobs by what they had heard from relatives, friends and other people within their social networks who were also in these types of jobs.

Interviewer: Is there a reason why you'd like to do firstly hairdressing?

Nicola: Erm... I don't know. I've always been like... my mother's always bought me the doll sets with the hair coming off them. She's always bought me them and I've always been doing hair and that. I've just always liked it since I was little and my mother used to do hairdressing so I used to always like her plating my hair and do stuff with my hair. I've just always liked it.

Nicola, Vocational Student, Cwm Mawr School

Interviewer: What led you to think about doing Carpentry [after Year 11]?

Darren: Because my grandcha [grandfather] was a carpenter and like he was good at it. And I found like I would be good at it if I tried and I'd done well at it.

Darren, Vocational Student, Cwm Mawr School

Furthermore, the long term aspirations of parents/carers of certain Vocational students differed to that of the parents/carers of the Academic students, particularly the Academic Inheritors. As illustrated in Chapter 6, the parents of Vocational students were interested in their child's education and encouraged them to progress into post-compulsory training and education considering that this would improve their chances of gaining a 'good job', according to their children. However, few of the Vocational students reported that their parents/carers had aspirations for them to go to university. Yet, this does not necessarily mean that parents/carers of Vocational students did not have aspirations for their child to go to university. Despite this, it is interesting to note that several of the Vocational students discussed how their parents/carers had aspirations for them to gain a job in the future as opposed to going to university. For example, in the extract below, Chris discusses how his mother and his stepfather, who ran a petrol station, along with his father, a bricklayer, wanted him to become a mechanic in the future in order for him to be able to continue their family business.

Interviewer: What would your parents and your stepfather like you to do after you finish Year 11?

Chris: Well... they wanted me to become a mechanic because it can help the business and stuff and they can extend [their business] but I don't really want to be a mechanic, so that idea has been a bit off so... because I want to be a plumber.

Interviewer: And how does you stepfather and your mother feel that you want to become a plumber rather than a mechanic?

Chris: Fine. They support me with the idea. They were just... when I wanted to become a mechanic ...they were just suggesting an idea for me...something that I could do 'cos it's there for me. But, I've gone my own way now.

Chris, Vocational Student, Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel

Although Chris did not want to fulfil his parents' wishes of becoming a mechanic, his parents still supported his aspirations of becoming a plumber. Chris's discussion of his parents' aspirations contrasts with the aspirations of the parents/carers of Academic Inheritors in particular (who held firm aspirations for their children to progress into higher education),

illustrating how the parents of young people may place different boundaries in terms of the aspirations that they have for their children.

The Career Aspirations of the Male and Female Vocational Students

While the size of the sample of this study needs to be taken into account, there were differences in terms of the types of jobs that male Vocational students and female Vocational students aspired to gain in the future. The gender imbalance appeared to be far more striking and visible among the Vocational students as opposed to the Academic students. For instance, some of the most common intermediate and working class occupations that the male Vocational students aspired to gain was Builder (n=3) and Plumber (N=3) (see Table A1.29). In contrast, none of the female Vocational students in this study expressed an aspiration of gaining these types of jobs. Whereas some of the female Vocational students aspired to gain jobs such as nursery assistant (N=4) and hairdresser (N=2), none of the male Vocational students reported that they wanted to gain these occupations (see Table A1.29). This reflects the gender imbalance within sectors such as skilled trades with men overwhelmingly bricklayers, roofers, plumbers and carpenter as well as personal services with women overwhelmingly hairdressers, educational assistants and child-minders (Parken *et al.* 2014: 45-6).

Similar to the Academic Inheritors and Strivers, the career aspirations of the male and female Vocational students are to a certain extent based on cost-benefit analyses because they wanted to pursue occupations that they considered would meet their interests and would be well-paid. At the same time, societal messages regarding the types of jobs which are “suitable” for men and for women may have also influenced the career ambitions of the Vocational students. The gender segregation which still exists in sectors such as skilled trades and personal services may provide some explanation for the differences in the types of careers that the male and female Vocational students wanted to pursue. When discussing people they knew in particular occupations, Vocational students also referred to individuals of a particular gender. For example, while the Vocational students who aspired to gain occupations in skilled trades such as carpenter (see Darren’s extract above), plumber and builder often referred to men who were

employed in such occupations; the Vocational students who aspired to gain occupations within the personal services such as hairdressers (see Nicola's extract above), nursery assistant and carers often referred to women employed in such occupations. Although the Vocational students did not allude to this, it needs to be recognised that the fact that gender differences are still prevalent in certain intermediate and working class occupations may encourage or discourage young men and women to pursue certain careers.

Furthermore, social assumptions regarding what are traditionally considered to be 'masculine' and 'feminine' traits also to some extent influenced the Vocational students' career aspirations. For instance, in the extract below, Llyr, a Vocational student from Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel, who had an ambition of becoming a builder, discusses how he and most of his friends wanted to gain a job which involves "gwaith dwylo [manual work]" rather than "gwaith ysgrifenedig [written work]" in the future.

***Cyfweilydd:** Wyt ti'n gwybod beth mae dy ffrindiau eisiau gwneud ar ôl gorffen blwyddyn 11?*

***Llyr:** Dwi'n gwybod beth mae rhai o nhw eisiau gwneud ac mae nhw'n wahanol iawn i beth dwi eisiau gwneud weithiau. Mae un o fy ffrind eisiau gweithio mewn vets. Mae un o fy ffrind eisiau wneud adeiladu... adeiladu taioedd fel fi, fy hyn, a 'falla rhai pobl eraill eisiau gwneud gwaith dwylo efallai... yn gwneud fel adeiladu a pethau. Dwi'm yn credu bod lot o pobl eisiau wneud gwaith ysgrifennu...o fy ffrindiau.*

***Cyfweilydd:** Pam wyt ti'n meddwl dydi rhai o dy ffrindiau chdi ddim eisiau gwneud gwaith ysgrifennu?*

***Llyr:** Achos mae nhw'n ffeindio fe'n eitha' boring weithiau a fel dwi'n ffeindio fo eithaf boring weithiau hefyd. So, fi'n hoffi mynd mas 'na a gwneud gwaith dwylo.*

Interviewer: Do you know what your friends want to do after finishing Year 11?

Llyr: I know what some of them want to do and they're very different to what I want to do sometimes. One of my friends wants to work in a vets. One of my friends wants to do construction... building houses like me, myself, and maybe other people want to

do manual work maybe...doing like building and stuff. I don't believe that a lot of my friends want to do written work...of my friends.

Interviewer: Why do you think that some of your friends don't want to do written work?

Llyr: Because they find it very boring sometimes and like I find it very boring sometimes as well. So, I like to go out there and do manual work.

Llyr, Vocational Student, Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel

The above extract suggests that peers play a role in shaping young people's career aspirations. In the extract above, Llyr wants to pursue a career which is similar to the career that most of his friends want to pursue. Furthermore, Llyr expresses a preference towards occupations which involve "manual work" rather than "written work". To a certain degree, Llyr's preference is based on cost-benefit analyses of different options because based on his experiences, he considers written work to be "very boring". At the same time, the way in which Llyr discusses written work and manual work is similar to the way in which the young men in Willis' study (1977) demarcated mental and manual labour. While the young men in Willis' (1977) study considered mental labour to be effeminate, they aspired to gain occupations which involved manual labour as it would enable them to emulate traditional masculine traits such as being strong, tough and active. It is also worth noting that when discussing why they wanted to pursue particular careers, some of the female Vocational students referred to the fact that these jobs would enable them to carry out activities which are traditionally associated with femininity (see Jackson and Scott 2002) such as "working with kids" (Nicola, Cwm Mawr School) and "caring [for other people]" (Rhiannon, Cwm Mawr School). While participants in this study such as Llyr, Nicola and Rhiannon did not associate certain traits with traditional conceptions of masculinity and femininity, research (Sharpe 1994, McDowell 2003, Archer *et al.* 2013 and Ward 2014) has shown that traditional, cultural messages surrounding masculinity and femininity still have an impact on the career aspirations of young men and women.

Staying Local or Moving Away: Young People’s “Spatial Horizons”

In terms of young people’s spatial horizons, most of the Academic Students (14 out of the 15 Academic Inheritors and 14 out of the 16 Academic Strivers) envisaged that they may move away from the Valleys in the future replicating findings from Evans’s (2016b) recent study which explored the spatial aspirations of young people from the Rhondda Valley (situated in the South Wales Valleys). Fewer Vocational students (11 out of 21 students) considered that they would migrate from the Valleys in the future.

Along with providing them with opportunities to explore new places, meet new people and gain new experiences, young people in this study considered that moving away from the Valleys would enable them to achieve their long-term aspirations. For the Academic Inheritors and Strivers, their spatial horizons were influenced by their aspirations of going to university. While there are a number of higher education institutions situated within reasonable travelling distance from the South Wales Valleys, most of the Academic Inheritors (13 out of 15 students) and some of the Academic Strivers (5 out of 16 students) were considering studying in universities which were a substantial distance from the South Wales Valleys⁵³. Some of the universities that were deemed to be ‘good universities’ by the Academic Inheritors in particular were far from the South Wales Valleys meaning that they would have to move away from the area in order to be able to attend these universities.

Young people’s career aspirations also shaped their spatial horizons. As illustrated in Chapter 6, young people were aware of the nature of the local labour market and considered that employment opportunities were scarce in the area. They were also aware of the types of jobs that were available in the local area and were aware of the relatively low number of highly skilled, highly paid jobs in the South Wales Valleys as highlighted in Chapter 4. Consequently,

⁵³ These numbers are slightly different to the number of students who considered that they may migrate from the Valleys in the future because some students wanted to study in a university which was close to the Valleys but were thinking of moving away from the Valleys after university.

there was a tendency for young people, particularly the Academic Inheritors and Strivers, to feel that they had to leave and move to more economically prosperous areas.

Interviewer: What are your reasons for wanting to go away?

Peter: Not sure...to live in a sort of nicer environment... I don't know if that would be the right word...more job opportunities elsewhere. I don't think the local town provides a lot of job opportunities.

Peter, Academic Inheritor, Cwm Mawr School (Follow-up Interview)

Cyfwelydd: Wyt ti'n gallu gweld dy hun yn aros yn yr ardal leol yn y dyfodol?

Alice: Na. Mae rhieni fi... Mam fi eisiau fi, ond fi eisiau fel pethau mwy na hynna. Mae'r ardal leol ddim yn cynnig llawer i unrhyw un, so fi eisiau symud i dinas neu dwi ddim yn gwybod...jysd ddim aros yn yr ardal leol.

Interviewer: Can you see yourself living in the local area in the future?

Alice: No. My parents...my mother wants me, but I want like bigger things than that. The local area does not offer a lot to anybody, so I want to move to a city or I don't know...just don't want to stay in the local area.

Alice, Academic Inheritor, Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel

Similar to participants in other studies (Jones 1999; Jamieson 2000 and Evans 2016b), young people in this study strongly adhered to the notion that 'to get on you get out' and considered that they would find better educational and employment opportunities elsewhere.

Yet, not all of the young people in the study had a desire to move away from the local area. Higher numbers of the Vocational students (14 out of 21 students) compared to the Academic Inheritors (2 out of 15 of students) and the Academic Strivers (5 out of 16 students) envisaged

or wanted to stay in the local area in the future⁵⁴. Young people's long-term aspirations provide some explanation for the differences in the number of Academic Inheritors, Academic Strivers and Vocational students who expressed a preference to stay in the local area. Vocational students were more likely to consider that they would be able to gain the jobs that they wanted to gain in the local area.

There were also some Academic students who expressed a preference of studying in a local university. It is interesting to note that slightly more of the Academic Inheritors (13 out of 15 students) than the Academic Strivers (5 out of 16 students) aspired to go to a university which was a substantial distance from the Valleys. Costs of participating in higher education constrained what some of the Academic Strivers, particularly those from working class backgrounds such as Rebecca, considered as universities that were financially feasible.

Interviewer: And have you thought about which sort of universities you would like to go to or where you would like to study?

Rebecca: I don't want to go... I think... I don't want to go too far... I think I'll end up staying quite close. I don't know. I haven't thought much.... I have thought about it, but like I have no ideas. But, I don't think I'll end up going like far away.

Interviewer: Is there a reason why you don't think you'll go far away?

Rebecca: 'Cos I don't want to live there and then have like loads of debt to pay, so I'd rather just sort of live at home and travel.

Interviewer: So, that's quite interesting... so are you worried about sort of the debt?

Rebecca: Yeah... 'cos I think one of my uncles went to university...he ended up staying there and like he's still paying off everything and I think it just would be a waste. I don't think there's a need for me to go and stay there.

Rebecca, Academic Striver, Cwm Mawr School (Follow-up Interview)

⁵⁴ It must be acknowledged that certain students envisaged that they would have to move away from the Valleys in the future, but at the same time expressed a desire to stay in the Valleys.

In the above extract, Rebecca considered that it would be better for her to stay at home and to travel to university rather than move away because she was concerned about the costs associated with going to university.

Students' spatial aspirations were not only influenced by their educational and career aspirations but also shaped by young people's emotional ties and attachment to place. As noted in Chapter 4, some of the communities of the South Wales Valleys remain close-knit and solidaristic (see Adamson and Jones 2004). Participants in this study also felt high levels of community association, with the majority of them (33 out of 52 students) noting that either their relatives lived close by, that they "get along" (Nicole, Vocational Student, Cwm Mawr School) with their neighbours, that "everyone knows each other" (Louise, Academic Striver, Cwm Mawr School) or that there was "quite a close community" (Grace, Academic Inheritor, Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel) where they lived. Furthermore, all of the participants apart from Lucy from Cwm Mawr School had lived in the area all of their lives, reflecting the stable nature of the communities of the South Wales Valleys.

For some of the young people who felt that they would move away in the future, leaving the Valleys was not expressed as a desire but as something that they felt that they needed to do in order to fulfil their long-term aspirations. Due to their close bonds to family members, friends and other members of their communities, these students were concerned over the prospects of leaving the Valleys. Several of the students expected that they would find it difficult to move away from the area in the future because they would miss the close contact with family members and friends.

Interviewer: Do you see yourself living around the local town in the future?

Nicola: I don't know. I do want to and I don't. I don't know. It's like. I don't know.

Interviewer: Why would you like to stay? You said you wanted to stay in the local area in the future?

Nicola: Well, my Nan lives next door to me. My auntie lives up above me. So, like all of us are really living together... like by each other. So, I don't know. I'd like to live

near them, but, then on the other hand. I don't know. It depends like where I work.

Interviewer: And how would you feel if you were to move away in the future?

Nicola: If it's about a job and it's like you would have to move to like do that job and it was like a really good job, then I think you would have to move. But, then in other ways, then I'd want to stay by my family. But, then, on the other hand then if it's like a really good job, and it's not that far away, but you would have to move there, then I think you would have to [move], wouldn't you.

Nicola, Vocational Student, Cwm Mawr School

Like the young people from the Rhondda Valley that Evans (2016b) interviewed as part of her research, it is evident that Nicola's aspirations are conflicted. While participants like Nicola acknowledged that they had to leave the area to achieve their long-term ambitions, they also had a desire to stay in the area and stay close to family members and friends.

Strong ties with family members and other people within their neighbourhoods had such an impact on some of the young people in this research that it had led them to visualise their futures in their local area as opposed to elsewhere. For instance, some of the Academic Inheritors and Strivers wanted to attend a local university as it would mean that they would be able to have close contact with family members and friends as well as being able to stay in their locality. While the Vocational students generally felt that they would be able to achieve their career aspirations in the local area, it was also evident among some of these young people that their strong relationships with people from their neighbourhood had deterred them from wanting to leave the Valleys in the future. Such students included Emily, an Academic Striver and Craig, a Vocational student:

Interviewer: And you sort of talked about university... so, do you know which university you would like to go?

Emily: I think Cardiff probably because it's closer to home, so... I might get quite homesick, so I think... I probably would live in university, but, at the same time I would

like to be quite close to home if anything went wrong or something like that. I think I'd prefer that.

Interviewer: Is there any other reason why you'd like to be close to home?

Emily: I think just because...at least I know that my family and my friends are only like halfway down the road like. So, I think if I went like London or something, I don't think I would like that because I think I'm out of my comfort zone then. I just don't know where I'm going or what I'm doing. I just think I'd much prefer to stay in Cardiff or something like that.

Emily, Academic Striver, Cwm Mawr School

Interviewer: Why do you see yourself living in the area in the future?

Craig: 'Cos like if I moved down to Cardiff, I don't know anyone there that well and it will take some time to get used to the streets and all of that and while I'm in my local town, I know everyone there. I know where to go. I know these streets.

Craig, Vocational Student, Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel

These students' aspirations of wanting to live and stay in the local area in the future are to a certain degree based on cost-benefit analyses. Staying in the local area provides these students with social benefits as they are able to maintain close contact with family members and friends. At the same time, we could argue that deeply embedded dispositions (*habitus*) may have also shaped Emily's and Craig's desire to stay in the local area. As noted earlier, the communities of the South Wales Valleys remain to be stable, with many of the inhabitants of the Valleys having lived in the area for a long time. Observing the practices of "people like me" as well as "people around here" (Allen and Hollingsworth 2013: 501) may have contributed towards Emily's and Craig's aspiration of staying in the local area. Furthermore, Emily's description of being outside of her comfort zone by moving away and Craig's discussion of his familiarity of the local area exposes the relationship between *habitus* and *field*. As Sandercock (2005: 222 quoted by Allen and Hollingsworth 2013: 501) notes, there are certain fields "which one feels 'at home', where we experience both a positive sense of belonging, as well as knowing where we belong, in the social order". The prospect of entering the unknown by leaving the Valleys deterred these students from wanting to move away from the area.

