

**Exploring a potential correspondence between
the structural conditions of universities and
stratified graduate work**

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Thesis Summary

Exploring a potential correspondence between the structural conditions of universities and stratified graduate work

This thesis examines the nature of the relationship between the educational environment of UK universities and the graduate labour market through the lens of correspondence theory. This theory was developed by Bowles and Gintis (1976), who asserted that there is a structurally reproductive relationship between the conditions of education and labour. One of the key aims of this research is to test the usefulness of this theory to contemporary UK higher education. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 10 students and key staff members in the Law faculties of three different status universities; *Elite*, *Old* and *New*. The interviews covered a number of key topics including class sizes, relationships between students and staff, career preparation and routines of working. Documents outlining the nature of the courses (e.g. prospectuses) were also collected and analysed. These data revealed that at Elite University, subject specific knowledge is the primary purpose of learning and the students encounter an intense working environment but are afforded high levels of autonomy. At New University, the educational experience for students is much more structured, with much less pressure on students to perform and a central focus upon employability. Old University occupies a position between these two universities, offering a form of education that encourages some autonomy within a structured teaching environment and values both employability teaching and subject specific knowledge. The significant differences between the teaching and conditions at these three universities reflect characteristics associated with different levels of graduate work thus indicating the continued analytical value of the correspondence theory.

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Chapter One

Introduction

It almost seems unnecessary to note that throughout its long history, the Higher Education (HE) sector in the United Kingdom has served to not only to produce an academic elite, but also to reproduce an economic elite. In recent decades there has been a move towards a supposedly fairer HE system, this has involved widening access to individuals who are academically capable but are members of social groups that have been traditionally excluded from attending university. The Robbins Report (1963) began this expansion in earnest, making numerous recommendations for the HE system in the United Kingdom that would make places at university available to all who were qualified for them by ability and attainment. This policy change paved the way for enormous increases in the numbers of people studying for higher level qualifications in the UK.

Another milestone on the path from an 'elite' to the current 'mass' system of HE (Trow 1973) occurred in 1992 when the Conservative government introduced the Further and Higher Education Act leading to the upgrading of former polytechnics to universities, ending a binary divide in higher education. Further changes throughout the last twenty years (for example the Dearing Report 1997), particularly affecting the way that higher education has been funded, have brought us closer than ever before to a universal higher education system in the UK. As a consequence of these changes, attendance at university jumped from nearly 200,000 in 1967 to nearly 2.4 million in 2008 (HEFCE 2009). Besides such democratic ideals as fair access, much of the policy discussion has featured rhetorical discussions of universities 'upskilling' the population in order to make the country economically competitive.

Critics of the expansion of higher education often point to the fact that there has not been sufficient growth in graduate jobs to accommodate the increased numbers of graduates (for example, Keep and Mayhew 2004 and Felstead et al 2007). These existing evidence-based and theoretical explanations often attempt to identify this problem as a flaw or inadequacy of either the HE or the wider economic system. This PhD thesis however suggests a different explanation, namely that the university sector in the UK is heterogeneous and segmented, and that this segmentation is hierarchical in nature. This hierarchical stratification in turn corresponds to and

maintains a stratified hierarchy of graduate work. Any graduate labour market inequality is therefore actually a function of this system.

Because there is a large body of research concerning inequality of access to higher education (for example Chowdry et al 2010, Reay et al 2010) and research that examines unequal graduate entry into the labour market (such as McGuinness and Bennett 2007 and Chevalier and Conlon 2003) this research will focus predominantly upon the function that universities perform in preparing students for entry into different levels of the graduate division of labour. This thesis will address a seemingly under-researched area of this field by researching the educational experience and environment of universities and assessing the ways in which these structural conditions prepare students for work. Specifically, differences between universities will be scrutinised in an attempt to demonstrate how structural inequality is maintained and reproduced by the teaching and environment of universities.

This thesis argues that while higher education has given previously excluded groups access to higher status work than before, much of that work has become routinised (Thompson and Warhurst 1998 and Brown, Lauder and Ashton 2011) and arguably proletarianised. Access to the most highly skilled and highly paid “knowledge work” is restricted (Brown and Hesketh 2004) and universities perform an active role in reasserting this restrictive labour market in the way in which they prepare their students for work. This thesis will argue that this inequality is maintained due to a highly stratified university system which corresponds to a highly stratified graduate labour market. Theoretical explanations of unequal access to higher education and prior research into the experiences of students at universities and the labour market destinations of graduates will be reviewed in Chapter Two to both provide context and justification for this argument.

In a practical sense, this thesis attempts to re-introduce Marxist arguments of the social reproduction of inequality to the debate around the nature of graduate labour, specifically the correspondence theory originally proposed by Bowles and Gintis (1976). In *Schooling in Capitalist America*, Bowles and Gintis argued that the education system was designed in order to legitimise and reproduce structural, class inequality. Bowles and Gintis argued against the dominant conception of the purpose of schooling, that is to say that it is a social good that serves to prepare students in a way that allows young people to integrate effectively into society. Rather they claimed that education restricts individual freedom by channelling pupils based upon

their class origins into forms of behaviour that correspond to the form of work they will be doing in the labour market. The relationships, environment and experiences of schooling were reflective of those in the hierarchical division of labour that the pupils would be entering upon leaving education. Consequently, the experience of schooling for middle class pupils was significantly different to that of their working class counterparts because they were being prepared for a different type of work. Proletarian labour was based around subservience, external rewards and alienation from production, likewise schooling for the proletariat was based around rigid discipline, achieving grades and non-participation in the generation of knowledge. Middle class pupils were more likely to find a more flexible and participatory form of education that would reflect their future position in the division of labour. Correspondence theory will be explored in greater depth in Chapter 3 which will outline the interface between existing research evidence, various applications of correspondence theory and methodological concerns for this thesis.

The central proposition of this thesis is that similar processes to those identified by Bowles and Gintis are occurring in contemporary UK HE. In order to test this hypothesis, existing research into the structure of the graduate labour market will be reviewed through the lens of correspondence theory to determine key attributes of different status graduate work. The extent to which these characteristics are reflected in the structural conditions of the corresponding level of university will form the empirical component of this thesis. Therefore, this thesis addresses the following research questions;

- How does the educational environment and experience of students vary between different status HE institutions?
- How useful is correspondence theory for understanding contemporary links between higher education and the labour market?

These questions are closely related and explore the same topic; however the first question focuses on the empirical dimension and the second on the theoretical. The purpose of this research is to compare how different universities prepare students for work, three universities were selected for the main sites of this research. Each of these

universities would represent a level in the broadly defined hierarchy of UK HE outline below;

- Elite Universities- the highest status universities for teaching and research
- Old Universities -established and respected institutions that do not rise to the status of the Elite
- New Universities-more vocationally orientated, post-1992 institutions

This research will argue that these three different broad categories of university type all correspond to a level of ‘graduate work’ in a hierarchical division of labour. Drawing on existing literature in the field of graduate work, key differences between these occupational strata were identified:

- The degree of autonomy/task discretion
- Application of knowledge gained at university
- The intensity of work

Essentially the higher status of work that the graduate is undertaking, the more autonomous the graduate will be in their activities, the more likely they are to rely heavily on their subject knowledge and skills and the higher the pressure of their work environment will be.

This research is relatively small-scale because it is exploratory in nature, attempting to assess the usefulness of applying correspondence theory to analyse this context. This research tests the concept that there are formal, structural differences between the academic and social environments of three different status universities that reflect the characteristics of the corresponding level of the graduate labour market. To investigate this claim, semi-structured interviews were conducted with undergraduate students and members of the academic staff at each of the three universities. In addition to the interview data, documents pertaining to the structure of the course and wider institution were collected and analysed. To aid the comparison between the three universities, it was decided that all of the participants selected should be sampled from the same academic course. Law was decided upon because of its nature as subject which is both academic and professional. It was therefore

predicted that the different status universities could privilege either more academic or vocational aspects of legal teaching which suited their level. Law was also seen as an appropriate choice because it has very clear labour market destinations attached to it for which it would be relatively straightforward to determine the status of and therefore the success of graduates from different universities in this field. A detailed discussion of the methodology can be found in Chapter Four.

The interview and documentary data are analysed in Chapters Five, Six and Seven through the lens of correspondence theory (as outlined Chapters 3 and 4). Chapter Five begins by outlining the way in which the three universities differ in how they present a public image and how their admissions processes vary. This chapter then goes on to discuss differences in the status of the teaching staff and the number of hours that students spend in lessons. This chapter is framed around the basic, more organisational differences between the universities and their priorities. Chapter Six discusses difference in teaching methods between the three universities. This predominantly explores the pedagogy of the universities and how students experience and manage their learning. This discussion covers class sizes, interactivity in teaching, the form and function of independent study and how the students manage their time. Finally, Chapter Seven will outline the most direct way in which a correspondence may manifest itself, namely how the students (with the help of the universities) engage with the labour market. This chapter is less concerned with corresponding characteristics and instead focuses more on entrenched, structural advantage and disadvantage. This will include a discussion of the differing forms of careers guidance and skills training at the three universities as well as exploring the extent to which the universities can help students develop professional contacts and networks.

Finally, this thesis will be concluded in Chapter Eight where an assessment will be made of how useful correspondence theory was in both collecting and analysing data relating to contemporary UK HE. This chapter will therefore discuss any drawbacks or limitations to this theory as well as assessing the goodness of fit of the methodology used. This discussion will be framed around the extent to which the observed attributes of the structural conditions of the universities matched up with the predictions made about the way they promote or restrict autonomy, the intensity levels of the environment and experience and the educational priorities. Any

contribution this research can make to the wider field will be explored as well as any policy or future research recommendations.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

Introduction

The research presented in this thesis is predominantly concerned with the interface between universities and work. In particular this thesis attempts to demonstrate that there is a symbiotic relationship between these two spheres and that this relationship is highly stratified. This chapter will review contemporary literature concerned with the nature of the higher education (HE) system in the United Kingdom and how it relates to and is affected by the labour market. This is a broad field of literature and this review will only be able to focus on a small section of it that relates directly to this thesis. Specifically, this literature review will explore some studies of inequality of access to higher education as well as differences between universities, however this will not be exhaustive and will predominantly focus on literature which helps to shape the understanding of how inequality is reproduced through higher education. The core research aim being tested empirically in this thesis is that the pedagogy, curriculum and environment of universities correspond to the status of work that students will enter after graduation, therefore literature that can help frame and contextualise this aim will be reviewed.

Essentially, this thesis is exploring the proposition that there are inherent, structural differences between different status universities that produce different types of graduates in order to reproduce structural inequality in the labour market. This theory draws upon the correspondence principle put forward by Bowles and Gintis (1976) in *Schooling in Capitalist America*. In order to justify the use of this theory as a basis for empirical research in contemporary HE settings, this chapter will argue that the expansion of HE in recent decades has served to create a false consciousness among students by developing a myth that all degrees are of roughly equal value and that there is a meritocratic graduate labour market awaiting students upon completion of their degree.

Firstly, a discussion will be presented of the extent to which attempts to remove traditional barriers to accessing HE have been effective and whether these changes can be seen as contributing to the development of a more meritocratic labour

market. Secondly, this chapter will explore a number of empirical studies discussing teaching and learning, the social experience of university (including managing study and work) and the composition of the student body. These areas will also be viewed through a lens of (potential) social class difference as well as in terms of skill development and usage in order to begin laying the groundwork for explaining the ways in which correspondence theory may be used as an analytical tool in this area. Finally, this chapter will review existing empirical research discussing the conditions of labour market for graduates in the UK with the purpose of demonstrating the existence of an increasingly stratified graduate labour market. This discussion will look at various studies of what graduates actually do, both in terms of their general occupational status and the skills which they use in their work. Finally, this chapter will try and identify existing research which could point to the existence of a correspondence between the status of university attended and the job entered post-graduation.

Changes in the labour market and higher education

In recent decades, the dominant discourse behind economic development, educational policy and global competitiveness has been the assertion that our global economic system is now a *knowledge economy* (Drucker 1993). As the name would suggest, this is a method of economic organisation where the dominant means of production is in industries that require high levels of skill and knowledge. This is a form of work that has developed in the wake of declining industrial manufacturing and requires highly skilled workers. In order to remain economically competitive in a global economy, nation-states are raising the skill levels of their citizens in order to attract investment from knowledge-intensive businesses which require highly skilled workers (Brown and Lauder 2001). This socio-economic shift has affected the higher education system in the UK, specifically the widening of access to traditionally excluded groups and the integrating of employability and skills training to university curricula (Dearing 1997). A discussion of the nature of these changes to education will be explored in this section.

The massification of Higher Education in the United Kingdom

Over the last few decades one of the key areas in which the development of a knowledge-based economy has been focused is the expansion of higher education (HE). Successive UK governments have seen increasing the numbers of university graduates as a logical response to the shift towards knowledge work as the principal mode of production. Having a larger proportion of the population attend university is seen as creating more (potential) knowledge workers. A key aspect of this expansion has been to make access to higher education available to those who have traditionally been excluded from attending university. In the Higher Education Funding Council of England's (HEFCE) guide to universities in the UK, this aim is stated in the following way:

Higher education should be accessible to all those who are able to benefit from it. Through programmes such as Aimhigher, the Government and funding bodies are working with higher education institutions and other organisations to widen participation in higher education, particularly among people from communities that are underrepresented. Overwhelmingly, these are people from lower socio-economic groups and disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds (2009:20)

Generally the argument is that if the UK is to be a competitive country, then we cannot be restricted by old prejudices and inequalities. The logic of the knowledge economy places HE at the centre of our economic success. It is the main site for the creation of highly skilled workers and is therefore one of the key areas for government to improve in order to improve our economic competitiveness.

In the United Kingdom (and now, in the four constituent nations to which responsibility for HE is devolved), the HE system has had a long-standing and explicit connection with the economy; this is demonstrated by the 1963 Robbins Report (for the Committee on Higher Education), which stated first among its four aims for higher education that it should instruct in skills suitable to play a part in the division of labour (Yorke 2004). Therefore it would be naïve to suggest that the attempts in recent decades to create a mass HE system in the UK were signs of a new trend away from academic achievement for its intrinsic value and towards it becoming a site of labour market preparation. However, this expansion has not been without consequence for the relationship between HE and the labour market. As

Mayhew et al (2004) claim when comparing the Robbins Report to the 1997 Dearing Report (for the Department for Education and Employment) there was a marked (if not total) shift in emphasis towards a more economically driven purpose for HE.

Participation in higher education in the United Kingdom has been steadily growing throughout the twentieth century (for a detailed discussion of the growth of HE since 1960 see Mayhew et al 2004). In particular, the numbers of students attending some form of HE had been increasing throughout the 1980s due to the introduction of the GCSE, improving retention rates which led to students at polytechnics out-numbering those at universities (Brown, R 2004). Partially in reaction to this growth, a significant step towards the shaping of the current system of HE in the United Kingdom was the 1992 Further and Higher Education Act. This Act was passed by incumbent Conservative government to upgrade the status of polytechnics to universities and end the 'binary divide' between these two types of HE institution. The basic motivation for changing the HE system was the assertion (fairly typical of the Conservative government of the time) that higher education institutions had to use resources more efficiently and respond better to the needs of the economy.

Keep & Mayhew (1996) claim that while the HE sector was under review for its effectiveness in the mid-1990s, business groups were pushing for greater expansion of HE in order to fuel what they saw as an increasing requirement for highly skilled workers. However, in numerical terms, the demand for graduates was already being met. So why was there demand for expansion from business? Keep and Mayhew claim these demands were based upon crude international comparisons (for example the prevalence of graduates in successful economies such as Japan) and a perception that a graduate education was an effective, alternative way to fill the 'skills gap' for technicians or craftsman. This interpretation would suggest that early on in the proposed move towards a universal HE system, that there was no genuine demand for more graduates or places for them in the labour market. This would inevitably lead to over-qualification.

The election of the New Labour Government in 1997 furthered the ideological entrenchment of a global knowledge economy as evident in the famous claim that 'education, education, education' was their best economic policy. As such they implemented many of the recommendations put forth in the Dearing Report (1997), which advocated a number of significant changes to the organisation of the HE

system. The growth of student numbers had led to significant funding problems for universities leading to a decline in the resources they had for to spend on teaching. Dearing proposed to resolve this problem through the introduction of tuition fees for students. These fees would be paid after graduation in a system that was contingent on future income. One of the reasons to introduce these fees was to ensure that the growth of and widening of access to HE remained sustainable, as evidenced by students from the lowest income families being exempt. Most significantly for this research, Dearing recommended an increasing focus upon the skills that could be learned at university in order to better prepare students for the workplace. This included outlining what key skills students were expected to gain at university, including communication skills, numeracy, the use of information technology and learning how to learn. This report was therefore supposedly another step in the move towards tying HE ever closer to labour market. Dearing also recommended furthering the expansion of universities with the purpose of making a more inclusive system. The report stated that governments should consider structuring the allocation of funding in accordance with universities commitment to widening participation. In spite of the various attempts to create a more inclusive system of HE, there are still a number of barriers to attending university and earning a degree based upon entrenched lines of social division. Empirical evidence of such barriers to entry and success in HE will be discussed in the following section.

Continued inequality of access to higher education

This thesis is not explicitly exploring the unequal nature of access to higher education, but the results of this study will have implications for discussing this topic. If the data suggest the existence of a correspondence between the form of educational experience at different status universities and the structural and organisational conditions of different levels of graduate work, this can be used to add to existing critiques of the barriers to access. This section will therefore explore different types of barrier to accessing higher education (and significantly particular types of university) and empirical evidence of differential access. This discussion will outline the extent to which access to universities of different status is stratified along class lines in order to highlight the broader implications that this thesis has. The application of correspondence theory to HE can illuminate how the education that students

receive at university further entrenches or even expands class differences. There is a large field of research into HE access; this discussion will only draw on a small number of studies to draw out the dominant arguments about the effectiveness of widening participation strategies.

Drawing upon statistics of UK HE applicants published by UCAS (2012), it is clear that members of the highest two social classes have the highest participation rates while the least likely to participate were from classes IV (semi-skilled manual) and V (unskilled manual). In England specifically, 53% of school leavers from the top quintile applied to university in contrast to 18% from the lowest group. Gorard et al (2006) claim that differential rates of participation in post-compulsory education are as close as discussions about social policy come to 'facts'. The causes of this differential access are much more difficult to ascertain.

In terms of differential access to university based on social class, there are a number of direct and implicit barriers. These include, but are not limited to low prior attainment (Chowdry et al 2010), geographical location (Gibbons and Vignoles 2012), family responsibilities (Bowl 2001), lacking prior knowledge of how HE works (Forsyth and Furlong (2003), financial constraints (Quinn et al 2005) and working class people simply being less likely to apply (Gorard 2005).

In addition to barriers to access in general, simply looking at differential rates of attendance for the whole of HE can obscure other inequalities for those that actually do enter. Chowdry et al (2010) show that the status of the university attended is also affected by social status with male students in the lowest socio-economic group 31.7% less likely attend a high status university (research-intensive) than their equivalents in the highest class group.

Further evidence of the differentiated nature of access is provided by Reay et al (2010) who show that while 24.72 percent of those accepted to university were from the four lowest socio-economic groups in 2005 only 16 percent of students admitted to Russell Group in 2000 from the lowest three class groupings. Three percent lower than the HEFCE benchmark which takes account of prior attainment, showing that even if the young people from disadvantaged backgrounds are equally qualified they are less likely to attend. Of the 300,000 applicants from the lowest classes, only one percent got into universities ranked in the top 13 of university league tables. Reay and colleagues claim this is due to people choosing universities that reflect their own (or a compatible) cultural environment, students choose a

university where they will feel comfortable. In practice this means that middle-class students choose pre-1992 universities and working class students choose post-1992 universities. If the cultural environment of a university is prohibitive to students then they are simply less likely to apply there. Forsyth and Furlong (2003) showed that cultural barriers such as these were present in various aspects of the HE process, affecting not only university choice but degree subject and whether to continue with studies.

Drawing on a wide range of literature discussing widening participation, Gorard et al (2006) identify from existing research, that three types of barriers to higher education are perceived to exist;

- *Situational* - such as direct and indirect costs, loss or lack of time, and distance from a learning opportunity, created by an individual's personal circumstances.
- *Institutional barriers* - such as admissions procedures, timing and scale of provision, and general lack of institutional flexibility, created by the structure of available opportunities.
- *Dispositional barriers* - in the form of an individual's motivation and attitudes to learning, which may be caused by a lack of suitable learning opportunities (e.g. for leisure or informally), or poor previous educational experiences (2006:5)

Many commentators see cultural capital as at the heart of explanations of these barriers to entry and is a concept that could seemingly unify all three types of barrier that Gorard et al (2006) identify. Applying the ideas of Lamont and Lareau (1988) to higher education, Noble and Davies (2009) identify the following four different modes in which exclusion through which cultural capital may work. Firstly, 'Self-elimination' where students do not expect to fit into the culture of university. Secondly, 'over-selection' by which students try and fail to apply or survive at university due to cultural disadvantage. Third is 'relegation' where ill-informed choices are made due to cultural misunderstandings or not accessing correct information and finally 'direct selection' where the bias of those tasked with university admissions restricts access. This argument is essentially stating that, for cultural reasons, working class people largely reproduce their own labour market by attending universities that fit with their cultural understanding.

Exploring working class students' experiences in the Canadian HE system, Lehmann (2009) claims that due to the relative risk and specific class-based

uncertainties about participating in higher education for these students, they develop an instrumental and vocational attitude to university. The data consisted of qualitative interviews with undergraduate students and revealed the extent to which these students implicitly accept arguments about the knowledge economy leading them to attend university with the utilitarian understanding that it is a necessity in the contemporary labour market. Lehmann identifies that these attitudes are often shaped by the opinions of parents, in particular when it came to choosing what subject to study. Students would often select more vocational courses or courses with clear career trajectories so they were not seen as wasting their time at university. Earlier research by Lehman (2007) identifies that the habitus of the university also contributes to decisions to drop out of studying at university if students do not feel they fit in.

With more prestigious institutions having a different culture to people from disadvantaged background these universities seem to deselect themselves. However, the effect that the culture of the university has on students is also significant. Reay et al (ibid) claim the institutional habitus (McDonough, 1997; Reay, 1998) of universities established the parameters of how students' learner identities can develop. The authors suggest that the strong classification and framing found at elite universities has an equalising effect on student habitus, this powerful institutional habitus functions to create new learner identities for the students that over-rule class based, cultural differences. Reay and colleagues (drawing upon Archer and Leathwood 2003) also suggest that the habitus of lower status universities is more of a reflection of working class identity that 'lulls working class students into a sense of security and symmetry' (2010:112).

To summarise, this section has shown that there are a number of barriers to accessing HE for working class young people. Particular attention has been paid to studies of cultural barriers of access, these studies show that not only are working class people less likely to attend, when they do they are clustered in lower status institutions. The concept of institutional habitus suggests that the social environment of universities reflects and is maintained by the students who attend. Where this thesis differs from understandings of habitus affecting students' choices, access and experiences is the exploration of the environment a university develops in order to correspond to the organisational conditions of differentiated work. In this sense, rather than new or working class universities simply acting as a filtering mechanism

for existing class difference they further entrench or expand these differences maintaining and reproducing labour market inequality.

Cultural explanations such as these are still valuable for this thesis in terms of framing the research design around the characteristics of universities. The studies discussed above show that there are indeed differences between universities in terms of their cultural environment. While this may not be surprising, the relative absence of research into the processes of universities (which will be discussed in the following section) means these conceptions are valuable. In this thesis the intention is to develop these conceptions and explore broader, structural differences and the way in which they can be tied in to the labour market. Similarly, there is strong evidence of class differentiation in the status of university attended, this not only lends support to the claim in this thesis of a stratified HE system but is useful for framing any critique of the HE system that the empirical elements of this thesis may provide.

The development of mass HE and continued inequality of access

A shift in the increasingly globalised capitalist mode of production has led to changes in the structure of the labour market in developed western countries from a manufacturing based economy to one where knowledge work is the dominant form of labour. In order to accommodate this change, the higher education system in the UK has been expanded, which has included widening access to groups of students who would not traditionally attend university. However, this change has not completely removed barriers to access for working class people or has largely seen these students clustered in lower status institutions which provide lower returns in for graduates in the labour market. The identification of differing cultural conditions at different universities will be useful for both framing and justifying the empirical component of this thesis which will explore is whether such differences are influenced by the labour market.

In terms of how the changes in the labour market and higher education can be conceptualised generally through the correspondence theory, these process are arguably a continuation of the linked historical development of capitalism and education outlined by Bowles and Gintis (1976). To briefly summarise, Bowles and Gintis present a detailed analysis of the way in which the education system has developed in an uneven way to accommodate the needs of the changing capitalist

mode of production. One of the key functions of this is the use of meritocracy to legitimise structural inequality. Simply put, a liberal conception of education has emerged which suggests that those who work hardest and are most able will succeed. This, Bowles and Gintis claim, serves to obscure and legitimate structural inequalities in the labour market. It could be argued that the growth of and widened access to HE is the next step in this process of education developing in order to maintain and legitimise capitalist inequality. For example, if working class people are now allowed to enter higher education and then take white-collar graduate jobs, this is portrayed as overcoming structural inequality. However, if working class students are clustered in low status universities and entering low status work then this can be seen as reproducing this structural inequality and legitimising it for a new form of labour organisation. This analysis will be further elaborate upon later in this chapter and in Chapter Three. The next section of this chapter will outline research into the experiences of students at university. With the main focus of the empirical element of this thesis being students' conceptions of their educational environment this discussion will help to frame the data collection and analysis.

Students' experiences of higher education

The discussion so far has explored the idea that while many changes have occurred in order to expand the absolute numbers attending universities and widen access to traditionally excluded groups, there have been a number of barriers to the success of this. This section will further this argument by discussing research concerned with how students actually experience higher education. This discussion will particularly focus upon any sources of diversity in the student experience, specifically in terms of class difference. These differences will be framed around a number of areas essential to illuminating student experience, including differences in the environment and culture of the university, teaching and learning, social experiences, how students are supported financially and any differences in the way students are prepared for the labour market. The purpose of this discussion is to establish the field of existing research into student experience which this thesis will contribute to.