Strong attachment towards the local area was another reason why some of the young people in this study such as Nathan and Llyr, two Vocational students, wanted to stay in the local area in the future.

Cyfwelydd: Wyt ti wedi ystyried symud o'r ardal o gwbl?

Llyr: Nac ydw.

Cyfwelydd: Pam ddim?

Llyr: Dwi ddim eisiau mynd i fel... i rhywle arall fel gwlad arall - dwi ddim yn credu. Dwi eisiau aros. Dwi yn achos dwi'n hoffiawn o gartref achos dwi'n gweld fy mhentref fel cartref.

Interviewer: Have you considered moving from the area at all?

Llyr: No.

Interviewer: Why not?

Llyr: I don't want to go to like...to somewhere else like another country - I don't think. I want to stay. I do because I am very fond of home because I see my village as my home.

Llyr, Vocational Student, Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel

Interviewer: Thinking about the sort of long-term future, where do you see yourself living in the future?

Nathan: Where I'm living now. I'll most probably be living in my hometown.

Interviewer: Is there a reason....what are your reasons for thinking that you will be in your hometown?

Nathan: Because I don't think I wanna move out of my hometown. I like the town. So I'd like to still be living there in 10 years.

Nathan, Vocational Student, Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel

Both of these interview extracts, particularly Llyr's assertion that he considers his village to be his "home", illustrates how emotional ties to the local area also play a part in shaping young people's preference towards staying in the local area. In her recent study, Evans (2016b) found that strong attachment to the local area and to the wider community was a distinctive feature

associated with the Rhondda Valley (located in the South Wales Valleys). In contrast to Evans's (2016b) participants from the Rhondda Valley, young people from Newport expressed a desire to stay in their local area because they wanted to remain close to their family as opposed to the wider locale.

As one of the aims of this study is to explore to what extent school type and social background have an impact on young people's aspirations (see RQ2 and RQ4 in Chapter 1), the next section explores and compares the spatial aspirations of the Academic Inheritors, the Academic Strivers and the Vocational Students in Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel and Cwm Mawr School.

Language and Spatial Horizons

Previous research has shown that Welsh-speaking students tend to express a preference towards staying in Wales in the future because they want to remain and be involved in a Welsh-speaking culture (for example, Jones and Desforges 2003; Hinton 2011). In this study, the majority of students in Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel (23 out of 26 students⁵⁵) had considered living in Wales in the future⁵⁶. To some extent, the Welsh language had an impact on students' spatial aspirations and expectations. Other studies have shown that students who attend Welsh-medium schools show a preference towards staying in Wales as it is primarily Welsh Higher Education institutions⁵⁷ that offer provision through the medium of Welsh (Pugsley 2004; Davies and Trystan 2012; Davies and Davies 2015). Of the thirteen Academic students in Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel who had thought of going to a university in Wales, five of these students⁵⁸ had considered studying their course through the medium of Welsh. Their desire to study through the medium of Welsh appeared to be based on cost-benefit analyses. For instance, Alun expressed a desire to study through the medium of Welsh in higher education because he had been educated through the medium of Welsh all of his life. It also appeared that the financial

⁵⁵ This figure consists of eight out of ten of the Academic Inheritors, five out of six of the Academic Strivers and ten out of ten of the Vocational students.

⁵⁶ It needs to be taken into account that some of these students had also considered living outside of Wales in the future.

⁵⁷ Recent statistics from Welsh Government (2016f) indicate that all of the eight Welsh Higher Education Institutions offer some provision through the medium of Welsh.

⁵⁸ Two of the male Academic Inheritors, one of the female Academic Inheritors and two of the female Academic Strivers had considered studying their course in Welsh. Only one of these students, Alun, came from a Welsh-speaking background with his mother being a fluent Welsh speaker.

support that the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol (see colegcymraeg.ac.uk) currently provide for students who study some of their university degree through the medium of Welsh had made some of the students such as Emma consider studying in Welsh in higher education. Another student, Mark, considered that studying through the medium of Welsh in higher education would improve his employment prospects.

Cyfwelydd: A pam fyddi di'n astudio'r pynciau yma [yn brifysgol] yn y Gymraeg?

Mark: Wel, os ydw i ...pan mae pobl... mae loads o pobl yn edrych ar y CVs nawr ac yn gweud "O...mae'n gallu siarad Cymraeg"...so, os byddai'n gallu cael y gradd yn y Cymraeg, 'falla bydd mwy o jobs yn gallu agor lan i fi.

Interviewer: And why would you like to study these subjects [in university] in Welsh?

Mark: Well, if I...when people... loads of people look at your CVs now and they say "Oh...they can speak Welsh"...so, if I am able to get a degree in Wales, maybe more jobs will be able to open up to me.

Mark, Academic Inheritor, Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel

Like some of the parents/carers in Chapter 5 who opted for Welsh-medium education, it appears that Mark also considered that the Welsh language would provide him with an advantage when looking for work in Wales. Interestingly, none of these students noted the cultural significance of the Welsh language as a reason for them wanting to study through the medium of Welsh in higher education.

However, the Welsh language did not appear to play a major role in influencing the spatial aspirations of most of the students in Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel. The majority of the Academic Strivers and Inheritors in Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel who had considered studying in a university in Wales (8 out of 13 students) imagined that they would be studying their course in English. This was partly because of the limited Welsh-medium provision in higher education institutions across Wales. Consequently, some of the Academic students in Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel such as Sian (an Academic Striver) envisaged that they would be studying their university courses in

English “*achos mae ddim lot o prifysgols sy’n gallu wneud y pynciau yn y Gymraeg*. [because there isn’t a lot of universities which are able to do subjects in Welsh]”.

Yet, studying through the medium of English at higher education level was also an active choice among these students. Their desire to study in English appeared to be based on cost-benefit analyses. For instance, students such as Natalie, an Academic Inheritor, considered that they were more able in the English language compared to the Welsh language, replicating findings from other studies (see Davies and Trystan 2012; Davies and Davies 2015). Other students such as Emma, an Academic Striver, considered studying through the medium of English in higher education because they considered that they would not use the Welsh language frequently in their future careers because of the lack of Welsh speakers in the Valleys and in other parts of Wales.

Interviewer: Don’t worry. It’s fine. There’s no right or wrong answer at all. I’m not here to judge you. I just want to find a bit more about what you want to do in the future. So, there’s no right or wrong answer. I’m not going to judge you in any way at all. Why do you think you would like to do it [the degree] in English rather than in Welsh?

Emma: I just think that it might be easier going from that [university] into a natural career then working with people ‘cos most people don’t speak in Welsh... I mean in Wales... most people don’t speak in Welsh, so, I think it would be helpful then to be able to speak Welsh to the certain people that can and want to speak Welsh to the doctor or find it easier. But, for most people then to have a doctor who speaks both languages [English and Welsh]. But, I think I will use English most in the job.

Emma, Academic Striver, Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel (Follow-Up Interview)

For the Vocational students in Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel who visualised their futures in Wales, particularly in the local area, a range of factors including their career aspirations plus their strong attachment to their family and local community shaped their spatial aspirations rather than the Welsh language. As Chapter 7 illustrated, the Vocational students generally considered that the Welsh language would be irrelevant in terms of their future as they felt that they would

mostly use the English language in work and in other aspects of their lives because of the low proportion of Welsh speakers in the area. Therefore, the linguistic context of the area also contributed to the way in which students in Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel perceived the role that the Welsh language would play in their futures. The Welsh language is rarely heard on the streets of the Valleys because of the low numbers of Welsh speakers in the area. Furthermore, mirroring trends in other schools in South East Wales, the majority of students from Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel came from non-Welsh speaking background (see Chapter 5). As the Welsh language did not play a central part in their lives outside of school, there was a perception among students from Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel that the Welsh language would not play a major role in their futures.

However, slightly more students in Cwm Mawr School (25 out of 26 students⁵⁹) had considered living in Wales in the future compared to students in Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel (23 out of 26 students). Previous research on the spatial aspirations of young people from the South Wales Valleys have shown that strong attachment and loyalty towards Wales provides some explanation as to why young people in this area want to stay in Wales in the future (see Donnelly and Evans 2016). While there was a strong sense of Welsh identity among the participants in Cwm Mawr School and Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel as the majority of them (42 out of 52 students) considered themselves to be Welsh (see Chapter 4), young people in this study did not explicitly express a strong attachment to Wales. The only exception was Tim, an Academic Striver from Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel, who expressed a firm desire of staying in Wales as he was “*hoff iawn a falch o’r gwlad hyn* [very fond and proud of this country]”.

The slight variation in the number of students in Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel and Cwm Mawr School who visualised their futures in Wales is partly due to the difference in the number of students who considered or wanted to stay in the Valleys in the future in both schools. More of the students in Cwm Mawr School (13 out of 26 of these students⁶⁰) compared to students in Ysgol

⁵⁹This figure consists of five out of six of the Academic Inheritors, all of the Academic Strivers and all of the Vocational students in Cwm Mawr School.

⁶⁰ This figure is composed of two out of six of the Academic Inheritors, four out of nine of the Academic Strivers and seven out of eleven of the Vocational students in Cwm Mawr School

Dyffryn Tawel (8 out of 26 of these students⁶¹) imagined or expressed a desire of living in the Valleys in the future. The social background of students provides some explanation for the higher numbers of students in Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel who envisaged or wanted to move away from the Valleys. More of the Academic students in Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel (13 students out of 16 students⁶²) considered studying in a university which was a substantial distance from the South Wales Valleys compared to students from Cwm Mawr School (5 out of 25 students⁶³). As noted earlier, Academic Strivers from working class backgrounds in particular expressed a desire of studying in a local university which they would be able to commute to from home because they were concerned with the costs that would be incurred if they went to a university far away from home. The higher number of Academic Inheritors (who were predominantly from salariat and intermediate backgrounds) in Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel provides some indication as to why more students in Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel had considered or wanted to study in a university which was a substantial distance from the Valleys.

Furthermore, as noted in Chapter 5, young people who attend Welsh-medium schools such as Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel attend a different school to what the majority of young people in their neighbourhood go to because of the relatively low numbers of Welsh-medium primary and secondary schools. Consequently, students in Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel such as Vicky, an Academic Striver, were more likely to express that they felt that they were not close to other people in their neighbourhoods.

⁶¹This figure consists of one out of sixteen of the Academic Inheritors and seven out of ten of the Vocational students in Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel.

⁶² This figure comprises of 9 out of 10 of the Academic Inheritors and 4 out of 6 of the Academic Strivers in Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel

⁶³ This figure consists of 4 out of 6 of the Academic Inheritors and 1 out of 9 of the Academic Strivers in Cwm Mawr School.

Interviewer: And do you have any friends who go to the local English-medium secondary school?

Vicky: I don't really like the children... like the people in my village. I don't like them 'cos they're just I don't know... I think it's 'cos I go to a different school. I don't get to see them a lot. So, I just don't bother with them.

Vicky, Academic Striver, Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel

Later in the interview, Vicky expressed a desire of moving away from the Valleys in the future and wanted to “move out of Britain”. In the extract below, Vicky discusses her feelings regarding moving away from the Valleys:

Interviewer: How would you feel about moving away from where you come from?

Vicky: I can always go back... I can always Skype them... FaceTime them... I'll visit a lot, but I don't mind.

Interviewer: So you're looking forward to moving away?

Vicky: Yeah.

Vicky, Academic Striver, Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel

In the above extract, it appears that Vicky is not concerned about moving away from the Valleys. It could be argued that the relative lack of contact that students in Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel such as Vicky had with individuals in their localities resulted in some of them not being deterred by the prospects of moving away from the Valleys.

Discussion

This chapter focused on the long-term aspirations of the young people in this study. To a certain extent, young people rationalised their long-term aspirations. Along with being interested in studying a particular degree and wanting to experience life as a university student, the

Academic Inheritors and the Academic Strivers considered that university would enable them to pursue the jobs that they aspired to gain. In terms of their career aspirations, both the Academic and Vocational students also wanted to pursue jobs which incorporated their interests and also wanted jobs that were well paid. At the same time, there was evidence that the long-term educational and career aspirations of students, particularly the Academic Inheritors and Vocational students, were shaped by their parents'/carers' wishes for the future, providing support to Bourdieu as well as Rational Choice Theorists such as Breen and Goldthorpe (1997) who recognise that our aspirations are formed by messages transmitted by individuals within our close social circles such as family members. Yet, the Academic Strivers' aspirations contradict a simplistic reading of the relationship between class-based habitual dispositions and educational aspirations proposed by Bourdieu (1977a) as these students wanted to pursue educational and career pathways different to their parents/carers. However, we need to acknowledge that the parents/carers of the Academic Strivers still played a role in shaping their aspirations by sharing their regrets and unfulfilled desires with regards to their own educational and career trajectories with their children. Their parents'/carers' regrets had spurred the Academic Strivers to want to go to higher education and gain a job which they deemed to be better than their parents'/carers' jobs.

Although they shared an aspiration of going to university and gaining a salariat jobs, there were differences in terms of the knowledge and information that the Academic Inheritors and Academic Strivers had regarding their educational futures and future careers. Like the embedded choosers in Reay *et al.*'s (2005) study, the Academic Inheritors appeared to be better informed compared to the Academic Strivers and were aware of the status hierarchy which exists between different higher education institutions in UK. Similar to the contingent choosers in Reay *et al.*'s study (2005), the Academic Strivers seemed to be perplexed by the process of applying to go to university. This was because the Academic Strivers lacked contact with individuals who had experience of higher education who would be able to provide them with valuable advice and information regarding their future.

With regards to students' spatial horizons, most of the Academic Inheritors and Strivers felt that they had to move from the area in order to be able to achieve their educational and career aspirations due to their perception of the state of the local labour market. While the Academic

Inheritors were generally unfazed by the prospect of moving away in the future, certain Academic Strivers were reluctant to move from the area. Most of the Vocational students felt that they would be able to achieve their career aspirations in the local area, considering that the jobs they aspired to gain were available locally. Reluctance to move away was partly based on cost-benefit analyses, with for instance, Academic Strivers wanting to go to a local university that they could commute to from home as they regarded it to be a financially feasible option. The strong sense of community that still prevails in the Valleys and the fact that they lived close to family members contributed towards certain students wanting to stay in the local area.

Language played a role in shaping some of the students' spatial horizons with several of the Academic Inheritors and Strivers from Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel considering staying in Wales because they wanted to study through the medium of Welsh in higher education. However, the Welsh language did not generally appear to impact on the spatial horizons of Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel students with other factors such as the strong bonds with community members and attachment to their local area playing a substantial role in shaping their aspirations of staying in the local area. Furthermore, the nature of Welsh-medium and English-medium education in South-East Wales also contributed to differences in the spatial horizons of students in Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel and Cwm Mawr School. As there are fewer Welsh-medium schools compared to English-medium schools in areas of South East Wales, students who attend Welsh-medium schools tend to attend schools different to other young people in their neighbourhood. A number of students in Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel talked about how they did not have close bonds with members of their community. The lack of close bonds with neighbours provides some indication as to why more of the students in Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel were less concerned over the prospect of moving away in the future.

Chapter 9: Conclusion

This study explored the aspirations and expectations of fifty-two young people from the South Wales Valleys, an area which has undergone significant social and economic changes largely as a result of rapid deindustrialisation and the decline of other industries such as steel and manufacturing. These young people were about to make the transition from compulsory to post-compulsory education and faced important decisions regarding their future. Although there have been a number of studies (for instance, Pugsley 2004; Reay *et al.* 2005; Donnelly 2015) which have explored the aspirations and expectations of young people in different educational institutions, this study fills the gap in current research by exploring and contrasting the aspirations and expectations of young people attending a Welsh-medium school (under the pseudonym of Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel) and an English-medium school (under the pseudonym of Cwm Mawr School).

This study set out to address the following research questions:

RQ1: What are the expectations and aspirations of young people in the context of significant economic and social changes?

RQ2: To what extent does social background shape young people's aspirations and expectations?

RQ3: To what extent does gender shape young people's aspirations and expectations?

RQ4: To what extent does school type (Welsh-medium and English-medium) shape young people's aspirations and expectations?

RQ5: To what extent does Bourdieu’s Cultural Reproduction Theory and Rational Choice Theory help us to understand young people’s aspirations and expectations?

This chapter will illustrate how this study has answered these research questions. This chapter will also explore the theoretical and policy implications of the findings of this study.

Summary of Key Findings

RQ1: What are the expectations and aspirations of young people in the context of significant economic and social changes?

The way in which young people understand their future educational and employment prospects has changed. While the ‘ordinary kids’ and ‘rems’ in Brown’s (1987) study in urban South Wales were aspiring towards gaining employment after Year 11, all of the young people in this study expressed an aspiration of staying on in some form of education and training after Year 11. Only a small minority (three out of fifty-two students) had noted that they had thought about employment as a possible option after Year 11.

Economic and social changes have influenced the way in which young people understand their futures. Participants in this study were aware that they were making decisions regarding their future at a time when the majority of young people progress into further education (Welsh Government 2016a; Skills Development Scotland 2015) and an increasing number of young people participate in higher education (HEFCW 2012; Department for Education 2016a: 1). As this study demonstrated, young people were aware of the positional aspect of the competition of the livelihood and understood that their chances of gaining a good job were not only based on their own merits and achievements, but also depend on how they stand relative to other people. As such, young people in this study had bought into the idea that “learning equals earning”, which is associated with human capital theory (for example, Schultz (1961) and Becker 1993)) and heavily promoted by politicians as well as other social actors such as

teachers. These young people considered that staying on in education and training after compulsory education and accumulating qualifications would improve their prospects of gaining a good job in the future.

Furthermore, local factors such as rapid deindustrialisation and the decline in the manufacturing industry as well as wider trends such as the contraction of the youth labour market have also reduced the employment opportunities available for school leavers in the South Wales Valleys. Young people in this study were aware of these economic developments and also perceived that there was a lack of jobs in the local area. A “discouraged worker effect” (Raffe and Willms 1989) was evident in this study, with students considering staying on in further education and training as a better alternative compared to looking for work in a labour market with scarce employment opportunities.

This study identified three types of students – the Academic Inheritors, the Academic Strivers and the Vocational Students - who had different orientations towards education and work. The orientations of the young people in this study towards education and work differ to the orientations of young people in Brown’s (1987) study. Both the Academic Inheritors and Strivers were academically orientated; had long-term aspirations of going to university and predominantly aspired to gain salariat occupations (jobs which are relatively well paid, have high levels of discretion and tend to require high levels of education such as university) such as Solicitor, Teacher, Surgeon and Pharmacist. However, whereas the Academic Inheritors’ aspirations of going to university were firm and concrete and they had relatively high expectations of fulfilling this ambition, the Academic Strivers were ambivalent about the prospects of going to university and had relatively lower expectations of progressing into higher education. The third group of students, the Vocational students either had not considered or had rejected higher education as a possible option in the future and instead wanted to gain intermediate/working class occupations (jobs which are relatively low paid, provide low levels of autonomy and do not necessarily require high levels of education) such as Builder, Plumber, Hairdresser and Nursery Assistant after post-compulsory education and training.

There were differences in terms of the types of subjects/courses that these students wanted to study after Year 11. The Academic Inheritors predominantly wanted to study academic AS/ A Level subjects such as Biology, Maths, Geography, English Literature, Chemistry, French, History and Sociology after Year 11. These academic subjects were either subjects that they either wanted to study at degree level or they felt that studying these subjects would enable them to study the courses that they wanted to study at university. It is worth noting that some of the Academic Strivers wanted to study practical/vocational subjects such as Child Care, Motor Vehicle, Physical Education and Travel and Tourism. Most of the Vocational students expressed a desire towards studying practical/vocational subjects such as Public Services, Health and Social Care, Hairdressing, Plumbing, Carpentry, Physical Education and Art. For some of the vocational students, some of the courses that they wanted to study were geared towards the careers that they wanted to pursue in the future. For other Vocational students, they felt that studying these vocational/practical subjects would improve their chances of gaining a decent job after further education and training.

In terms of the educational institutions that students wanted to enter after Year 11, most of the students wanted to stay in sixth form as they felt that it would provide them with a sense of familiarity because they would be taught by the same teachers and would have classmates that they knew from secondary school. However, other students, predominantly the Vocational students, wanted to go to a Further Education College or wanted to do an apprenticeship after Year 11. Some of the Vocational students aspired to go to a Further Education College as opposed to entering the school's sixth form after Year 11 because of their fraught relationship with teachers. Other Vocational students envisaged that they would be studying in a F.E college because Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel and Cwm Mawr School did not offer the courses that they wanted to study in their sixth forms, illustrating how institutional choice is related to subject choice.

Students' long term aspirations were entwined with their spatial horizons – where young people imagined they lived in the future. While the Academic Inheritors and Strivers felt that they would have to move away from the Valleys in order to fulfil their long-term career and educational aspirations, the Vocational students imagined that they would stay in the area as they believed that they would be able to gain intermediate and working class occupations

locally. Not all of the students who imagined they would move away from the Valleys wanted to move away and some of them expressed a desire of staying in the local area in the future.

RQ2: To what extent does social background shape young people's aspirations and expectations?

As illustrated above, there were no social class differences in terms of the numbers of young people who wanted to progress into post-compulsory education and training with all of the young people in this study expressing an aspiration of wanting to stay on in education and training after Year 11. Broader social and economic developments in recent years such as the declining size of the youth labour market and the increasing rates of young people progressing into further and higher education as well as changes to the local labour market influenced young people to want to stay on in some form of education and training after Year 11 as opposed to their social background.

However, there were clear differences in terms of the social background of the three types of students – the Academic Inheritors, Academic Strivers and Vocational Students – who were identified in this study. The Academic Inheritors came from higher education backgrounds and predominantly came from salariat backgrounds. The term ‘Academic Inheritors’ was attached to this group of students as they wanted to pursue similar educational and career pathways to their parents/carers. In contrast, all of the Academic Strivers came from non-higher education backgrounds and were predominantly from working class and intermediate backgrounds. As this study has illustrated, these young people were called Strivers as they were likely to face further barriers and obstacles in achieving their ambition of going to university because of their social background. The Vocational students largely came from working class and intermediate backgrounds and had little or no history of higher education participation among their families. Like the Academic Inheritors, the Vocational students also aspired to follow similar educational and employment trajectories to their parents/carers.

There were clear differences in terms of the educational performance of the Academic Inheritors, Academic Strivers and Vocational Students. While the Academic Inheritors and some of the Academic Strivers were regarded by teachers to be high achieving students, the Vocational students generally were performing relatively poorly in school. Along with biological factors, this study has shown that social background also impacts on educational performance. While the parents/carers of the Academic Inheritors were able to use their educational and cultural knowledge or what Bourdieu (1986/1997) would term as cultural capital to help their children with their school work, several of the Academic Strivers and the Vocational students noted that their parents/carers were unable to help them with their education as they did not understand their school work. Therefore, the level of cultural capital that the parents/carers possessed provides some explanation for the differences in the educational performances of the Academic Inheritors, Academic Strivers and Vocational students.

This study has demonstrated that young people's educational self-concept (their perception of their educational performance) impacts on their expectations and aspirations, providing support to the assertions of Rational Choice Theorists such as Breen and Goldthorpe (1997) and Jonsson (1999). Young people's educational self-concept is influenced by their previous performance in assessments and also the comments that students receive from teachers, parents/carers and peers. Comparison of their educational performance with the educational performance of other students also provides students with an idea of where they are placed within the educational hierarchy. Educational self-concept provides young people with a sense of what educational pathways are achievable and unachievable. In this study, young people had different perceptions regarding their educational performance. The expectations of the Academic Inheritors of progressing into further and higher education were relatively higher compared to other participants largely because of their previous performance in school. As some of the Academic Strivers were performing relatively poorly compared to some of their classmates, their expectations of progressing into higher education were lower compared to the Academic Inheritors. The Vocational students had lower expectations of progressing into further education and some of them had dismissed the possibility of going to university because they considered it to be an unrealistic goal in educational terms.

What young people consider to be realistic and unrealistic goals is also shaped by their economic backgrounds. Both Bourdieu (1986/1997) and Rational Choice Theorists such as Breen and Goldthorpe (1997) acknowledge that levels of economic capital/financial resources impact on young people's aspirations and expectations. While the South Wales Valleys is widely considered to be an area of social and economic deprivation, it needs to be taken into account that there are pockets of affluence in the area as well. There were clear differences in terms of the economic circumstances of the Academic Inheritors, Academic Strivers and Vocational students in this study. The Academic Inheritors who were from higher socio-economic backgrounds generally did not perceive the costs of participating in further and higher education as an obstacle due to their economic circumstances. In contrast, certain young people from lower socio-economic backgrounds such as the Academic Strivers and the Vocational students in this study considered higher education to be a financial risk because of their parents'/carers' lack of economic capital/financial resources.

Young people's economic background may also influence their spatial aspirations. As noted earlier, in order to achieve their educational and career aspirations, the Academic Inheritors and Strivers generally considered that they would have to leave the Valleys and move to more economically prosperous areas. Yet, some of the Academic Strivers expressed a desire of studying in a university that they would be able to commute to from home as they felt that they would not be able to afford to move away and go to a university which was far away from their home.

Individuals in young people's social networks such as parents/carers, family members, neighbours and teachers also shape young people's aspirations and expectations. There were variations in the character and usage of the social networks of the Academic Inheritors, Academic Strivers and Vocational Students which to a certain extent reflected the social backgrounds of these students. For example, in this study, the Academic Inheritors were more likely compared to the Academic Strivers to be in contact with individuals who were able to provide them "hot knowledge" (Ball 2003) regarding future educational and career trajectories. As a result, the Academic Inheritors appeared to be more informed regarding future educational and career pathways as they recognised the different status attached to various universities and were aware of what was required of them in order to achieve their educational and career

aspirations. Additionally, individuals in young people's social networks may also provide them with access to certain employment opportunities. Some of the young people in this study, particularly the male Vocational students, were in contact with individuals who they felt would be able to help them gain low entry employment. This illustrates how the different levels and forms of social capital (Bourdieu 1986/1997) may impact on young people's aspirations and expectations.

Individuals in young people's social networks may also have different attitudes towards education. In this study, young people were in contact with individuals who were either very supportive or had little respect towards education and school. Parents/carers also have aspirations for their children and may make these aspirations clear to them. As this study demonstrated, parents/carers set different boundaries in terms of what they consider to be desirable and undesirable aspirations for their children. In this study, while the parents/carers of the Vocational Students generally were happy for their children to look for work after compulsory education or to pursue vocational pathways; there were other parents/carers, particularly the parents/carers of the Academic Inheritors, who discouraged their children from pursuing pathways that were alternatives to progressing into higher education.

The educational attitudes and aspirations of certain individuals in their social network may influence the aspirations and expectations of young people. In this research, this was clearly visible among the Academic Inheritors and Vocational students with these students wanting to pursue educational and career pathways similar to their parents/carers, illustrating how their social background played a major part in shaping their aspirations. The aspirations of the Academic Inheritors and the Vocational students provides some evidence which provide support to Bourdieu's (1977a) concept of habitus because it illustrates how young people's aspirations were formed by their observations of the practices of family members. Rational Choice Theorists such as Breen and Goldthorpe (1997) also acknowledge the role that cultural norms and values play in shaping young people's aspirations. Although the Academic Strivers wanted to pursue educational and career pathways which were different to their parents/carers, it cannot be denied that individuals in their social network still had an influence on their future aspirations and expectations. In this study, the Academic Strivers discussed how their parents/carers deterred them from pursuing educational and career pathways similar to them,

illustrating how parents'/carers' regrets and unfulfilled desires may shape students' expectations and desires.

Individuals in young people's social network may also shape young people's spatial aspirations. While some of the young people in this study felt that they would have to out-migrate in order to fulfil their educational and career aspirations; some of these young people wanted to stay in the area. As this study has highlighted, strong bonds with family members and other members of the community as well as attachment to the Valleys made it difficult for young people to envisage moving away from the area. Furthermore, the communities of the Valleys remain to be stable as many of its inhabitants have lived in the Valleys for a long time. The stable nature of the communities of the Valleys is another factor which may influence young people to want to stay in the area.

RQ3: To what extent does gender shape young people's aspirations and expectations?

To a certain extent, gender still plays a role in shaping young people's aspirations and expectations. Some of the students in this study, particularly the female Academic Inheritors and Strivers wanted to study subjects and pursue occupations which were once gender specific. This reflects wider societal trends. In recent decades, women have made inroads in certain subjects and occupations which were once the preserves of males such as scientific-related subjects and occupations (Rees 1999; Crompton 2002; Parkin *et al.* 2014; Welsh Government 2016c; WISE 2016). However, overall young people still aspired to study subjects and occupations which are traditionally associated with their gender. In this study, gender differences in terms of the types of subjects and occupations that young people wanted to pursue were more marked between the male Vocational and female Vocational students compared to the male and female Academic Inheritors and Strivers. For instance, with regards to their occupational aspirations, it was only the male Vocational students in this study who wanted to become plumbers, builders and electricians. Meanwhile, aspirations of becoming a hairdresser, nursery assistant or carer were only stated by the female Vocational students. Again, this mirrors broader patterns with regards to the occupations that men and women enter with sectors such as skilled trades dominated by men and women dominating "people centred"

occupations (see Parkin *et al.* 2014) . On the one hand, these aspirations are the result of cost-benefit analyses providing support to the assertion of Rational Choice Theorists such as Jonsson (1999). Young men and women wanted to study subjects which they were interested in, felt they would be able to perform well in and felt were relevant in terms of their future. They also wanted to gain occupations which they considered to be interesting and well paid. However, we also need to take into account that young men and women's educational and career aspirations are also the product of societal messages which still promote traditional conceptions of masculinity and femininity, providing some support to the Bourdieu's (1977a) notion of habitus and support to the claim made by Rational Choice Theorists such as Breen and Goldthorpe (1997) that what we consider to be 'rational' is also to some extent shaped by cultural norms and values.

RQ4: To what extent does school type (Welsh-medium and English-medium) shape young people's aspirations and expectations?

This study also examined whether attending a Welsh-medium or an English-medium school impacted on young people's aspirations and expectations. It appeared that the Welsh-medium and English-medium school in this study were promoting a common narrative to their students. Both schools were trying to encourage young people to stay on in some form of education and training after Year 11 and were also making young people aware of the range of different routes they could pursue in the future such as higher education and more vocationally orientated pathways such as apprenticeships. There was little variation in the aspirations of young people from Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel and Cwm Mawr School with similar numbers having aspirations of pursuing 'academic' and 'vocational' pathways in both schools. However, there were differences in the socio-economic characteristics of the participants in both schools with more of the students from Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel coming from economically and socially advantaged backgrounds compared to students from Cwm Mawr School. To a certain extent, differences in the socio-economic characteristics of students in this study reflect variations in the social compositions of Welsh-medium and English-medium schools in South-East Wales (see Chapter 5).

As this study illustrated, parental choice contributes to the differences in the socio-economic characteristics of certain Welsh-medium and certain English-medium schools. To a certain degree, choice of medium of education is based on cost-benefit analyses with parents/carers considering the advantages and disadvantages of different schools and choosing the school which will benefit their child the most, providing support to the explanation that Rational Choice Theorists offer for school choice (Bosetti 2004). With regards to choice of medium of education, this study and previous research has shown how perceptions of the educational standards of Welsh-medium and English-medium schools and perceptions regarding the cultural, cognitive and economic value of the Welsh language shape parents'/carers' choice of medium of education (see Williams *et al.* 1978; Bush *et al.* 1981; Packer and Campbell, 2000; Thomas, 2010; Hodges 2010, 2012; O'Hanlon 2015). The proximity of the school to the home is also a factor which influences choice of medium of education with parents/carers tending to choose schools which are convenient to travel to (Packer and Campbell, 2000: 590; Thomas, 2013b: 169). Yet, we also need to acknowledge how the possession of different levels of capital shape what parents/carers consider to be the "best" schools for their children. The uneven distribution of social and cultural capital and to some extent economic capital/financial resources expands the choices available for certain parents/carers, in particular those from middle class backgrounds, and constrains the choices available for other parents/carers, particularly those from working class backgrounds, in terms of medium of education. This study found that social background also impacts on the way in which parents perceive different aspects of schools with for instance, parents wanting their children to have classmates from similar socio-economic backgrounds.

As there tends to be differences in the social composition of certain Welsh-medium and English-medium schools in South-East Wales such as Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel and Cwm Mawr Schools, it needs to be taken into account that differences in the educational and social outcomes of Welsh-medium and English-medium schools are to some extent due to differences in the social backgrounds of students. As this study highlighted, more of the students in Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel than in Cwm Mawr School were identified as Academic Inheritors – students who came from higher education backgrounds and were from predominantly salariat backgrounds who wanted to pursue similar educational and career pathways as their parents/carers. Therefore, within the sample study, there were more students in Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel who had parents/carers who were able to help them with their homework, who had

strong aspirations for them to progress into university and who were able to provide them with valuable information regarding future career and educational trajectories. Consequently, these students had higher expectations of progressing into further and higher education and were more informed about future educational and career pathways. Further research is needed to examine whether this is the case in other Welsh-medium and English-medium schools in South East Wales.

Young people who attend Welsh-medium schools also have to consider in what language they want to study their courses/subjects in the future. We need to take into account that students' aspirations with regards to language of study is shaped by the amount of Welsh-medium provision which is offered by different educational providers. While students study subjects and courses in Welsh-medium sixth forms through the medium of Welsh bar the subject of English Literature, Welsh-medium provision offered by Further Education Colleges and by Work Based Learning Providers is relatively low in South East Wales (Duggan *et al.* 2016) and most students in these institutions study subjects and courses through the medium of English. At higher education level, Welsh-medium provision is still limited in Higher Education institutions across Wales (Welsh Government 2016f).

We also need to acknowledge that young people also make an active choice with regards to what language they will be studying in after Year 11. Echoing findings from Heller's (2006) study, it appeared that the Welsh language was considered more of a commodity rather than a source of identity among the participants from Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel. When discussing language choice, most of the students in this study referred to instrumental factors as opposed to cultural factors. For those students who were thinking of studying in Welsh in further and higher education, students referred to the Welsh language as a form of linguistic capital (Bourdieu 1977b), considering that continuing to studying in Welsh would provide them an advantage when looking for work in Wales in the future. A minority of students who aspired to study in Welsh after Year 11 referred to the cultural value of studying in Welsh. Instrumental factors also motivated students from Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel who wanted to transfer from Welsh to English either during the transition from compulsory to post-compulsory education or during the transition from further to higher education. Concerns about their ability in Welsh as well

as the perceptions that the labour market advantages of speaking Welsh are restricted to Wales influenced these students to want to transfer from studying in Welsh to English in the future.