Sabri (2011) claims that the concept of 'the student experience' has become central to policy discussion about higher education. However, when examining policy documents she identifies that this term is often used to give the impression of a

generic student divorced from any individual (or broader structural) differences that may alter their experience. This, Sabri claims, facilitates the growing discourse of students as consumers in opposition to academics as it inherently separates these two groups and implies disparate interests thus further entrenching the marketisation of higher education. The growth of this ‘shallow’ conception in policy discussion can obscure any differences in how students will experience university based upon class, gender, race or institution attended. To attempt to avoid falling into this trap, where possible, the particular students that are experiencing higher education will be referred to in this discussion.

Student experience of teaching and learning

Teaching and learning is a highly important aspect of the university student experience, but also one of the least researched. There are a number of factors related to teaching and learning that can provide differing student experiences. Many of these are dependent on broad differences between the educational experiences of students such as the university attended or the subject of study. Clearly, the demands of a medical degree differ from that of an engineering degree and the teaching adapts accordingly. Unfortunately, there have been very few attempts to empirically investigate the whole of the student experience in terms of teaching. However, a number of studies have emerged in recent decades that propose various methods of how to explore the student experience. Additionally, there has been some research into how particular types of students experience teaching and learning or how a specific aspect of this is engaged with. Some examples of these studies will be explored in this section.

Drawing upon a wealth of cognitive psychology of education research, Biggs (1987) developed a measure of students’ study processes to determine both the motive and strategy for the way in which students engage with their work in higher education. Three different approaches to study were identified using this measure; deep, surface and achieving, each of which had a distinct motivation and strategy. Table 2.1 outlines the specifics of these approaches, motivations and strategies;

Approach	Motive	Strategy
Surface	<i>Instrumental:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> requirements minimally: a balance between working too hard and failing 	<i>Reproductive:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> limit target to bare essentials and reproduce through rote learning
Deep	<i>Intrinsic:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> study to actualise interest and competence in particular academic subjects 	<i>Meaningful:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> read widely, interrelate with previous relevant knowledge
Achieving	<i>Competition:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> about achieving the highest irrespective of interest in the material 	<i>Organising:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> managing ones self and time to be the ‘model student’

Table 2.1 Study process learner motivations and strategies

This table specifically is adapted from Gow and Kember (1990) who use the study process questionnaire developed by Biggs (1987) to study the extent to which students in tertiary education can be considered ‘independent learners’. They claim that students become more likely to adopt surface learning strategies as their course carries on, citing a decrease in enthusiasm and competitiveness. The way in which students engage with their course can be seen as an important site of difference in the general university experience. Biggs later revisited the study process questionnaire and suggested the removal of the ‘achieving’ approach, citing changes in work and educational conditions requiring a different form of measurement (Biggs, Kember and Leung 2001). While this thesis does not intend to employ the methodology of Biggs and colleagues, namely the study process questionnaire, this typology of student learning approaches can be used to enhance the understanding of differences across learning at different status universities.

Archer and Hutchings (2000) claim that in spite of widening participation there has been a lack of focus upon students’ ability to actually participate fully once they are in higher education. Similarly, Jary and LeBeau (2009) claim that psycho-educational studies such as those discussed above dominated discussion of students in the UK, this changed in the 1990s with massification of universities giving rise to research concerned with inequalities of access, however sociologists have still not significantly explored the experiences of ‘mainstream students in mainstream institutions’. Jary and Lebeau draw on the work Dubet (1994) to overcome this gap. Dubet developed a typology of student orientations that sought to overcome any

contradictions of how universities are both ‘massified’ in terms of their size and influence on students and ‘atomised’ in terms of students’ personal trajectories. This typology of how students experience mass higher education was based upon the following dimensions:

- The nature of the personal project
 - The degree of integration in the university life
 - The level of intellectual engagement with the subject
- (Jary and LeBeau 2009:699)

These characteristics of student experience can either be positive or negative, and combining these characteristics lead to eight distinct types of student (e.g. a student who is positive in all three is Type 1, the model student). Jary and LeBeau apply this typology to the UK (with Dubet’s work being conducted in France, and indeed in French hence the reliance upon Jary and LeBeau for discussing his work here), in particular sociology students. Applying this typology to interview and questionnaire data concerning students’ approaches to learning, the authors suggest that while there are a variety of ways that students ‘engage’ with learning many of these are viable. They credit this to sociology for having a strong, shared disciplinary culture that can somewhat overcome institutional differences. The suggestion is that subject-based differences are therefore arguably more important than institutional differences in terms of how students engage with the academic aspect of the course. However, it is unclear from the data they present how prevalent each of these types are, with quotations from student interviews being presented to illustrate each individual type but little discussion of how representative these quotes were.

So far this section has discussed a number of proposed methods for exploring the way in which students engage with their teaching and learning, however empirical research discussing the general experiences of students in this area seem thin on the ground. However, there are a number of studies that focus on either specific aspects of the teaching (such as employability skills) or how specific groups of students experience teaching (such as mature students). Examples of this research will form the remainder of this discussion of the student experience of teaching and learning.

The role of class size and contact time in students' experiences

One area of research that contributes to the understanding of how students experience teaching and learning is the influence of class sizes. Studies by Martins and Walker (2006) and Bandiera, Larcinese and Rasul (2010) have explored the link between class size and attainment at university with mixed results. Specifically, Bandiera and colleagues claim that class size negatively affects attainment but this was not statistically significant whereas Martins and Walker claim that attainment increases with the size of the class but that this may be due to 'easier' courses having larger classes. Unfortunately, research into the effect of class size on university attainment is limited, with these two studies being among the few and both of them only focusing on one university and Martins and Walker's data only covering one academic course. Therefore, there would appear to be a demand for comparing class-size between institutions to further understand its effects. These two studies use statistical data concerning attendance and attainment. However, due to the seemingly inconclusive nature of this method perhaps a more qualitative design that could explore the ways that students experienced and benefitted from these classes would be more appropriate. In studies of schooling, for example, Blatchford, Bassett and Brown (2011) claim that smaller classes allow for higher levels of interaction between teachers and learners, something that may not directly affect attainment but may significantly alter the educational experience of students. In terms of this thesis, exploring qualitatively any effects that class size had on the experience of students may reveal important differences between the different status universities.

In terms of the actual amount of time spent in class, research for the NUS and HSBC (2008) show that this varies by course, but that most students were accepting of the fact that it would be limited and that studying for a degree required extensive private study. Many students did desire guidance in how to structure this time with the exception of what were termed 'academics' who were more active in finding their own readings and structuring their own time. This study also shows that contact hours often decline throughout a course; but that hours were generally higher at Russell Group and other pre-1992 universities than at post-1992 institutions but 'new' universities generally spend more of their time in interactive teaching environments. In terms of who teaches, this study showed that Russell Group and other old universities are more likely to have contact time with professors than new

universities, but that these post-1992 institutions most commonly had senior lecturers lead classes. These two types of teacher comprised 85% of all teaching showing that post-graduate tutors are relatively rare. These findings are will be very useful for exploring the differences between the three universities featured in this thesis.

The role of skills teaching in students' experiences

One of the more significant changes for how students experience teaching and learning at university in recent years has been the rising importance of employability and transferable skills. The concept of employability will be explored more fully later in this chapter, but briefly this refers to the development of generic skills or competencies that can help graduates to secure and perform well in work and life in general (Hillage and Pollard 1998). With the expansion of universities and the increasingly tight relationship between universities and work, there has been a growing demand from business and government for universities to prepare their students for immediate labour market entry (Dearing, 1997). One of the ways this aim has been implemented is the integration of transferable skills teaching into university curricula (Cranmer 2006). Mason et al (2006) claim that universities usually respond to the demand to increase the employability of their students by altering courses, introducing new courses and methods and increased opportunities for work experience. After conducting research into the effectiveness of this style of employability teaching, Mason and colleagues recommended that it is most effective when employers are involved in the design of university courses. The extent to which these types of alterations and interventions are present at the universities sampled for this thesis and the differences between them will be another important factor in drawing out signs of a correspondence.

Yorke (2004) explores the way in which students perceive the teaching of 'employability skills' as part of their teaching and learning at university. Yorke identified that in spite of a growing integration of employability skills into university curricula, it is not always guaranteed that students will appreciate the learning intentions of staff or develop in the expected way. This can lead to a labour market where certain skills that graduates have supposedly been explicitly taught are under-utilised or under-appreciated by employers. However, while Yorke claims to be exploring employability from the 'student perspective', this claim is not necessarily

supported by referring to data collected from graduates in the workplace retrospectively assessing their teaching and foundation degree students. This would appear to be another misrepresentation of the student experience (in this case, of skills teaching) as applying to a generic conception of a student that is not necessarily realised in the data.

Tymon (2011) claims that the student perspective on employability is almost entirely missing from this discussion and therefore conducted focus groups with business students at a post-1992 university to explore students' perceptions of this concept and how important it was to them generally and for their studies. Tymon found that the students sampled only engaged with employability teaching as a means to an end and that any employability teaching integrated into the curriculum was subject to low levels of engagement, particular from first and second year students. However, as Tymon accepts this is only the perspective from one department in one university - once again leaving an incomplete picture of the student experience in this area.

The role of the institution in students' experiences

This section will focus on differences in students' experiences by the institution they attend. While this discussion will inevitably cut across a number of other key dimensions to the student experience, in many ways, this is the area of difference in the student experience that is of the most interest for this research. Institutions can vary in a number of wide or narrowly focused ways that affect the experiences and levels of engagement of their students. For example, the level of flexibility the institution shows towards external constraints such as child-care or the necessity of part-time work can influence the way in which older or working class students engage with their university.

Using a mixed methods approach, Brennan and Osborne explored the student experience at different universities across three academic subjects (sociology, business studies and bioscience), to analyse these data they suggest a three-fold typology of institutional and individual diversity:

- Type A: Shared experience and high student diversity
- Type B: Shared experience and low student diversity

- Type C: Individualised student experience (2008:184)

The students surveyed were asked a number of questions pertaining to how they had engaged with their university socially and academically and placed accordingly into one of these categories. Few of the sample cases fitted with the Type A category. Type B was determined to have the most in common with the ‘traditional’ university and accounted for eight of the fifteen sample groups, only one of which was a post-1992 institution. Likewise, the Type C universities were exclusively ‘new’ institutions, often drawing their students from the local area and having participants display more instrumental attitudes to their education. However, these students also generally had a clearer idea of their career trajectory before they started the course.

Crozier et al (2008) show that the conditions of learning vary at different status institutions by the way in which contact is mediated between staff and students. In comparing the educational conditions of three different status universities, the lowest status institution largely left students to their own devices facilitated by online learning. A similar situation was identified at a pre-1992 civic university but was supported by one-to-one contact time with tutors when needed. The highest status university however was highly engaged in students’ learning, providing individual, personalised assistance rather than general advice including detailed, regular feedback about individual progress.

Further elaborating on this, Crozier and Reay (2011) examined the learning experiences of 17 working class students in the final two years of their course in one ‘new’ university with a student body comprised of 40% working class people and in one high status university which has rigorous entry requirements and struggle to meet benchmarks for widening participation. These students were often subject to individual financial or domestic concerns which influenced how they engaged with both their studies and the university in general. At the elite university, Crozier and Reay state that due to high level of investment in the students’ success from the institution, there is tight institutional control over the educational experience. They suggest that strong framing of this kind is often associated with social reproduction and control.

In the context of this thesis, which focuses on how the structural conditions of universities correspond to the labour market, such a reproductive form of framing is

consistent with expectations of elite universities functioning to reproduce elite workers in a stratified labour market. By contrast, the framing was looser at the lower status institution, with the intention of allowing student to develop more freely. However, this actually served to make the students feel unsupported and unaware of what they should actually be doing due to their lack of cultural awareness of the form and purpose of universities. This ultimately led to students desiring greater levels of contact and therefore becoming more dependent learners. The authors claim that over time students develop sufficient 'capitals' to survive in their educational environment but these capitals are specific that institutional context. Again, when explored through the lens of correspondence theory, it is arguable that this is preparing students for a controlled working environment where they are disengaged from tasks.

Cultural explanations of differential student experience

As was discussed in earlier in the chapter, working class students have a tendency to select their universities based upon whether they will fit in with the cultural environment. Research exploring the nature of these environments, how they differ between universities and how different students experience them will be discussed in this section. Reay et al (2010) explain the role of the cultural processes of universities with the concept of institutional habitus (McDonough, 1997). The habitus of an institution is essentially the way in which the ethos of the institution is related to their particular, broader socio-economic and educational culture. Reay and colleagues argue that a university's habitus is maintained and moulded by the students it recruits while also serving to reinforce and develop the learner identities of those students.

Drawing on observational and interview data at four different status universities, Reay and colleagues claim that new universities (post-1992 institutions) have an institutional habitus that is compatible with the individual habitus of working class students. The students feel comfortable and accepted because their cultural values match with those of the university. However, this process can be problematic due to students never being properly challenged by their education and are subsequently not benefitting from it academically (Archer and Leathwood 2003). This can be seen as corresponding with the conclusions of Brennan and Osborne (2008) who claimed that post-1992 universities were more likely to recruit local students with instrumental attitudes to the benefits of HE.

Usefulness of student experience research

This section has explored the way in which students' experiences of university can differ in terms of their teaching, the way they engage with the course and the role that preparing for the labour market plays in their experience. The empirical studies featured will all be used to inform the data collection and analysis which will be discussed in the following chapter.

As this discussion has shown, much of the literature focusing on differences in student experiences between universities has focused on Bourdieusian discussions of habitus and capital. The theoretical propositions behind this thesis diverge from discussions of institutional habitus in a number of ways, not least of all in the proposed purpose of the ethos of universities. Institutional habitus is a reflexive concept that relates the philosophy and practices of universities to broader, related socio-economic cultures. In this sense, students are both shaped by the habitus of the university and contribute to it with their own individual habitus. This implies a fluidity and lack of permanence about the habituses in question.

This thesis attempts to go beyond this and relate the environment of universities to broader, structural inequalities in the division of labour. This thesis also intends to take account of organisational elements of the universities which are not necessarily cultural in nature. Research showing differing cultural environments at universities will be useful for informing data collection, not least of all because it is indicative of broad differences between institutions that go beyond simply varying levels of ill-defined concepts such as status or quality.

The nature of the graduate division of labour

This chapter began with a discussion of the development of a mass HE system in the UK and differential access to this. This was followed by exploring a few key areas of difference in how students experience university education and life. This section explores the next step; what graduates do once they leave university. Where possible this discussion will draw upon the ways in which aspects of the university attended have a bearing on where people end up in the graduate division of labour. This section will also include a discussion of the nature of the graduate jobs and attempt to

draw out any common characteristics of this work as well as examining evidence of any stratification present in the labour market.

The structure of graduate division of labour

Before it is possible to explore factors such as skills utilisation, job performance and issues of entry into the labour market, it is first necessary to look at the structure of the jobs market for graduates since the move to a mass system of HE. This section will discuss a dominant conceptualisation of how the work that graduates do can be divided. Few observers, policy-makers, business leaders or researchers suggest that there is a homogenous field of work for graduates to enter and one of the more influential ways in which this heterogeneity has been expressed will be outlined here. This discussion will help to demonstrate how the three tiered hierarchy of graduate jobs and corresponding university status was developed and the vital role that this plays in framing the research.

The work of Elias and Purcell (2004) has had an influential role in much of the recent policy discussion concerning graduate labour. Elias and Purcell developed the SOC(HE) classification of occupations to be used in their research into long-term career paths of graduates and was designed to be complimentary to the Standard Occupational Classification that is used by (among others) the Office for National Statistics to record jobs by their skill level and content. The SOC(HE) classification divides graduate work into five groups:

- Traditional graduate occupations
- Modern graduate occupations
- New graduate occupations
- Niche graduate occupations
- Non-graduate occupations.

With the obvious exception of non-graduate occupations, these jobs are not actually ascribed any specific level of priority or hierarchy in spite of the apparent natural hierarchy that emerges. This is essentially because presenting an impression of the labour market that is segmented but not stratified gives an impression of inclusivity. Elias and Purcell (2004) argue that the labour market is simply changing and it is no longer just traditional graduate jobs such as law that require a degree; many different

areas of the labour market are growing and demand a highly skilled workforce. Therefore all of these types of jobs are deemed appropriate for graduates to enter.

Traditional graduate jobs are those jobs that have always had a degree as a prerequisite for entry, such as doctors and lawyers (which will be discussed below in reference to this thesis). Modern graduate occupations are “The newer professions, particularly in management, IT and creative vocational areas, which graduates have been entering since educational expansion in the 1960s” (2004:61). These are the types of employment that seem to fit best with the concept of ‘knowledge workers’. ‘New’ graduate jobs are occupations that traditionally do not require a degree in order to either access or perform well within them, but that have supposedly changed in recent years for a higher level qualification to become the main form of access. Elias and Purcell give the example of marketing managers, physiotherapists, welfare officers and countryside rangers. This category seems to fall into a definitional trap of graduate labour whereby any job that is being filled by graduate becomes regarded as a ‘graduate job’ irrespective of whether this occupation actually takes advantage of skills or knowledge learned from a university course (Keep and Mayhew 2004).

Simply because there is an increase in the numbers of graduates in an occupation does not mean that there has been any significant change in the occupation to accommodate their higher level skill nor does it mean either that universities are the best way of educating these workers. In particular the more vocational occupations such as physiotherapy may benefit more from level three training. This is also true of the final category, ‘niche’ graduate jobs, which Elias and Purcell define as occupational areas that largely do not employ graduates but within which there are emerging niches for graduates to fill. The examples provided here include leisure centre, hotel and retail managers. This final classification consists of jobs that the authors readily admit have been done competently in the past without a degree. Classifying jobs as graduate jobs in this way becomes tautological, if there are a greater number of people with degrees a greater number of jobs can be filled by graduates so a degree will increasingly become an entry requirement for skilled work. In spite of Elias and Purcell’s insistence that this classification is based on the skills, these classifications seem like broad ranging attempts to justify jobs where a degree is a requirement or desirable criteria for entry. This ignores any potential credential inflation (Collins 1979) and over-qualification (Chevalier 2000).

It is difficult to determine exactly what skills criteria Elias and Purcell depended on when developing this categorisation in order to critique it fully. As with the general criteria for which jobs should fit into each level of the classification, the justification for what skills are required is often ill-defined or tautological, as the following quote from one of the technical documents for compiling the SOC(HE) classification demonstrates:

The conceptual basis of the five fold classification of work is that the jobs classified within the first four of these categories consist predominantly of tasks for which a university level education is appropriate. That is, the work involved makes use of the skills and knowledge imparted via a degree course, and that a highly qualified job holder makes use of his/her skills and knowledge imparted via their degree level education. (2004b:8)

No attempt is made to actually define the skills that would indicate suitability for graduate employment or that students would learn while at university. The categories were developed using the Labour Force Survey and vague references to an ‘array of materials about occupations’ (2004b:3). This conceptualisation is actually left to the respondents in their study who are asked to define their own skills levels and usage. These questions leave a significant amount of room for interpretation for the respondents for whom there is no guarantee that they will be explicitly aware of the skills they use or possess and when they acquire them. The questions asked (see Elias and Purcell 2004b) largely assume a homogeneity of degree courses, over-looking differences in skills by subject area and that much of the expansion of higher education courses has actually come in more vocationalised areas (Keep and Mayhew 2004) and therefore may actually be highly appropriate for a typically ‘non-graduate’ job.

Due to the empirical aspect of this thesis exploring the structural conditions of law degrees and the correspondence to the legal profession, it is worth scrutinising the ‘traditional’ graduate job category further. This grouping is generally one of the established professions, such as medicine or law, and they generally have a very direct route from the higher education system into work through either highly academic or professional university courses. These occupations will usually require that the graduate is an expert in a specific field or knowledge. This clearly places knowledge at the forefront of access to these traditional jobs. A degree has historically been required for access to these elite professions and is therefore

supposedly less likely to suffer from credential inflation. Elias and Purcell claim that there has been little expansion in these areas and therefore the requirement of graduates to fill these traditional roles has remained static.

As the discussion of the legal profession in Chapter Four will show, there is in fact significant stratification within the broad category of 'traditional' graduate jobs in terms of status, pay and skills utilisation. Part of the of problem with classifying jobs based on skills utilisation, as Elias and Purcell claim to have done, is that the diversity of such skills even within seemingly similar jobs is too vast to capture in such a broad stroke. While this thesis is also aiming for a broad picture of the labour, dividing the jobs explicitly by status can incorporate this diversity. For example, a low status and low paid legal secretary who does not use a very large amount of their subject knowledge can be classified very differently to a barrister who obviously requires a significant depth of knowledge and is very high status. Under the classification of Elias and Purcell, both of these jobs could be considered in the traditional graduate category.

There many studies of the graduate labour market which refer to 'elite' graduate work (for example Brown and Hesketh 2004, Chevalier and Conlon 2003), however this is not usually part of a broader typology of types of graduate work. Instead this generally refers to the highest status work that can be entered in a heterogeneous but not necessarily segmented labour market. This thesis will argue that a conception of 'elite' graduate work must be followed by an explicit hierarchy of other lower status types of work. The extent to which this hierarchy is borne out in the literature will frame some of the following discussion and be explored explicitly in Chapter Three. In this vein, the following section outlines more empirically based literature into the shape of the graduate labour, specifically exploring the extent to which graduates are entering jobs that require or use their qualifications.

Over-qualification in the graduate labour market

Over-education is often presented as merely a temporary mismatch in the labour market (Pitcher and Purcell, 1998). However, there is empirical evidence suggests that over-education itself is a permanent (and arguably necessary) feature of the labour market. For example, using data from a cohort who graduated in 1980, Dolton and Vignoles (1997), claim that 62% of male graduates who were over-educated for

their first destination after graduation remained mismatched six years later. Providing similar data, McGuinness and Bennett (2007) show a decrease in the number of over-qualified workers in their sample of only 6.1 percent over a four year period (from 32.3% of workers over-qualified in their first job to 26.2% still over-qualified four years later). Clearly this raises a number of questions about how long over-qualification can be considered a temporary condition if there is such a small decline over such a relatively long period of time.

Using the 2006 UK Skills Survey, Felstead et al (2007) estimate that in 2006 there were 4,844,000 jobs that specifically required a degree and 98,000 vacancies. This is severely mismatched with the amount of people with the qualifications to fill these occupations with 6,091,000 people having a degree leading to a mismatch of 1,149,000. If there are not enough jobs available for over a million graduates then they will necessarily have to enter jobs for which they are over qualified. Using these data would give a figure of 18.87 percent graduate over-qualification but when exploring skill utilisation, Felstead and colleagues show that this rises to 24.8%. This study also claims that while credentialism has been prevalent since the mid-1980s (when the skills survey began) it has increased gradually every year. Felstead and colleagues also identify that professional workers are encountering more rigid hierarchies and are permitted less discretion and autonomy in their work than ever before and this decline is continuing. This is clearly in contrast to the image of the autonomous knowledge worker selling their talent and working creatively. Research by Mason et al (2002) into graduate skills utilisation showed that just under half of the students sample did not make use of their degree subject knowledge in their post-graduation jobs. Keep and Mayhew (2004) claim that while it was often touted that 80 percent of the growth in jobs until 2010 would be require higher level workers, this figure is actually based on a mis-reading of data which in fact show only require level three skills and would therefore lead to over-qualified graduates filling these places.

Using data from a panel survey at the University of Birmingham collected in 1996, Battu, Bellfield and Sloane (1999) attempt to track two cohorts of graduates over their careers in order to determine whether over-qualification is in fact a short-term, temporary state. Workers were asked if a degree was required for their job at three different stages and revealed that while there was definite decline among those who are in non-graduate jobs (from a peak of 41.3%) a significant number of

graduates had never entered work that actually specified a degree as a formal requirement (31.5%). Additionally, this study provides an interesting result that a number of graduates fail to maintain 'graduate level' employment and actually move down the occupational ladder into jobs where a degree was not a requirement...While such a decline only affects around 2-5 per cent of the graduates in this sample, it raises questions about how well graduates are prepared for the labour market by their degree. The following section will explore differing rates of return but the type of education received

Returns on type of education

Pooling data from the Labour Force Survey from 1994 to 2006, Walker and Zhu (2008) claim that there has been significant growth in the number of graduates entering the labour market and a subsequent disparity between supply and demand for graduate employment. These data do identify that the wage premium for having achieved a higher level qualification has remained relatively constant when comparing two different cohorts, one from 'before' and one 'after' the expansion of HE. This premium has risen substantially for men in the top quartile of wage distribution and declines in the lower quartile. When viewed from the perspective of correspondence theory, evidence of a possible polarisation of the labour market such as this could be due to more structural inequalities in the graduate labour market that are growing because HE has become a standard pathway for young people. Walker and Zhu's research does not take account of various factors including the level of degree attained or the institution that was attended thus treating graduates as a fairly homogenous group.

When exploring returns to degrees based upon the classification of degree achieved, Smetherham (2006) shows that first class graduates from low status institutions are significantly less likely than their similarly qualified counter-parts to be in jobs that had degrees as an entry requirement. With 82 percent of first class graduates from 'middle' institutions and 80 percent from elite institutions entering jobs that require degrees for entry while only 44 percent from low status universities entered qualifications of this level. This is obviously contrary to the perception that of the expansion of higher education will provide enhanced opportunities from people

from disadvantaged backgrounds (those most likely to attend lower status institutions).

Using nationally representative panel data from the Graduate Cohort Study, Chevalier and Conlon (2003) state that there are heterogeneous returns for graduates depending upon the status of institution attended. Studying at a Russell Group university (a loose confederation of high status, research-orientated institutions) can provide up to a six percent wage increase for graduates upon labour market entry, even after controlling for other major factors including prior attainment and parental background. Chevalier and Conlon claim this can essentially level the playing field for some graduates. They do however suggest that intra-group differences in returns between Russell Group universities can vary as much as 10%, something that Chevalier and Conlon identify is due to increasing homogeneity of 'types' of students in universities and increasing polarisation in the HE system. This concept of homogenous groups of students attending particular university types and heterogeneous financial returns to a degree contingent on the institution attended seem to lend support to the model of a correspondence between a stratified HE sector and a stratified graduate labour market that being proposed in this thesis.

Using the same data set as Chevalier and Conlon to further illuminate the nature of this polarisation, Hussain, McNally and Telhaj (2009) developed a measure for university quality combining staff-student ratios, expenditure per student, student A level scores, research quality and drop-out rates. Their results show that the difference in terms of graduate pay for those attending universities in the highest quartile of quality against a university in the lowest quartile was between 10 and 16 percent. Hussain and colleagues also identify that the returns based on institutional quality have increased over time, although they make this claim with the caveat that the data used covers period of dramatic change in the HE sector and therefore makes longer term comparisons difficult.

As Power and Whitty (2008) show students from private schools are more likely to attend elite universities for what can be considered broadly cultural reasons, for example better preparation for the rigorous application process at Oxbridge. Power and Whitty also show that degrees have differing values in the jobs market, specifically that those who attend elite universities are more successful by a number of measures. This, the authors claim raises questions about the nature of widening participation and moving the financial burden of HE to students, which will cause the

greatest damage to working class students. These are the students who are more likely to attend the lowest status universities and therefore will get lower returns on their investment coupled with higher rates of debt.

Differing skills usage and returns in the graduate labour market

This section has shown that there is a large body of research evidence demonstrating that the labour market for graduates is at least heterogeneous, if not segmented or stratified. There are clearly differing returns; both financially and in terms of fulfilment for graduates in the actual jobs they enter which raises questions of the suitability of a university education for many people. In the context of this thesis, graduates from 'new' universities are over-represented in jobs that do not use their skills or provide lower financial returns. This study intends to explore any role that the universities play in creating this labour market inequality, if the findings correspond with the predictions then it can be seen as indicative of a more structural, social reproduction.

The discourse of employability and individual responsibility

Graduates from new universities are apparently less likely to enter high status graduate work (Smetherham 2006, Power and Whitty 2008) and have lower returns on their investment in education (Chevalier and Conlon 2003, Hussain, McNally and Telhaj 2009). However, they are also the most likely to embrace employability development strategies as a central focus of their teaching (Saunders and Machell 2000, Cranmer 2006). This raises questions of about the ability of such programmes to adequately prepare students for graduate work. Bowles and Gintis claim that the concept of meritocracy has emerged to legitimise structural inequality. Arguably, employability can be seen as the next step in this legitimisation as it is an ideology which exists to convince students that they are being adequately prepared for 'graduate work' but that the highest status work will always be unavailable to them. To explore this conception, the following section will explore the nature of employability as a concept.

Employability has its roots in human capital theory, particularly as it was advanced by Becker (1993). In simple terms Becker sought to demonstrate that

people (or workers) operated as a means of production similar to machinery or land and that therefore productivity could be increased or improved by investing in their 'human capital' through education and training. Simply put, if you buy better machinery you increase your productivity. Likewise, if you increase the skill levels of your workers through training then you will similarly gain returns through increased productivity. The idea that the more educated one becomes the more economically valuable one becomes is a simple one, the next seemingly logical step in this argument is that the more valuable you are the better rewarded you will be. Human capital theory has received increasing traction in government policy in recent years as demonstrated by the following statement from a Treasury report into UK productivity:

Improving skills and human capital is important in promoting growth, both as an input to production and by aiding technological progress. This has been recognised both in endogenous growth theory and also in empirical studies comparing growth in different countries (HM Treasury, 2000:32)

The expansion of higher education allowed for more and more people to increase their human capital. However, there are still people who are losing out in the market and not attaining the high status work they expect, these graduates are accepting of entering low status work because of the myth of a meritocratic labour market. The policy doctrine that delivered this upskilling of the workforce while also keeping the responsibility for either success or failure with the individual was employability.

In the context of this thesis, it is asserted that it would predominantly be graduates from low status universities who are not utilising their subject-based knowledge or skills in lower status graduate work. Therefore, it is students of lower status universities that are most in need of employability skills and therefore they will be made a key focus of the teaching. However, rather than serving the purpose of preparing graduates for a non-linear labour market, employability in fact serves to legitimate inequality in a stratified labour market by placing the responsibility for failure in the hands of the individual. Keep and Mayhew (2010) take this attitude further stating that the prioritising of this skills agenda is the first and often only resort for the government because it excuses policy makers from having address or even recognise other non-individual, structural and macro-economic factors for

labour market difficulties. Keep and Mayhew therefore argue that skills are treated as a remedy to various social and economic policy issues that divest those in power from responsibility for the continuation of social problems because they have invested in improving skill levels,

To demonstrate its influence as a concept, Keep and Mayhew (2004) interviewed graduates from post-1992 institutions to assess the extent to which the principle of employability affects graduates' perceptions of the labour market. The participants in this study reproduced the dominant discourse of individualism and skills development and accept these as explanations or justifications for success (or lack of success) in the competition for jobs. This study consisted of a large number of graduates who had failed to enter the 'graduate labour market', however due to the discursive shift towards individual responsibility for unemployment or under-employment they framed their lack of success in terms of personal failure. They were likely to attribute their situation to a lack of transferable skills or knowledge rather than any external, structural causes such as rigid labour markets or a lack of social capital due to their background or the effect of attending a lower status institution.

Similarly, Moreau and Leathwood (2006) carried out interviews with 'non-traditional' graduates about their fortunes in the labour market with the intention that this would give a more accurate picture of how the expansion of HE has affected employment of those it was expanded to. When asked to discuss what they believe was holding them back in the labour market, many of the respondents took the responsibility upon themselves. This is clearly in line with the individual responsibility implied by the current discourse of employability. Discussions of progress were always phrased in terms of skills and abilities in a fashion similar to how transferable skills were presented in university documents. When referring to skills, these graduates often referred to simply personal character traits.

Of course the internalising of the discourse of employability by students and graduates (whether they are employed or not) would not be such a problem if subscribing to this doctrine led to employment for graduates. One of the key functions of the correspondence explored in this thesis is that it is legitimated. Specifically, if you fail to enter high status jobs after graduation this is painted as a personal failure in a meritocratic competition rather than structural exclusion. Vital to justifying this perspective is an understanding that the role of employability and other technocratic-meritocratic processes play in creating a false consciousness among proletarianised

students is to justify structural inequality. Working class people are more likely to attend universities which have a stronger focus on employability and internalise the ideology of personal responsibility for finding (satisfying) work.

The concept of employability as false consciousness is based upon developing the work of Bowles and Gintis (1976) in outlining the way that an unequal education system has developed in line with and to support an unequal capitalist economic structure (this will be discussed further in the next chapter). At the core of Bowles and Gintis' argument is that the liberal, democratic conception of education obscures capitalist oppression inherent in the system. They analyse how various changes in the education system have been reactions to the necessity to justify or obfuscate this inequality or to fuel the requirements of capitalism. This thesis argues that the decline of industrial production and shift to more white collar work has required a similar educational change in order to support the capitalist mode of production and legitimise their position in a hierarchical system to individuals. The expansion of higher education and the ideology of employability have performed this function.

This thesis does not provide an in-depth study of the changes in the economy and education akin to that of Bowles and Gintis to explore this idea, but their work on the development of education and capitalism is useful for critiquing the development of the knowledge economy as a meritocratic system. If the results of this study convincingly suggest a correspondence then a more detailed, historical analysis is a potential avenue for future research. This thesis will explore the prevalence of the employability doctrine at the universities being studied with the prediction that it is of greater importance at the new university to justify the corresponding low status positions in the graduate division of labour.

Conclusion

In this chapter, the development of a mass higher education has been explored in terms of how students gain access to university, their experiences once there and the form of their eventual labour market destination. This discussion has shown that there remain significant barriers, particularly in terms of social class, to students being able to enter high status universities. This is viewed as problematic due to the higher status jobs with better rates of returns that these universities lead to. Students are also more likely to choose particular universities for cultural reasons, selecting those institutions

that best fit with their own values and background. Once in the labour market, significant numbers of graduates are entering jobs which do not seemingly require their university level qualifications or skills and there is evidence that ‘non-traditional’ graduates are internalising the doctrine of employability which leads them to take personal responsibility for their position in the labour market irrespective of any structural inequalities that may be functioning to restrict their access to higher status work. In the broader context of this thesis, this chapter has both illuminated some key areas of investigation (for example, differences in terms of class sizes and employability teaching at the different universities) and provided the context for which the results of this study can be framed. The next chapter will explore the ways in which some of the research discussed in this chapter can be combined with broad tenets of correspondence theory to investigate the structural conditions of contemporary higher education.

Chapter Three

An exploration of correspondence theory and its relevance for contemporary higher education

Introduction:

The previous chapter outlined existing research discussing the current form of UK higher education (HE) and its relationship to stratification in the labour market. The purpose of that chapter was to establish the field of research that this thesis will be contributing to and building upon. This chapter will establish the background to one of the more original contributions of this thesis to the field, specifically how it draws upon a theoretical perspective that has been largely under-utilised in recent years, particularly in the context of HE.

The empirical component of this research compares the structural conditions that students encounter at different status universities in order to explore the ways in which they might reflect the structural conditions of the graduate labour market. The nature of this comparison draws its inspiration from the correspondence theory developed by Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis in their classic education text *Schooling in Capitalist America: Educational Reform and the Contradictions of Economic Life*. Briefly, Bowles and Gintis argued that the structure of social relations and conditions in schooling are more important than the substance of learning. These conditions are hierarchical along social class boundaries and help to reproduce structural inequality by preparing young people for a type of work that corresponds to their type of schooling.

This chapter will explore the correspondence theory in greater depth and suggest ways in which it can be made relevant in application to higher education. Firstly, this chapter will outline the nature of the correspondence principle as it was first proposed by Bowles and Gintis including an exploration of their historical analysis of the development of education. Secondly, criticisms that have been made of the correspondence theory since *Schooling* was published shall be explored, specifically focusing on critiques concerning the methodology and the absence of cultural understandings. Thirdly, this chapter will explore some empirical applications of the correspondence theory which may suggest a way forward in

applying this theory to a contemporary higher education setting. This section will include a discussion of any existing contemporary uses of the correspondence theory. Finally in this chapter, ways in which the correspondence principle can be updated and applied to contemporary UK higher education will be discussed which take account of the various criticisms of the original theory and changes in social conditions. As an extension of this outlining of the more practical application of the correspondence principle, a discussion of the nature of the legal profession in the UK will conclude this chapter. This discussion will explore ways in which this profession is stratified and how this can relate to the education system with the purpose of justifying this sphere of work as appropriate for study. As such, this chapter comprises the interface between contemporary HE research, correspondence theory and the methodology of this research thesis.

Contemporary higher education and re-introducing correspondence

In principle, the widening of access to higher education (discussed in Chapter Two) should mean that the barriers of class, ethnicity and gender are beginning to be lifted. If there has been a shift in the composition of the student body then universities may have shifted away from being the preserve of an elite section of society (generally, white, middle-class males). If everyone can achieve the same high standard of educational attainment irrespective of their class, gender or ethnicity then they will surely all be equipped with the same skills required for participation in the labour market. This should promote free-flowing, more equitable social mobility.

However, as we saw in the last chapter, a number of studies have shown that this is not necessarily the case (for example Chevalier and Conlon 2003, Power and Whitty 2008). Many young people are graduating from university with a degree level qualification and the associated skills that accompany that credential but they are not entering jobs that utilise these skills (Felstead et al 2007). Perhaps a different perspective on the motivations for and impact of changes in higher education is required to understand why so many young people are failing to achieve what is promised to them. Rather than embrace the dominant contemporary ideological discourses in the field of higher education research and the graduate labour market, it is possible that returning to an analytical perspective from the past may illuminate the nature of the problem.

Few studies of the structural relationship between the education system and the labour market have had such a lasting impact as the one presented by Bowles and Gintis (1976) in *Schooling in Capitalist America*. Their theory of the form of schooling playing a pivotal role in the reproduction of social inequality has become a key text in the development of sociological and educational research and theory. However, such macro-economic, structural-functionalist arguments have largely fallen out of favour in contemporary sociology, often due to criticisms of economic determinism and the marginalising of individual agency. Arguably the development of a mass HE system and the ever growing influence of business on HE (for example, the growth of employability-Mason et al 2003, Cranmer 2006) make this a suitable time to revisit these Bowles and Gintis' theory.

Schooling in Capitalist America

In their seminal work *Schooling in Capitalist America* (1976), Bowles and Gintis examined the nature of education as a form of social control, specifically the role that it plays in preparing individuals for their future position in a hierarchical division of labour. Bowles and Gintis sought to problematise the liberal and democratic conception of the social role of education. This conception portrayed education as fair, meritocratic and developmental, claiming that the education system provided children with all of the correct tools to integrate functionally and happily into society. However, Bowles and Gintis attempted to show that education is instead a conservative force that functions to reproduce social inequality and therefore necessarily represses personal development. Writing from a highly structuralist-functionalist Marxist perspective, Bowles and Gintis argued that schooling served the function of preparing young people for particular roles in the labour market hierarchy based upon their social class. They claimed that the form of education would correspond to the work that these students were expected to enter. Bowles and Gintis summarise their argument as such:

The structure of social relations in education not only inures the student to the discipline of the work place but develops the types of personal demeanour, modes of self-presentation, self-image and social-class identifications which are the crucial ingredients of job adequacy. Specifically, the social relationships of education - the relationships

between administrators and teachers, teachers and students, students and students, and students and their work- replicate the hierarchical division of labour. (1976:131)

Just as the proletariat are alienated from the product of their labour, school pupils are alienated from what they learn. Young, working class people are educated in a way that actively discourages independence and are subordinated to the external rewards of grades just as workers are subordinated by wage labour. Likewise, strict discipline was present in working class schools to replicate the controlled working environment of industrial production.

As with differences in labour based on social position, working class pupils will encounter a more rigid education than their higher status counterparts who, due to their position in the social structure, will have more successfully internalised the norms of capitalist society and can therefore be encouraged to engage in more independent thought and activity. This will correspond to the greater freedom to perform the intellectual labour that they will enter, including progression to university. At the time Bowles and Gintis were writing, the working class youth was prepared for a future in manual labour and therefore the subjugation of insubordinate tendencies was essential. This served to oppress workers on a day to day basis in order to make them more productive but also served a wider repressive function of discouraging social unrest and rendered them “sufficiently fragmented in consciousness to preclude their getting together to shape their own material existence” (1976: 130). Thus, the system not only supported capital accumulation by facilitating the exploitation of workers, it also serves to legitimate the system.

For Bowles and Gintis, education is therefore an effective method of social reproduction because it manages to maintain inequality under the guise of meritocracy:

This is what we mean by “legitimation”: the fostering of a generalised consciousness among individuals which prevents the formation of the social bonds and critical understanding whereby existing social conditions might be transformed. Legitimation may be based on feelings of inevitability (“death and taxes”) or moral desirability (“everyone gets what they deserve”). When the issue is that of social justice, these feelings are both present, with a dose of “custom” and “resignation” as well. (1976:104)

The proletariat are socialised into obedience and out of a unified class consciousness which otherwise could become an effective force of social change. It is integral to the maintenance of inequality that individuals see the characteristics of the capitalist mode of production, particularly its various hierarchical forms, as not only 'natural' but democratic. Education is a key social sphere for the maintained legitimation of the existing social stratification. Simply put, the hegemonic discourse of 'meritocracy' says that people who succeed in education do so because they are more able, intelligent and work the hardest and are therefore more deserving of higher status work and better pay. Bowles and Gintis maintain that the meritocratic façade that pervades the wider economic structure is only possible because it is tied to the education system:

[By] rendering the outcome (educational attainment) dependent not only on ability but motivation, drive to achieve, perseverance, and sacrifice, the status allocation mechanism acquires heightened legitimacy. Moreover, such personal attributes are tested and developed over a long period of time, underlining the apparent objectivity and achievement orientation of the stratification system. (1976:106)

Therefore, the doctrine of meritocracy operates to both reinforce and legitimise structural inequality by convincing people that they are deserving of their place in the social hierarchy. One of the ways it achieves this is through the guise of the objective measurement of ability that obscures any structural explanations for differences in attainment. This is lent moral authority by the conception that this hierarchy is both natural (based on ability) and can be altered (based on effort). In theory anyone can achieve, thus placing the responsibility for success on the individual.

The concept that there is a hierarchy that is justified by a supposed meritocracy is reinforced through sporadic and impersonal testing throughout the education system. That testing teaches pupils to accept their inability to succeed competitively against those of a higher 'ability' while those who work hardest learn to accept their social position. Subsequently job assignment is seen as fair because it is linked to attainment. This "technocratic-meritocratic" perspective is challenged by Bowles and Gintis, who claim that education had not developed over time towards a meritocracy but has rather been forged through class conflict. The structure of schooling is dictated by the nature of the labour market and education changes to better maintain the inequality found in the economic sphere. If class is the dominant

influence on educational success and educational success is the main contributing factor to economic success, then working class people are inherently restricted from any potential means of improving their position in the social structure.

Capitalism and the development of education

One of the key methods that Bowles and Gintis used to illustrate the socially reproductive aspects of the education system was to place the development of education and wider economic system in its historical context. Much of the early chapters of *Schooling in Capitalist America* are given over to an examination of how the social conditions of contemporary capitalism were created, specifically focusing on the various exploitative aspects that this system has been built upon. Bowles and Gintis undertook a detailed economic analysis of the United States in order to demonstrate the way in which the education system is irrevocably tied to it. They essentially argue that education and the structure of economic life are intrinsically related because they both serve the purpose of shaping individuals for the particular social organisation required for capitalism, summing up their views as follows:

The economy produces people. The production of commodities may be considered of quite minor importance except as a necessary input into people production. Our critique of the capitalist economy is simple enough: the people production process - in the workplace and in the schools - is dominated by the imperatives of profit and domination rather than by human need (1976:54)

The capitalist system functions by extracting the greatest possible amount of labour from workers for the lowest reward and the education system with its technocratic-meritocratic democratic philosophy justifies this process. Bowles and Gintis argue that the capitalist system simply requires that its workers are equipped with the basic skills and capacities for labour with control maintained through both reward (wages) and the legitimisation of subordination to authority. The later is more complex to achieve and involves the justification of the greater value of authority figures to wider society as well as convincing workers of their own inferiority. Meritocracy also convinces people that the only way in which they can change their social circumstances is through working harder, devoting more time and effort to capitalism rather than through resistance, such as

organised labour. One of the roles of the education system is to sell the myth of meritocracy and democracy to children so that they believe their exploitation is deserved and just.

Analysis of personal attributes and IQ as determinants of economic success

In addition to their extensive analysis of the historical development of education and capitalism, Bowles and Gintis' methodology also consisted of large-scale, quantitative research measuring IQ, class background and economic success. Their data were drawn from the US census of 1950 and 1960 and from various previous studies that had measured adult and child IQ levels and educational attainment (discussed in Bowles and Nelson 1974). Multiple regression analyses were performed on these data to determine the significance of the influence of the class background on IQ, attainment and future economic success. This analysis sought to determine the nature of the correlation between adult IQ, education, father's education and childhood IQ. The purpose of this analysis was to challenge the idea that 'the-poor-are-dumb', a concept which would validate the technocratic-meritocratic ideology outlined above. Bowles and Gintis wanted to challenge the growing understanding of the time that IQ was genetically inherited and that this explains why socioeconomic status is reproduced intergenerationally (an idea that they termed 'IQism'). Firstly they demonstrate that the higher the socioeconomic status of an individual, the longer that person would generally stay in education even when controlling for IQ in other individuals. Then, they analyse the influence of child-hood IQ and family socioeconomic background upon the probability of entering the top quintile of incomes. By holding childhood IQ as constant by linear regression, there was only the slightest reduction in its affect on the probability of adult males being in the top fifth of income when measured by family socioeconomic background. These results therefore demonstrate that that socio-economic status is reproduced by non-cognitive mechanisms, namely the class background of individuals. Therefore IQ was not an important determinant of either educational or economic success. The way in which the socioeconomic status of individuals was reproduced is therefore more open for debate; this is where the correspondence principle can shed light.

Additional data were drawn from other research concerning the personal attributes of workers (Edwards 1976) and how these characteristics were reflected in

high school students (Meyer 1972). Edwards found that when comparing the attributes of workers as defined by their supervisors and co-workers, three key personality traits emerged; rule orientation, dependability and internalisation of the norms of the firm. The correlation between how workers were described in these characteristics by their supervisors and co-workers remained strong when controlling for IQ and key background variables (such as class and education). The lowest status workers were most strongly defined by rule orientation and the highest by internalising norms. Bowles, Gintis and Meyer (1974) explored similar attributes in high school students. Sixteen personality traits of students were developed and analysed in correlation with various measures of students' academic ability and intelligence. When analysed in terms of the contribution these attributes had to grades, those incompatible with conformity (creativity, independence and aggression) had a negative relationship. These sixteen traits were consolidated into three broad attributes that matched with those used by Edwards and when the relationship between the traits of these workers and successful students were compared, there was significance congruence. Bowles and Gintis interpret Edwards' result as demonstrating that 'at least for this sample, the personality traits rewarded in schools seem to be rather similar to those indicative of good job performance in the capitalist economy' (1976:138). This is of course at the heart of the correspondence theory.

Correspondence from higher education

Bowles and Gintis claim that universities in America were traditionally highly exclusive with only a minority of even the social elite attending. They note that in 1870 only 1.7% of 18 to 21 year olds in the USA attended university, 'Even among the economic elite of the day, college attendance was the exception rather than the rule, a cultural luxury rather than a social necessity' (1976: 201). Therefore, higher education had only the most minor of roles in the social reproduction that they claim is the central purpose of other sectors of the education system. By the end of World War II these figures changed drastically and by the time *Schooling in Capitalist America* was being written, almost half of young people in America would progress to postsecondary education. Concurrently higher education became more broadly integrated into the system of reproducing the class structure and dominant ideology of capitalism.

Bowles and Gintis argued that throughout the middle of the of the 20th Century there was a shift in the form of labour in US that was typified by a shift from self-employed, often agrarian, work to white collar labour. Bowles and Gintis suggest that similar processes that occurred to control blue collar labour and bring it under the control of the capitalise mode of production began to occur to white collar work - namely a fragmentation of skills (often under the promise of greater efficiency through technocratic management) leading to a 'divide and rule' scenario coupled with a reserve army of suitably qualified workers that undermine job security. Reflecting this fragmentation and technocratisation of white collar work has been a compartmentalisation of intellectual pursuits in higher education so that students are alienated from a wider understanding of where their knowledge fits - mirroring how workers are alienated from working on a whole product.

Bowles and Gintis claim that the growth of higher education, in creating a large body of skilled workers, also fuelled the growth of white collar work which subsequently led to even more growth in numbers attending university. There are a number of other factors that either influenced or facilitated this change including pressure for political change for women and ethnic minority groups as well as changing economic and consumer demands. Bowles and Gintis argue that the university was shifting from a site of liberal education designed to develop critical thought because the sheer volume of students would be a threat to the capitalist system. If young people are being educated to the extent they can perceive the nature of inequality in the capitalist mode of production and then subsequently enter jobs for which they are over-qualified due to the large numbers of equally credentialed graduates this could lead to widespread discontent and even become a force for social change. Therefore the system became fragmented and stratified;

Higher education has developed a multitiered system dominated at the top by Ivy League institutions and the great state universities, followed by the less prestigious state universities, state colleges and ending with community colleges. This system reflects both the social status of the families of students and the hierarchy of work relationships into which each student will move after graduation (1976:209)

This fragmented system, Bowles and Gintis claim, overcomes the problem that the 'elite' education could threaten the existing social order if it is accessed by those groups that are being oppressed by it. The higher level universities can still provide the liberal education that promotes a critical understanding of the wider society and economic system because they are producing the leaders of society who will benefit from its inequalities. The lower level schools satiate the desire for the working class, ethnic minorities and women to access postsecondary education but the form of education can be suited to their 'needs' - namely more vocationally orientated with less focus on intellectual development. This not only legitimates inequality but also prepares students to accept lower status white-collar work. In the intervening 36 years, very little research following this model has been undertaken. This is particularly surprising considering the massive growth of higher education since Bowles and Gintis were writing.

Summary

To summarise their work generally, according to Bowles and Gintis, the education system performs three key functions in society;

- The reproduction of class inequality through corresponding conditions of schooling and work
- The restriction of the development of class conscious and potential social change through repression and alienation
- The legitimisation of class inequality through the maintenance of the hegemonic ideology of meritocracy and 'individual' achievement

If the correspondence theory is a useful tool for examining the contemporary higher education system in the UK then it will be necessary to analyse the existence and prevalence of these three processes. This thesis will predominantly focus on the first of these functions, which when explored empirically, can be used to assess the extent of the legitimisation present in the system. However, it is beyond the scope of the empirical component of this thesis to explore the influence of HE on the restriction of class consciousness. Before it is possible to outline how correspondence theory can be effectively used in a contemporary setting and for analysing higher education, it is

necessary to explore any shortcomings or critiques of the correspondence theory in order to determine which aspects are still appropriate for use in social research and which may need some updating.

Criticisms of the correspondence thesis

Since its publication, *Schooling in Capitalist America* has become widely accepted as an important work in the development of the sociology of education. Cole (1988) claimed that the work of Bowles and Gintis was largely responsible for solidifying a growing trend to view the macro-economic impact of capitalism upon education and that correspondence allowed a greater understanding of the principles behind classroom interaction. Their influence however did not stop with Marxists and the Left, as Swartz (2003) notes when he identifies its continued use as an introductory text to the sociology of education 30 years after its publication. However, while the impact of their work cannot be denied, Bowles and Gintis have also drawn criticism for their methodology, analysis and conclusions from various sectors - including from other Marxist and left-wing sociologists. One of the most common criticisms of *Schooling* is that the analysis presented is overly deterministic.

Economic determinism

Bowles and Gintis go to great lengths in their attempts to tie the (uneven) development of the capitalist mode of production to the (uneven) development of the education system to reproduce workers for its various requirements. This largely takes the form of analysis of changes in various economic factors such as labour relations and advancements in technology. However, Au (2006) discredits the correspondence theory for lacking the dynamism and fluidity of the oppressive processes of capitalism that Marx originally described, claiming that Bowles and Gintis' analyses were too economic and functional to be truly considered 'Marxist'.

In terms of education, Hogan (1981) claims that the development of educational organisation and strategies are not given equal weighting to the development of the economic system. The development of various pedagogic practices were overlooked by Bowles and Gintis and merely sublimated to the rather blunt analysis that all of education had developed to support and legitimise capitalist

oppression - making their work both overly economic and in many ways ahistorical. It is important for this thesis that such criticisms are taken on board when examining the nature of the pedagogy at different contemporary universities. It is important to place any observations in a wider educational context as well as the socio-economic one.