In addition, we need to recognise that the linguistic context of the area also plays a role in shaping how young people perceive the value of certain languages. As noted in Chapter 4, the South Wales Valleys is considered to be an Anglicised part of Wales because of the relatively low number of Welsh speakers in the area. Most of the participants from Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel also came from non-Welsh speaking backgrounds. Generally, for students in this study, the fact that they rarely spoke Welsh outside of school made them consider that the Welsh language was irrelevant in terms of their future.

This study also found that the type of school may impact on young people's spatial aspirations. Whilst the majority of students in both schools had considered living in Wales in the future, more of the students in Cwm Mawr School imagined or expressed a desire to stay in the Valleys in the future. Moreover, more of the Academic Inheritors and Strivers in Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel considered studying in a university which was a substantial distance from the South Wales Valleys compared to their counterparts in Cwm Mawr School. To a certain extent, the social background of students explains this variation. This is partly because there were more Academic Strivers in Cwm Mawr School from low socio-economic backgrounds who wanted to study in a university which they could commute to from home as they were concerned about the costs of participating in higher education. Furthermore, as there are relatively fewer Welsh-medium schools in South East Wales, students from Welsh-medium schools tend to attend schools which are different to the schools other young people in their neighbourhoods attend. Consequently, the bonds that students in Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel had with members of their community appeared to be weaker compared to the ties that students in Cwm Mawr School had with other people in their communities. As a result, students from Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel appeared to be less concerned by the prospects of moving away from the Valleys.

RQ5: To what extent does Bourdieu's Cultural Reproduction Theory and Rational Choice Theory help us to understand young people's aspirations and expectations?

This study also aimed to contribute to existing research (for example, Hodkinson *et al.* 1996; Glaesser and Cooper 2014) by assessing the merits of Rational Choice Theory and Bourdieu's Cultural Reproduction Theory in helping us to understand young people's aspirations and expectations. By analysing the data, I have come to realise that there are challenges when assessing the usefulness of Rational Choice Theory and Bourdieu's Cultural Reproduction Theory. One of the issues is that it is difficult to rule out that young people's aspirations are rational. In this study, young people articulated their aspirations as being rational as opposed to being random and impromptu. They also rationalised their reasons behind their aspirations. For instance, young people in this study frequently noted that they wanted to pursue a particular educational pathway such as progressing into higher education because they considered it as a means of gaining a "good job". Therefore, at times, it was difficult to determine whether young people's aspirations were the result of cost-benefit analyses of future options or whether young people were only articulating their aspirations as being rational in order for it appear that they were making the 'right' choice.

One of the other issues is that both theoretical standpoints concur on a number of different matters. As a result, certain extracts from the interviews with participants supported both of the theoretical ideas associated with Rational Choice Theory and Bourdieu's Cultural Reproduction Theory. For instance, one of the main findings of this study was that young people's economic circumstances influenced what future options they considered to be financially feasible and unfeasible. This finding supports Rational Choice Theory and Bourdieu's Cultural Reproduction Theory as both of these theoretical standpoints acknowledge that aspirations are the product of financial considerations. Therefore, it is fairly difficult on some occasions to make any distinction between Rational Choice Theory and Bourdieu's Cultural Reproduction Theory when analysing the data.

Another issue with assessing Rational Choice Theory and Bourdieu's Cultural Reproduction Theory is to do with the difficulty of operationalising concepts and the main theoretical ideas

associated with these theoretical standpoints. For instance, when analysing the data, it was difficult at times to determine whether the aspirations that young people expressed were the product of a particular habitus. This was particularly hard when examining the aspirations of the Academic Strivers, students who came from non-higher education backgrounds and had aspirations of going to university. Some of the Academic Strivers did report how their parents/carers had shared their regrets of not continuing with their education. However, it was still difficult to establish whether it was their habitus i.e. the dispositions that they had acquired from family members and others around them, which had influenced the Academic Strivers' aspirations of going to university. It could be also argued that the Academic Strivers' aspirations of going to university was a rational response as they considered that going to higher education would increase their chances of gaining employment which was better than their parents'/carers' occupations.

Nevertheless, the findings of this study suggest that young people's aspirations and expectations are to a certain extent based on cost-benefit analyses. Personal interest plays a role in shaping young people's aspirations with young people in this study aspiring to pursue educational and career pathways that they were interested in. Young people's aspirations are also based on financial considerations with young people in this study aspiring towards pathways which they thought were financially feasible and would grant them the most economic rewards. Young people's level of financial resources/economic capital influences their financial considerations. Educational performance plays a large part in shaping ambitions and expectations as young people in this research tended to aspire towards options which they felt that they would be able to achieve in. To a certain extent, both theories recognise how these factors impact on young people's expectations and aspirations. However, they underplay the role that the rhetoric of "learning equals earning" (which is promoted by policymakers and others actors such as teachers) plays in shaping young people's expectations and aspirations. This explains the shift in the orientations of young people today towards education and work compared to the orientations of young people in Brown's (1987) study.

Yet, what young people consider as "rational" aspirations or choices is a matter of interpretation and is influenced to a certain extent by their social background, which Bourdieu (see Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992) and Rational Choice Theorists such as Goldthorpe (1996) recognise. We need to take into account how the possession of economic, social and cultural

capital shape what young people consider to be 'rational' aspirations. The amount of economic capital/financial resources that a young person possesses shapes what options they consider to be financially feasible and unfeasible. Young people's social capital can provide them with access to information or certain services which will help them to fulfil their aspirations. The endowment of cultural capital contributes towards young people's educational attainment. Certain individuals within young people's social networks may also possess cultural capital in the form of their knowledge regarding the education system. Their knowledge of the education system may help them to provide young people with valuable information, enabling these young people to make informed choices regarding their future.

This study also found that cultural norms and values may also shape what young people constitute as rational aspirations, providing support to the assertions of Rational Choice Theorists such as Breen and Goldthorpe (1997). Bourdieu (1977a) develops the term *habitus* to illustrate how deeply embodied dispositions which are shaped by our observations of the practices of family members and other individuals from similar socio-economic backgrounds to us shape what we consider to be rational aspirations. Family members and other individuals certainly influence but do not as Bourdieu sometimes suggests when discussing his concept of *habitus* (for example, Bourdieu 1977a), determine what young people constitute as rational actions. For instance, the aspirations of the Academic Strivers in this study provides evidence which calls into question Bourdieu's concept of *habitus*. Despite predominantly coming from intermediate/working class background and having little or no history of higher education within their families, the Academic Strivers still had aspirations of progressing into university and gaining a salariat job.

The findings of my study have shown that to a certain extent Rational Choice Theory and Bourdieu's Cultural Reproduction Theory help us to understand the aspirations and expectations of young people. On the basis of this study, I believe that Rational Choice Theory is adequate in explaining individual agency and in explaining how individuals may have aspirations and make choices which are different to those of their family members. Bourdieu's concepts of economic, social and cultural capital are useful in explaining how different resources constrain or expand aspirations and choices. Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* is problematic because it places emphasis on the role of structure as our dispositions are fundamentally durable, deeply embedded and are largely shaped by early socialisation. As this

study has shown cultural norms and values certainly shape our aspirations and expectations, but do not determine them. However, the concept of habitus highlights the way in which cultural norms and values shape our aspirations and expectations. Therefore, rather than treating both Rational Choice Theory and Bourdieu's Cultural Reproduction Theory as being oppositional theories, we need to see that together these theoretical standpoints are able to enhance our understanding of the ways in which young people's aspirations and expectations are shaped.

Policy Implications of this Study

The issue with the 'raising aspirations' policy approach

The findings of this study question the dominant approach of policymakers and politicians towards increasing participation in further and higher education, that is, raising young people's aspirations (see *Rewriting the Future: Raising Ambition and Attainment in Welsh schools* (Welsh Government 2014a) and *Education Excellence Everywhere* (Department for Education 2016)). By emphasising the need in changing the attitudes and behaviour of certain young people, particularly those from low-socio economic backgrounds, policymakers are at risk of placing blame on young people and their families rather than acknowledging how social, educational and economic inequalities impact on young people's aspirations, expectations and decisions.

This study has illustrated that young people's perception of their educational performance, primarily shaped by earlier educational experiences, influence the way in which they perceive their future and also determine which educational pathways they are able to progress through. As this study has suggested and other research has demonstrated (for example Sullivan *et al.* 2013; Strand 2014), social class and parents'/carers' education remain major determinants of educational attainment with those living in poverty and coming from families with low educational levels likely to underperform in school. In light of this evidence, policymakers

need to focus on tackling social class inequalities in education by providing investment and support, particularly during early years of schooling when these inequalities start to manifest.

Economic circumstances also shape young people's expectations and aspirations regarding their future. While young people from economically affluent backgrounds tend to express few concerns regarding the costs of participating in further and higher education, young people from low-socio economic backgrounds often consider further and higher education to be a financial risk and consider employment to be more of an economically viable option. There is a need for policymakers to provide financial support for young people from economically disadvantaged backgrounds to participate in Post-16 Education and Training. The Welsh Government's decision to continue to provide EMA and to focus on means tested maintenance grants as opposed to tuition fees following recommendations from the Diamond Independent Review on Higher Education Funding (2016) are steps in the right direction.

Rather than aiming to raise young people's aspirations, policymakers need to formulate policies aimed at broadening the horizons of young people and making them aware of different educational and occupational opportunities. As this study highlighted, young people have unequal access to information regarding future educational and career pathways. For instance, young people in this study from relatively higher socio-economic background such as the Academic Inheritors appeared to be more informed regarding what was required of them in order to achieve their educational and career aspirations compared to the Academic Strivers. As noted in Chapter 5, the recent cuts to Careers Wales funding have placed more responsibility on teachers to provide career advice and guidance to students. However, teachers in both schools found it difficult to find time to provide career advice and guidance to students due to other priorities such as the demands of the national curriculum and exams and assessments. While students may access career information via other sources such as websites and telephone services, recent research by Howieson and Semple (2013: 298) found that direct contact with careers advisers is still important for young people, particularly students who may not have access to individuals who are able to provide them with valuable and accurate information regarding their future. Therefore, policymakers need to ensure that students have access to individuals who are able to provide them with valuable information about a range of different

educational and career pathways, so that young people are able to make informed decisions regarding their future.

Increasing the Status and Quality of Vocational Courses

There is also a need for policymakers to achieve parity of esteem between Academic and Vocational subjects. The different educational pathways that young people want to pursue after Year 11 impact differently on their chances of gaining a place in socially prestigious universities (see Hayward and Hoelscher 2011 and Vidal Rodeiro *et al.* 2013) and their labour market prospects (Greenwood *et al.* 2007). Additionally, in this study, certain students, particularly the Academic Inheritors and their parents/carers also placed higher value on academic subjects/courses as opposed to vocational subjects/courses and considered that academic subjects/courses would better equip them or their child for progression into higher education. With this in mind, policymakers need to ensure that young people have access to high quality vocational qualifications which will enable them to progress into higher education or into well paid, rewarding employment. Furthermore, key actors such as policymakers and teachers also need to play a part in increasing the status of vocational education by making students aware of future pathways that are alternatives to higher education.

The future of Welsh-medium education and the Welsh Language in South-East Wales

Although this study was not about how to develop Welsh-medium education and there were no specific research questions about this matter, the empirical work offers some valuable insights concerning this issue and so I felt that it was important to discuss the implications of this study with regards to Welsh-medium education and the Welsh Language in South-East Wales.

With little sign of every school in Wales providing Welsh-medium education soon, future research needs to recognise how school choice contributes towards the differences in the social

composition of Welsh-medium and English-medium schools. By drawing on Rational Choice Theory and Bourdieu's Cultural Reproduction Theory, researchers will gain a better understanding of the process underlying choice of medium of education. Future research needs to continue to examine the types of parents/carers who send their children to Welsh-medium and English-medium schools in South East Wales and the reasons behind their choices. In light of the findings of this study which suggests that school choice in terms of medium of education contributes towards social segregation, the Welsh Government need to find ways of encouraging parents/carers from low-socio economic backgrounds to consider Welsh-medium education for their children so that children from all social backgrounds are able to access Welsh-medium education.

As this study has highlighted, the attrition of young people studying through the medium of Welsh in further and higher education is still a problem. A number of students in this study from Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel were considering studying through the medium of English in further education and higher education. Policymakers need to ensure that young people are able to continue to study through the medium of Welsh in further and higher education. The work of the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol and the work of the Bilingual Champions have contributed to an increase in Welsh-medium provision in Post-16 education and training. However, Welsh-medium provision offered by further education colleges, work based learning providers and higher education institutions is still relatively limited (Duggan *et al.* 2016). The Welsh Government as well as educational institutions such as further education colleges, work based learning providers and higher education institutions need to continue to invest and support the development of Welsh-medium provision in further and higher education so that young people are able to continue to study in the Welsh language as they progress through the education system.

At the same time, we need to also take into account that certain students may actively choose based on cost-benefit analyses to transfer from studying through the medium of Welsh to studying through the medium of English. Individuals such as teachers, tutors, lecturers, Bilingual Champions and organisations such as the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol need to encourage students to continue to study through the medium of Welsh. Young people need to be made aware of the benefits of studying through the medium of Welsh. Young people also

need to be made aware of the opportunities to study through the medium of Welsh in further and higher education.

Policymakers also need to realise that we cannot rely on schools and other educational institutions alone to revitalise the Welsh language. As most of the young people who attend Welsh-medium schools in Anglicised areas of Wales such as the South Wales Valleys come from non-Welsh speaking families and communities, the Welsh language does not play a major part in their lives outside of school. Consequently, many of the young people in this study considered the Welsh language would be of little relevance to them in the future, including those young people who visualised their futures in the South Wales Valleys. The Welsh Government needs to extend opportunities for individuals across Wales to use the Welsh language in their day-to-day lives. Welsh Language Standards issued by the Welsh Language Commissioner will hopefully increase the value that employees place on the Welsh language and subsequently increase employment opportunities for those who are fluent in Welsh. Welsh Government also needs to continue to provide resources to *Mentrau Iaith* and to the new Welsh Language Centres so that they are able to continue to provide opportunities for young people to use the language outside of school by hosting a number of different events and activities in Welsh for young people. These developments will hopefully change young people's perceptions of the Welsh language and increase the importance of the Welsh language in their lives.

The Future of the South Wales Valleys

There was a consensus among a number of the young people in this study that in order for them to achieve their educational and employment opportunities, they needed to move away from their area because of scarce educational and employment opportunities. In recent years, the Welsh Government have started to turn towards neighbouring cities such as Cardiff and Swansea to alleviate the deeply entrenched economic problems of the Valleys by establishing the Cardiff Capital Region (see Cardiff Capital Region 2015) and the Swansea Bay City Region (see Swansea Bay City Region 2013). The Welsh Government hopes that these cities will act as economic drivers to neighbouring boroughs such as the South Wales Valleys by providing

employment to their inhabitants. As part of these City Region Developments, a number of projects funded by the Welsh Government have been announced such as the Cardiff Capital Region Metro (see Cardiff Capital Region 2015) to improve transport infrastructure for people to commute from the South Wales Valleys to Cardiff. While these policy developments are commendable, researchers such as Gore *et al.* (2007) found that there may be other barriers apart from poor transport infrastructure which may deter individuals from looking for employment opportunities in neighbouring cities such as transport costs, distance, knowledge and experience of the city as well as the influence of social networks. As this study has highlighted, material circumstances and emotional ties to the local area may also prevent individuals from wanting to move away and to look for educational and employment opportunities elsewhere.

Therefore, it is important for policymakers to continue to tackle social and economic polarisation which exists between different geographical locations and to provide opportunities for those individuals who want to stay in their localities as well as young people who want to move away. There is evidence that policymakers are trying to improve educational opportunities in the South Wales Valleys, with initiatives such as the Universities Heads of the Valleys Institute (UHOVI) providing a range of accessible, educational and training opportunities in the local area aimed at meeting the needs of the local economy. Such initiatives provide individuals with the opportunity to be able to engage in education and training as well as maintaining bonds with family members and other members within their communities.

At the same time, policymakers need to also invest and help to create meaningful and relatively well paid employment opportunities in economically deprived areas such as the South Wales Valleys, so that individuals are able to progress from education and training into employment. The UK's recent decision to leave the European Union in the 2016 referendum means that the South Wales Valleys and other economically deprived areas in Wales will no longer receive structural funding from the European Union in the near future. Welsh politicians need to ensure that economically deprived areas in Wales such as the South Wales Valleys will not lose out on funding as a result of the UK's decision to leave the European Union. The Welsh Government also needs to ensure that future funding will be spent effectively in creating

employment opportunities with good pay and working conditions for people within the South Wales Valleys. Creating such employment opportunities will contribute towards the economic regeneration of the South Wales Valleys.

Limitations and Future Research

While this study provides new insights into how young people's expectations and aspirations are shaped, there are some limitations with this piece of research. This is largely due to the finite amount of time and resources that were available to carry out this research.

One of the main limitations of the study was the sample of participants. As the sample of this study consisted of students attending one Welsh-medium and one English-medium school in the South Wales Valleys, it is difficult to ascertain the extent to which the views and experiences of my participants are generalisable to the wider population of students in Welsh-medium and English-medium schools in other parts of Wales. Further research is needed to explore the aspirations and expectations of young people attending Welsh-medium, English-medium and bilingual schools in other parts of Wales. This would enable researchers to be able to explore the role place plays in shaping young people's ambitions and choices. Another issue with regards to sampling was the parents/carers that I interviewed as part of this study. While the data from the interviews with parents/carers supplemented findings from previous research on choice of medium of education and school choice, I only interviewed six parents/carers. Furthermore, all of the parents/carers I interviewed were parents/carers of students from Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel as I was not able to recruit parents/carers of students from Cwm Mawr School. These parents/carers were also predominantly from middle-class backgrounds. I would have liked to have interviewed parents/carers from Cwm Mawr School and explored their reasons for choosing English-medium education for their children. It would also have been good to interview parents/carers from different socio-economic backgrounds and to explore whether different factors influence choice of medium of education of parents/carers from different backgrounds.