Olneck and Bills (1980), state that Bowles and Gintis' analysis is crude and deterministic claiming that if socioeconomic status were the main determining factor of personality then brothers would be no more alike each other than they would anyone else in their class. They claim that Bowles and Gintis show some fundamental unawareness of the nature of schooling and work:

Schoolwork is largely cognitive and solitary (even when pursued in a classroom), while adult work is largely physical or interpersonal. At school, the child's "boss" is not accountable for the same kind of production or profit criteria as is the worker's boss. (1980:42)

An extension of this over-simplification of the true nature of schooling and work and a fundamental criticism of the work of Bowles and Gintis is the lack of agency attributed to both teachers and pupils for their participation in the reproduction of the capitalist status quo.

One of the central contradictions of the socialism outlined by Bowles and Gintis is that it is unclear how social class groups can possibly begin the "prolonged struggle based on hope and a total vision of a qualitatively new society" (1976:17) if education so rigidly and effectively reproduces their oppression. The correspondence principle essentially eliminates the ability of students or teachers to resist or change their reality and therefore the oppressive nature of schooling. If individual freedom is so effectively curtailed by education, then it is unclear from where sites of resistance will emerge in order to bring about the massive social change Bowles and Gintis claim is required for both a more egalitarian education and a socialist state. This view of education assumes education only functions as a repressive apparatus of the state and that therefore teachers can only ever be agents of this function. Bowles and Gintis claim that teaching is far too controlled to allow any individual freedom, even if resistance is attempted:

The teacher's job has undergone subtle change. The educational efficiency binge of the 1920s led to the application of business management methods to the high schools. The concentration of decision-making power in the hands of administrators and the quest for economic rationalization had the same disastrous consequences for teachers that bureaucracy and rationalization of production had on most other workers. (1976:204)

The view of Bowles and Gintis presumes a similarity between teaching and other forms of labour that may not exist due to the interactive nature of education. This argument is highly economically reductionist in its failure to recognise the unique nature of the labour undertaken by teachers and the interactional relationship they have with their pupils. Carlson (1988) claims that the standard structural-functionalist conception of teaching assumes that the profession has become proletarianised through increasingly rigid bureaucracy and a shift in priorities from imparting knowledge to maintaining discipline. This view can be counter-productive as it encourages circumventing teachers rather than incorporating them into any proposed change. If teachers are simply inert intermediaries between education and the labour market then not only are they passive reproducers of inequality but they could never be mobilised to improve schooling or the futures of their students. Providing evidence of resistance from the providers of education, Wolcott (1977) claims that teachers find many methods of resistance to the routinisation and bureaucratisation of their profession which, while they do not threaten the stability of this control, at least serve to demonstrate that teachers are not merely a functional tool of oppression.

Even if a narrow, functionalist view of teaching were to be accepted, correspondence theory still over-looks any possible methods of resistance to the controlling force education exerts over pupils. All young people will be moulded effectively based upon their class identity but without developing a class consciousness due to the oppressive way in which working class students and workers are managed. In some ways, the work of Willis (1977) contradicts this deterministic view of working class youths with a discussion of how they learn and express proletarian identity through their resistance to schooling. With the acceptance of the role culture plays in education, Willis was able to demonstrate how working class youths actively created alternative values and priorities to those of schooling, namely a rejection of academic achievement and conformity. This resistance was carried forward into the labour market with the structure of work corresponding to the structure of education. Arguably this is a demonstration of how the

correspondence principle provides the purpose of education; it is actively resisted by those that it attempts to repress. However, the cultures identified by Willis were generally small-scale disobedience and a passive rejection of authority rather than organised resistance to capitalism. Therefore, while Willis describes more accurately the conditions of schooling and work for the proletariat (at least proletarian boys) the function is arguably still very much the same as that suggested by Bowles and Gintis.

Either way, a culture (or sub-cultures) of resistance are key to working class autonomy in education in the work of Willis, while Bowles and Gintis have come under attack for neglecting the role of culture in the reproduction of oppression through schooling. Consequently, a discussion of the execution of social reproduction in the classroom is essentially absent from their account. This absence in part can be explained by their deterministic view of teaching and their passive view of working class youth. If these conceptions of teachers and students are accepted it becomes unnecessary to discuss the day-to-day practices of education. However, if a view of education as being constituted by actors with their own priorities and motivations is accepted this questions how the education system deals with the practicalities of educating the youth in correspondence with their appropriate labour market position.

Giroux (1981) claims that many of the criticisms of correspondence theory have done little to undermine the value of the work, however if the concept of cultural hegemony is used to analyse correspondence theory its shortcomings become immediately apparent. A surface reading of correspondence theory would lend itself to supporting and embracing hegemony, however the practicalities of maintaining cultural hegemony are often eschewed in favour of a more simplistic and reductionist conception of bourgeois control. The domination and oppression found in the classroom is strictly limited to the economic realm, namely how it functions in the mode of, and to prepare for the workplace. This would appear to separate the school from other aspects of society (and indeed social control) because it is simply subsumed to the functioning of the economic aspects of capitalist oppression. While Bowles and Gintis stress the importance of being socialised with the correct behaviours and personality traits of one's class group they limit this to labour and not other social spheres which exert equal pressures upon class identity. Middle and higher class students are supposedly given more autonomy because of their internalisation of the norms and values of capitalist production. This internalisation is

only relevant and functional in term of their future labour market destinations not their role in wider society.

Bowles and Gintis also implicitly over-look alternative cultures or cultural explanations by suggesting that the norms and values of capitalism are all-encompassing and that the only differentiation between the working class and those above them is the extent to which they have these values forced upon them. This suggests that working class identity is merely antagonistic to capitalism and has no defining characteristics of its own. The absence of a coherent understanding of hegemonic control undermines correspondence theory and explains why it includes such passive representations of teachers and students.

Empirical Problems

While much of the criticisms of Bowles and Gintis concentrate on theoretical problems, the empirical basis of their work has also been questioned. Whitty (1985) claims that Bowles and Gintis present a crude Marxist analysis based upon questionable statistical data that strangely over-looks any overt reproductive and legitmatory facilities of education to instead focus on the hidden curriculum. Similarly, Olneck and Bills (1980) claim that the empirical basis for *Schooling* is often dubious, suffering from a number of problems, including interpreting ambiguous data as confirming their theories and relying on unrepresentative samples. Much of the analysis of Bowles and Gintis was based on comparing IQ levels to attainment and class background. There are a number of problems with IQ as a measure of intelligence which Bowles and Gintis allude to but do not fully accept in their analysis. If both the statistics used and measures are dubious then it is difficult to accept the conclusions based upon them. While Bowles and Gintis stress the significance of personality traits over skills as significant in determining economic success, they seem eager to use IQ as a stand-in for intelligence even though IQ cannot demonstrate more social abilities.

Empirical Support for correspondence theory

While the work of Bowles and Gintis has been widely criticised on a number of grounds, such as its lack of cultural understandings of reproduction and economic

determinism, this has not diminished the influence of the correspondence principle. The following section will detail two key empirical applications of this theory. While numerous studies have been based upon or influenced by Bowles and Gintis (for example, Apple 1993, Olneck and Bills 1980, Howell and McBroom, 1982, Oakes, 1982, Schilling 1989), the following research will be focused on because their methodologies make attempts to overcome a number of the criticisms levied at *Schooling in Capitalist America*. Therefore, the lessons learned from these two studies will be instrumental in shaping the form of this research thesis in applying the correspondence theory in qualitative research to a new setting. Firstly, the approach of Anyon (1981) which applied the correspondence to analysis of observational, interview and curriculum data collected from different status schools. Secondly, the methodology of Carnoy and Levin (1985) who conducted ethnographic research in schools.

Anyon and observation in elementary schooling

In a study of elementary schools in the United States, Anyon (1981) identified stratification across social class divisions even in what she claimed is a highly standardised level of education. Anyon's work differed empirically from Bowles and Gintis in accounting for a more grounded, cultural aspect to social reproduction rather than a more mechanistic, macro-economic model. Rather than drawing on historical analysis and statistical analysis of large datasets (as in *Schooling For Capitalist America*), Anyon investigated the pedagogy, curriculum and pupil evaluation processes of five schools through a combination of interviews with staff and pupils, classroom observation and examining various curriculum documents. Anyon identified that there were many similarities between the actual curricula being taught, with many of the same textbooks being used across the schools surveyed, largely due to them all being subject to the same state-wide education requirements. However, while the curricula were largely similar, the knowledge disseminated differed significantly across the schools.

Firstly, the two 'working class schools' seemed largely focused on just imparting basic knowledge to their pupils and often just keeping them occupied rather than encouraging them to learn. This was attributed to teachers' low expectations of the pupils' capacities - often seen to stem from a perceived lack of

parental interest. The work undertaken by the pupils was often highly routinised, simple tasks that left little room for creativity among the students and involved the teacher strictly controlling situations with a common pedagogic practice requiring simply copying notes that the teacher had written out on the blackboard. The learning of facts isolated from context was the prevalent form of pedagogy with little attempt made to connect or relate types of knowledge or understand how it is created. This contrasts to the middle class schools in the study where the priority was still often on the accumulation of facts but a broader purpose and context to accumulating knowledge was engendered to the pupils, namely that this knowledge could be exchanged for financial and social success. However this is still contingent on having 'enough' knowledge. Knowledge was still not presented as being related to the individual, as something that the pupils could gain or produce themselves. The third school type was classified as being for the 'Affluent Professional' and this school focussed much more on encouraging students' creativity and exploration. It also seemed to engage more with the connectedness of knowledge as well as broader social contexts. Placing knowledge against a wider social backdrop in this school encouraged the development of a particular form of ideological self-development, namely the promotion of what Anyon called aggressive individualism. The final school type was the identified as being for the 'Executive Elite'. Here knowledge was academic and rigorous and involved teaching much more complex topics than any other school and also making clear how knowledge is created and tying it to the individual and their development. These pupils are also under the most pressure to work hard and understand these concepts and subsequently succeed in education and work.

Anyon draws a distinction between reproductive and nonreproductive types of knowledge, which she defines:

"Reproductive" will refer to aspects of school knowledge that contribute directly to the legitimation and perpetuation of ideologies, practices, and privileges constitutive of present economic and political structures.
"Nonreproductive" knowledge is that which facilitates fundamental transformation of ideologies and practices on the basis of which objects, services, and ideas (and other cultural products) are produced, owned, distributed, and publicly evaluated. (1981:31)

Clearly the reproductive aspects of knowledge discussed here are similar to the type of social reproduction outlined by Bowles and Gintis. However, with a more qualitative and culturally sensitive research design, Anyon is able to describe how this reproduction operates in a more day to day fashion. For example, she claims that working class pupils were never taught history that related to their social background with the suggestion that this would promote alienation from their own class and restrict both resistance and a critical understanding of the world. The work of Anyon is indispensable when trying to adapt the correspondence principle to a more qualitative research design to understand how such a reproduction may operate such as in this thesis. Even though UK HE is vastly different from US elementary education, various factors such as the increasing intellectual and disciplinary independence in line with status, differing forms of engagement with knowledge and variations in curricula will be taken into account when testing the existence of class reproduction in universities.

Carnoy and Levin's ethnographic approach

Carnoy and Levin (1985) also attempted move beyond the mechanistic functionalist accounts of correspondence to develop a more sophisticated understanding of how education prepares young people for the labour market. One of the methods they used to support their arguments included an ethnographic study in two American classrooms in order to compare educational experiences of working class and middle class children. This focused on how these children were prepared for the labour market both in what they were taught and how values were instilled in them. They argue that one of the fundamental differences between strata in hierarchies of labour is how independent employees are in their actions, decisions, motivations and communication. Carnoy and Levin therefore hypothesised that, if pupils were being socialised into the same occupational strata as their parents, the working class school would have greater emphasis on rule-following whereas the middle class school would focus more on internalisation of norms and values of doing good work. The middle-class school was shown to refer to the future consequences of actions eight times more frequently than the working class school; the higher status school also placed more emphasis on self-presentation and subsequent interaction from the teacher. While numerous factors appear to separate the two schools in how they enact

class-structure reproduction they are largely motivated by differing strategies, expectations and priorities of the teachers and parents. This is clearly in contrast to the highly functionalist arguments found in Bowles and Gintis. This study shows that in order to make the correspondence principle a valid tool for educational research it must not only take account of more interactional elements of the educational experience but must also account for the role of teachers and other stakeholders.

Continued relevance and usefulness of the correspondence thesis

Many of the criticisms levelled at the work of Bowles and Gintis do little to undermine the usefulness of the correspondence thesis as a conceptual tool - provided that more attention is paid to how and why such reproduction occurs. Bowles and Gintis argue that, post-world war II, access to education in America had increased significantly, however attainment was still strongly linked with class. It is arguable that with the vast expansion of higher education in the UK, particularly with widening access to working class people, a similar process is occurring currently but these class differences are more obscured. For example, many lower status institutions specialise in more vocational courses which very directly correspond to lower positions in the graduate labour market. The remainder of this chapter will explore contemporary uses of the correspondence thesis as well as making suggestions as to how it can be made more robust for use in analysing contemporary HE.

Schooling in Capitalist America Revisited

Recently, Bowles and Gintis (2001) revisited their own work, claiming that the failure of the US education system was what sparked their original work and its continued failure necessitated revisiting it. Using more robust datasets than were available during their original work in the 1970s, Bowles and Gintis demonstrate how their core arguments of reproduction of social class and the significance of personal qualities besides cognitive ability are still maintained today. This later work however attempts to account for the influence of participation in the culture of reproduction and therefore moves away from more reductionist conceptions of socialisation as a passive process. Their argument moves beyond a simple reproductive form of

education where a curriculum (whether hidden or overt) maintains the capitalist status quo to a model where the cultural values of parents and teachers influence the development of young people. The contrast or consensus between class values gained from upbringing and the values taught in school are how students receive their class identity. While this transmission of values is still somewhat mechanistic it moves towards an acceptance of how cultural hegemony is a significant factor in maintaining and reproducing inequality. Although the process itself has become more elaborate in Bowles and Gintis' work it does however still treat young people as merely passive receptors of culture who then appear to make a conscious decision about their identity.

A new correspondence?

One of the few contemporary users of the correspondence thesis are Saunders and Machell (2000) who, drawing on the work of Hickox and Moore (1992) have developed the concept of 'neo-correspondence' in order to understand the motivating factors behind the contemporary relationship between HE and work. Saunders and Machell claim that, in contrast with the implicit nature of labour market preparation maintained by the education system in a hidden curriculum (according to Bowles and Gintis) the correspondence to labour has now become part of the explicit curriculum in HE. The researchers identify that while it has always been the case that higher level skills gained through education have a relationship to the labour market, it is the growth of generic skills rather than specific or technical skill that has changed the landscape of HE. In order to serve the requirements of the labour market, the authors suggest that the process of becoming a generic graduate worker has been refined and become the principal focus of higher education from a curriculum standpoint because having generic skills has become the principal focus of labour for graduates.

The research of Saunders and Machell was structured around a project designed to compare the effectiveness of national policies designed to align universities with the needs of national economies (the HEINE project). This project explored how a number of varying types of university allowed students to 'rehearse' future labour market roles through the integration of enterprise programmes, key skills teaching and work experience. The data used for this project were a combination of interviews with academics and policy makers and analysis of various

key documents relating to policy and the universities. This study explores the explicit, labour market preparation processes with a view to recommending how they can be strengthened and identifying barriers to this. Saunders and Machell conclude that for higher education to successfully fulfil what they see as its purpose (preparing students for work) then there must be a tighter coupling between employers and universities

Clearly where this application differs from previous uses of the correspondence principal (including the one in this thesis) is that neo-correspondence is not a tool for critiquing the structure of educational settings in reproducing inequality. Rather neo-correspondence is predicated upon a tacit acceptance of the technocratic-meritocratic ideology (that Bowles and Gintis extensively criticised) in its current form, namely making students employable for entering a competitive and meritocratic labour market. The authors demonstrate how neo-correspondence can be used to understand decision-making and inform decisions in HE policy planning, specifically in the expansion of skills training and the tightening of links between HE and work. Correspondence has become a practical method of conceptualising the benefits of HE and therefore justifying its expansion. This correspondence is viewed as a positive tool by policy makers and educators due to supposed redistributive qualities inherent to contemporary HE.

In order to fulfil this function it must inherently ignore or reject any structural inequality in the graduate division of labour and assume a meritocratic labour market where developing skills and experience will naturally yield rewards. This conception differs significantly from the contemporary use of correspondence theory proposed in this thesis which explicitly explores structural, hierarchical difference. Saunders and Machell do recognise that different status universities do in fact lead to differing labour market outcomes. However, this is only conceptualised in narrow terms which seem to suggest that the proliferation of transferable skills is the most effective strategy for helping graduates get good jobs and function well within them, in spite of evidence that the authors accept show that the elite universities manage to perform this role without embracing the teaching of generic skills.

The focus on generic skills and improving how they are explicitly taught under-estimates the growing disparity in types of graduate labour which this thesis asserts. The authors themselves claim (citing the work of Pitcher, Purcell and Simm, 1999) that the graduate labour market has become increasingly diverse however they

also suggest that generic abilities are the most effective strategy for preparing students for the labour market. Saunders and Machell's research does not take into account the cultural and environmental conditions of universities which this thesis asserts are more tightly coupled with corresponding conditions in the labour market. This leads to a rather two-dimensional conception of the role of universities. However, while this discussion has been largely critical of the concept of neo-correspondence, this thesis can draw upon the methodology of Saunders and Machell to help frame the empirical aspects of the research. Namely, interviewing academic staff and collecting institutional documentation are effective strategies for exploring the structural conditions of universities. Additionally, the research of Saunders and Machell does highlight the importance of exploring explicit methods of labour market preparation rather than simply focusing on the more implicit processes.

Correspondence theory as a contemporary conceptual tool

This study intends to explore the proposition that structural labour inequalities are reproduced through HE. If evidence of such a reproduction is found then this will serve to critique the conception that HE is a meritocratic system where the most intelligent and those who work hardest will gain access to the best job and be justified in so doing. Bowles and Gintis claim that the personal development of individuals is shaped according to the demands of the market and the economy. In recent decades the linking of higher education to the economy has in many ways been overt. With the decline of manufacturing and industry in the industrialised, western democracies, many have argued for the workforce to be more educated in order to maintain high levels of employment (Reich 1991). This change is justified not as a purely economic decision for the country as a whole but as a means of providing better opportunities for the individuals participating in higher education allowing them to better themselves and achieve higher status and higher paid jobs than would traditionally be possible.

A large number of contemporary studies of higher education focus on the issues of over-qualification or over-education (notable examples including Battu, Bellfield and Sloane 2000, Felstead et al 2007, Chevalier 2000 and McGuinness and Bennett 2007). Essentially, the problem of over-qualification is that that the expansion of higher education has created a surplus of highly educated workers and

that their skills will be going to waste in jobs that are below their skill levels.

Applying the analysis of the capitalist system provided by Bowles and Gintis to over-qualification suggests a different interpretation of the 'problem' of over-educated workers. Job insecurity is one of the key methods of social control utilised by the capitalist system to prevent workers wresting control from the bourgeoisie. If there is an excess of equally qualified and experienced workers waiting to take over any job then people will accept lower pay, poorer conditions etc. Bowles and Gintis claimed this strategy was used to control people in traditional proletarian labour. However, this thesis argues that this process has occurred in what were traditionally secure 'primary' labour sector jobs and that this shift has occurred to control the working class people who are entering higher education.

Access to universities was opened up to people irrespective of their social origins but structural inequalities still operate at various levels of the education system to place people in the appropriate level of the labour market. This thesis will argue that one way in which this process occurs is through the type of education and experience young people receive while at university. The actual experience of attending higher education operates to validate class inequality by preparing graduates for a highly corresponded type of labour and legitimising the type of work that they enter under the guise of meritocracy. As attending university and achieving a degree become common-place the processes of social reproduction and legitimisation have continued into this higher level.

In order to fulfil the aim of this research to reapply the correspondence theory to a different educational environment in a different time period, it will be necessary to closely follow what Bowles and Gintis believed most typified the nature of the reproductive mechanisms of schooling for capitalism:

We suggest that the nature of work is a fundamental determinant of personal development; a central factor being the degree to which workers have control over planning, decision-making, and execution of production and tasks, as well as sufficient autonomy to express their creative need and capacities. In capitalist society... work is largely devoid of these qualities for most people. (1976:68-69)

One of the central premises of this thesis is the assertion that with changing economic conditions and the expansion of higher education have changed the nature of the labour market, particularly for university graduates. Specifically, a new form of

‘proletarianised’ graduate work has emerged which shares a number of traits with the work undertaken by the American working class throughout most of the twentieth century as identified by Bowles and Gintis . However, as has been outlined previously, since the publication of *Schooling in Capitalist America*, the study has been subject to number of criticisms. In order for this research to be worthwhile many of these short-comings and flaws will have to be overcome. The following section will outline the way in which these criticisms, other practical concerns relating to studying contemporary higher education and new research can be incorporated into a new application of correspondence theory.

Exploring correspondence in contemporary higher education

To begin the process of showing how the correspondence principle can be utilised in a contemporary HE context, the following section will outline a number of key studies that both provide the broad framework for analysis and illustrate the more specific details of the form this correspondence may take. As will be further outlined in the following chapter, this thesis attempts to overcome the criticisms that Bowles and Gintis over-looked cultural explanations for social reproduction and that the actual classroom behaviour of students and staff were ignored. The following table (3.1) outlines both the broad characteristics of the reproduction of structural labour market inequalities in educational settings and more grounded ways that these may manifest themselves. The aspects of correspondence theory are also discussed in terms of how they can be applied to a university context both in terms of framing empirical research and analysing data:

Author	Key points	Applying to a university context
Bowles and Gintis (1976)	<p><i>Over-arching principles of thesis:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The form and function of schooling is more important than the substance • The structural conditions of school correspond to the social conditions of work young people will enter <p><i>Specific characteristics:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legitimatory role of technocratic-meritocracy • Higher classes have more intellectual freedom because they internalise capitalist norms • Good proletarian worker: dependable, subordinate to authority, internalise company values and respond to external rewards 	<p><i>Over-arching principles of thesis:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate the form and function of university education • The structural conditions of universities correspond to the social conditions of work young people will enter <p><i>Specific characteristics:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employability as next step - explore the pervasiveness of this doctrine • Higher status universities have more intellectual freedom • Good proletarian student: dependable, subordinate to authority, internalise university values and respond to external rewards
Carnoy and Levin (1985)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Correspondence must take account of interactional elements of teaching and the role of teachers and other stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore the nature of interactions between staff (and other key stakeholders) and students at university
Anyon (1981)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘Working class’ schooling <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • routinised tasks • non-contextual knowledge • distance from creation of knowledge • ‘Middle class’ schooling <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • focused on facts but more awareness of purpose and context • not aware of creation of knowledge • ‘Affluent Professional’ schooling <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • promotes creativity • contextual/connectedness of knowledge • ‘Executive Elite’ schooling <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • academic and rigorous, • much more complex topics also • making clear how knowledge is created • pressure to work hard to succeed in education and work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proletarianised universities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • routinised tasks • non-contextual knowledge • distance from creation of knowledge • Mid-level universities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • focused on facts and some awareness of purpose and context • not aware of creation of knowledge • contextual/connectedness of knowledge • ‘Executive Elite’ schooling <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • academic and rigorous • much more complex topics also • making clear how knowledge is created • contextual/connectedness of knowledge • pressure to work hard to succeed in education and work

Table 3.1. Using correspondence theory in contemporary HE research

From this table it starts to become clear that certain characteristics of the teaching, experience and atmosphere of universities would be central to exploring a correspondence – such as, the amount of pressure on students, the type of knowledge (e.g. contextualised/routinised, academic/vocational) and intellectual freedom. These characteristics would need to be explored in the context of how students engage with the university including with their teaching staff. The studies referred to here are simply shaping the wider theoretical basis of this thesis. While some of the more specific characteristics are relevant, it is important to frame them within context of contemporary HE and labour market conditions. Therefore the following tables (3.2 and 3.3) will discuss the more contemporary research in the area of graduate work to help shape the empirical component of this thesis. To investigate the existence or prevalence of a correspondence to the labour market it is of course necessary to understand what the characteristics of this labour are. This table will include a brief summary of key, relevant characteristics of graduate labour drawn from existing research, outline how these points can be interpreted in the context of the correspondence theory and finally how this can either frame the research or be used to analyse data.

Authors	Key point	Interpretation/synthesis/assertions	Correspondence application
Elias and Purcell (2004)	The graduate labour market has changed to accommodate different types (not different status) of graduate work- Traditional, Modern, New and Niche	Traditional jobs are elite graduate jobs Modern jobs are mid-level graduate jobs New and Niche are proletarianised graduate jobs There are also divisions within these categories (e.g. low status legal practice)	Determining the use of a three-tiered hierarchy for empirical investigation
Felstead et al (2007), Battu et al. 2000, Chevalier 2000	There is a mismatch between the number of jobs that require a degree and the number of graduates. Graduates are also increasingly found in jobs that do not utilise their skills	Graduates from low status universities are more likely to be over-qualified. It is more important for low status graduates to learn transferable skills to survive in jobs that do not suit their degree	Explore differing educational priorities, namely the significance attached to transferable skills v subject-based knowledge (e.g. do low status universities place a higher priority on transferable skills/employability?)
Dolton and Vignoles (2000), Mason et al (2003)	Large numbers of graduates do not use their subject based knowledge or subject-specific skills once they are in work	This would be more common for graduates of lower status universities	Explore the extent to which different status universities prioritise subject-based knowledge and skills
Thompson and Warhurst (1998)	White collar work has become increasingly monotonous and defined by limited task discretion	Routinised work is more likely to be carried out by low status graduates	Explore differing levels of routinisation of work and restricted autonomy at different status universities
Brown, Lauder and Ashton (2011)	Digital Taylorism-technological advances allow for a greater routinisation in the work-place (low-skilled graduate work)	This form of work will be filled by graduates of low status universities	Explore differing levels of routinisation of work and restricted autonomy at different status universities
Brown and Hesketh (2004)	Elite graduates make social connections with prospective employers Elite graduates enter high-skilled and high pressured work (which is highly rewarded)	Higher status universities help their students develop the capital and skills to make these connections Elite graduates must be prepared to work in intense environments	Explore the opportunities of students to interact with high status people (experience) and develop their cultural capital Explore the different 'intensity' levels of different status universities
Hesketh (2000), Allen and de Weert	Employers most require and look for in graduates; communication skills, learning	These skills will be more intrinsically learned (embodied?) by elite graduates and	Explore how differing work and social environment of universities help to develop

(2007), Bennett (2002), Brown and Hesketh	how to learn, ability to cope under pressure, being self-directed and team working skills	under-developed by graduates from lower status universities	these characteristics naturally (and the effectiveness of this)
Power and Whitty (2008), Chevalier and Conlon (2003), Hussain et al 2009, Reay et al (2010)	Financial returns (and other measures of success) are higher for graduates from elite universities. Working class students are more likely to attend low status universities	Questions the extent to which a 'degree' is a valid measure of ability/intelligence that is offered by all types of university	Critique the current system if the results of this research demonstrate a correspondence

Table 3.2: Using existing literature to frame the use of correspondence theory in contemporary universities

In common with a number of aspects drawn from the correspondence theory literature, a number of these studies point towards an increase in routinisation in what can broadly be characterised as ‘graduate work’ as well as a decline in graduates using their subject-based knowledge. Elite graduate jobs are seemingly typified by high intensity work but these workers are rewarded with more autonomy and greater extrinsic rewards. It hopefully starts to become apparent the role that correspondence theory can play in explaining this increasing diversification of graduate labour. Table 3.3 draws out these characteristics, which while by no means are an exhaustive list of key aspects of different types of graduate work are those identified from contemporary research that are also compatible with previous applications of the correspondence theory;

Level	Autonomy	Pressure/Intensity	Subject Knowledge
Elite	High levels of discretion and independence	Sustained high pressure	Use of subject specific knowledge
Mid-level	Some task discretion	Occasional high pressure	May or may not utilise subject knowledge
Proletarian	Low task discretion	Low pressure Limited independent work	Unrelated to subject knowledge

Table 3.3: Characteristics of stratified labour drawn from the literature

Generally the role that universities play in securing employment for their students, whether this is how they teach, what they teach or the social opportunities available, will be explored through the lens of correspondence theory. Drawing on the research discussed in the previous tables and existing research into the student experience (which is discussed in Chapter Two) some characteristics of the teaching and structural conditions of different status universities that may be seen as representative of this correspondence have been collated in table 3.4;

Level	Autonomy	Pressure/Intensity	Subject Knowledge
Elite	<p>High levels of student involvement in defining tasks</p> <p>Regular access to teaching staff</p> <p>‘True’ independent study</p> <p>Self-imposed structure of work</p>	<p>Small class sizes for high levels of interactivity (2-5 students)</p> <p>Heavy workload</p> <p>Longest working hours</p>	<p>Close proximity to knowledge creation (e.g. world experts teaching their research)</p> <p>In-depth academic knowledge and skills</p> <p>Understanding of the basis of knowledge (e.g. Jurisprudence instead of Law)</p>
Mid-level	<p>Independent study encouraged but not mandatory</p> <p>Managed access to teaching staff</p> <p>High levels of student engagement with set tasks</p> <p>Institutionally suggested structure of work</p>	<p>Medium size classes for some interactivity (5-10 students)</p> <p>Moderate work-load</p> <p>Regular working hours</p>	<p>Some/limited proximity to knowledge creation (e.g. mixed status staff teaching their own and other higher status research)</p> <p>Emphasis on a mixture of academic and transferable skills</p> <p>High levels of knowledge and its practical applications</p>
Proletarian	<p>Limited independent work</p> <p>Limited access to teaching staff</p> <p>Low student engagement in tasks or their definition</p> <p>Institutionally imposed structure of work</p>	<p>Large class sizes (10-20 students)</p> <p>Light workload</p> <p>Few hours spent working</p>	<p>Separated from knowledge creation (e.g. non-research active teaching staff, reliance on core texts over research)</p> <p>Employability and transferable skills of the highest importance</p> <p>Low levels of knowledge and its application</p>

Table 3.4: Predicted characteristics of the correspondence between HE and stratified graduate work

The main focus of the empirical component of this research will be to explore the extent to which the student experiences of the participants at each university correspond to the characteristics outlined in table 3.4. This will be discussed further in the following chapter. To focus on the law (as this is the academic subject being explored), there is stratification within legal practice which will be outlined in the following section. There are many studies which show that graduates from elite universities get elite jobs (e.g. Sutton Trust 2010) and a few that suggest how this operates in the labour market (e.g. Brown and Hesketh 2004). However, there is a lack of research into the institutional effect (if any) on this labour market segmentation. Why is it that certain law firms only recruit Oxbridge students? While arguments of reputational capital have some bearing on this, the structural conditions of the universities have been under-researched. This is where the correspondence theory may be able to shed to light. If the data show that the three different status universities being studied in this research broadly fit the expected characteristics outlined in table 3.4, then it can be interpreted as indicative of a correspondence to stratified graduate labour.

Legal Profession

In many ways, the legal profession is ideally suited to the requirements of this study, provided it is remembered that the main purpose of this study is an exploratory one that attempts to investigate the efficacy of a new theoretical framework for assessing the links between higher education and the labour market. The suitability of law students for participants in this study shall be outlined through a discussion of the various ways that the legal profession is stratified along social class boundaries and the ways in which this is reproduced and maintained. This discussion will include a brief review of literature concerning the recruitment practices of different solicitors firms and the social composition of various levels of the legal profession.

To place the discussion of the legal profession in context, a brief outline of the nature of a law degree and the general structure of the profession will be presented here. While the study of law at undergraduate level is not a necessity for the pursuit of a legal practice career, students studying for a ‘qualifying law degree’ are able to reduce the amount of study required after their undergraduate degree in order to qualify for legal practice. The Law Society and General Council of the Bar set a series

of criteria that an undergraduate law course has to meet to be classed as ‘qualifying’, most significant is the teaching of the following modules:

- i. Public Law, including Constitutional Law, Administrative Law and Human Rights;
- ii. Law of the European Union;
- iii. Criminal Law;
- iv. Obligations including Contract, Restitution and Tort;
- v. Property Law; and
- vi. Equity and the Law of Trusts.

Law Society and the Bar Standards Board, 2001

All graduates who intend to enter the legal profession must undertake a vocational programme of study after their undergraduate degree. For solicitors this is the Legal Practice Course (LPC), for barristers the Bar Professional Training Course (BPTC) and for non-law graduates the Common Professional Examination conversion course. These courses are generally expensive (Cardiff Law School for example charges £10,250 for a two stage LPC running from September to June) which can provide another barrier to access in the profession which will be outlined below.

At its most basic, the legal profession in the UK can be separated into three different levels; the judiciary, barristers and solicitors. While this is not strictly a hierarchy based upon status, it would not be unreasonable to suggest some semblance of stratification between these three types of legal profession. In 2008 there were 139,666 practicing solicitors in the UK (Cole 2008) and in 2009 there were 1772 barristers (Bar Council website). Clearly, becoming a barrister is a much more privileged position than becoming a solicitor, which can account for a very broad range of legal services.

Employment prospects by education

In terms of how higher education is stratified along class divisions in the subject of law, the Sutton Trust (2010) identified that students who have attended independent schools are fifty-five times more likely to attend either Oxford or Cambridge than the poorest students from state schools. Additionally, Sommerlad and Stapleford (2008) claim that non-traditional students (older, ethnic minority and less privileged students) tend to be concentrated in new universities (often former polytechnics) while elite

institutions are much more likely to recruit middle-class students creating a polar divide in the type of education received that is contingent upon your social background.

Earlier research by the Sutton Trust (2005) using longitudinal data of the educational backgrounds of top lawyers suggested that little had changed in the type of education received by barristers and judges since 1989. This research found that in 2004, sixty-eight per cent of barristers had attended fee-paying schools compared to seventy-three per cent in 1989. More pertinently in terms of this research, the Sutton Trust found that in 2004, eighty-two per cent of barristers that were educated in the UK had attended Oxford or Cambridge, with eighty-one per cent of judges also being Oxbridge educated. While this research establishes that an elite education overwhelmingly leads to elite work, it does not explore why this is. This thesis is examining the role that universities play in creating this advantage, an area which is largely over-looked.

In terms of actual labour market entry, Shiner (2000) demonstrated that in terms of employment prospects as solicitors, Oxbridge law graduates were about ten times more likely than new university graduates to be working in a City firm (often considered to be the elite level of practice for solicitors). Conversely, new university graduates were seven times more likely to be working in a high street solicitors' than their Oxbridge counterparts, particularly in small firms. Shiner divides the education system in a similar way to this thesis and determines that graduates from old universities seem to have their destinations options spread more widely across the field of different status solicitors' practices. These data add some significant support to the hypothesis behind this research by demonstrating overwhelmingly that the most sought-after and highest status solicitors firms employ significantly larger percentages of elite university graduates.

In terms of how this disadvantage operates, Shiner conducted a multivariate analysis of data linking the success of different groups in gaining training contracts with firms to undertake the LPC. A statistically significant advantage was identified for those students who had undertaken some relevant work experience and access to such opportunities are often limited (Shiner and Newburn 1995). Additionally, once factors such as interest and qualifications were accounted for, type of university, contacts/networks, work experience and social class remained significant variables for assessing what labour market destination these graduates would enter with City firms

privileging the highest status graduates from the most elite universities. While this demonstrates a significant relationship between the university a person attends and their destination in the labour market, it does not explore the role that universities actually play in this process. This research does not dispute that there are entrenched inequalities of access to high status work and education based on class; it does however intend to shed light on the role universities play in compounding this. Put simply, what exactly do Oxford and Cambridge do that other universities do not? This discussion of legal practice will highlight some areas where this reproduction occurs and will be assessed in terms of the role universities may play in this

Recruitment processes

Using data collected from qualitative interviews with law firms with the purpose of understanding how they recruit graduates, Rolfe and Anderson (2003) observed that many law firms had introduced rigorous and systematic recruitment methods with the explicit aim of recruiting the best talent. This attitude was claimed to be most convincingly demonstrated by the large City firms in the study which recruited students while still in university. Targeting particular universities' students while they are still studying is defended as rigorously locating the most talented. But little justification is given for why particular universities are targeted other than perceptions of status. These strategies do not appear to engage with what characteristics of certain universities produce the 'best' graduates. This is one of the areas that is being explored in this thesis. Rolfe and Anderson did observe that when recruiters are comparing a 'good' candidate from a new university to a 'good' candidate from Oxbridge, the latter candidate was preferred because of the rigour of the admissions process at Oxford and Cambridge. This appears to be a tacit acceptance of organisational difference in one area, but still ignores the effect universities have on their students once they're actually in attendance.

This could manifest itself through greater advantages for students of elite universities because they have more experience of the conditions of the elite labour market. For example, Sommerlad and Sanderson (2002) claim that recruitment processes involve practices and require characteristics that privilege insider knowledge in such an intrinsic way that employers may not consciously discriminate but institutional practices reproduce the social composition of law firms' recruits. The

authors suggest that this privileges those with existing social and cultural capital, however it does not credit the ways in which such capitals can be developed by the university attended, a central component of this research.

Rolfe and Anderson (ibid) claim the process of earning work experience placements was still afflicted by a form of nepotism. With work experience being a major factor in the selection of which candidates to employ, it is possible to suggest that the importance of social connections in gaining the highest level of employment in law has simply shifted to an earlier stage in the process. The researchers claim this behaviour would prove particularly exclusionary for members of lower social classes (who are more likely to attend new universities) because they do not have such connections. One of the areas that this thesis will address is the way in which different status universities cultivate these connections for their students, particularly exploring how existing relationships between universities and employers can be exploited to provide advantage.

As many larger firms recruit straight from university, they subsequently pay for the graduates' fees when studying for the LPC. Rolfe and Anderson (2003) claim that only small firms actually advertise training contracts, with many large firms having regular contact with students through fairs, presentations, workshops and sponsoring events. The elite legal practices target their recruitment at elite universities; Halpern (1994) found that fifty-three per cent of Oxbridge graduates had attended some form of recruitment activity while only twenty-one per cent of graduates from post-1992 institutions had done the same. This thesis will explore differences in terms of how and why students engage with such activities. Is it simply because firms only target particular universities or because the students are less likely to attend at new universities? If it is the latter then what conditions at higher status universities promote attendance that are absent at the new universities? Halpern claims that large firms prefer to recruit from old universities because of a perception of the students' quality and that they offer more demanding courses but that it reflects well on the image of the firm if their new recruits attend prestigious and respected institutions. This indicates that it is not exclusively something that the universities do, but rather simply what they are that means their graduates get the best jobs. Similarly, Sullivan (2010) claims that status is always the most important factor when separating applicants; citing research by the College of Law, in 2008 students with a First Class degree from a new university and high UCAS points had similar success in gaining

training contracts to students with similar A levels results but who had received a 2.1 from an old university. However, simply identifying an institutional effect on labour market success does not explain why particular universities have this affect. While this research does not intend to reject or disprove the importance of status, a lack of focus in the literature about the actual functions of universities (including maintaining these reputations) and the vagueness of conceptions like ‘demanding courses’ seem to require further investigation. For example, does getting a 2.1 from an old university actually represent a similar amount of effort as getting a first from a new university? Without exploring the structural and educational conditions of universities it is not possible to conclude that it is simply a function of status.

While these results demonstrate the stratification present in elite recruitment of law, similar practices can be found in other fields; Barber and Perryman (2001) claim that 60 per cent of firms that are members of the Association of Graduate Recruiters target specific universities and courses when recruiting students straight from university. This demonstrates the usefulness of law as a field to study for this research, the exploratory nature of this research would benefit from investigating a subject that has strong, structural relationships between the universities and the labour market in order to make the results more explicit. While it will not be possible to generalise from these results to other subjects, suggestions can be made for future research in different fields of study with less explicit links between education and labour to test if the educational experience differs in the same way across the strata of universities.

Cultural explanations of success

Moving beyond recruitment, Sommerlad and Stapleford (2008) claim that success and progression within the field is contingent upon assimilating into the dominant culture and conforming to professional norms and rituals. Through this, the legal profession manages to maintain its cultural homogeneity in spite of apparently increased recruitment from more diverse social groups. Clearly those who are already ‘skilled’ in this way (middle-class, white and often male) will be at an advantage (Brown and Hesketh 2004). The results of Sommerlad and Stapleford’s study show that most students on law courses successfully internalise the cultural paradigm of law but with different degrees of effectiveness or accuracy that was often dependent on how much exposure they have to the real workings of the legal profession. This thesis will outline

the under-explored ways in which opportunities to engage with the legal profession will differ at different status universities to illustrate that institutions also have an influence in this process, not simply social background.

Cook et al (2010) claim that being professional currently means more than simply possessing the right qualifications, it involves the adoption of presentation and behaviour related attributes. Employees learn to internalise practices of being professional (which is some times industry or even firm specific) through a number of different discursive strategies which can include direct definition of the required attributes, education into the acceptable behaviour, language games, comparison either positively to successfully integrated employees or by ‘othering’ somebody who does not embody the appropriate notion of ‘professionalism’. This has implications for this research as one of key aims of this study would be the demonstration that this ‘symbolic violence’ (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992) begins at university with students having their cultural capital reformed in order to best suit the form of work they will be entering. Sommerlad and Stapleford claim that the style of education received at old universities can be alienating to some with a common expectation that you have to ‘get on with it’ whereas new universities are more likely to provide clear explanations and support. This, they claim, leads to accusations that new universities ‘dumb down’ their courses. This has clear implications for this research, which will explore how the experiences and institutional practices prepare students to behave in particular ways.

The Judicial Appointments Commission (2009) claimed that while opportunities had been improved in recent years for access to the judiciary for non-traditional groups (e.g. women, ethnic minority groups) a perception of inherent prejudice prevented people from applying to the judiciary. Similarly, solicitors of any kind are much less likely to apply for the judiciary than a barrister - in spite of the fact any practising lawyer is eligible to become a judge. The following factors were identified by a sample of legal practitioners when asked to outline what they perceived as the key barriers to becoming a judge:

- Having higher court experience
- Known by senior judiciary
- Being a barrister
- Right education
- Right social network

(Judicial Appointments Commission, 2009 page 8-9)

With the exception of higher court experience and being a barrister, it is possible that all of these factors can be developed in education. While much research focuses on how factors such as these can be prohibitive in terms of social class, this thesis will explore how such attributes can be developed in educational settings with particular focus on organisational differences between universities.

This discussion has shown that the field of legal practice is highly stratified with graduates from elite universities at a significant advantage in accessing the highest status legal jobs. However, there is an apparent gap in the literature outlining what differences at these universities produce particular types of graduates. There are vague references to elite institutions having more rigour or more intense study but these are largely under-developed. To overcome this, the way in which the universities differ in the following areas will be investigated;

- Frequency/type of contact with employers
- The extent to which students are supported or left to just ‘get on with it’
- Rigor/intensity of the course and conditions
- Differences in cultural attitudes

This discussion has demonstrated how law seems an almost paradigmatic representation of a stratified labour market for graduates and therefore is a suitable choice to assess the existence of the correspondence between graduate work and university education.

Conclusion

This chapter has largely functioned as an interface between the existing literature discussed in Chapter Two and the methodology that will be outlined in the following chapter. This has taken the form of a discussion of the nature of Bowles and Gintis’ correspondence theory, including outlining the key components of their theory and research, some of the subsequent criticism it faced and some empirical applications of the theory. This chapter then moved on to how the theory could be re-applied to the current higher education system while overcoming some of the criticisms of the

original work and incorporating some current research and theory. This process helped to determine the three important attributes of graduate work and educational structures that draw upon correspondence theory and can be investigated empirically in universities. These characteristics were differing levels of autonomy, intensity and the importance of subject knowledge. A broad stratification in the graduate division of labour was identified, with elite graduate work being the most likely to allow workers to act independently, have the highest pressure and place the greatest value on subject specific skills. The strength of these characteristics declines as the status of the work declines leading to low status graduate work being typified by rigid and routine work environments, lower pressure and placing greater value on transferable skills. The empirical aspect of this thesis will be exploring the extent to which this stratification is present in the educational and structural environments of different status universities. For example, do the highest status universities promote the most autonomous learners? If these characteristics are indeed present in a hierarchical form at these universities then it would be indicative of a correspondence, thus proving the value of this theory and opening up the possibility of further research utilising it.

Chapter Four

Methods of enquiry

Introduction

Essentially this research is assessing the efficacy of a theoretical proposition that there is stratification among UK universities and that their learning environments operate to reproduce a hierarchical division of labour among the graduate population. This theory is inspired by the work of Bowles and Gintis (1976) and the principle of a correspondence between the form of education and the social setting of future occupations. Due to the central role that correspondence theory plays in the collection and analysis of data, this research follows a deductive research design which will be outlined throughout the this chapter. This chapter will begin with a discussion of the general research design, including how the research questions were constructed and assessing their appropriateness for this thesis and their methodological implications. Secondly, this chapter will discuss the research settings, specifically a description of the processes involved in selecting appropriate universities for study that seemingly fit the hierarchical categories. Thirdly, the process of data collection shall be outlined: how the sample population was determined, how access was gained to participants and justification of selecting qualitative interviews with students and staff at the three universities. This section will also include a discussion of the topics covered in these interviews, how, when and where the interviews were conducted and finally a statement concerning the ethical considerations of the research. Finally, how the data were analysed will be outlined making particular references to how key characteristics developed from the correspondence theory were used to code the qualitative interviews.

Research Design

The aim of exploring the potentially reproductive relationship between universities and work could lend itself to a number widely varying research designs, for example Bowles and Gintis' original, quantitative study examined a wide range of variables including personality traits, parental occupation and IQ to determine their impact on

children's educational success as well as a historical investigation into the development of schooling to establish their correspondence principle. However, many of the criticisms of *Schooling in Capitalist America* are concerned with the fact that Bowles and Gintis failed to understand adequately processes occurring in schools and how these affected pupils (e.g. Willis 1977, Wolcott 1977) and that the correspondence principle overlooks cultural explanations of inequality (Apple 1982, Giroux 1982).

Any research taking its inspiration from Bowles and Gintis' work must therefore take account of these criticisms. Additionally, a large-scale, quantitative study analysing many universities (and potentially graduate employers) was deemed beyond the scope of this PhD research. Existing datasets concerning the links between the labour market and higher education (such as the Higher Education Statistics Agency's research on graduate destinations) were not deemed to be nuanced enough to illustrate the specific characteristics of the study or work undertaken by students and graduates.

This research design has a clear, deductive structure which has established a number of key characteristics of different types of graduate labour from existing literature in the field. The empirical aspects of this research would largely be assessing the existence and prevalence of these characteristics at different status universities. Because one of the purposes of this thesis is to test the usefulness of applying a theory to a different context in a different way, this research is largely exploratory with one of the aims being to either stimulate debate or make suggestion for future research. This more open exploratory approach is supported by the decision to use semi-structured interviews. This allows some room for discovering characteristics that were not predicted but seem to fit with the broad theory or indeed unanticipated aspects which challenged the theory. This design was structured around the following research questions;

- How does the educational environment and experience of students vary between different status HE institutions?
- How useful is correspondence theory for understanding contemporary links between higher education and the labour market?

These questions are quite broad and place the predicted correspondence between higher education and graduate work at the centre of the research design. These questions help to focus this thesis around the key theoretical and empirical considerations of the research. This is significant since the empirical aspects of this research will focus almost exclusively upon education and will rely on existing research and some secondary data sources when discussing the labour market. These questions also place priority on how the environment and experience of education are the key variables in any potential correspondence therefore helping the research stay focussed on developing from the shortcomings of Bowles and Gintis' work.

One of the most obvious limitations of this research design is one associated generally with deductive research and that is the danger of over-looking data that do not fit the theory or refute the theory being explored. The main risk of this research is a form of measurement bias, where only certain aspects of the field are explored that may give a less than accurate picture of the structural conditions thus invalidating the conclusions drawn. Hammersley and Gomm (1997) claim that bias can manifest itself in a number of ways including the type of questions asked and how they are asked, this can of course affect the reliability of the data collected. In many ways this is more pronounced when conducting qualitative deductive research due to the more subjective nature and depth of the data. One of the intentions of using the same interview schedule for all three universities is to reduce the extent to which the questions may lead respondents from different universities to refer to their course in different terms. The same aspects of the structural conditions of each university were being explored so questions about them were framed in the same way for each university. However, this process can only help to ensure the comparison across the universities is fair. It can by no means guarantee that all aspects contributing to the overall conditions of these universities are properly explored, not least of all something which has unforeseen importance (particularly if it is over-looked due to the lack of fit with the theory). One of the ways in which attempts will be made to limit this problem will be using different sources and types of data which can give as broad a picture as possible of the structural conditions of the universities being explored.

With the stated purpose of understanding experience and environments of university, these questions lend themselves well to a qualitative research design. Therefore, it was decided that semi-structured interviews would form the bulk of the data collection strategy. Interviews with students at different universities about their

experience of higher education and how this prepared them for work would allow a broad range of relevant topics to be covered in a shorter space of time than observation, for example, would allow. These interviews were complemented by interviews with staff members at each of the universities which would allow a different perspective to that of the students as enhancing the understanding of the philosophies and organisational aspects of the course. This interview data were supplemented by a more mixed methods approach to the analysis of key institutional documents (such as prospectuses and websites) that will provide further insight into the differing environment and priorities of the universities being studied.

The latter sections of the previous chapter are devoted to how correspondence theory may be used to both plan the collection of data and then analyse it. Essentially, various key characteristics of graduate work were identified from existing research literature in the field (including Elias and Purcell 2004, Thompson and Warhurst 1998 and Brown, Lauder and Ashton 2011-see Chapter 3, Table 3.2). These characteristics were interpreted through a lens of correspondence theory, identifying three broad characteristics of graduate work that could vary according to status and were consistent with previous empirical applications of the correspondence theory. These three attributes are autonomy in work, pressure or intensity of work and the use of subject-based knowledge and skills. From these characteristics, predictions were made of a corresponding form of education for different levels of graduate work which can be found in table 3.4.

In order to ease the comparison between universities and increase the accuracy of the assessment of the labour market, it was decided that this research should focus on only one field of study with clear paths into the labour market. Students studying Law at undergraduate level were selected for a number of reasons which will be outlined here. Briefly, the sample was taken from students studying law because it is a subject with a clear career path that is taught in both an academic and professional way. Also, there is a degree of structured segmentation in the legal profession; these factors would make any signs of a correspondence more explicitly observable from the data. With this study being exploratory in nature, selecting a course with clear, but not rigidly set careers path will make it easier to draw out differences between the ways these universities prepare their students for work. A detailed discussion of the nature of the legal profession can be found in Chapter Three.

Another advantage is that as a 'traditional' university subject, it is widely taught in a variety of different institutions, therefore choosing Law allowed for a large target population of universities. This proved very useful due to difficulties in gaining access which will be discussed later in the chapter. One draw back of selecting law is that because there is a fairly structured career path, signs of a correspondence may be more prevalent than in other disciplines restricting the extent to which generalisations can be made beyond this subject. However, the benefits of choosing to study law students were deemed to outweigh this problem considering this study is only small and exploratory in nature.

Selecting the universities

To test the efficacy of correspondence theory, suitable institutions have to be chosen to examine this supposed correspondence. Much of the literature that discusses differences in employment based on the university attended creates a dichotomy between 'new' (post-1992) and 'old' (pre-1992) institutions (examples include Chevalier and Conlon 2003, Elias and Purcell 2004). This assumes a level of homogeneity within these two groups that is potentially problematic particularly due to the dominance of some elite universities' graduates, particularly Oxbridge, in attaining elite employment (Power and Whitty 2008). Due to the significant difference between elite graduate work and other forms (Brown and Hesketh 2004) it is important to recognise elite universities as a separate group from other 'old' institutions. This study therefore determined three different university types each of which can be roughly seen as representing a different level on a hierarchy. These broad stratified categories were;

- Elite Universities- highest status universities for teaching and research that generally have a very long history (as well as high levels of wealth)
- Old Universities- institutions that were established as universities prior to the 1992 expansion of higher education which are generally respected institutions that do not rise to the status of the Elite
- New Universities- Institutions that were granted university status in 1992 or were founded after this date. Generally more modern institutions that tend to be vocationally orientated.