This study could also have used other methods to explore young people's aspirations and expectations. For instance, participant observation in the schools would have enabled me to

examine young people's educational experiences rather than relying on their own accounts of their educational experiences in interviews. Participant observation in the schools would also provide me with the opportunity to compare school practices in Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel and Cwm Mawr School and to explore how both schools facilitated young people's choices instead of depending on teachers' accounts in interviews. In addition, although I carried out interviews with some of the young people before and after they made the transition from compulsory to post-compulsory education, it would be interesting to re-interview some of the participants in this study to see whether they pursued and were able to achieve their long-term aspirations.

Final Thoughts

This study has illustrated how significant social and economic changes have changed the ways in which young people perceive their futures. The future orientations of young people in this study contrasted with the future orientations of the young people in Brown's (1987) study of young people in industrial South Wales. Furthermore, this research has added to the wealth of academic research on young people's aspirations and expectations. It has also contributed to the existing body of research, for example, Hodkinson *et al.* (1996) and Glaesser and Cooper (2014), which has assessed the merits of Bourdieu's Cultural Reproduction Theory and Rational Choice Theory in explaining young people's aspirations and expectations. This study has also made a particular contribution to research by exploring and comparing the aspirations and expectations of young people attending a Welsh-medium and an English-medium school in the South Wales Valleys. Based on my findings, I hope that policymakers will be able to direct resources towards encouraging young people to study in Welsh in further and higher education and to use the Welsh language outside of school as well as providing them with opportunities to do so. These developments will hopefully transform the way in which young people perceive the Welsh language from the language of the classroom to a living language. I also hope that policymakers will target resources towards addressing differences in young people's educational and social outcomes and will formulate policies that will help broaden young people's horizons and policies that will enable young people to achieve their aspirations. The first step for policymakers and researchers is to recognise that whilst young people's aspirations and expectations are 'rational', what young people consider to be a "rational" choice is shaped by a range of factors including their access to different forms of capital

(economic, social and cultural) and cultural norms and values. Only by acknowledging that both Rational Choice Theory and Bourdieu's Cultural Reproduction Theory together are able to increase our understanding of young people's aspirations and expectations will policymakers be able to start tackling educational and social inequalities which still persist in today's society.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Tables

Table A1.1: Academic Inheritors in Cwm Mawr School

Pseudonym	Category	Free School Meals Status	Occupational Class based on Household Reference Person (based on students' descriptions of parents'/carers' jobs)	Parents' /Carers' Education (as described by students)	Older Siblings	Older Siblings' Destinations
Tamsin	Academic Inheritor	No	Intermediate	Mother University	0	N/A
Chloe	Academic Inheritor	No	Salariat	Father University	0	N/A
Karen	Academic Inheritor	No	Salariat	Father University	0	N/A
Lucy	Academic Inheritor	Yes	Salariat	Stepfather University	0	N/A
Peter	Academic Inheritor	No	Intermediate	Father University	0	N/A

Table A1.2: Academic Strivers in Cwm Mawr School

Pseudonym	Category	Free School Meals Status	Occupational Class based on Household Reference Person (based on students' descriptions of parents'/carers' jobs)	Parents' /Carers' Education (as described by students)	Older Siblings	Older Siblings' Destinations
Rachel	Academic Striver	No	Salariat	Not sure	0	N/A
Rebecca	Academic Striver	No	Working Class	Parents Secondary School	0	N/A
Emily	Academic Striver	No	Intermediate	Parents and Step-mother Further Education	0	N/A
Louise	Academic Striver	Yes	Working Class	Parents Secondary School	Bro 22 Bro	Sixth Form and Working on the Railways Railways
Anthony	Academic Striver	Yes	Working Class	Parents Secondary School	0	N/A
Daniel	Academic Striver	Yes	Working Class	Mother Further Education	0	N/A
David	Academic Striver	No	Working Class	Not sure	0	N/A
Holly	Academic Striver	Yes	Working Class	Parents Further Education	0	N/A
Will	Academic Striver	No	Salariat	Not sure	Bro 25+	Working
John	Academic Striver	No	Salariat	Parents Further Education	Sis	University

Table A1.3: Vocational Students in Cwm Mawr School

Pseudonym	Category	Free School Meals Status	Occupational Class based on Household Reference Person (based on students' descriptions of parents'/carers' jobs)	Parents' /Carers' Education (as described by students)	Older Siblings	Older Siblings' Destinations
Rhiannon	Vocational Student	Yes	Working Class	Mother Further Education	0	N/A
Hannah	Vocational Student	Yes	Salariat	Father University	Bro 20	University
Michael	Vocational Student	No	Intermediate	Stepfather Further Education	Sis Bro	Further Education and running Beauty Shop Painter
Tom	Vocational Student	Yes	Working Class	Not sure	0	N/A
Elliott	Vocational Student	Yes	Intermediate	Not Sure	0	N/A
James	Vocational Student	No	Working Class	Parents Further Education	Bro 17 Bro 23	Both were in College
Ellie	Vocational Student	No	Working Class	Parents Secondary School	0	N/A
Aaron	Vocational Student	No	Salariat	Mother Further Education	Bro 18	Working on the Railways
Darren	Vocational Student	No	Intermediate	Father University	Bro 17	Electrician
Harry	Vocational Student	No	Salariat	Parents Secondary School	Bro 22	Further Education College and Looking for Work
Nicola	Vocational Student	Yes	Working Class	Parents Further Education	0	N/A

Table A1.4: Academic Inheritors in Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel

Pseudonym	Category	Free School Meals Status	Occupational Class based on Household Reference Person (based on students' descriptions of parents'/carers' jobs)	Parents' /Carers' Education (as described by students)	Older Siblings	Older Siblings' Destination
Sophie	Academic Inheritor	No	Salariat	Mother University	0	N/A
Natalie	Academic Inheritor	No	Salariat	Father University	0	N/A
Angharad	Academic Inheritor	No	Salariat	Father University	Bro 19	University
Alice	Academic Inheritor	No	Salariat	Mother University	0	N/A
Grace	Academic Inheritor	No	Salariat	Mother University	Bro	University
Nia	Academic Inheritor	No	Salariat	Parents University	0	N/A
Luke	Academic Inheritor	No	Salariat	Mother University	0	N/A
Dafydd	Academic Inheritor	No	Salariat	Parents University	0	N/A
Mark	Academic Inheritor	No	Salariat	Mother University	Stepsis	University
Alun	Academic Inheritor	No	Salariat	Father University	0	N/A

Table A1.5: Academic Strivers in Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel

Pseudonym	Category	Free School Meals Status	Occupational Class based on Household Reference Person (based on students' descriptions of parents'/carers' jobs)	Parents' /Carers' Education (as described by students)	Older Siblings	Older Siblings' Destination
Amy	Academic Striver	No	Working Class	Father Further Education	Bro 20	Apprenticeship and Painter
Vicky	Academic Striver	No	Salariat	Mother Further Education	Sis Bro Bro	Tree Surgeon RAF Rugby Player
Emma	Academic Striver	No	Intermediate	Mother Further Education	0	N/A
Tim	Academic Striver	No	Salariat	Father Further Education	0	N/A
Jo	Academic Striver	Yes	Working Class	Mother Further Education	0	N/A
Sian	Academic Striver	No	Working Class	Parents Further Education	Bro 19	Further Education College and Carpenter

Table A1.6: Vocational Students in Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel

Pseudonym	Category	Free School Meals Status	Occupational Class based on Household Reference Person (based on students' descriptions of parents'/carers' jobs)	Parents' /Carers' Education (as described by students)	Older Siblings	Older Siblings' Destination
Llyr	Vocational Student	No	Intermediate	Father and Stepmother Further Education	0	N/A
Steve	Vocational Student	Yes	Intermediate	Parents Further Education	0	N/A
Craig	Vocational Student	Yes	Working Class	Mother University	Sis	Sixth Form
Nathan	Vocational Student	Yes	Working Class	Mother University	0	N/A
Gareth	Vocational Student	Yes	Working Class	Not Sure	Sis 17-18	Sixth Form
Chris	Vocational Student	No	Intermediate	Stepfather University	Sis	Sixth Form
Charlotte	Vocational Student	No	Working Class	Mother Further Education	Sis Bro	Sixth Form and Cleaner Sixth Form and Looking for Work
Sam	Vocational Student	Yes	Working Class	Parents Further Education	0	N/A
Hayley	Vocational Student	Yes	Intermediate	Mother University	0	N/A
Ryan	Vocational Student	No	Working Class	Not Sure	0	N/A

Table A1.7: Employment rates of Males and Females in the South Wales Valleys and Wales in 2017 (Adapted from StatsWales. 2017c. *Employment rate by Welsh local area, year and gender* [Online]. Available at: <https://statswales.wales.gov.uk/Catalogue/Business-Economy-and-Labour-Market/People-and-Work/Employment/Persons-Employed/employmentrate-by-welshlocalarea-year-gender> [Accessed: 24/7/2017])

	Males (%)	Females (%)
Neath Port Talbot	75.8	65.7
Rhondda Cynon Taf	72.5	65.8
Merthyr Tydfil	70.4	67.7
Caerphilly	75.6	66.8
South Wales Valleys Average	73.6	66.5
Wales	74.8	68.1

Table A1.8. Workplace Employment by industry in the South Wales Valleys, Wales and United Kingdom (Adapted from StatsWales. 2017d. *Workplace employment by Welsh local areas and broad industry* [Online]. Available at: <https://statswales.wales.gov.uk/Catalogue/Business-Economy-and-Labour-Market/People-and-Work/Employment/Jobs/Whole-Workforce/WorkplaceEmployment-by-WelshLocalAreas-Industry> [Accessed 28/04/2017])

	Agriculture, forestry and fishing	Production	Construction	Wholesale, retail, transport, hotels and food	Information and communication	Finance and insurance activities	Real estate activities	Professional, scientific and technical activities; administrative and support service activities	Public administration, defence, education and health	Other service activities	All Service Industries	All industries
Neath Port Talbot	400	10500	3600	11800	300	300	1000	4700	15200	2900	36200	50800
Rhondda Cynon Taf	500	12700	7600	19600	600	1200	900	8000	28700	4400	63400	84300
Merthyr Tydfil	100	3900	1600	6600	900	200	400	1900	8600	1000	19600	25100
Caerphilly	300	12800	4100	13400	400	700	400	7900	16200	2400	41400	58500
South Wales Valleys	1300	39900	16900	51400	2200	2400	2700	22500	68700	10700	160600	218700
Wales	40800	172500	92700	357800	23900	30800	19100	167300	423500	77300	1099700	1405600
United Kingdom	403800	2845800	2157900	8291600	1365700	1061000	551500	5662100	7980500	1838400	26750800	32158200

Table A1.9: Proportion of Total Workplace Employment in each industry in the South Wales Valleys, Wales and United Kingdom (Adapted from StatsWales. 2017d. *Workplace employment by Welsh local areas and broad industry* [Online]. Available at: <https://statswales.wales.gov.uk/Catalogue/Business-Economy-and-Labour-Market/People-and-Work/Employment/Jobs/Whole-Workforce/WorkplaceEmployment-by-WelshLocalAreas-Industry> [Accessed 28/04/2017])

	Agriculture, forestry and fishing (%)	Production (%)	Construction (%)	Wholesale, retail, transport, hotels and food (%)	Information and communication (%)	Finance and insurance activities (%)	Real estate activities (%)	Professional, scientific and technical activities; administrative and support service activities (%)	Public administration, defence, education and health (%)	Other service activities (%)	All Service Industries (%)	All industries (%)
Neath Port Talbot	0.8	20.7	7.1	23.2	0.6	0.6	2.0	9.3	29.9	5.7	71.3	100.0
Rhondda Cynon Taf	0.6	15.1	9.0	23.3	0.7	1.4	1.1	9.5	34.0	5.2	75.2	100.0
Merthyr Tydfil	0.4	15.5	6.4	26.3	3.6	0.8	1.6	7.6	34.3	4.0	78.1	100.0
Caerphilly	0.5	21.9	7.0	22.9	0.7	1.2	0.7	13.5	27.7	4.1	70.8	100.0
South Wales Valleys	0.6	18.2	7.7	23.5	1.0	1.1	1.2	10.3	31.4	4.9	73.4	100.0
Wales	2.9	12.3	6.6	25.5	1.7	2.2	1.4	11.9	30.1	5.5	78.2	100.0
United Kingdom	1.3	8.8	6.7	25.8	4.2	3.3	1.7	17.6	24.8	5.7	83.2	100.0

Table A1.10: Average Gross Weekly Earnings in the South Wales Valleys, Cardiff, Vale of Glamorgan and Wales (Adapted from StatsWales 2016c. *Average gross weekly earnings by Welsh local areas and year (£)*. [Online] Available at: <https://statswales.wales.gov.uk/Catalogue/Business-Economy-and-Labour-Market/People-and-Work/Earnings/averageweeklyearnings-by-welshlocalareas-year> [Accessed: 02/05/2017])

	Average Gross Weekly Earnings (£)
Neath Port Talbot	557.30
Rhondda Cynon Taf	563.10
Merthyr Tydfil	576.50
Caerphilly	572.90
South Wales Valleys Average	567.45
Cardiff	622.40
The Vale of Glamorgan	619.10
Wales	565.90

Table A1.11: ILO unemployment rates in the South Wales Valleys and Wales (Adapted from StatsWales. 2017e. *ILO unemployment rates by Welsh local areas and year* [Online]. Available at: <https://statswales.wales.gov.uk/Catalogue/Business-Economy-and-Labour-Market/People-and-Work/Unemployment/ILO-Unemployment/ilounemploymentrates-by-welshlocalareas-year> [Accessed: 02/05/2017])

	Year ending 31 Dec 2007 (%)	Year ending 31 Dec 2008 (%)	Year ending 31 Dec 2009 (%)	Year ending 31 Dec 2010 (%)	Year ending 31 Dec 2011 (%)	Year ending 31 Dec 2012 (%)	Year ending 31 Dec 2013 (%)	Year ending 31 Dec 2014 (%)	Year ending 31 Dec 2015 (%)	Year ending 31 Dec 2016 (%)
Neath Port Talbot	5.1	5.4	9.7	8.9	10.4	7.1	8.9	6.9	6.8	5.4
Rhondda Cynon Taf	6.7	7.1	9.1	11.6	10.4	12.6	11.7	7	6.8	6.4
Merthyr Tydfil	8.2	7.5	13.7	11	14.9	12.1	9.9	7	7.9	6.3
Caerphilly	6.1	7.5	11.8	9.2	11.2	9	7.6	9.9	6.8	5
South Wales Valleys Average	6.5	6.9	11.1	10.2	11.7	10.2	9.5	7.7	7.1	5.8
Wales	5.5	6.3	8.2	8.3	8.3	8.3	7.9	6.8	5.9	4.6

Table A1.12: ILO unemployment rates of 16-24 year olds in the South Wales Valleys and Wales (Adapted from StatsWales. 2017e. *ILO unemployment rates by Welsh local areas and year* [Online]. Available at: <https://statswales.wales.gov.uk/Catalogue/Business-Economy-and-Labour-Market/People-and-Work/Unemployment/ILO-Unemployment/ilounemploymentrates-by-welshlocalareas-year> [Accessed: 04/05/2017])

	Year ending 31 Dec 2016 (%)
Neath Port Talbot	22.5
Rhondda Cynon Taf	12.5
Merthyr Tydfil	19.3
Caerphilly	14.3
South Wales Valleys	17.2
Wales	12.7

Table A1.13: Economic inactivity rates (excluding students) in the South Wales Valleys and Wales (Adapted from StatsWales. 2017f. *Economic inactivity rates (excluding students) by Welsh local area and year* [Online]. Available at: <https://statswales.wales.gov.uk/Catalogue/Business-Economy-and-Labour-Market/People-and-Work/Economic-Inactivity/economicinactivityratesexcludingstudents-by-welshlocalarea-year> [Accessed 04/05/2017])

	Year ending 31 Dec 2007 (%)	Year ending 31 Dec 2008 (%)	Year ending 31 Dec 2009 (%)	Year ending 31 Dec 2010 (%)	Year ending 31 Dec 2011 (%)	Year ending 31 Dec 2012 (%)	Year ending 31 Dec 2013 (%)	Year ending 31 Dec 2014 (%)	Year ending 31 Dec 2015 (%)	Year ending 31 Dec 2016 (%)
Neath Port Talbot	31.1	29.2	30.3	28.8	29.2	26.1	23.2	23.8	27.7	23.4
Rhondda Cynon Taf	25.4	25.2	28.7	26.8	26.2	23.9	21.8	22.9	21.4	23.0
Merthyr Tydfil	29.1	26.5	25.1	24.9	28.6	24.4	26.5	22.8	25.4	25.4
Caerphilly	27.6	29.1	26.5	28.5	26.5	25.5	21.8	23.5	23.6	22.8
South Wales Valleys	28.3	27.5	27.7	27.3	27.6	25.0	23.3	23.3	24.5	23.7
Wales	23.9	23.4	24.1	23.7	23.1	22.1	21.0	21.1	21.0	21.0