These three institutional types were all to be examined for the social conditions they create for learning and how this may potentially relate to the labour market. The selection of these institutions will be outlined below. Of course, the HE system can be divided in other ways, however this three-tiered hierarchy adequately reflects some of the more important differences in ethos and structure between universities, although there will also be heterogeneity within these categories.

The Sampling Frame

The universities that were eventually selected for study were each chosen from a short-list of potential candidates that satisfied the criteria for inclusion in these categories. These three short-lists were compiled with reference to *the Times' Good University Guide* for the academic year 2009/10 (The Times 2009) in order to provide a clear structure to operate within. The Times' guide was chosen over other similar league tables due to the inclusion of research quality as a measure (and at the time, the ease of use and access to these tables, however this was before *the Times* website moved to a paid subscription service). The importance and quality of research to the institutions selected was seen as significant because of the implications this has for the type of teaching and environment of the university. For example, the extent to which students believe that they have access to the most 'cutting edge' knowledge or contact with research-active staff rather than simply teachers. As it was decided that the universities themselves should kept anonymous it is only possible to roughly outline how they were selected.

In order to select the universities, the league table was divided into four sections. One of these sections was disregarded for use in this research due to the highly specific nature of the institutions and teaching (for example, the University for the Creative Arts). The other three categories were divided along the categories that this research are using to frame the study, namely elite, old and new universities. Of the 114 institutions rated in the 2010 Times University Rankings League Table, a degree in Law is offered at 91 universities. The universities were ranked based on quality of teaching for Law and then these rankings for quality of teaching in law were compared to the overall university rankings in order to find which institutions had the closest general ranking to the subject ranking. It is important that the quality of law

teaching corresponds closely to the overall quality of teaching at the university so that law teaching can be seen as typical of the institutions' status as a whole.

Selecting the Elite University

By its nature the Elite group was a limited and exclusive set of institutions that all ranked very highly in the league tables. However, in order to minimise perceived difficulties in gaining access, the category of Elite Universities was made as broad as possible without undermining its purpose. Therefore this list included the top ten institutions in the country both in overall quality and then in the teaching of law. These two lists were then compared to produce a short-list of candidates. Five universities were featured in both the general top ten rankings and for the teaching of law. By aggregating the two ranking measurements (law and general quality), the universities were ranked in order from one to five. The universities would be approached for recruiting participants in this order starting with the highest ranked university. Lack of response from any one institution (or any other problems of access) would lead to selection of the next highest priority institution.

Selecting the Old University

In order to select the mid-level institutions, a similar method was used as for the elite institutions. However because a larger number of universities met the criteria for this level an alternate means of reducing the number of possible universities was required. For the mid-level institutions it was more important that they be typical of universities in their grouping whereas it was necessary that the elite universities were exceptional even for the category they were in. Firstly, general teaching quality was used to select the initial candidates for investigation. Twenty-five universities beginning with the eleventh rank and finishing with the thirty-fifth rank were initially selected. The decision to stop at thirty-five was fairly arbitrary but was decided upon to simplify the process because after this rank the number of post-1992 institutions increased which are more suited to the third, New University category. Secondly, the corresponding list of teaching quality in law was compiled. The numbers in the list were then reduced and given a new ranking using the following criteria;

- Any institution which did not appear in both lists was eliminated
- No post-1992 universities
- No university already short-listed for the other categories
- No Scottish institutions (due to their different rules on funding etc)
- No Northern Irish institutions (due to the distance/limited time and funds)
- No ‘specialist’ institutions (where law might be a minor subject)

These criteria led to twelve potential candidates for the Old University category. While it was necessary to rank the Elite universities to prioritise them for negotiating access, any of these institutions would be an acceptable representative of this category of study. Therefore these universities would simply be approached according to the perceived ease of access (for example, public availability of contact information).

Selecting the New University

A similar process was then repeated in order to select candidates for the New University. As with choosing Old University, it was important that the choices for the New University were typical of institutions in their category, rather than exceptional. In practice this would selecting from the middle of the eventual shortlist rather than from the top of the status rankings when approaching institutions. The number of institutions that would be initially included for this category was greater than the either two, being taken from the remainder of the table ranking universities on general teaching quality (from number 36 to 116). As with the previous two shortlists, the general league table was compared to the specific league table for law with any university that features in only one of these lists being eliminated. The numbers in the list were then reduced using the same criteria as the Old University selection with the obvious change to ‘only post-1992 universities’ as a criteria rather than precluding them. This reduced the list to 33 potential institutions for study which were then re-ranked based upon league table placing for both general education and law. The selection of the universities to approach from this list followed the same principle as selecting Old University, with an institution that was from the middle of this category being more representative of the university type. However any of these institutions

were acceptable for this study and therefore issues such as ease of access would also be taken into account.

Negotiating access and recruiting participants

Student participants

Gaining access to participants at each of the three universities followed a similar procedure but led to varying results with each one. With probably every university (and most individual departments) in the country having their own website, initiating contact with gatekeepers was relatively straightforward in many cases. For all three universities, members of the administrative or support staff in the law department were contacted via email with a brief outline of the purpose of the research and a preliminary request for assistance. In cases where a response was received, this invariably led to the email being forwarded to somebody better suited to assist with the process.

This access procedure was made more complicated by the closed off nature of many of the new universities' websites. While the universities in the other two institutional categories generally had extensive lists of both academic and administrative staff publicly available this was not always the case at the new universities, seemingly as a security measure (for example, contact details were available on a password protected intranet) but also sometimes due to poor site design. This obviously made accessing the desired new universities more difficult with many being removed from the list due to a straight-forward and effective way of contacting the desired faculty members being unavailable.

This problem was further compounded after numerous rejections from universities on the new list. Three different new universities did not respond to any form of email contact at all. After successfully negotiating access to one new university, an academic staff member with careers and employability teaching responsibilities sent a group email to undergraduate law students. After three weeks and one reluctant reminder email from the institutional gatekeeper, only two participants came forward, one of which would only be interviewed by email. This was obviously insufficient so it was decided that another university should be approached.

While the universities selected to represent old and elite were not necessarily the first choice, access was considerably more straightforward with even rejections being more constructive (or actually consisting of a response). One problem encountered while negotiating access to one elite university was that I found myself passed around staff members of various roles and status within the department for a number of weeks until an eventual rejection because the potential gatekeeper believed it was too close to the examination period (which was in May) and would be disruptive to students (in spite of my initial contact being made in February).

Once the appropriate individual had been located and agreed to assist they were sent the contents of an email to be circulated to undergraduate students and a poster to be placed in a suitable location of their choosing to advertise the research to prospective participants. This process was repeated once for the Elite and Old Universities to recruit the required number of participants. However, despite the enthusiastic assistance of the New University gatekeeper and her insistence to the students that participation would be a worthwhile experience for them, a further two attempts were required to solicit sufficient interest from the students at New University. One possible explanation for this is that the size of the student body was significantly smaller at New University than the other two institutions. While it is interesting to note that most of the major difficulties experienced in gaining access were associated with New universities, it might be a stretch of the imagination to suggest that the problems encountered this could be considered evidence of the stratification being looked for in this research (for example, lower levels of student engagement or poor institutional structures).

One final access-related issue that was purely due to either inexperience or lack of forethought on the part of the researcher was the difficulty in initially recruiting participants from Elite University due to the time of year. After being rejected by one Elite institution around May (as outlined above), the next university on the list was contacted immediately. However, after relative ease in negotiating access with gatekeepers, only two participants replied. After interviewing these participants they were asked why they believed few other participants had replied and they both mentioned the busy examination period. A subsequent attempt to recruit participants in the following October yielded a very positive response from the students.

In the law department at all three universities, female students were in the majority. Therefore attempts were made to roughly reflect this gender balance while

recruiting participants. This gender balance becomes less pronounced the higher the status of the institution, although the difference between Elite and Old University is quite small. The female majority at New University however is roughly ten per cent greater than the other two institutions which could suggest a gender-based dimension to the correspondence theory. If women are significantly more likely to attend New Universities and education at such institutions corresponds to a proletarianised form of graduate work then clearly women are more likely to have their access restricted to high status graduate work. It might be expected that due to its exclusive nature the Elite University would have the smallest student population; however this in fact applies to New University.

Staff participants

The members of staff at the university selected for participation were largely chosen on the basis of publicly available descriptions of their roles within their departments (including job titles). It was decided the staff members should be senior members of the academic teaching staff that had some position or authority in organising undergraduate teaching. A member of the teaching staff with senior administrative duties could provide the most complete interpretation of education and labour market preparation at each of the universities.

The first hurdle in selecting appropriate candidates for these interviews was provided by the Elite University. As will be outlined further in the following chapter, the way that their institution and faculty is structured made determining key members of staff difficult with many aspects of teaching devolved to the students' college rather than being undertaken departmentally. Additionally, the complete lack of integration of direct labour market preparation into academic teaching meant that there was nobody who was a member of the teaching staff positioned to discuss student employability. Therefore it was decided that two staff members would be approached for Elite University, one a very senior academic and one a member of the careers service for the whole university.

Participants were approached by email, which was generally publically available on the various institutional websites. In every case the individual approached would subsequently recommend a member of staff that they believed was better suited to participate. Gaining access was made simpler at all three universities by the existing

established links with gatekeepers in key positions due to student interviews which were conducted earlier. The interviews with the academic staff were all conducted in the offices of the participants in their various faculty buildings. The interview with Brian (Elite University's law careers advisor) was conducted by email due to our inability to arrange a mutually agreeable time.

Data collection

Interview data

Due to the small-scale, exploratory nature of this research ten student participants from each of the three institutions were selected. The depth and richness of the data collected from the students was appropriate for uncovering the key defining aspects of the teaching and social experience of the different status universities. With the majority of students studying 'straight' law, there was little variation in the teaching. While individual differences in how these students engage with their university experience were of course present, the focus on the structural conditions meant these were of minor importance to this study and have been explored extensively by other researchers (e.g. Crozier et al 2008, Reay et al 2009). These student interviews were supported (and to a degree triangulated) by further in-depth interviews with one or two staff members at the universities. This section will outline the format of the interviews with both the staff members and students

The main aim of this research is to explore the organisation, education and environment of universities and use this data to test how useful this theoretically proposed correspondence is as an explanation for any differences that are observed. Therefore, an in-depth understanding of the processes involved in various aspects of university life was required. In depth, semi-structured interviews were selected to encourage a free-flowing dialogue with participants that allowed them to frame their response in their own terms (May 1997). While the general research design is deductive with pre-established characteristics to investigate, the ability for participants to interpret questions and digress as to areas they believed relevant was important for covering as much of their experience as possible and how they perceive it. This would provide rich data for analysing the structural, educational differences between the universities overcoming one of the weaknesses of Bowles and Gintis' research, namely

how their data could not explore the active role of students or teachers in reproducing (or challenging) the social relations of capitalism. Additionally, the semi-structured format would hopefully ameliorate some of the problems associated with deductive research, namely the danger of entering the field with too rigid a framework which can cause the researcher to simply find what they expected to find.

The interviews were also semi-structured in order to ease comparison between students, both across and within universities. This would allow the interviews to adhere to roughly equivalent topics ensuring that the key points of comparison were covered in the interviews. Initially the research design was to include observation of teaching and learning settings, however difficulties in gaining access in the required timeframe precluded this possibility. Therefore interviews were selected as the best possible method for exploring the participants' experience of teaching. The interviews allowed the data collected to go beyond merely academic aspects of university but also the social sphere including how students spend their free time, their labour market aspirations and relationships with staff.

Conducting the interviews

Interview schedules were composed to help maintain structure; this schedule largely consisted of key points and prompts. The interview schedule for the students was organised into the following sections;

- Educational background
- Teaching and learning
- Legal profession
- Social experience
- Labour market awareness

These topics were selected to give the broadest possible understanding of the participants' experiences of university both academically and socially while tying this in to labour market preparation. The full interview schedule can be found in Appendix One. Students who were willing to participate would send an email expressing their

interest and then meetings would be arranged at their convenience, usually somewhere on campus.

The interviews with the staff members covered a number of similar topic areas as the student interviews including resources, assessment, contact time and independent study. Topics that moved beyond those of the student interviews included the following;

- Influence of external stakeholders on the course
- The philosophy behind teaching practices
- How students are helped to enter the labour market
- Student recruitment

All of the topics discussed in the staff interviews were focused on understanding why these conditions occur at the university rather than simply what the conditions were and how students engage with them. These interviews would also allow a more transparent understanding of the purpose of various aspects of the educational provision which may not be apparent to the students and why these decisions were made.

Data Analysis

Staff and student interviews

Due to the structured, deductive research design of this thesis, it was possible to plan the analysis of the data before they were collected. The coding and analysis of data informed the development of the research instruments and the conducting of the interviews. Having *a priori* codes made the process of interpreting and organising the data relatively straightforward once it was collected. Before analysis, all of the interview data were fully transcribed by the researcher. Because of this focused approach to data collection and analysis as well as the small sample size and common type of data, it was decided that it would not be necessary to use CAQDAS software to assist the analysis process. Therefore the interview transcripts were coded using Microsoft Word.

Analysing the student interviews

The student participants' interview data were initially divided into five broad themes that could then be further sub-divided into more specific codes at a later stage. These five codes were assigned a colour using the highlighter tool and then a new Word Document for each code was generated. These codes were;

- Background
- Teaching
- Private time
- Relationships
- Work

Once all of the data were organised into separate documents along these themes they were then recoded through the same process with more specific themes and placed into new documents along these new codes. The next stage in the analytical process was to examine this coded data through the lens of correspondence theory. As was outlined in Table 3.4 in Chapter Three, a number of key characteristics were identified which could be viewed as typical of different status graduate work. These characteristics were developed into the following codes;

- Autonomy
- Learning priorities
- Level of intensity

The documents containing the data that were then re-analysed using these three codes and placed into new documents that were also divided by university. Any data that would fit the criteria of the appropriate university (for example, a student from Elite University demonstrating 'high levels of autonomy displayed in organising and undertaking volume of work outside of contact hours') would be considered as evidence in favour of the usefulness of correspondence theory. Data that seemed to fit the criteria of a different university (for example a student from Elite University

demonstrating ‘low levels of autonomy displayed in organising and undertaking volume of work outside of contact hours’) or did not fit the schema at all could be considered evidence against the appropriateness of using the correspondence theory to analyse contemporary higher education.

To demonstrate this process more clearly, this section will discuss the development of the code to analyse transferable skills using both the existing literature and the data themselves. Firstly, a list of the skills broadly considered as generic or transferable was compiled from existing literature and government documents (see Chapter Two for a discussion of what skills are considered ‘transferable’). Any reference to these skills were highlighted as relating to skills and placed within the appropriate file, usually *Teaching* and/or *Private Time*.

These files were then re-coded through the lens of correspondence theory. Firstly, any reference to transferable skills was placed in the *Learning Priorities* file (although they were often also placed in the other two documents when appropriate). As explained in Chapter Three, a key prediction of difference between the institutions is the type of knowledge they prioritise. Broadly speaking, the higher status the university the more academic their course because high status legal practice requires more subject-specific skills and knowledge. A *Learning Priorities* file was created for each of the three universities.

Drawing on existing literature as summarised in Table 3.4. (principally the work of Felstead et al 2007, Battu et al 2000, Chevalier 2000, Mason et al 2003 and Brown, Lauder and Ashton 2011) a stratification of the teaching of transferable skills was devised and developed into three codes;

Transferable skills-Elite	No teaching of transferable skills in compulsory contact hours
Transferable skills- Old	Some integration of transferable skills in compulsory contact hours
Transferable skills-New	High levels of integration of transferable skills in compulsory contact hours

Table 4.1 Transferable Skills Codes

Because of the routinisation of low status graduate work identified in the literature it was expected that graduates from lower status institutions would require transferable

skills to function well in work more than their high status counter-parts. Coupled with the hypothesis that the conditions of teaching will correspond to a labour market segmented based upon status, the code *Transferable skills- New* was developed to record any reference to a high priority being placed upon compulsory skills teaching. Any reference made by participants from any university that they encountered a form of teaching that included high integration of compulsory skills teaching would be coded as *Transferable skills- New*. If the majority of instances of this code were found among New University students and few (or no) references found among students from the other universities then it would be taken as an indication of correspondence. Likewise, if large numbers of this code were found in the other universities, it would indicate that in this area of investigation there may not be a correspondence. It would also be taken as evidence that there was no correspondence from this area if there was a lack of students from New University labelled with this code.

Documentary Data

This section will discuss the collection and analysis of the different forms of documentary data which were collected for this thesis. One of the purposes of all of the documentary data is to provide a wider context for analysing the interview data. As such these data are generally concerned with broad outlines of the three institutions being studied. The first type of data were prospectuses for the law course at Elite, Old and New Universities. For both New and Elite University, individual prospectuses were available for the law department; however as Old University did not have a separate prospectus for either the law department or course the law section of the general university prospectus was used. As they are advertising the courses to prospective students, all of these documents were publically available. Digital versions of the prospectuses were downloaded from the universities' website to aid the analysis and comparison. These data were analysed using word or 'tag' clouds to present the data visually. These clouds show the frequency of particular words in a document or body of text, the larger and darker the words in the tag cloud then the more frequently they appear in these documents. Cidell (2010) claims that content clouds such as these are an effective way of summarising and comparing data concerning a single issue. By creating different clouds from comparable data sources on a similar topic, any differences or similarities between them become immediately apparent. The clouds

were generated with the free to use software featured on the website www.tagcrowd.com. This service allows users to alter the parameters that dictate the appearance of the tag cloud, including the removal of conjunctions, grouping similar words (e.g. learned, learns and learning being displayed as 'learning'), limiting the amount of words featured and excluding any specific words. The criteria used for the tag cloud are as follows:

- Display the 75 most frequently mentioned words
- Group together similar words
- Remove words that reveal details about the university (e.g., names of buildings)

The words are presented in alphabetical order to ease comparison between the three documents (i.e. to see which words are featured and which are not). This allows for a straightforward comparison between the three universities, particularly as the documents themselves, while similar in purpose may vary significantly in format or length. The word clouds and their analysis can be found in Chapter Five. The main purpose of this analysis will be to outline the broad priorities and philosophies of the universities. Prospectuses were used because they would contain a distillation of key elements of the structural conditions of the course to present a particular public image. Differences in attributes of the teaching and experience that the universities chose to present publicly would reveal broader structural differences between them (such as their commitment to employability) that could frame the analysis of the interview data and other documents.

The second type of documentary data were employability statements for each university. Since 2010, all universities have been required to supply the UK government website <http://unistats.direct.gov.uk> with a statement outlining their provision for developing the employability of their students with the aim of allowing students to become more informed consumers when choosing universities (HEFCE, 2010). These data lay out the way in which the teaching of employability skills is (or is not) integrated into the teaching as well as the nature of the universities relationships with employers. The statements for each university were collected and analysed to illustrate the ways in which their skills training and labour market preparation differ.

Obviously these data reveal significant information about the universities so will be used sparingly in order to retain anonymity.

The third documentary form of data is the institutions' own representations of data relating to the destinations of graduates six months after completing their course. This data will be useful in outlining the extent to which the universities vary in terms of this basic measure of graduate employment. However, these data will be more useful for exploring how the universities actually present their data publicly. For example, an interesting point of comparison will be the broad occupational categories that they develop to display the raw occupational data of their graduates. These data are generally drawn from websites and other publicly available material published by the universities or faculties being investigated. Some of the data being presented however were attained either through the interviews with staff members or contact with the institutions' respective careers services.

Ethical Issues

The undertaking of this research received approval from the Cardiff School of Social Sciences' Research Ethics Committee prior to commencement of data collection. Participants were all given an information sheet discussing the purpose of the research, why they were selected for participation and what would be required of them. This sheet also explained that their participation was voluntary and could be withdrawn at any time for any reason (see Appendix Three for a copy of Information Sheet). After the participants were fully informed of the purposes of the research they were given the opportunity to ask any questions or discuss any issues that they had. Written, informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to the interviews, including permission for the interviews to be digitally recorded and only the researcher has access to these consent forms and recordings. All participants were also informed that their anonymity would be protected through the use of pseudonyms throughout this thesis and any associated publications. In order to further protect the anonymity of the student and staff participants it was decided that the universities themselves would be also made anonymous.

Conclusion

In combination with Chapter Three's discussion of how correspondence theory and contemporary HE research can be used as an analytical tool, this chapter has explained and evaluated the methodology for the empirical component of this thesis. This chapter outlined how this research project is a relatively small-scale exploratory study designed to assess the extent to which the structural conditions of universities can be seen as corresponding to the equivalent conditions in a stratified graduate labour market. Certain characteristics of this stratification were identified in the previous chapter while this chapter focussed on how the different status universities were selected and how data were collected and analysed. In order to gain the broadest picture of the conditions at the three different status universities, data consisting of semi-structured interviews with staff and students of these universities as well as a number of different documentary data sources will be drawn upon. The interviews will be analysed in the context of the level of intensity of the working environment, the educational priorities of the university and how student autonomy is developed. The analysis of these data form the basis of the following three chapters. Firstly, Chapter Five will explore the broad structural differences of the universities, include how differences in ethos, status of teaching staff and structure of teaching hours. Secondly, Chapter Six will explore the details of the pedagogy and learning environment including discussions of differing class sizes, independent study, working routines and the relationship between students and staff. Finally, Chapter Seven will outline differences in the more explicit ways that the universities prepare their students for work and how these differ by status of university. This discussion will centre around graduate destinations, careers guidance and the development of professional networks.

Chapter Five

Exploring differences in the organisation and ethos of three different status universities

Introduction

The central purpose of this research is to investigate the usefulness of applying the principles of Bowles and Gintis' correspondence theory to higher education and the graduate labour market in the United Kingdom. In order to frame the empirical component of this thesis, a distinction was drawn between three different levels of higher education and explored in terms of the differences in their environment, teaching and organisation that could be interpreted as being to prepare students for the corresponding level of graduate work.

Accordingly, this chapter will be presenting and interpreting data collected through semi-structured interviews with students and staff members at the Elite, Old and New university with the aim of revealing the way in which teaching is organised at each of the three different status universities and how this reflects the character of the institutions. These interview data will be supported by analysis of various forms documentary data such as prospectuses and institutional statements. This discussion will be framed around the following areas;

- The purpose and priorities of education
- The status and expertise of teaching staff
- Differences in contact time

Firstly, this chapter will explore any differences between the three universities in their educational priorities. This will comprise a discussion of how the main focus or philosophy of teaching is portrayed publicly and how this is reflected in the teaching and environment of the universities. This will incorporate analyses of how the universities advertise themselves to prospective students and the nature of differences (or similarities) in the knowledge and skills that are taught and learned while at university. This section will discuss the role that the teaching of transferable,

employability skills plays at the three universities. This section will draw upon the interview data and documentary data from the universities that advertise the institutions publicly.

Secondly, this chapter will feature a discussion of the status of the teaching staff that will attempt to outline the type of people who actually deliver this philosophy of teaching and how they do so. In particular, differences in the expertise and reputational capital of teaching staff will be explored to illustrate any differences in status between the three universities sampled.

Finally, to lead in to the next chapter which is focussed more explicitly around how students experience teaching and learning, this chapter will feature a discussion of differences in teaching hours for the students. The analysis in this chapter will therefore illustrate key differences between the three universities in terms of what they teach, why they teach it and the organisational process by which this teaching is delivered

The purpose and priorities of education

The first section of this chapter will be exploring the differences between the three universities in terms of their broad purpose or ethos. This will be explored in two ways, firstly how the institutions present themselves in advertising materials that are accessible by the general public. The first part of this section will be to begin to develop a picture of what the priorities of each institution are. Prospectuses from each university for law will be examined to see what aspects of the course, environment and experience of each university that they choose to advertise. Additionally, each section discussing an individual university will also present data taken from the employability statements the universities supply to the website unistats.direct.gov.uk. These statements will be analysed in terms of how they reveal the level of importance attached to preparing students for work and how this manifests itself both in and beyond the teaching.

The second part of this section will focus on how the ethos and environment of those universities are experienced by students day to day. This section will explore the accounts of students and senior staff members about their view of the purpose of the course and the university experience in general. The three universities will all be

compared and contrasted with each other and how well the students and staff members' accounts match the observations made from the publicity materials.

One of the main reasons for selecting Law students as the participants for this study was due to the almost unique character of the course. The exploratory, theory-testing nature of this research would be well served by studying a subject with explicit links to the graduate labour market but that was also viewed as highly academic. In this vein, one of the key purposes of this research was to assess the different priorities of teaching at the three different status universities. While a qualifying law degree requires the teaching of certain subject matter the way in which this knowledge is transmitted is less prescribed. It was predicted that the priorities of the universities would differ greatly according to status, with the Elite University focusing exclusively on more knowledge based, academic teaching, in particular Black Letter Law. In contrast the New University would be expected to place significant value upon the teaching of vocational and transferable skills to their students. These predicted differences are outlined in table 5.1 below:

	Elite	Old	New
Subject Knowledge	Only Priority	High Priority	High Priority
Vocational Skills	Implicit	Secondary priority	Supplementary
Transferable Skills	None	Supplementary	High Priority

Table 5.1 Predicted nature of the skills divide

These differences are a reflection of the different expectations for the labour market requirements of the key correspondence concepts of autonomy and subject-based knowledge. Because there is a greater expectation that students are responsible for their own employability at the higher status universities, then direct skills teaching is either unnecessary or of a lower priority.

Due to the professional nature of a law degree, vocational, legal skills are predicted be a priority at all three universities. While these are expected to receive a minimal amount of attention at New University (due to their predicted correspondence to low status work), they will be a central, if not primary priority for Old University. Elite University is expected to also privilege the learning of such skills, but rather than

the explicit form of instruction received at Old and New, these skill were be learned implicitly as part of the teaching and externally through extra-curricular activities.

Public presentation of the universities

The first part of this section will analyse prospectuses and employability statements aimed at future law students for each university. These prospectuses will be analysed using word clouds to present the data visually in terms of word frequency. The word clouds used are a clearly presented way of observing if there are any areas of the teaching or wider university experience that are presented differently according to status, whether certain aspects are prioritised over others or whether any of the universities' prospectuses either have or do not have certain key phrases (that the other institutions do or do not have). For example, does it appear that one university prioritises their graduate employment rates over descriptions of their teaching? This discussion will predominantly be framed by the key correspondence concept of the centrality of subject-based knowledge. A discussion of the use of word clouds can be found in Chapter Four.