Table A1.14: Proportion of Welsh Speakers in in the South Wales Valleys and Wales (Adapted from Aitchison, J. and Carter, H. 2004. *Spreading the word: The Welsh language 2001*. Talybont: Y Lolfa and StatsWales. 2012. *Welsh speakers by local authority and broader age groups, 2001 and 2011 census* [Online]. Available at: <https://statswales.wales.gov.uk/Catalogue/Welsh-Language/WelshSpeakers-by-LA-BroaderAge-2001And2011Census> [Accessed: 02/05/2017])

	1991 (%)	2001 (%)	2011 (%)
Neath Port Talbot	17.8	18.0	15.3
Rhondda Cynon Taf	9	12.5	12.3
Merthyr Tydfil	7.5	10.2	8.9
Caerphilly	6	11.2	11.2
South Wales Valleys Average	10.1	13	11.9
Wales	18.7	20.8	19.0

Table A1.15: Total of Welsh speakers in Each Age Group in the South Wales Valleys and Wales in 2011 (Adapted from StatsWales. 2012. *Welsh speakers by local authority and broader age groups, 2001 and 2011 census* [Online]. Available at: <https://statswales.wales.gov.uk/Catalogue/Welsh-Language/WelshSpeakers-by-LA-BroaderAge-2001And2011Census> [Accessed: 27/04/2017])

	Total 3-19 years old	Total 20-44 years old	Total 45-64 years old	Total 65 Years Old and Over	Total
Neath Port Talbot	7682	5003	3929	4084	20698
Rhondda Cynon Taf	13857	9024	2967	1931	27779
Merthyr Tydfil	2546	1518	552	412	5028
Caerphilly	11665	5211	1635	740	19251
South Wales Valleys	35750	20756	9083	7167	72756
Wales	212401	150742	107941	90932	562016

Table A1.16: Proportion of Welsh speakers in Each Age Group in the South Wales Valleys and Wales in 2011 (Adapted from StatsWales. 2012. *Welsh speakers by local authority and broader age groups, 2001 and 2011 census* [Online]. Available at: <https://statswales.wales.gov.uk/Catalogue/Welsh-Language/WelshSpeakers-by-LA-BroaderAge-2001And2011Census> [Accessed: 28/04/2017])

	% 3-19 years old	% 20-44 years old	% 45-64 years old	% 65 years old and over
Neath Port Talbot	37.1	24.2	19.1	19.7
Rhondda Cynon Taf	49.9	32.5	10.7	7
Merthyr Tydfil	50.6	30.2	11	8.2
Caerphilly	60.6	27.1	8.5	3.8
South Wales Valleys	49.6	28.5	12.3	9.7
Wales	37.8	26.8	19.2	16.2

Table A1.17: Proportion considering themselves to be only Welsh in the South Wales Valleys and Wales in the 2011 Census (Adapted from: Office for National Statistics. 2012. *2011 Census: National identity, local authorities in England and Wales*. Titchfield: Office for National Statistics)

	Welsh only identity (%)
Neath Port Talbot	71.8
Rhondda Cynon Taf	73.3
Merthyr Tydfil	73.2
Caerphilly	71.2
South Wales Valleys Average	72.4
Wales	57.5

Table A1.18: Highest qualification level of working age adults in the South Wales Valleys and Wales, 2014. (Adapted from: StatsWales. 2017g. *Highest qualification level of working age adults by region and local authority* [Online]. Available at: <https://statswales.wales.gov.uk/Catalogue/Education-and-Skills/Post-16-Education-and-Training/Data-For-Regions-of-Wales/highestqualificationlevelofworkingageadults-by-region-localauthority> [Accessed: 04/05/2017])

	No qualifications (%)	Qualified to NQF level 2 or above (%)	Qualified to NQF level 3 or above (%)	Qualified to NQF level 4 or above (%)
Neath Port Talbot	13.9	70.2	48.7	27.7
Rhondda Cynon Taf	12.8	71.2	49.6	27.7
Merthyr Tydfil	14.3	69	49.2	26.8
Caerphilly	10.8	73.3	53.7	29.1
South Wales Valleys	13.0	70.9	50.3	27.8
Wales	9.8	76.6	56.6	35.2

Table A1.19: Examination achievements of pupils aged 15 in South Wales Valleys and Wales, 2013/4 academic year (Adapted from: StatsWales. 2016a. *Examination achievements of pupils aged 15 by local authority* [Online]. Available at: <https://statswales.wales.gov.uk/Catalogue/Education-and-Skills/Schools-and-Teachers/Examinations-and-Assessments/Key-Stage-4/ExaminationAchievementsOfPupilsAged15-by-LocalAuthority> [Accessed: 04/05/2017])

	Percentage who achieved Level 2 incl. English/Welsh and maths (%)		
	Boys	Girls	All Pupils
Neath Port Talbot	48.5	63.3	55.8
Rhondda Cynon Taf	44.5	56.9	50.5
Merthyr Tydfil	43.5	54.2	48.9
Caerphilly	43.8	56.4	50.0
South Wales Valleys Average	45.1	57.7	51.3
Wales	51.4	59.7	55.4

Table A1.20: Destinations of Year 11 students from the South Wales Valleys and Wales in 2004 (Adapted from: Careers Wales. 2004. *Destinations of School Leavers by LEA. Year: 2004. Year* [Online]. Available at: http://www.careerswales.com/prof/upload/pdf/2005823_20050823_year_11_eng.pdf [Accessed: 04/05/2017])⁶⁴

	Full Time Education Total	Full Time Education %	Work Based Programme Total	Work Based Programme %	Any form of Education or Training Total	Any form of Education or Training %	Employment Total	Employment %	NEET Total	NEET %	Total
Neath Port Talbot	1368	73.9	195	10.5	1563	84.4	89	4.8	200	10.8	1852
Rhondda Cynon Taf	2644	79.8	258	7.8	2902	87.6	227	6.8	211	6.4	3314
Caerphilly	1811	74.8	227	9.4	2083	86	176	7.3	208	8.6	2422
Merthyr Tydfil	547	74.3	78	10.6	625	84.9	60	8.2	51	6.9	736
South Wales Valleys	6370	75.7	758	9.6	7173	85.7	552	6.8	670	8.2	8324
Wales	29098	77.9	2992	8	32090	85.9	2545	6.8	2733	7.3	37368

⁶⁴ This table excludes missing data. Therefore, the percentages in this table are different to the percentages in Careers Wales's Document.

Table A1.21: Destinations of Year 11 students from the South Wales Valleys and Wales in 2014 (Adapted from: Careers Wales. 2014. *Destinations of School Leavers by LEA. Year: 2014. Year 11.* [Online]. Available at: <http://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/static.live.careerswales.net/Destinations2014-byLEA-Year11.pdf> [Accessed: 04/05/2017])⁶⁵

	Full Time Education Total	Full Time Education %	Full Time and Part time Education Total	Full and Part Time Education %	Work Based Programme Total	Work Based Programme %	Any form of Education or Training Total	Any form of Education or Training %	Employment Total	Employment %	NEET Total	NEET %	Total
Neath Port Talbot	1440	87	1446	87.4	131	7.9	1577	95.3	15	0.9	63	3.8	1655
Rhondda Cynon Taf	2482	90	2485	90.1	119	4.3	2604	94.5	44	1.6	109	4	2757
Caerphilly	1860	87.9	1864	88.1	151	7.1	2015	95	25	1.2	76	3.6	2116
Merthyr Tydfil	512	83.4	512	83.4	75	12.2	587	95.6	11	1.8	16	2.6	614
South Wales Valleys	6294	88.1	6307	88.3	476	6.7	6783	95	95	1.3	264	3.7	7142
Wales	29690	88.6	29834	89	2015	6	31849	95	619	1.8	1040	3.1	33508

⁶⁵ This table excludes missing data. Therefore, the percentages in this table are different to the percentages in Careers Wales's Document.

Table A1.22: Higher Education Participation Rate by Local Authority between 2006/7 and 2009/10 (Adapted from: Wright, C. 2014. *Widening Access to higher education in Wales: Analysis using linked administrative data*. Cardiff: WISERD)

	HE Participation	
	Boys	Girls
Blaenau Gwent	23.7	30.1
Bridgend	31.1	40.7
Caerphilly	24	32.5
Cardiff	33.4	39.1
Carmarthenshire	32.7	44.3
Ceredigion	34.2	50.4
Conwy	30.9	40.6
Denbighshire	27	36.5
Flintshire	27.8	36.7
Gwynedd	32.3	43.4
Isle of Anglesey	32.3	44
Merthyr Tydfil	37.8	48
Monmouthshire	35.4	46.2
Neath Port Talbot	27.1	36.8
Newport	30.6	36.5
Pembrokeshire	32.4	41.9
Powys	34.4	43.9
Rhondda Cynon Taf	28.7	35.2
Swansea	32.1	39.1
Torfaen	24.3	30.3
Vale of Glamorgan	38.7	43.9
Wrexham	23.2	30
South Wales Valleys Average	29.4	38.1
Wales Average	30.6	39.6

Table A1.23: The Subjects and Courses that Academic Inheritors in Both Schools Aspired to Study after Year 11

Subject/Course	Male Students			Female Students		
	Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel	Cwm Mawr School	Total	Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel	Cwm Mawr School	Total
Applied Science/ BTEC Science	0	0	0	0	1	1
Art	0	0	0	1	0	1
Biology	0	1	1	3	1	4
Business	0	0	0	0	1	1
Chemistry	4	1	5	3	1	4
Drama	0	0	0	1	0	1
English Literature	1	0	1	3	2	5
French	0	1	1	0	1	1
Geography	2	0	2	0	0	0
History	2	0	2	3	0	3
Maths	3	0	3	3	0	3
Physical Education	2	1	3	0	2	2
Physics	1	0	1	0	0	0
Religious Studies	0	0	0	1	2	3
Sociology	0	0	0	1	0	1
Textiles	0	0	0	0	1	1
Welsh	0	0	0	0	1	1

Table A1.24: The Subjects and Courses that Academic Strivers in Both Schools Aspired to Study after Year 11

Subject/Course	Male Students			Female Students		
	Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel	Cwm Mawr School	Total	Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel	Cwm Mawr School	Total
Applied Science/ BTEC Science	0	1	1	0	4	4
Art	0	2	2	3	0	3
Biology	1	0	1	2	0	2
Chemistry	1	0	1	1	0	1
Childcare	0	0	0	0	1	1
Design and Technology	0	1	1	0	0	0
English Literature	0	0	0	0	2	2
Engineering	0	1	1	0	0	0
French	0	0	0	0	1	1
Geography	0	0	0	0	1	1
History	0	0	0	2	0	2
Information Technology	0	1	1	0	0	0
Maths	0	1	1	2	1	3
Motor Vehicle	0	3	3	0	0	0
Physical Education	0	1	1	0	2	2
Psychology	0	0	0	2	0	2
Religious Studies	0	0	0	0	1	1
Sociology	0	0	0	2	0	2
Spanish	0	0	0	1	0	1
Travel and Tourism	0	0	0	0	1	1
Welsh	0	1	1	0	1	1

Table A1.25: The Subjects and Courses that Vocational Students in Both Schools Aspired to Study after Year 11

Subject/Course	Male Students			Female Students		
	Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel	Cwm Mawr School	Total	Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel	Cwm Mawr School	Total
Applied Science/ BTEC Science	0	2	2	0	1	1
Art	2	0	2	0	1	1
Business	0	1	1	1	0	1
Carpentry	1	1	2	0	0	0
Childcare	0	0	0	0	3	3
Construction	2	0	2	0	0	0
Cookery	0	0	0	1	1	2
Engineering/ Aircraft Engineer	1	1	2	0	0	0
English Literature	0	1	1	0	1	1
Hair and Beauty	0	0	0	0	1	1
Health and Social Care	0	0	0	0	1	1
History	1	0	1	0	1	1
Information Technology	0	1	1	0	0	0
Maths	0	1	1	0	1	1
Media Studies	1	0	1	0	0	0
Motor Vehicles	0	1	1	0	0	0
Physical Education	1	1	2	0	1	1
Plumbing	2	0	2	0	0	0
Public Services	0	1	1	0	0	0
Teaching Assistant Course	0	0	0	1	0	1

Table A1.26: The Subjects and Courses that Students in Cwm Mawr School and Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel wanted to Study after Year 11

Subject/Course	Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel	Cwm Mawr School
Applied Science/ BTEC Science	0	9
Art	6	3
Biology	6	2
Business	1	2
Carpentry	1	1
Chemistry	9	2
Childcare	0	4
Construction	2	0
Cookery	1	1
Design and Technology	0	1
Drama	1	0
Engineering / Aircraft Engineering	1	2
English Literature	4	6
French	0	3
Geography	2	1
History	8	1
Hair and Beauty	0	1
Health and Social Care	0	1
Information Technology	0	2
Maths	8	4
Media Studies	1	0
Motor Vehicle	0	4
Physical Education	3	8
Physics	1	0
Plumbing	2	0
Psychology	2	0
Public Services	0	1
Religious Studies	1	3
Sociology	3	0
Spanish	1	0
Teaching Assistant Course	1	0
Textiles	0	1
Travel and Tourism	0	1
Welsh	0	3

Table A1.27: The Careers that the Academic Inheritors Aspired to Gain

Occupation	Male Students			Female Students		
	Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel	Cwm Mawr School	Total	Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel	Cwm Mawr School	Total
Actress	0	0	0	0	1	1
Barrister	0	0	0	1	0	1
Chemical Engineer	1	0	1	0	0	0
Doctor	0	0	0	1	0	1
Events Manager	0	0	0	0	1	1
Fashion Designer	0	0	0	1	0	1
Forensic Scientist	0	0	0	0	1	1
Innovator	1	0	1	0	0	0
Lawyer/Solicitor	0	0	0	2	0	2
Midwife	0	0	0	1	0	1
Pharmacist	1	0	1	0	0	0
Physiotherapist	1	1	2	0	0	0
Police Officer	0	0	0	1	1	2
Psychiatrist	0	0	0	1	0	1
Psychologist	1	0	1	0	0	0
Teacher	1	0	1	1	2	3
Textiles Worker	0	0	0	0	1	1
Vet	0	0	0	1	0	1

Table A1.28: The Careers that the Academic Strivers Aspired to Gain

Occupation	Male Students			Female Students		
	Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel	Cwm Mawr School	Total	Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel	Cwm Mawr School	Total
Aircraft Engineer	0	1	1	0	0	0
Architect	0	1	1	0	0	0
Chef	0	1	1	0	0	0
Chiropodist	0	0	0	0	1	1
Doctor	1	0	1	0	0	0
Engineer	0	1	1	0	0	0
Forensic Scientist	0	1	1	0	0	0
Games Designer	0	1	1	0	0	0
Geneticist	0	0	0	1	0	1
Language Tutor	0	0	0	0	1	1
Lawyer	1	0	1	1	0	1
Nurse	0	0	0	0	2	2
Pathologist	0	0	0	1	0	1
Physiotherapist	0	1	1	0	0	0
Police Officer	0	0	0	1	0	1
Politician	1	0	1	0	0	0
Psychologist	0	0	0	1	0	1
Running a Business	1	0	1	0	0	0
Script Writer	0	1	1	0	0	0
Surgeon	0	0	0	1	0	1
Tattoo Artist	0	0	0	1	0	1
Teacher	0	0	0	2	2	4
Translator	0	0	0	1	0	1
Vet	1	0	1	0	0	0

Table A1.29: The Careers that the Vocational Students Aspired to Gain

Occupation	Male Students			Female Students		
	Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel	Cwm Mawr School	Total	Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel	Cwm Mawr School	Total
Aircraft Operator	0	1	1	0	0	0
Animator	1	0	1	0	0	0
Builder	2	1	3	0	0	0
Carer	0	0	0	0	1	1
Carpenter	1	1	2	0	0	0
Chef	0	0	0	1	0	1
Engineer	1	1	2	0	0	0
Fire Fighter	0	1	1	0	0	0
Forensic Scientist	0	1	1	0	0	0
Hairdresser	0	0	0	0	2	2
Nurse	0	0	0	0	1	1
Nursery Assistant	0	0	0	1	2	3
Plumber	2	1	3	0	0	0
Police Officer	0	1	1	0	0	0
Prison Warden	0	1	1	0	0	0
Retail / Shop Assistant	1	0	1	1	0	1
Sport Coach	0	0	0	0	1	1
Teacher	2	1	3	0	1	1
Working in the Armed Forces	0	1	1	0	0	0

Appendix 2: Students' Destinations after Year 11

This section focuses on young people's destinations after Year 11 and explores the decisions that young people made after finishing compulsory education. This section starts by examining whether students decided to stay on in some form of education and training or not. It also explores the institutions and subjects/courses that students chose to pursue after Year 11. The main aim of this section is to compare students' decisions at the end of Year 11 with the aspirations that they expressed almost a year previously (which were outlined in Chapter 6 and 7). Therefore, this section will examine whether students pursued their aspirations and if so, whether they were able to fulfil and achieve their aspirations

Table A2.1 displays the educational institutions that students in Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel and Cwm Mawr School entered initially after Year 11.

Table A2.1: Initial Destinations of Students after Year 11⁶⁶ (as of September 2015)

Destinations	Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel	Cwm Mawr School
Sixth Form	16	22
Different Sixth Form	1	0
F.E. College	7	3
Independent Fee Paying College	1	0
Military College	1	0
Apprenticeship	0	1
Work	0	0
Not in Education, Employment and Training	0	0

⁶⁶ It is important to note that between October 2015 and April 2016, I tried to make contact with students to discover their destinations. I made contact with the majority of participants in this study. With regards to the students who I was unable to contact, I have had to rely on information given by friends and teachers.

Table A2.2 illustrates the types of courses that students were studying initially in the different educational institutions that they had entered after Year 11. Based on Jin *et al.*'s (2011) classification of qualifications, it was possible to group subjects and courses that students wanted to pursue into three distinct pathways – academic pathway (taking only AS Level subjects), vocational pathway (pursuing an Apprenticeship or a work-orientated qualification such as a CACHE Diploma, a BTEC qualification, NVQ Level 2 and 3 or Applied AS levels such as Applied Science which are considered to be a more work-orientated alternative) and a combination of academic and vocational subjects.

Table A2.2: Students' Initial Pathways after Year 11 (as of September 2015)

Destination		Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel	Cwm Mawr School
Sixth Form	Academic	12	2
	Combination of Academic and Vocational	1	10
	Vocational	3	10
Different Sixth Form	Academic	1	0
	Combination of Academic and Vocational	0	0
	Vocational	0	0
Further Education College	Academic	0	0
	Combination of Academic and Vocational	0	0
	Vocational	7	3
Independent College	Academic	1	0
	Combination of Academic and Vocational	0	0
	Vocational	0	0
Military College	Academic	0	0
	Combination of Academic and Vocational	0	0
	Vocational	1	0
Apprenticeship	Academic	0	0
	Combination of Academic and Vocational	0	0
	Vocational	0	1

As Table A2.1 and A2.2 illustrate, all of the students were in some form of education or training after Year 11. The majority of students in both schools returned to the sixth form of the school after Year 11. Yet, more students in Cwm Mawr School (n=22) returned to sixth form than students from Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel (n=16). One of the students from Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel, Natalie, was studying academic subjects in a sixth form in an English-medium school after Year 11. The fact that students were able to study through the medium of English rather than Welsh in other educational institutions unlike in Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel's sixth form contributes to the differences between the numbers of students who returned to sixth forms in both schools.

With regards to students' pathways, more students in Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel's Sixth Form (n=12) were studying only academic AS subjects after Year 11 compared to students in Cwm Mawr School's Sixth Form (n=2). In contrast, higher numbers of students in Cwm Mawr School's Sixth Form were studying a combination of academic and vocational subjects (n=10) as well as only vocational subjects (n=10) in Year 11. Some commentators have argued that the difficulty faced by Welsh-medium schools to collaborate with other educational providers (discussed in Chapter 5) makes it particularly challenging for Welsh-medium schools to offer vocational courses (National Assembly for Wales's Children and Young People Committee Committee 2012: 48). Despite these challenges, based on the prospectuses of the two schools, Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel was offering a similar amount of vocational courses to Cwm Mawr School.

Chapter 7 illustrated how certain parents/carers of the Academic Inheritors dissuaded their children to pursue vocational pathways and encouraged their children to choose academic courses and subjects as they considered that these subjects would enable their children to progress to higher education. The substantially higher numbers of Academic Inheritors in Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel provides some indication as to why more students were studying purely academic subjects in Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel compared to Cwm Mawr School. School practices and policies may also contribute to the differences in the types of subjects that students decided to study in both schools, with Chapter 7 illustrating how teachers guided students who they perceived to be 'lower ability' students towards subjects of a 'lesser' academic standing.

The second most common destination for students in both schools was F.E College, with slightly higher number of students going to a Further Education College from Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel (n=7) compared to students from Cwm Mawr School (n=3). The fact that attending a Further Education College as opposed to Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel's sixth form meant that students would be able to study through the medium of English rather than in Welsh provides some explanation to this trend.

All of the students (N=10) who went to a further education college after Year 11 were studying vocational subjects. Seven out of ten of these students were studying vocational subjects that were not offered in the Cwm Mawr School's Sixth Form or in Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel's Sixth Form, illustrating how students' choice of educational institution is shaped by the subjects/courses which are available in these educational institutions. As noted in Chapter 7, negative past experiences of secondary school may explain the relatively higher number of students studying Vocational courses/subjects who decided to go to a Further Education College.

One of the students from Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel, Nia, an Academic Inheritor, had gained a place and a scholarship to attend an Independent, fee paying College. Nia was studying academic subjects as these were the only types of subjects that this College offered in order to prepare students for university. Another student, Sam, a Vocational student, who had chosen to go to a Military College was studying vocational subjects as the College specialised in vocational courses in order to prepare young people for careers in Public Services and the Armed Forces.

Only one student, John, an Academic Striver from Cwm Mawr School (who aspired to go to sixth form after Year 11) had successfully gained an apprenticeship as an engineer with an aircraft company. Despite expressing aspirations of wanting to go university, John had also considered pursuing an apprenticeship as an option in the future. Factors such as the fact that his father worked as an aircraft engineer for the same company, the prospects of gaining a relatively well-paid job and earning money while doing the apprenticeship may have

influenced John to apply for the apprenticeship⁶⁷. Other students had aspirations of becoming an apprentice, but were not in apprenticeships after Year 11. This finding reflects trends across the South Wales Valleys and Wales, with the percentage of students from these areas gaining an apprenticeship relatively low (see Chapter 4). The relative lack of apprenticeships available for young people in Wales and across the UK (Steedman 2010: 2) is a factor which contributes towards the low numbers of young people who progress into an apprenticeship after Year 11.

Table A2.3 to Table A2.8 compare the aspirations and destinations of students with regards subjects/courses and educational institution.

Table A2.3: Comparison of Aspirations and Destinations regarding Educational Institution

Comparison of Aspirations and Destinations	Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel	Cwm Mawr School
Same	20	21
Different	6	5

Table A2.4: Comparison of Aspirations and Students' Decisions regarding Subjects/Courses

Comparison of Aspiration and Decision	Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel	Cwm Mawr School
Same	23	18
Similar	2	7
Different	1	0
N/A⁶⁸	0	1

⁶⁷ I was unable to interview John and I gained information about his destination from his friend.

⁶⁸ As Harry, a student from Cwm Mawr School, was unsure during the first interview what subjects he wanted to study after Year 11, it is not possible to compare his aspirations and subject choice.

Table A2.5: Aspirations and Destinations after Year 11 of Students of Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel

Name	Aspiration after Year 11	Destination After Year 11	Comparison of Aspirations and Destinations
Sophie	Sixth Form	Sixth Form	Same
Natalie	Sixth Form	English-medium Sixth Form	Different
Angharad	Sixth Form	Sixth Form	Same
Amy	Sixth Form	Sixth Form	Same
Alice	Sixth Form	Sixth Form	Same
Grace	Sixth Form	College	Different
Vicky	Sixth Form (Top Aspiration - Sixth Form)	Sixth Form	Same
Emma	College	Sixth Form	Different
Nia	Sixth Form or an Independent College (Top Aspiration – Independent College)	Independent College	Same
Tim	Sixth Form	Sixth Form	Same
Llyr	Apprenticeship	College	Different
Luke	Sixth Form	Sixth Form	Same
Dafydd	Sixth Form	Sixth Form	Same
Mark	Sixth Form	Sixth Form	Same
Steve	Sixth Form or College (Top Aspiration - Sixth Form)	College	Same
Craig	Apprenticeship or get a job (Undecided)	College	Different
Nathan	Sixth Form or College or Getting a Job (Top Aspiration - Sixth Form)	Sixth Form	Same
Jo	Sixth Form and University	Sixth Form	Same
Gareth	Sixth Form or College (Undecided)	Sixth Form	Same
Sam	Apprenticeship	Military College	Different
Sian	Sixth Form	Sixth Form	Same
Chris	College or Apprenticeship (Top Aspiration -College)	College	Same
Charlotte	Sixth Form or College (Top Aspiration - Sixth Form)	Sixth Form	Same
Hayley	College	College	Same
Alun	Sixth Form	Sixth Form	Same
Ryan	College	College	Same

Table A2.6: Aspirations and Destinations after Year 11 of Students of Cwm Mawr School

Name	Aspiration	Destination	Comparisons of Aspiration and Destination
Tamsin	Sixth form	Sixth Form	Same
Rachel	Sixth form	Sixth Form	Same
Rhiannon	College	Sixth Form	Different
Rebecca	Sixth form	Sixth Form	Same
Hannah	Sixth Form or College	Sixth Form	Same
Louise	Sixth Form	Sixth Form	Same
Chloe	Sixth Form (Top Aspiration - Sixth Form)	Sixth Form	Same
Emily	Sixth Form	Sixth Form	Same
John	Sixth Form	Apprenticeship	Different
Tom	Sixth Form	Sixth Form	Same
Michael	College	Sixth Form	Different
Daniel	Sixth Form	Sixth Form	Same
Anthony	Sixth Form	Sixth Form	Same
Lucy	College	College	Same
Karen	Sixth Form	Sixth Form	Same
Holly	Sixth Form	Sixth Form	Same
Peter	Sixth Form	Sixth Form	Same
David	Sixth Form	College	Different
James	Sixth Form or College (Top Aspiration - Sixth Form)	Sixth Form	Same
Elliott	Sixth Form or College (Top Aspiration - College)	College	Same
Will	Sixth Form	Sixth Form	Same
Ellie	Sixth Form or Getting a Job (Top Aspiration - Sixth Form)	Sixth Form	Same
Aaron	Sixth Form	Sixth Form	Same
Nicola	Sixth Form	Sixth Form	Same
Harry	Sixth Form	Sixth Form	Same
Darren	College	Sixth Form	Different

Table A2.7: The Types of subjects that students from Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel wanted to study and chose after Year 11

Name	Type of Subjects Wanted to Study After Year 11	Type of Subject Chosen After Year 11	Aspirations and Decisions
Sophie	Academic	Academic	Same
Natalie	Academic	Academic	Same
Angharad	Combination of Academic and Vocational	Academic	Similar
Amy	Academic	Academic	Same
Alice	Academic	Academic	Same
Grace	Academic	Vocational	Different
Vicky	Academic	Academic	Same
Emma	Academic	Academic	Same
Nia	Academic	Academic	Same
Tim	Academic	Academic	Same
Llyr	Vocational	Vocational	Same
Luke	Academic	Academic	Same
Dafydd	Academic	Academic	Same
Mark	Academic	Academic	Same
Steve	Vocational	Vocational	Same
Craig	Vocational	Vocational	Same
Nathan	Combination of Academic and Vocational	Vocational	Similar
Jo	Academic	Academic	Same
Gareth	Vocational	Vocational	Same
Sam	Vocational	Vocational	Same
Sian	Academic	Academic	Same
Chris	Vocational	Vocational	Same
Charlotte	Vocational	Vocational	Same
Hayley	Vocational	Vocational	Same
Alun	Academic	Academic	Same
Ryan	Vocational	Vocational	Same

Table A2.8: The types of subjects that students from Cwm Mawr School wanted to study and chose after Year 11

Name	Type of Subjects wanted to study after Year 11	Type of Subjects chosen after Year 11	Aspirations and Decisions
Tamsin	Combination of Academic and Vocational	Combination of Academic and Vocational	Same
Rachel	Academic	Combination of Academic and Vocational	Similar
Rhiannon	Vocational	Vocational	Same
Rebecca	Combination of Academic and Vocational	Combination of Academic and Vocational	Same
Hannah	Vocational	Vocational	Same
Louise	Combination of Academic and Vocational	Combination of Academic and Vocational	Same
Chloe	Academic	Combination of Academic and Vocational	Similar
Emily	Combination of Academic and Vocational	Combination of Academic and Vocational	Same
John	Vocational	Vocational	Same
Tom	Combination of Academic and Vocational	Vocational	Similar
Michael	Vocational	Vocational	Same
Daniel	Combination of Academic and Vocational	Academic	Similar
Anthony	Combination of Academic and Vocational	Combination of Academic and Vocational	Same
Lucy	Combination of Academic and Vocational	Vocational	Similar
Karen	Combination of Academic and Vocational	Combination of Academic and Vocational	Same
Holly	Combination of Academic and Vocational	Vocational	Similar
Peter	Academic	Academic	Same
David	Combination of Academic and Vocational	Vocational	Similar
James	Vocational	Vocational	Same
Elliott	Vocational	Vocational	Same
Will	Combination of Academic and Vocational	Combination of Academic and Vocational	Same

Ellie	Vocational	Vocational	Same
Aaron	Vocational	Vocational	Same
Nicola	Combination of Academic and Vocational	Combination of Academic and Vocational	Same
Harry	Not sure	Vocational	N/A
Darren	Vocational	Vocational	Same

When we compare students' aspirations and destinations in terms of the educational institutions that students entered and the subjects/courses that they pursued initially after Year 11 (see Table A2.3 to Table A2.8), the majority of the students in both schools pursued and were able to fulfil their aspirations. There were differences between some of students' aspirations and initial destinations in terms of the institution that they entered after Year 11. Most of these students had either aspired to go to sixth form or a Further Education College and had gone to the opposite educational institution after Year 11. One of the main factors which lead to students deciding to enter an educational institution different to the one that they intended to was because of the subjects/courses that they wanted to study. For instance a student from Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel, Natalie, expressed a desire of going to Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel's sixth form, but chose to transfer to an English-medium sixth form after Year 11. While Natalie felt that making the shift from being educated through the medium of Welsh to English would "benefit me more when I go to university because...university is all in English", her decision to attend an English sixth form was also because the "option boxes⁶⁹ didn't work" in Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel's sixth form, illustrating how subject choice can influence institutional choice. There were other students who had aspired to go to Further Education College, but decided to go to sixth form in the end. One factor which may have contributed to this is that teachers were able to persuade students to return to sixth form.

In terms of subject choice, it is clear that the majority of students in Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel and a substantial number of students in Cwm Mawr School were studying the same types of subjects to the ones that they aspired to study after Year 11. For instance, students who aspired to study academic subjects were studying academic subjects after Year 11. Some students were

⁶⁹ Schools, Further Education Colleges and other educational institutions tend to divide subjects into different boxes and students must choose one subject from each box to study at Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5. It is not possible for students to choose subjects in the same box.

studying similar types of subjects after Year 11 to the ones that they aspired to study. For instance, a number of students in Cwm Mawr School who had aspired to study academic subjects were studying a combination of academic and vocational subjects after Year 11. Only one of the students, Grace, an Academic Inheritor from Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel, was pursuing a substantially different pathway to the one that they had expressed an aspiration of pursuing in Year 11. In Year 11, Grace noted that she wanted to study A Level, academic subjects after Year 11. A year later, Grace was studying a Level 3 Diploma in a Further Education College. Despite this shift from an academic to a vocational pathway, Grace was still academically orientated and aspired to do a teaching degree in university after Further Education.

Discussion

This chapter has shown stability in terms of students' aspirations and decisions, with most students pursuing and being able to achieve their aspirations. While certain students decided to study in a different educational institutions to what they were planning on attending, they tended to study the same types of subjects after Year 11 to what they had aspired to study. While there were certain exceptions with for instance, Grace, choosing to study a Vocational course as opposed to an Academic course, these students' long-term educational and career aspirations remained the same to what they had expressed a year previously.

However, we need to acknowledge that focusing on young people's transition from compulsory education to post-compulsory education only provides us with a snapshot of their educational trajectories. Six months into the academic year, two of the participants, Lucy, an Academic Inheritor and Rhiannon, a Vocational Student from Cwm Mawr School, had dropped out from the course or subjects that they had chosen to study after Year 11. Lucy had enrolled onto a Fashion Design course, but left college a couple of months later. In her last correspondence to me, Lucy noted that she was looking for work, but noted that she would like to go back to college noting that she "regret[s] leaving and misses the routine of education". Rhiannon had initially chosen to go to sixth form, but dropped out months later. When she was re-interviewed, Rhiannon was doing a Childcare course with a local training provider.

There were a number of factors which made these students decide to quit their course. Dissatisfaction with the course was cited as one of the reasons why these students decided to quit their course. For students, particularly from working class backgrounds, financial considerations played a role in directing them towards quitting their course. For instance, Rhiannon had decided to study a course with a training provider as she had heard from friends that she would be paid each week for studying the course. In sixth form, she was not being paid for studying her courses as she was not receiving the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA)⁷⁰. There were other students such as Charlotte from Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel who did admit that they had considered dropping out of their course. Different to Rhiannon, Charlotte was receiving EMA. Charlotte had started a job in the local Chinese takeaway restaurant to support herself and her family who were “*struglo* [struggling]” financially. This reflects statistical evidence, which indicates that students from lower socio-economic backgrounds are more likely to combine part-time work with their studies compared to students from the higher socio-economic backgrounds (see Callender and Wilkinson 2003; Callender 2008). Similar to participants in other studies (see Moreau and Leathwood 2006; Callender 2008) who undertake part time work with studying, Charlotte was finding it difficult to balance part-time work with her studies. She tended to work late during the evenings. Consequently, she felt tired in sixth form and in her placements. These case studies highlight that in order for us to gain a valuable insight into young people’s progression through the education system, we need to not just focus on transitions, but also look at the retention and experience of students on the courses that they have chosen to pursue.

⁷⁰ Different to the UK Government, the Welsh Government like the Scottish Parliament and the Northern Ireland Assembly have kept the Education Maintenance Allowance, a means-tested bursary which is regarded as providing individuals from low-socio economic households a financial incentive to participate in further education (Gov.uk 2017b).

Appendix 3: Methodological Materials

Interview Guide for First Interview with Students

How old are you?

What languages do you speak?

What is your nationality?

Family

Now, could you tell me a little bit about who you live with?

Questions regarding older siblings

Have you got any brothers or sisters? Are they older than you?