The employability statements will explore similar areas (namely educational priorities) but obviously these data specifically focus on transferable skills and direct labour market preparation. Therefore the analysis will explore any noticeable differences in the way these aspects of the university experience are organised. Particular attention will be paid to references of the integration of skills teaching into the formal curricula.

Public presentation of Elite University



Fig 5.1: Elite University law prospectus tag cloud

What is initially clear from this cloud is that ‘law’ is the most frequently mentioned term featured in the tag cloud for Elite University’s prospectus with other reasonably generic terms such as ‘year’ and ‘course’ also featuring highly. In terms of conforming to the expectations of the correspondence theory, it is quite interesting that Elite University is the only one of the three institutions to feature the word ‘vocational’ as part of its tag cloud. The expectation would be that the Elite course was the most academic of the three in order to create students with more subject-based knowledge and independent thought rather than skills. However, when looking at the word usage in context it becomes clear that the term ‘vocational’ is often used in a number of ways that fit better with the correspondence theory conception of Elite education as the following quotes show:

‘A University law course gives a deeper appreciation of the working of legal rules and institutions than is available from a merely vocational training, and provides an intellectual discipline in a subject of wide human interest’

‘Vocational considerations should not be regarded as paramount when choosing law as a degree subject. Career preferences change while a

university education is for life. Thus a genuine interest in law as an intellectual inquiry should be the principal motivation'

Elite University Law Prospectus

Therefore the term vocational appears with a high frequency in this document to make a clear distinction between the intellectual pursuit of the subject that students will encounter at Elite University and a more vocational form of teaching. This is presumably of particular importance for a law degree which could be seen as highly vocational, therefore the prospectus explicitly states how this is not the case at Elite University.

These quotes reveal the extent to which law is presented as a deep, intellectual pursuit at this institution, showing signs of the high priority of subject-based knowledge (and to a degree, intensity) expected if a correspondence to elite graduate work is operating here. This is also consistent with the strong framing present at elite universities identified by Crozier and Reay (2011), they claim that high levels of control over educational experience is exerted by teachers at these highest status universities because so much is invested in the students that failure is not an option. The intrinsic value of intellectual development on the course is prioritised over other concerns, such as career aspirations.

Another term which features much more frequently in the Elite University's prospectus is 'examinations'. This word features only four times in the New University's law prospectus and six times in that of the Old University, but is mentioned 17 times in the prospectus for Elite University. This could demonstrate the degree to which the Elite University is performance driven, demanding high grades from both its prospective and current students. However, explored in context, the frequent use of 'examinations' is largely due to the complexity of the organisation of the course and the frequent necessity of repeating the term.

This tag cloud is the only one of the three to explicitly feature the term 'barrister' which could be seen as a sign that this occupational destination in legal practice was something that was more common for Elite graduates. Some of these mentions are simply outlining the potential progression to vocational qualifications post-graduation (which was also present in the other two universities' prospectuses). However, other uses of 'barrister' do reveal the extent to which Elite University projects the

impression to prospective students that becoming a barrister is a common career path for Elite graduates and that the university can help you with this:

‘Deciding whether law will be a good choice of degree subject is often difficult. It is useful to find out more about the subject and, if possible, to spend time in a solicitor’s office or barrister’s chambers. Visiting courts is also very helpful in providing a glimpse of an aspect of the work of practising lawyers.’

‘Barristers’ and solicitors’ evenings are organised so that students can meet members of the legal profession informally’

‘Assistance will also be given in arranging work experience during vacations with solicitors’ firms or in barristers’ chambers.’

Elite University Law Prospectus

These quotes all demonstrate the way in which Elite University seems to encourage its students to learn more about the world of work through immersing themselves in it by observing or working with existing practitioners. Elite University positions itself as associated with one of the highest status forms of legal practice, a career path which is highly supported by the institution. This indicates to prospective students the type of elite opportunities available to them.

In comparing the findings from the Elite prospectus to their employability statement, further evidence of academic teaching and employment destinations are revealed. As the following quote shows, transferable skills are only gained implicitly from the intensity of the teaching:

The intellectual rigour of our courses and intensive education provided through small-group teaching in supervisions promote independent learning and help students develop transferable skills which are highly valued by employers

Elite University employability statement

There is no mention of any explicit teaching of skills as part of the course because the intensity of the work and intellectual challenge are sufficient. The statement does outline various ways in which students can learn skills from their extensive extra-curricular opportunities but this is completely separate from the academic course. This would create more independent graduates who are better suited to function in a high-

skilled work environment. This is consistent with the predicted educational priorities of Elite University and the prospectus data.

Public presentation of Old University



Fig 5.2: Old University law prospectus tag cloud

As with Elite University, ‘law’ is predictably the most frequently mentioned term in the Old University prospectus. One key term at Old University for the structure of the course is ‘modules’ which is mentioned 18 times (compared to only five for New University, although ‘electives’ is featured 14 times). Coupled with numerous other words relating to particular modules which have high scores (for example ‘French’, ‘Criminology’ and ‘Sociology’) and the high score of ‘credits’ it is not unreasonable to suggest that the level of flexibility of the course is something that the Old University is keen to advertise. Similarly, one of the more eye-catching words in this cloud (featured 21 times) is programmes. The Old University tag cloud also shows that taken together ‘teaching, ‘taught’ and ‘lecturers’ appear nine times, perhaps suggesting that Old University is more eager to advertise the style of its teaching.

The Old University tag cloud shows four references to ‘solicitors’ and none specifically to barristers which might be seen as indicative of the broad type of legal practice that graduates are expected to enter. Interestingly, both New and Old University have the same frequency of ‘bar’ all of which were in reference to pursuing

further study on the Bar Vocational Course (now the Bar Professional Training Course). If there is a correspondence to a stratified legal profession then it would be expected that few students from Old University became barristers and even less New University graduates (perhaps none). However, the equal importance that these documents give to studying the bar suggest otherwise.

Generally, the Old University prospectus appears less interested in selling its experience or ethos and simply outlining the structure and form of the education on offer. This may be due to the fact that this document was taken from a broader, institution-wide prospectus as opposed to the faculty specific documents for the other two universities. However, with no law specific document available this would be the main way that students are initially advertised the course.

In the employability statement for Old University, a picture of an environment that values a mixture of intellectual development and more practical, grounded learning emerges:

Students benefit from a stimulating study environment, research-led teaching and interaction with academics working at the frontiers of knowledge in their field.

Old University employability statement

The use of the term ‘stimulating’, in contrast to Elite’s ‘intensive’ is suggestive of an academic environment that places less pressure on their students but still values high levels of intellectual engagement. The following quote shows that unlike the complete separation of skills teaching at Elite, this is more central to the Old University experience:

Employability is embedded into the student experience and students choose [Old] University to improve their job opportunities and salary prospects

Old University employability statement

However, after making this point, the statement only outlines methods of developing employability that are external to teaching. This could be seen as indicative of the how there is some explicit skills teaching in the formal curriculum, but it is a low priority. This is broadly consistent with the predictions made for Old University but will be explored further in the interview data.

Public presentation of New University



Fig 5.3: New University law prospectus tag cloud

This tag cloud, in common with those from other the two universities, unsurprisingly has ‘law’ as the word that is most frequently mentioned in the New University Law prospectus. There are also a roughly similar number of references to other key subject specific terms for example; ‘legal’ is mentioned 28 times here, 23 times in Old University’s prospectus and 22 in Elite’s. Many of the words seem to just be outlining the nature of the course and what modules are on offer as would be expected from this type of document. However, the third most commonly featured word however is ‘skills’ (19), which could indicate that New University places a large emphasis on the explicit gaining of skills (whether general, technical or legal is not clear) as part of their teaching and in the way that they advertise themselves to prospective students. The fact that Elite’s prospectus only referred to skills seven times and Old University did not refer to skills at all would strengthen the suggestion that a more skills based form of teaching is prevalent at the New University. This is consistent with the predications made about New University from the correspondence theory, with subject knowledge being less required for low status graduate (or legal) work, transferable skills were predicted to be more central to the teaching at New.

Another interesting word is ‘employment’ which while only appearing six times, does not appear in either of the other clouds. This could therefore be interpreted

as evidence that New University is significantly more preoccupied with the labour market than the other two universities. There may be a number of explanations for this, however through the lens of correspondence theory it could be suggested that this is because the teaching at New University will be significantly more vocational and practical because it will correspond to a low status form of ‘graduate work’ that does not require subject specific skills. Closer examination of the prospectuses reveals that in context four of these six references are in fact to the various employment opportunities available to graduates, for example:

The [New University] has a good record when it comes to graduate employment

New University Prospectus

Two of the references are to a module in Employment Law that is offered as an elective module in Year Two of the course. As one of the initial documents that prospective students would encounter if considering applying to study law at New University, this prospectus seems to focus on the interface between higher education and the labour market, particularly preparing students for work with skills teaching. Therefore, students who read this document (at least in comparison to the prospectuses from the other two institutions) will be already aware that this is a key priority of the faculty and university.

An interesting term that does not appear in either of the other clouds is ‘lawyers’. This of course a generic term for any form of legal practice including barrister and various types of solicitor. With Old University only referring to solicitors in their prospectuses (not barristers) this could be seen as challenging the expectation that the lowest status university would prioritise lower status forms of legal practice. However, when examined in context these references do not actually refer labour market destinations but ‘lawyer’ is either used in the prospectus when referring to a particular, skill-based module (Lawyer’s Skills) or as catchall term for students studying law as in the following quote:

‘lawyers are also valued in many other occupations for their strong problem solving and communication skills and their ability to think critically and objectively’

New University Law prospectus

This is significantly different from the uses of ‘solicitors’ in the Old University prospectus which was only ever used in relation to the necessary further qualifications needed in order to pursue legal practice as a career or in identifying the degree offered as being a ‘qualifying’ law degree (i.e. one that meets the requirements of the relevant governing bodies as suitable preparation for legal practice). This could be seen as evidence that a progression into legal practice is a more taken for granted assumption for the students of Old University.

In the employability statement for New University, the high priority of employability as an explicit part of the teaching is immediately apparent from the opening line:

We provide a wide range of opportunities for you to enhance and record your employability skills, both within and outside of your course, and support this by providing impartial careers advice and guidance to help you make informed choices about your future.

New University employability statement

Providing the opportunity to develop employability skills within the course does not necessarily differentiate it from the implicit way skills are gained on the intensive teaching course at Elite. However, the extent to which employability shapes and penetrates the teaching is further outlined later in the statement:

All of our programmes are designed and delivered with graduate employability as a focus, including professional, employability and career management skills. Our programmes are also designed and reviewed with input from employers, ensuring that their content is relevant to the future career ambitions of our students

New University employability statement

This clearly shows how explicit skill teaching is fundamental to the course at New University in a way not revealed by the other universities’ statements.

Public presentation of all three universities

When comparing all three prospectuses, there do appear to be differences in the aspects of the courses that are prioritised. Elite University seems to distance itself from concerns of future employment to focus purely on the educational development of students. The prospectus for Old University seems largely to advertise the details of the course rather than 'selling' themselves as much as the other two institutions. However, this does include discussions of future labour market destinations. Finally, New University seems to be more interested in advertising the skills and employability benefits that the course has to offer than the intellectual development of students. These documents are one of the ways that students get a first impression of the university they hope to attend and there are clear differences between the three.

Other differences are linguistic, such as Elite University using terms such as 'faculty' and 'collections' conferring a particular, high status identity which is not necessarily present at the other two universities. There are also key differences in the learning activities described, Elite University is the only one to refer to reading (and generally the only one to detail the specifics of the teaching) whereas New University is the only university to refer to communication (a more generic, key skill).

In dealing explicitly with the issue of career development, the varying educational priorities of the three universities are even more apparent in the employability statements. A clear distinction between the three institutions emerges that largely fits with the predictions made above. These data and observations were largely presented to be illustrative of some key differences between the universities that will be explored later. However, it is already apparent (whether hierarchical and reproductive or otherwise) that in spite of offering the same course (law) the universities present their educational environment and provision very differently. The following part of this section will move on to discuss how these educational priorities are actually experienced by students.

Experiences of educational priorities

This section will move beyond how the universities conceptualise and advertise their varying purpose to focus on how these differing priorities are experienced by students day to day. This section will explore the accounts of students and senior staff members about their view of the purpose of the course and the university experience in general. This section will therefore outline students' interpretations of the different teaching

priorities of their chosen institutions and their views as to the purpose, suitability and efficacy of the skills provision. These views will be compared to the views of the staff members at the universities to allow for a comparison of how well the students' experiences and interpretations correspond with the consciously planned aims of the faculty.

Elite students' experiences of educational priorities

Firstly, the lack of explicit support for skills development that was central to the predictions for Elite University and apparent in the documents seems to correlate with Rebecca's experience of the course:

This was one of the things that I was really surprised by. Even at A level when you've been doing a subject for ages they still give you guidance on how to approach essays and things like that but there wasn't anything like that here at all. Nobody told you how to write a law essay, nobody told you how to read cases or how to approach problem questions, you just have to pick it up along the way really. It does feel like constantly you are re-learning skills if that makes sense; it's like a constant learning process

Rebecca, First Year Elite University

Rebecca says that no skills that will be beneficial for work, or for success on the course, are taught at any point by the university. However, by not having a highly structured approach to teaching skills it would appear that benefits are more substantial and long-term as she claims it is a constant learning process. The following quote from Claire illustrates the extent to which any explicit learning of skills or enhancement of employability must be sought independently:

I think with law, it's the kind of thing where it's very different to learning it in theory to actually doing it in practice. You have to have this base of knowledge in order to go and do anything with it but you don't really get taught that. Unless you do things like mooting you don't get taught any practical stuff you just sort of get spoon-fed and you have to sit and do reading. In some ways that is what you'd do as a lawyer, you have to do a lot of reading in your jobs; it's kind of hard to tell not having been out there

Claire, First Year Elite University

The law course seems to privilege knowledge over skills, however there is provision for students to go beyond the course if they so desire in order to explicitly learn new skills or to put into practice the skills they are developing. In particular mooting, which is a simulated trial, allows students to experience more practical aspects of legal practice. While she qualifies the statement due to her own lack of experience in the world of work, Claire also says that the skills that students are utilising in their day to day studies will correspond to the skills required for a successful law graduate.

This focus purely on the law can leave some feeling unsatisfied, Jane suggests that students at the Elite University who are not intending to enter the highest status jobs in the legal profession are somewhat over-looked by the university:

A law degree, it does lead you straight into a job but the degree itself, it's not really about practice it's more about theory and learning the law and Black Letter Law and stuff, it's not really about vocational experience. You get so much career help on the side that any kind of vocational things you want to do, you get so much career help beyond the course that you don't need any in there... But in terms of outside the course, I don't think there's a lot of help for people that don't want to go into the magic circle or become a barrister. There is help but you'd have to really seek it out because everyone's just thinking 'magic circle, magic circle'

Jane, Third Year Elite University

With skills teaching being so intrinsic to the course content that this could potentially leave graduates who did not intend to enter the law under-prepared for the world of work. This would be compounded by the lack of provision outside of the course for anybody who is aiming for anything but the most elite graduate jobs. However, even while this situation seemed to be acknowledged by a number of research participants, the nature of the course was often defended - as shown with this quote from Liz:

I didn't really do the degree to get a career I did it to learn about law and some people don't want to go into the profession so I think it would be a bad idea to have a lot of that in a degree

Liz, First Year Elite University

The nature of the course and the university itself is one that promotes academic learning as an end in and of itself and therefore produces graduates who are arguably more 'rounded' than people who are simply career focused. However, attending a high status university with a reputation for producing elite graduates gives a significant

advantage in the labour market even if the original motivations for studying were not driven by labour market concerns.

The accounts of the students' experiences and perceptions of the purpose of the course seem to correlate with those of the academic staff. When asked about the purpose of the course and how students are prepared for work, Professor Davies comments focused very specifically on the law:

[The purpose is] To give a good liberal education, as law as a subject is good for people to study in its own right. And it is of course to prepare people for work as lawyers and I think it has to be both of those and it is both of those... They know how to do law, we hope that they have got research skills to find out what the law is, they do a huge amount of application of law to facts by doing legal problems, problem solving of various sorts. Those who want to go to the Bar and quite a lot who don't will do mooting although that's not part of the formal syllabus. They get lots and lots of experience of presenting themselves in writing and presenting themselves orally.

Prof. Davies, Head of Law Faculty at Elite University

The initial response and seemingly the primary purpose of the course is the study of law as an end in itself without any necessity to pursue it as a vocation. This is a concept that was not mentioned by either of the staff participants at the other two universities who always framed their discussions of the purpose of legal education as linked to the labour market as will be shown below.

Prof. Davies goes on to say how the course does prepare people to be lawyers but this comes across as more of a secondary priority. The skills that he refers to are more specific legal skills, however there are some more transferable skills mentioned but these are also skills that are strongly linked to legal practice. Therefore the teaching at the Elite University can focus more wholly on the law without the need for external concerns such as employability and transferable skills. Communication was a transferable skill identified as being most in demand by graduate employers but also one that they believed was not being taught sufficiently by universities (Hesketh 2000, Bennett 2002). That this is one of the few transferable skills mentioned (which is only taught through experience) further strengthens the suggestion that the education at Elite University corresponds to what graduate employers desire most.

To summarise, attempts to enhance employability take place outside of the course itself in either optional forms of study or extra-curricular activities. The

intensity of the course necessitates the autonomous development of certain skills in order to succeed. This is never made explicit to any of the students who would have to hone these talents individually in a 'sink or swim' atmosphere. This environment would create graduates who are able to work autonomously, be self-reliant, and have good communication skills and good time management. These are skills that are required for graduate work, but rather than these skills being something that are gained and can be displayed they are internalised through the process of simply surviving at Elite University.

Old students' experiences of educational priorities

The prediction of the priorities of Old University appear to somewhat correspond with the analysis of the documentary data. However, drawing on the student data, it would initially appear that the teaching priorities of the Old University have more in common with the Elite University than predicted, as outlined by Joe:

Skills, in the sense of, a lot of the skills I've learned on my undergrad degree will be very useful. Things like research, a barrister's job is essentially a researcher, things like critical analysis and things like that will all be useful. But there's not, um at this level it's a very theoretical course about what law is rather than practical skills

Joe, Third Year Old University

When asked to discuss what skills he had been taught on the course, Joe generally identified subject specific skills similar to the students at the Elite University. These are the sorts of skills that are developed over time through experience rather than being taught in an explicit and prescribed manner. But where the Elite students gave the impression that the teaching and the learning of skills on their course was best suited for the legal profession, the Old University students seemed to be more aware of the transferability of these skills as shown in this typical quote from Bashir:

The best part of law is basically getting skills that could help you with other areas of any employment such as research and giving structured answers that sort of thing. These sorts of skills may not be found in other courses so in that sense law helps a lot.

Bashir, First Year Old University

Placing this much emphasis on the importance of the transferability of skills goes against the predictions for Old University. This again is in contrast to a number of participants from the Elite University who often claimed that the knowledge is the most important aspect.

In terms of professional legal skills, the Old University teaches a compulsory module for all of its law students:

Oh and Legal Skills in the first year where they introduce you, that just runs till January for one semester...that's the kind of stuff where if you didn't do it then you couldn't be a solicitor

Katie, Third Year Old University

This integration of a compulsory module into the formal curriculum demonstrates further the difference in priorities from Elite University. The fact that this is only a small module over a single semester supports the earlier prediction that the Old University would explicitly recognise the importance of teaching skills but it would be of significantly less importance than other more academic aspects of the course. A few of student participants however, seemed open to a more structured form of professional skills teaching:

But they do run a lot of courses on like, how to apply and things like that, so they do give you information but maybe they need to bring us all together and give us collective information. Like just one lecture that everyone can go to and sit down rather than just run them quite sporadically when you might not be able to go... I'm not saying they're the best because they're not constantly saying 'do this, do that' but they are letting you find your own way so it's giving you independence which you need at uni but maybe it's too much

Ruth, Second Year Old University

This demand for greater guidance could be viewed indicative of the high levels of autonomy that the course allows, but the fact that Ruth (and a handful of other participants) expressed a desire for greater structure perhaps indicates lower levels of student engagement than expected.

Amanda, a Law Tutor and Careers Advisor at Old University stressed the significance of employability when asked about the central focus of the law

department but, as the student participants stated, that this largely takes place outside of the main teaching:

I'm a teacher here and a solicitor, but [Old University] has had the foresight to realise that employability is such a big thing and that you need a member of staff who is an academic member but also a professional who has got the sort of background to know the profession... All of that at the moment is voluntary. We had an away day a couple of weeks ago to discuss building employability into the curriculum; it's something that we discuss year on year... There's some but it's not as embedded as it might be, and I think that's historical with most law degrees especially in the Russell group, it's all about research and the academic side and they've not really realised the importance of skills before but with £9,000 fees coming in and the importance of employability there is going to be a change even sort of hard nosed academic institutions seem to be heading that way and hopefully we're a few years ahead

Amanda, Law Careers Advisor & Tutor at Old University

The description of the limited integrated skills teaching coupled with extensive voluntary support fits the predicted organisational structure of Old University. However, the fact that greater integration is being discussed, coupled with apparent student support as shown by Ruth above perhaps challenges these predictions.

To go over the main points, research skills were those most commonly identified as being taught by the student participants at Old University. This is a skill which is clearly linked to the legal profession but is also transferable to other types of work. In contrast to Elite University, the skills provision (whether legal or generic skills) was more explicit, even being somewhat integrated into the teaching. However, most of the skills teaching, while more instructional and overt, was separated from the course as optional forms of study. This can largely be seen as confirming the predictions made based upon the suggested correspondence to mid-level graduate work. Namely, that academic skills are high priority and vocational skills are supplementary, however transferability is more important than for elite graduates and it appears that the teaching staff want to embrace a more integrated skills teaching programme which does not fit with the predicted characteristics to Old University.

New students' experiences of educational priorities

The predictions made for New University were for it to have the highest level of explicit, compulsory integrated skills teaching in the formal curriculum. This was a prediction largely supported by the documentary data and as this quote from Michelle shows, by the student interview data:

We do Legal Skills and Professional Development which isn't actually about the law and such; it's about your learning skills so we do a little course on that each year, like a ten credits course... I quite like it because we've been given tests to do which tells us what our preferences should be and how you should be learning and has more of a fun aspects I suppose, you have to create a portfolio and I kind of like that stuff and it's a bit different to all the writing that you have to do

Michelle, First Year New University

This module is only for a single semester in a similar style to the module at the Old University. However, Michelle states that this is something that students must study every year rather than simply as an introductory and supplementary part of the course - like at the Old University. Additionally, at New University, one of the courses focuses on professional development, something which is much more broad and ambiguous than simply Legal Skills (which is the corresponding course at the Old University). This could be seen as suggesting a greater expectation that students will be entering fields of work outside of the law and therefore need adequate preparation for the labour market in general. With tasks including creating portfolios, this module also appears to be more focused on how to apply for and attain work rather than how to function within a work environment (as was implied about the similar course at the Old University by Katie).

This module also serves to help students adapt to the learning environment of the university, suggesting a greater level of institutionally imposed structure on the learning of students than at the other two universities. This interpretation is supported by David's elaboration about this module;

We have quite a lot [of vocational teaching], two of the modules we're doing at the moment are like that. One's called Lawyer Skills and Professional Development and that's entirely around doing things like that. Also we're submitting a piece of coursework at the moment, on Tuesday actually, which is on, ah, one of the goals of it is to find out about your own learning and how it benefits you and one of the aims is to come up with a career-based goal and give yourself dates and stuff to do with that. An

example would be to check out the police website and then volunteer for the police by such and such a date. You do a similar exercise at the end of the year where you're meant to say what you've learnt from that but to be honest you could probably just make it up quite easily.

David, First Year New University

David identifies that there are actually two modules devoted to teaching vocational skills. He also clearly states the way that the module is focused around attaining work rather than functioning within a work environment. New University provides compulsory teaching to help students to learn how to learn, which while restricting the autonomy and self-reliance of the students does satisfy one of the key skills that Hesketh (2000) identifies employers require. Whether the coursework David discusses is summative or formative is unclear, however the fact that the university includes career-development planning as an assessed task speaks volumes about the priorities behind the course. It is also revealing how David's interpretation of this task is aimed at career in the police which would only utilise a small amount of subject specific knowledge.

One of the most notable differences is the extent to which the law course at New University is designed explicitly to teach transferable skills and prepare for work throughout the whole duration of the course. Anna, in her final year of study, says that there are modular options based around vocational preparation later on the course as the course becomes more specialised:

We do three, modules, one every year which is all about vocation, what you want to do. There's like work-based learning which is the one I'm doing this year and that's why I'm doing these work experiences because you have to do a minimum of 80 hours and that's quite nice because it gets you thinking about stuff and that's really helped me, if I hadn't done that I would be clueless... The first year was sort of general; I can't really remember what the module was called. The second year was really good because that was lawyer skills and for that you did stuff like, they did assessments on client interviewing and letter writing and advocating. That was really eye-opening, like whether you were good at it, whether you were confident enough so I found that useful. I think the uni is one of the most practical courses, because we focus on the academic side as well of the practical skills that you will need and some people forget that. They think

they can do client interviews but it takes a lot of skill to get to know what you've got to do

Anna, Third Year New University

The way in which the New University attempts to develop the employability of their students over time can be drawn out quite clearly from this statement by Anna. First year students are required to undertake a general assessment of their aims, competencies and priorities in terms of the labour market with the assumed purpose of encouraging students to engage with considerations about employment and employability from the very start of the course. This is later consolidated by the more grounded, practical legal skills taught in the second year (something that a number of participants at the Elite and Old University criticised for being obsolete due to the necessity of entry to the highly vocational Legal Practice Course and Bar Vocational Course after graduation in order to progress to practice). Subsequently, students in the third year are actually assessed by the amount of engagement with the labour market they have managed through work experience including setting a target in hours that they are expected to attain. The fact that Anna discusses such a basic transferable skill as letter writing being taught in this manner is suggestive of how structured and controlled the teaching is and how generic the skills these students will require in the job market are.