What do your brothers/sisters do? What are their jobs?

Have they gone to sixth form/college or university?

Parents/Carers

Do your parents/carers (or parent/carer) work? What are your parents'/carers' (or parent's/carer's) job(s)?

Did they go to university? Did they go to sixth form/college?

Do you talk about school work with your parents/carers? What kind of things do you talk about with your parents/carers (in regards to school work)? Do they understand your school work? Do they encourage you to do your homework?

What do they think of school and education? What are your parents'/carer's opinion of school and education?

What do your parents/carers want you to do after you finish Year 11?

Community

Where do you live?

How would you describe your local area to someone of the same age who has just moved in next door?

Are there job opportunities for young people in the local area? What kinds of jobs are available?

Is doing well at school respected in your neighbourhood?

Do you know if any of your neighbours have gone to university?

Questions regarding choice of school

Do you know why your parents/carers decided to send you to this school? Did you have a say in deciding which secondary school you would attend? Are you happy that your parents/carers sent you to this school?

The school

How did you find primary school? Did you enjoy primary school?

How do you find secondary school? Do you enjoy secondary school?

Which do you prefer – primary or secondary school?

How are the teachers in secondary school? How is your relationship with the teachers? What do teachers think of you?

Do teachers encourage you to do well in the school?

Do teachers favour certain students over others? Which ones/ groups – why?

How well do you think you're performing at school? How well do you think you're performing at school compared to other students?

What subjects are you studying at the moment? What led you to choose some of these subjects in Year 9?

What subjects do you like - why? What subjects do you hate - why?

Will you have to do exams or assessments in these subjects? How do you feel about these exams or the assessments? Do you think you will be able to get the mark/ grades you're expected to get?

Certain people believe that girls do better than boys in school. From your own experience, do you think this is true?

What kind of things does the school do to help young people make decisions regarding their future? What kind of activities does the school hold?

Friends

How important are your friends?

Have you got friends who go to another school? How is your relationship with these friends?

Do your friends want to do well in school? Do your friends like school?

Do you know what your friends want to do after finishing year 11? Are your friends considering going to sixth form, college or higher education?

Aspirations

What would you like to do after finishing year 11? What led you to think about [what they expressed as their aspirations]?

Why would you like to [what they expressed as their aspirations]?

When did you decide you wanted to become [what they expressed as their aspirations]?

When thinking about your future, has money been something you've thought about / considered? Has money had an impact on your aspirations (on what you would like to do after year 11)?

When thinking about your future, have school results been something you've thought about / considered? Have school results had an impact on your aspirations (on what you would like to do after year 11)?

For those who express that they would like to progress into further education

What subjects would you like to study?

What are your reasons for wanting to study these subjects?

For students in Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel – Will you be able to choose which language you will be studying your subjects? Which language will you be studying these subjects? Why would you like to...? How do you feel...?

Have you thought about what you would like to do after you finish (e.g. sixth form)...?

For those who express that they would like to progress into higher education

Which university would you like to go to? Why would you like to go to these universities?

What subject/ course would you like to study in university?

If they note that they would like to go to a university in Wales - What language will you be studying these subjects? Why would you like to...? How do you feel...?

Future job and career prospects

Have you thought about what job / what sort of career you would like to have in the future?

Why would you like to be a....?

What you will you have to do in order to become [what they expressed as their aspirations]...?
What qualifications will you need?

Do you know anyone who is doing this kind of job?

Job information

Has anyone helped you or given any advice in regards to your future?

Probe

Have you had a meeting with a career advisor? Has anyone else given you any advice e.g. parents/carers, family, friends, teachers...?

Expectations

Do you think you will be able to ... [include what they expressed as their aspirations in the previous question]?

Long term aspirations

Do you see yourself living in the same neighbourhood in the future? Why do you believe...? Is this through choice?

If they think they will move away - How would you feel about moving away from the area when you're older? Do you think you will miss anything? Do you look forward to moving away? What are you looking forward to leaving behind?

Perceptions of success and a good job

What does 'success' mean to you? What makes someone successful? Would you regard anyone within your community as being successful? How have they become successful?

What is a good job? How much money does a person earn if they have a good job? Do you know anyone who has a 'good job'?

How much would you like to earn in the future e.g. when you're 25 years old? Do you know anyone who earns this type of money?

Final Remarks

Do you have anything else you would like to add which you don't think we have talked about in this interview?

Thank you very much for taking part in this interview

Interview Guide for Interview with Teachers

Could you tell me about your role in the school?

Could you tell me a little bit about the catchment area of the school and the social characteristics of pupils?

What do students in this school do after finishing Year 11? What motivates students to make these decisions?

All of the students aspired (wanted) to stay in some form of education and training after Year 11. Is this a pattern among students in this school?

What does the school do to help and support pupils' aspirations? How does the school support the aspirations of pupils who want to enter the world of work? How does the school prepare pupils for higher education?

From the interview data, there was a clear divide in terms of the students who wanted to pursue the academic pathway and study A Levels, and those who wanted to study vocational or practical subjects such as P.E, Engineering and Art and study BTEC subjects after Year 11? Is this a pattern you have identified as a school?

There also appeared to be some gender difference in terms of subject choice, with females wanting to study Arts, Language and Humanities academic subjects such as English, History and French or vocational subjects such as Health and Social Care, Hairdressing and Child Care and boys wanting to study Science-related academic subjects such as Maths, Chemistry and Physics and vocational subjects such as Carpentry and Plumbing. Is this a pattern which you can identify in the school? If so, what is responsible for this? What does the school do to prevent this difference between boys and girls?

Approximately how many pupils are in the sixth form? Approximately what proportion of students progress to the sixth form?

What sort of careers advice does the school offer?

What are the sixth form entry requirements? What grades do you ask for in order for pupils to progress into sixth form?

Thank you very much for taking part in this interview

Interview guide for interviews with parents/carers

Education and Occupation

Do you work? Are you currently in waged work? Where do you currently work?

Does your partner work? Where do they currently work? Did your partner go to university?

What were your experiences of school and education? How was your time in school?

Area

I've never been to _____. How would you describe the area to me?

How long have you lived in the area?

What are your thoughts on the local area? Do you like where you live?

Do you think the area has changed a lot in the last five years?

Children

Which primary school and secondary school did your child and your other children attend?

How did you choose which primary and secondary school to send your child to?

Why did you choose to send your child to ***** (name of school)? Are there any other reasons why you sent your child to this school?

What factors influenced your decision to send your child/children to this school?

Have you helped your child with their school work? In what ways have you helped your child with their school work?

How would you rate your child's performance in school?

Do you think your child is ambitious?

Have you discussed with your child what they would like to do after year 11? What would they like to do?

What would you like your child to do after they finish year 11? Why?

Do you think your child will go to [include what they expressed as their aspirations in the previous question]?

What would they have to do to achieve this?

What would you like your child to do in the long term? Why?

What would they have to do to achieve this?

Have you provided any advice to your child in regards to their future? What advice have you given to them?

Does your child have any older siblings? Did they attend the same school as your child? What are they currently doing?

Thank you very much for taking part in this interview

Interview Guide for Follow-up Interview with Students

Results in exams and assessments at the end of Year 11

To start off with, do you mind me asking how did you feel about your exam results and/ or your results in your BTEC/other subjects? Were you happy with your results?

Process of decision-making

What made you decide to go to college/ sixth form? Why did you decide to go to college/ sixth form?

What were your reasons for going to sixth form/ college rather than trying to find a job?

If any of the students have made a choice which was different to the aspirations that they expressed in the first interview - You mentioned in the interview last year that you wanted to _____? What made you decide to go to _____ rather than _____?

Prompts

Did anyone provide you with any advice or say anything when you were deciding what you wanted to do after Year 11 e.g. friends, family, teachers, career advisors...?

Did you have a meeting with a career advisor? How did you find the meeting?

Evaluation of their choices

How are you finding college/sixth form?

What course/ subjects are you studying in college/sixth form? Was/were this course(s)/ these subject(s) the one(s) that you wanted to study in sixth form/college in Year 11? What made you change your mind?

What made you choose this course or these subjects?

How is/are the course(s)/subject(s) that you are studying in college/sixth form?

How are the tutors/teachers? Do you get along with them?

Is _____ different to secondary school?

Is it living up to your expectations? Were you expecting sixth form/college to be like this?

For those from Ysgol Dyffryn Tawel – What language are you studying this/these course(s)/ these subject(s)? Were you able to decide in what language you would be studying this/these course(s)/ subject(s)? If yes, what made you decide to study these subjects in _____? How do you feel...?

How do you feel about the choice that you have made?

What do your family think about what you're doing?

Future Aspirations

Have you thought about what you would like to do after you finish (e.g. sixth form)...?

What are your reasons for wanting to go to...? Why would you like to...?

What are your reasons for wanting to _____ rather than _____ after (e.g. sixth form)...?

Has your aspiration (what you want to do after finishing _____) changed since school?

For those who express that they would like to progress into higher education

Which university/universities would you like to go to? Why would you like to go to these universities? Has this changed since school?

What subject/ course would you like to study in university? Why would you like to study this subject/course? Has this changed since school?

Does the thought of graduate debt that you hear a lot about in the media concern you? / Has the thought of graduate debt led you to change what you want to study?

If they note that they would like to go to a welsh university - What language will you be studying these subjects? Why would you like to...? How do you feel...?

Future Career/ Job Prospects (these questions will be asked to both those aspiring to go to university and those aspiring to look for work)

Have you thought about what job / what sort of career you would like to have in the future? Has this changed since school?

Why would you like to be a...?

What will you have to do in order to become [what they expressed as their aspirations]...? What qualifications will you need?

Do you know anyone who is doing this kind of job?

Advice regarding future

Has anyone helped you/ given any advice/ said anything about your future? e.g. friends, family, teachers, and career advisors?

What do your family think of your plans for the future?

Expectations

Do you think you will be able to ... [include what they expressed as their aspirations in the previous question]?

Long term aspirations

If they think they will move away - Where do you see yourself living in the future? Do you see yourself living in the same neighbourhood in the future? Why do you believe....? Is this through choice?

How would you feel about moving away from the area when you're older?

Thank you very much for taking part in this interview

Coding Framework for Analysis of Interviews with Students

Nodes							
Name	Sources	References	Created On	Created By	Modified On	Modified By	
Advice		2	28/01/2015 09:59	SLJ	13/04/2016 16:16	SLJ	
Age		1	27/01/2015 16:53	SLJ	29/01/2015 16:25	SLJ	
Aspirations		0	28/01/2015 10:07	SLJ	28/01/2015 10:18	SLJ	
Assessments		0	28/01/2015 09:57	SLJ	28/01/2015 10:18	SLJ	
Attitudes towards the Welsh language		0	28/01/2015 09:05	SLJ	28/01/2015 10:18	SLJ	
Choice of School		0	28/01/2015 09:06	SLJ	28/01/2015 10:18	SLJ	
Choice of Subject		0	28/01/2015 09:29	SLJ	28/01/2015 10:18	SLJ	
Classmates		0	28/01/2015 09:14	SLJ	28/01/2015 10:18	SLJ	
Destination		0	07/04/2016 09:06	SLJ	07/04/2016 09:06	SLJ	
Different to Secondary School		0	07/04/2016 10:00	SLJ	07/04/2016 10:00	SLJ	
Earn in the future		2	28/01/2015 10:44	SLJ	09/02/2015 08:50	SLJ	
Educational Performance		0	28/01/2015 09:55	SLJ	28/01/2015 10:18	SLJ	
EMA		0	07/04/2016 10:05	SLJ	07/04/2016 10:05	SLJ	
Expectations		0	28/01/2015 10:02	SLJ	28/01/2015 10:18	SLJ	
Father's Occupation		0	27/01/2015 17:18	SLJ	27/01/2015 17:18	SLJ	
Favourite Subject		0	28/01/2015 09:32	SLJ	28/01/2015 10:18	SLJ	
Final Results		1	07/04/2016 09:25	SLJ	12/04/2016 11:34	SLJ	
Financial Consideration		1	28/01/2015 10:23	SLJ	11/02/2015 12:11	SLJ	
Friends		1	28/01/2015 10:34	SLJ	13/02/2015 08:58	SLJ	
Geek		1	11/04/2016 13:48	SLJ	11/04/2016 13:48	SLJ	
Gender		0	27/01/2015 17:13	SLJ	27/01/2015 17:13	SLJ	
Gender Difference		0	28/01/2015 09:20	SLJ	28/01/2015 10:18	SLJ	
Good Job		3	28/01/2015 10:42	SLJ	09/02/2015 15:00	SLJ	
HE		0	28/01/2015 10:20	SLJ	28/01/2015 10:20	SLJ	
Higher Managerial and Professional Jobs		0	30/01/2015 09:23	SLJ	30/01/2015 09:23	SLJ	
Job Opportunities		0	28/01/2015 08:52	SLJ	28/01/2015 10:18	SLJ	
Know someone who has gone to university		0	28/01/2015 08:47	SLJ	28/01/2015 10:18	SLJ	
Language Background		0	27/01/2015 16:58	SLJ	27/01/2015 16:58	SLJ	
Language of Study		0	28/01/2015 09:02	SLJ	28/01/2015 10:18	SLJ	
Language spoken		0	27/01/2015 16:54	SLJ	28/01/2015 09:02	SLJ	
Least Favourite Subject		2	28/01/2015 09:34	SLJ	06/02/2015 09:29	SLJ	
Mother's Occupation		0	27/01/2015 17:21	SLJ	27/01/2015 17:21	SLJ	
Moving away		1	28/01/2015 10:28	SLJ	28/01/2015 15:18	SLJ	
Nationality		0	27/01/2015 16:55	SLJ	27/01/2015 16:55	SLJ	

<input type="checkbox"/>	Neighbourhood		0	0	28/01/2015 08:50	SLJ	28/01/2015 10:18	SLJ
<input type="checkbox"/>	Neighbours		0	0	28/01/2015 08:55	SLJ	28/01/2015 10:18	SLJ
<input type="checkbox"/>	Older Siblings		1	1	28/01/2015 08:36	SLJ	30/01/2015 09:20	SLJ
<input type="checkbox"/>	Parents		0	0	28/01/2015 08:26	SLJ	28/01/2015 10:18	SLJ
<input type="checkbox"/>	Parents' Education		0	0	28/01/2015 07:51	SLJ	28/01/2015 10:33	SLJ
<input type="checkbox"/>	Part Time Job		3	4	11/04/2016 11:33	SLJ	13/04/2016 15:24	SLJ
<input type="checkbox"/>	Place		0	0	28/01/2015 07:55	SLJ	28/01/2015 07:55	SLJ
<input type="checkbox"/>	Preference		0	0	28/01/2015 09:20	SLJ	28/01/2015 10:18	SLJ
<input type="checkbox"/>	Primary School		0	0	28/01/2015 09:10	SLJ	28/01/2015 10:18	SLJ
<input type="checkbox"/>	Primary School Attended		0	0	28/01/2015 08:14	SLJ	28/01/2015 10:18	SLJ
<input type="checkbox"/>	Research		3	6	07/04/2016 09:32	SLJ	13/04/2016 16:15	SLJ
<input type="checkbox"/>	Results		0	0	07/04/2016 10:31	SLJ	07/04/2016 10:31	SLJ
<input type="checkbox"/>	Sampling Bias		1	1	13/02/2015 10:36	SLJ	13/02/2015 10:36	SLJ
<input type="checkbox"/>	School attended		0	0	27/01/2015 16:53	SLJ	27/01/2015 16:53	SLJ
<input type="checkbox"/>	School Results		0	0	28/01/2015 10:21	SLJ	28/01/2015 10:21	SLJ
<input type="checkbox"/>	Secondary School		0	0	28/01/2015 09:12	SLJ	28/01/2015 10:18	SLJ
<input type="checkbox"/>	Set		0	0	28/01/2015 08:38	SLJ	28/01/2015 10:18	SLJ
<input type="checkbox"/>	Space to do homework		0	0	28/01/2015 08:48	SLJ	28/01/2015 10:18	SLJ
<input type="checkbox"/>	Stay in Wales		0	0	28/01/2015 10:33	SLJ	28/01/2015 10:33	SLJ
<input type="checkbox"/>	Stepfather's Occupation		0	0	27/01/2015 17:19	SLJ	27/01/2015 17:19	SLJ
<input type="checkbox"/>	Stepmother's Occupation		0	0	27/01/2015 17:22	SLJ	27/01/2015 17:22	SLJ
<input type="checkbox"/>	Studying subjects in different schools		0	0	07/04/2016 10:03	SLJ	07/04/2016 10:03	SLJ
<input type="checkbox"/>	Success		2	2	28/01/2015 10:40	SLJ	12/02/2015 11:27	SLJ
<input type="checkbox"/>	Successful		0	0	28/01/2015 10:41	SLJ	28/01/2015 10:41	SLJ
<input type="checkbox"/>	Teachers		0	0	28/01/2015 09:22	SLJ	28/01/2015 10:18	SLJ
<input type="checkbox"/>	Teachers' Perception		0	0	28/01/2015 09:28	SLJ	28/01/2015 10:18	SLJ
<input type="checkbox"/>	Threat to Post 16 Transport		1	1	13/02/2015 14:42	SLJ	13/02/2015 14:42	SLJ
<input type="checkbox"/>	Transition from Primary School to Secondary School		0	0	28/01/2015 09:11	SLJ	28/01/2015 10:18	SLJ
<input type="checkbox"/>	Work Experience		5	7	28/01/2015 14:37	SLJ	13/02/2015 11:19	SLJ