The central focus of the skills provision and vocational training are not only restricted to separate modules, it is also a key part of the more academic, knowledge based aspects of the teaching:

We do get skills teaching because that's basically what our tutorials are about, like research methods and critical thinking. But I think because it's a bit of a culture shock to suddenly be so independent, especially in our first year we could use more a bit more guidance. Especially on deadlines, how to write your essays and how to reference, how to write your essays like spacing, it's different for each module so it gets a bit confusing

Laura, First Year New University

It is not clear from this quote (or from other data) how explicitly these skills are taught to students at the New University. However, Laura appears to be dissatisfied with a lack of support in certain areas of skills development. This is similar to comments by Ruth at Old University but Laura appears to want more help in more basic areas.

When asked directly about what in their view the main purpose and focus of the teaching at their university was, Debbie, the Teaching and Learning Director for Law

at New University, was very keen to identify the significance of skill development and labour market preparation as integral aspects of their teaching:

It's very much a practical and academic approach combined, so we wouldn't describe it as purely academic nor would we describe it as purely vocational it's clearly not, it's a mixture of the two and we put a lot of emphasis on in year one study skills and transferable skills in year two the practical employability skills and in year three the work place learning, all that sort of thing

Debbie, Director of Teaching and Learning at New University

Debbie was asked to describe the way in which they present their course to students and what its key aspects are and she chose to mainly focus on the integrated employability aspects which she felt made their teaching seem most appealing to students. While she does stress that there are significant academic aspects, this quote shows a much greater significance for vocational skills teaching as an explicit part of the course - which strongly supports the predictions made from the correspondence theory.

Student experiences of educational priorities of all three universities

While it is not surprising (for they would hardly deceive their audience) the student and staff accounts of the teaching largely corresponded with the images they portrayed publicly in the documents analysed at the beginning of this section. To summarise, at Elite University, student participants indicated that they are prepared for work by the high pressure, autonomous environment that is created by the teaching staff. Skills are not taught explicitly but rather the format of the teaching and work undertaken implicitly provide students with the attributes required for success in the highest status jobs. Skills are seemingly internalised as personal characteristics rather than being something which are learned and then redeployed separately. A general ethos that prioritises academia above all else permeates all aspects of Elite University.

The students interviewed at Old University experienced much more explicit teaching of skills however this was largely voluntary and external to the course delivery. When skills teaching was integrated with academic study it was usually only in a minor capacity or supplementary to the more academic knowledge. A philosophy of preparing students for work explicitly permeates the faculty - however this is never

given precedence over academia. But there are some signs, contrary to what was expected that there is a desire from staff and students for more integrated compulsory skills teaching.

At New University, the student interviews reveal that preparing students not only how to function effectively in work but how to find work in the first place is given a significantly greater level of importance than the other two universities in this study. Practical legal skills, generic transferable skills and job-finding skills were all taught as integrated parts of the course and given equal value to the academic knowledge.

Generally, at all three institutions, the experience of students corresponds with the intention of those planning and delivering the courses. Prof. Davies from Elite University appears to view the teaching of anything but legal skills on the course as being removed from the purpose of the education they provide, a view not shared by the staff at the other two universities. Debbie from the New University appears to believe that the vocational skills training, with an emphasis on transferability is synonymous with a legal education and Amanda from the Old University believes that independently gained transferable skills with institutional support are a necessity for a successful graduate. However Prof. Davies believes that the Elite students only need a good legal education and the opportunity to practice those specific skills.

There are clearly significant differences between the three universities in terms of their general ethos and how this affects their educational priorities. These differences will be further explored in the next section which discusses differences between the universities in who teaches.

The status and expertise of teaching staff

Anyon (1981) identified that in different status schools, the key differences in the knowledge and understanding were the context, connectedness and creation of knowledge. Pupils from working class backgrounds attending working class schools were taught facts as divorced from their broader context or separate from where the knowledge was created. Conversely, the higher status schools would promote an awareness of the origin and connectedness of knowledge. In terms of this study, with universities being sites of knowledge creation through research, the extent to which students have access to producers of knowledge (in the form of research, particularly

high status research) will be significant. Therefore, the following predictions for the nature of the academic staff are outlined in table 5.2 below:

	Elite	Old	New
Status of staff	World experts	Research active staff	Teaching staff

Table 5.2: Predicted status of staff at all three universities

The extent to which students experience a form or teaching from staff that confirm these predictions will be discussed below.

Teaching staff at the Elite University

When asked to discuss the quality or status of teaching staff the participants from the Elite University were almost unanimously positive about everybody that had taught them for a number of different reasons. One common characteristic (and indeed requirement) of the teaching staff was extensive expertise and knowledge in their subject area:

The timing really depends on the personality of the supervisors. Some of them will just continue until they're finished so you can go for an hour and half or two hours whereas some try and fit everything into an hour... They've got to know their subject well because you can come up with all sorts of questions so they've got to be on their toes and they all were, but they've also got to be interesting because if they're boring then you'll just nod off, having a good tone of voice is important

Andrew, First Year Elite University

The majority of participants from the Elite University praised the teaching staff for not only being experts but also for their ability to convey that expertise. As the quote from Andrew demonstrates, the students at the Elite University had high expectations from their teaching but these expectations seem to be met. One consequence of the level of knowledge and engagement from teaching staff appears to be that it is not uncommon for classes to over-run. In a more structured work environment, particularly with larger classes it would be necessary for staff to stick to the prescribed time available. The

passion and enthusiasm displayed by teachers was seen as essential by a number of students including Jennifer:

Well, it's a teaching body of eccentrics, so they are very different, but they are fantastic and I think that's why I enjoyed my degree.... they are so enthusiastic, I mean some of them are better at putting across ideas than others but they are all just absolutely in love with subject and I think that's just so lovely... I tend to find actually that the leading lights tend to be older professors, then the younger ones who are teaching a bit may be still doing PhDs or are young fellows may not be the expert in their field but tend to make up for it maybe in enthusiasm. Also sometimes they'll realise that the basics are difficult when they're new to you so they can be slightly more patient at teaching I've found. It doesn't really bother me so much if they're an expert in their field as long as they're enthusiastic but often that goes hand in hand. I tend to find that the staff who are particularly enthusiastic tend to also be the ones who have written the most fabulous texts on the area... I think perhaps it's a more modern view of teaching; that teaching isn't something secondary to research when in fact being able to impart your enthusiasm is absolutely integral to it, which I think is wonderful. So I don't really see that being an expert is important in its own right but the fact that they are experts does bring a different quality to their teaching but it's the enthusiasm that I particularly like.

Jennifer, Third Year Elite University

Jennifer values expertise, but seems to suggest that it only has value when it is paired with engaging teachers. The teaching staff at the University, were in her estimations all committed to teaching as a key part of their role in the university rather than as a secondary concern.

Charlotte seems to suggest that while the teaching staff at the Elite University were very high status, in practical terms this can sometimes feel alienating due to the levels of formality involved in their teaching style:

It sounds bad, but the ones who wear their gowns to actually lecture in tend to just talk at you. I think they just sort of like to show what they know, which is helpful in some ways but they're less sort of open to questions. But then they're the sort of people who do like to argue with you as well so if you do say something then you'll have quite a big debate going on... I mean talking at you is fine but that's sort of what happens in lectures anyway and a lot of the supervisors will lecture you as well so you're hearing the same information twice so it's pointless.

Charlotte, Third Year Elite University

This suggests some problems with having the teaching solely in hands of people with high levels of expertise in their field - their teaching style may be difficult for the students to relate to. However, as a number of participants have already praised the benefits of having contact with leading experts in their field it may be a minor complaint that there is often more associated formality. The fact that Charlotte identifies the most formal teachers as those who wear their gowns to teach demonstrates the type of teaching staff that Elite students are having contact with. There is an implication that these are either barristers or judges which as discussed previously are two of the most elite types of legal practice in the United Kingdom. There does seem to be a respect from these high status teachers of the viewpoints of their students as in spite of the more structured experience Charlotte claims that these are the staff most inclined to have involved discussion with students when the opportunity does arise. The fact that the expertise of staff can be daunting is discussed further by Liz:

At first it was quite intimidating because at first it was two of us in a room with someone who is obviously very expert at what they do but actually it makes it a lot easier if you've got questions then you can ask them and if there's something that you don't understand or you don't know then it's made obvious and they will talk to you and explain it to you. ... I think that it's wrong, but it has such a status where the people who come here and the people who teach want to come here because it's [Elite] which is not something I particularly agree with but it does mean that it gets the best staff and the best kind of people.

Liz, First Year Elite University

This quote from Liz suggests that, provided you are prepared and engaged with the subject matter, you will get good value from having contact time with experts in spite of the fact that it is intimidating. The fact that these students are exposed to people in positions of respect and authority in their industry would also serve to demystify the nature of Elite legal practice. Additionally, students will have more experience in making social connections with Elite employers if the people teaching them are similar people, with Brown and Hesketh (2004) claiming that making this is one of the methods used by graduates to secure elite jobs the students at the Elite University are given a strong advantage. As Liz claims, this advantage is something that is reproduced by the university because it uses its

reputational capital to continue to attract the highest status teaching staff thus maintaining its Elite status.

Teaching staff at the Old University

The views of the participants interviewed from the Old University were largely positive when asked to discuss the style of teaching they received. The participants often claimed that while the teaching was of a very high standard it was not always what they or what they believed their peers wanted from teaching. For example, a number of students praised that lecturers were often highly regarded experts but in tutorials post-graduate students often taught. This was not always viewed negatively, Samuel for example was keen to espouse the benefits of the policy at the Old University of using lower status teaching staff because he believed that it was only done when appropriate:

I think [Old University] has got it down to a T, it does vary from subject to subject but generally they're quite well suited for example my criminal law tutor is a post grad and he's fantastic, really can't fault him and again he loves the subject but it's a subject which needs less insight, it's more cut and dry so you don't need someone who has spent 20 years reading nothing but. If you get on with the pupils, you're enthusiastic and you know the subject quite well then that's kind of enough

Samuel, Third Year Old University

Being taught by post-graduate teaching staff in modules where expert knowledge was not a necessity does not seemingly undermine the students' learning because the teachers supposedly make up for their lack of knowledge with enthusiasm for the subject. Samuel goes to claim that expertise is wasted if it is not paired with enthusiastic and engaging teaching:

I think ability to relate to people is the main thing for me in teaching if you get a professor who really inspires you and has a genuine love for their subject but only covers 50% of the material in a seminar then you're that much more likely to go out and do that extra reading around the subject... [a Professor] would give out a lecture handout and maybe talk about 20% of the things on there but at the end you'd go out and then go to the library because he's obviously really kind of into it and it makes you want to. Whereas somebody who knows absolutely everything but talks in a

monotone and allows everyone to ask a question at the beginning and is just really dry, it doesn't do anything

Samuel, Third Year Old University

The passion demonstrated by the teaching staff would impact upon the students (at least the more studious ones) and encourage them to further their own study in a way that was not possible if the teaching stuck solely to what was prescribed. One would presume that a certain expertise is required in order to support the off topic, improvised discussion that Samuel claims came from his most enthusiastic lecturers.

In contrast to Samuel's account, Emily claims that certain members of the teaching staff are unpopular among the students because their teaching style does not stick closely enough to the core material:

I think if they know the subject better than they can show you better understanding. I think that it kind of goes hand in hand but a lot of people can't transfer their intellectual abilities to students. [A Professor] in the law school, is fantastic, he knows his subject inside out and he's really good at teaching. I like him, but a lot of people don't because he tends to go around the reading area and he doesn't stick to the questions that he gives you. But I think that's better because it shows a more thorough understanding rather than just knowing that set of questions

Emily, Third Year Old University

Emily claims that many students do not respond well to digression and would prefer to be simply taught the essential parts of the course. This instrumental attitude was not predicted to be prevalent at Old University. The decreased necessity for independent study at the Old University in comparison to the Elite (as discussed in Chapter Six) is arguably reflected by this lack of interest in teaching which does not 'stick to the questions'. For example, Joan claims that it is not necessary to go beyond what has been directly taught in order to succeed at the Old University:

You can normally answer the questions from your notes but that would only get you a 2:2 or a low 2:1 you need to go and do the extra research to get academic opinions

Joan, Third Year Old University

If only those students who are aiming for a First Class degree need to do any independent reading then it is not surprising that a number of students are disengaged

with a teaching style that regularly strays away from the essential knowledge. Generally it would appear that the teaching staff at the Old University is made up of a mixture of high status experts and lower status post-graduate tutors who in spite of their lower levels of knowledge and experience can compensate with a passion for the subject. However, expertise and enthusiasm were not necessarily seen by students as desirable characteristics for the teaching staff to have, suggesting a more instrumental attitude than expected for Old University students.

Status of teaching staff at the New University

While none of the students at the New University questioned the status of the teaching staff, differences in style were identified by which a different status of staff can be inferred. This is a topic touched upon by Ivy:

I think the teaching is probably better here at the supposedly lesser universities because when I looked at [an old university], the lecturers were all snappy and sort of if you're coming here then you're getting three A's sort of thing even though their courses didn't require you to get 3 A's...I'd prefer a friendly lecturer rather than one who just tells you how it is
Ivy, Second Year New University

Ivy claims that on an open day at a highly ranked 'old' university that the staff were very formal and 'snappy' with high expectations of their prospective students (and presumably their current students). This image of formality and high expectations is something that Ivy did not find at New University. Staff at this institution were more friendly and casual in their teaching style which contrasts with the other two institutions. At the Elite University the high levels of formality among the lecturers was associated with and reflected their high status. The New University's more relaxed teaching staff can accommodate and create a different type of working environment.

According to the students interviewed, there did not appear to be a significant difference between the Old and the New University in the use of post-graduate teaching staff; however the experience of engaging with these teachers appeared to be different as Julia states:

I've only had one [post-graduate tutor] but he was rubbish. You'd ask him a question and he just wouldn't know, but in his favour he would go and

find out for us what we wanted to know and he'd email us which was good. But at the time it was sort of like he was reading off a script, he didn't really know what he was doing and it didn't seem like he really wanted to be there.

Julia, Third Year New University

If the post-graduate tutors at the Old University made up for their lack of knowledge with a high level of enthusiasm and passion then this did not appear to be the case at the New University. The teaching style that Julia describes would seem to function with highly routine tasks; this would allow anybody to teach irrespective of knowledge or skill levels. This routinised environment in tutorials is something that Claudia also identified:

In our second year, we haven't had it at all this year, but in the second year we had the chance in one of the tutorials to do a presentation on what we'd covered which is really good 'cause the week you have to do it you spend ages looking up the stuff so you really understand it and when it's anyone else's turn then they explain it in a way that sort helps you understand it better. That's a lot better than just teachers sort of telling you... I feel with the tutorials they are done because they have to be done rather than to help people understand, does that make sense? I think it's only done because it has to be

Claudia, Third Year New University

As discussed in the next chapter, all three universities expect their students to undertake substantial private study to supplement their learning. Claudia seems to suggest that this was only something that occurred rarely because seminars are usually more like lectures with teachers just 'telling' students. As such she claims that tutorials only exist at the New University because they're a requirement of the teaching not because anybody actually benefits from them. The fact that Claudia can only identify one isolated incident where she did a significant amount of independent study and that the lesson plan deviated from the norm to allow more student participation lends support to the prediction that the experience of New University students is more routinised.

Teaching staff at all three universities

The student participants at all three universities were generally quite positive about the teaching body as a whole, however this was usually for different reasons. The Elite students praised the expertise of the teaching staff but many identified that rather than simply the knowledge of staff, but the engaging way in which they taught made the teaching of a high standard. A few students did identify that the high status of the teaching and in particular the associated formality that came with this could be intimidating. However, this formality could be seen as reflecting the conditions of elite legal practice (for example, lecturers in barristers' robes), allowing students more familiarity with these conditions, which was not present at the other two universities. Staff were more likely to have in-depth knowledge which could be drawn upon to stimulate intellectual debate that could go 'off the beaten track'.

Participants from Old University identified a similar experience of staff digressing from set material but this received a mixed response from the students with some preferring to stick closely to the prescribed work and other appreciating the opportunity to explore ideas in more depth with either well-informed or enthusiastic teaching staff. It was difficult to determine the status of the academic staff at Old University from these data (they were predicted to be 'research-active'); although it did appear that small-group teaching was more commonly performed by post-graduate students.

Many participants from New University identified a lack of formality among the teaching staff and a more routinised and structured form of teaching that did not diverge from the set topics in the same way as the other two universities. As with the Old University, it was not possible to accurately determine the status of the teaching staff (in particular the lecturers). New University seemed to use of post-graduate students as teachers about as much as Old University. However, the lower levels of knowledge among these post-graduate teachers does not seem come with the compensatory 'enthusiasm'. Who actually teaches does appear to be a significant difference between the universities. Further refinement of the predicted distinctions as well as more in-depth data about the teaching staff would be required to make an informed assessment of the role this plays in creating (or challenging) a correspondence. Moving on from who actually teaches, the following section will discuss the differences in contact time across the three universities.

Contact time

This final section of the chapter will explore one of the more basic and quantifiable differences between the educational provision of the Elite, Old and New university, namely the amount of hours that students spend in contact with teaching staff in formal teaching settings. Because studying for a law degree necessitates a large amount of private reading, it was not expected that any of the universities would have a particularly high number of hours where their students were engaged in formal, structured teaching environments. The nature of the correspondence being explored would tend to suggest that any key differences would be more likely to be found in how the time was spent in contact and how it related to and encouraged the time spent studying independently. Because contact time was expected to be so limited, even minor differences are worth exploring.

Clearly, there would be individual reasons for differences in contact time, including which modules were chosen, year of study and whether the student was undertaking a joint honours degree. Because of the way that a law degree balances the divide between vocational and academic modes of teaching, there are a certain number of core modules that students must undertake in order for the degree scheme to qualify as an LLB so this in principle would be expected to be the same across the three universities. The following section aims to illustrate organisational differences between the three universities in how they teach.

Contact Time at the Elite University

At Elite University most participants in their first year reported that they had roughly 12 hours of contact time per week spread between lectures and supervisions. Liz, a first year student at Elite University argued that while the contact time is limited, it is how it is used by her institution that makes it stand out over the competition:

There's about 10 hours of lectures and then 2 hours of supervisions, so usually around twelve hours per week. That seems to be quite a bit more than some of my friends at other universities but if you think about what you learn in an hour of supervision it's a lot more than you do in an hour of lectures so I think it's probably worth more time

Liz, First Year Elite University

The supervision system used at the Elite University, Liz claims, allows for greater depth of understanding than was possible in lectures. This increased intensity required in supervisions would seem to separate the Elite from the other universities. Therefore, if the time was lower at Elite University the students may still get more benefit from the time spent in teaching. Jennifer, who is in her third year at the Elite University, makes a similar claim to Liz when comparing contact time to other institutions:

Well, when I first saw the timetable I thought it seemed very small compared with school, but actually the amount of work that we're set by the supervisors is quite incredible. In the end it feels as if we have quite a lot of contact hours. I've got friends studying Law at Warwick and certainly their hours seem to be a lot fewer but also because they have lectures rather than supervisions it works very differently

Jennifer, Third Year Elite University

Jennifer claims that the Elite students actually have a relatively high amount contact hours and that this contributes to the quantity of independent study that is required. Intensity was determined to be one of the key correspondence characteristics of the different status universities. Working in a high pressure environment was determined to be a typical of elite graduate work. Therefore, if the conditions of Elite University correspond to elite graduate work then the teaching must just as intense. Jennifer and Liz's quotes would seem to support the assertion that the intensity of the work load is high at the Elite institution and that this is encouraged by having a relatively large number of contact hours which subsequently requires further, private study. The amount of contact time (and concurrent independent study) does not appear to decline at Elite University over the three years of the course:

I think I have eight hours of lectures a week, or is it more than that? Obviously the main two subjects I have are three hours so maybe it's ten. You know what, I don't know, between eight and ten probably. Then supervisions, it's supposed to be five supervisions so five hours every two weeks so one week I have three and one week I have two

Charlotte, Third Year Elite University

Charlotte, as a student in her final year of study, reports a similar amount of contact hours (either 12 or 13 hours depending on the week) as Liz who is only in her first

year (12). This indicates that the contact time would stay roughly the same throughout the duration of the course showing a sustained level of intensity throughout the whole of the degree scheme at Elite University, how this differs to the other universities will be shown below.

Contact time at the Old University

The previous section revealed that students at Elite University typically have 12 hours of contact time per week. This contact is sustained throughout the whole three years of the course. More significant than the hours is the intensity of the work that participants identified which could be indicative of conditions that correspond to those of elite graduate work. At Old University, Katie claims that the style and structure of teaching varied across the years of her course, but the hours spent in contact remained roughly the same:

It has varied over the years. I do four modules, so you have two lectures per modules so that's 8 contact hours, they're not compulsory but people pretty much go and I have two, one hour tutorials every week so maybe it's 10 contact hours, yeah 10... you'll have one tutorial based on like two or three lectures worth of work...last year I had a tutorial that was two hours but if you have a two hour one then you only have one lecture so you have three contact hours per module

Katie, Third Year Old University

So while the nature of the course may change over time, the teaching provision adapts in order to provide the same amount of time spent in structured, formal learning environments. The contact hours reported by Katie are less than those reported at Elite University suggesting a less intense form of teaching to correspond to a less intense working environment. These contact hours are sustained so students are accustomed to working an environment of a particular intensity level. One of the predictions from the correspondence theory was that intensity would fluctuate between being high and low, however this may be challenged by the data. While the details may differ however, having a consistently lower number of hours than Elite could still be seen as fitting with the broad idea of a correspondence.

An alternative explanation is that these reduced hours actually give students more time for independent study encouraging their development as autonomous

learners. This is an interpretation that seems to be supported by Samuel who claims that the nature of a law degree would generally necessitate limited contact hours:

It's not actually that much really, I'm only actually in class for 6 hours of lectures and three or four hours of tutorials a week... and much of the contact time is for you to choose and there's the option to make it as big as you want really. I think a lot of that is because this year I'm on very research based course as well, two of the subjects I'm doing are very, very research intensive which obviously leads to less contact time but as I say, it's there if you need it.

Samuel, Third Year Old University

Samuel is clearly suggesting that fewer contact hours leads to more independent study at the discretion of the student. This conception would challenge the predictions made of lessening intensity as the status of university decreased corresponding with less intense forms of graduate work because the contact hours were greater at Elite University. The following chapter will explore differences in the nature and intensity of independent study that will allow a greater understanding of this relationship which questions the straight-forward suggestion that less contact leads to more independent study.

Contact Time at New University

In the first year the contact hours seem quite high for the law course at New University as this quote from David illustrates:

I think it's 13 hours [per week], I have a lecture every weekday at the moment which can be anywhere from one to two hours long. I have quite a few tutorials and they're on mainly Tuesdays and Thursdays but I have them spread around a bit. The tutorials are an hour each and I think it's about 4 to 5 hours of tutorials and the rest are lectures.

David, First Year New University

In the first year everybody does the same compulsory modules and therefore all students undertaking their first year of a single honours, 'straight' law degree would be in attendance for at least an hour every day. This is the highest contact time reported of all three universities, but similar to Elite University (typically 12 hours). Therefore first year students at Old University would find themselves in contact less than their

New and Elite University counterparts. However, once in the final year, the contact time decreased dramatically at New University:

This term, each week there's 5 hours, the lectures are for 4 hours and then every other week I have a one hour tutorial... Last year I was in every day, last term I mean I was in every day I had um, 10 maybe 11 hours last ...in the first year it was um we did have a tutorial for each lecture and module as well but in the first year we did have tutorials every week. In this year and the second year we only have them every other week for each module
Julia, Third Year New University

This suggests that as students progress through their course they are expected to become increasingly independent in their study and are therefore given greater freedom to work outside of the sessions in compulsory attendance with the university. This quote may seem initially unrepresentative of other students due to the fact that Julia was undertaking a dissertation in her final year contributing to her low levels of structured contact time. While a dissertation is an optional, forty credit module at the university it is clearly weighted to provide a comparable education to other more structured pathways (which based upon Julia's other teaching may only increase contact time by two to three hours). Crozier and Reay (2011) claim that 'new' universities often have a less engaged learning environment with the purpose of allowing students more freedom, but that for working class students in particular, this leads to students feeling unsupported and craving more contact time. Students at New University have the least contact time across the three years of the course. How this effects the students will be explored in the next chapter.

Contact time at all three universities

Across the three years of the course, Elite University law students spend the highest number of hours in contact with teaching staff in structured learning environments. While numbers are initially comparable between New and Elite universities, there is a decline throughout the three years for New University students. Old University students have fewer hours than their Elite counter-parts per week but this level is sustained throughout the course. While it may be too early to judge based on the data presented so far, all three universities appear to have cultivated similar attitudes among their students in how they engage with both contact hours and independent study and

the relationship between these two aspects of learning. Generally participants from all three universities recognised that their contact hours were limited in order to provide more opportunities for students to do private study. The intensity of the course does seem to differ from the data discussed here with Elite students stating that their supervisions are a more intense form of teaching than at other universities. The following chapter will explore further the form of teaching that takes place in these classes and differences between the three universities to elaborate on this discussion of contact time.

Conclusion

The aim of this chapter has been to explore some of the more fundamental differences between the Elite, Old and New University in terms of their organisation and philosophies. Specifically, this consisted of a discussion of the public image they present, their admissions process, the ethos and focus of education, the nature of the teaching staff and the time that students spend in classes. This section will explore the extent to which the data analysed in this chapter match up with the general predictions for the structural conditions of the different universities if there was a correspondence to stratified labour. Various data were used to explore differences between these aspects of the universities, what these data revealed is summarised below.

Firstly, The Elite University takes great care to cultivate a public image which displays their commitment to intensive, intellectual development. This either overlooks or precludes more grounded, skills based forms of learning. This purely permeates the teaching and is reflected in the expertise of the academic staff. Students spend the greatest amount of time in formal teaching sessions of the three universities, although the differences are small. Many students did comment on how the work-load in these sessions was intense, in their perception more intense than other universities. These attributes are all broadly consistent with the predicted characteristics for Elite University in this area.

At the Old University, the way in which they present their educational philosophies and priorities publically suggests that their teaching is very academically focused, but perhaps more grounded than the deep intellectual pursuits of Elite University. This correlates with the accounts given by students and staff when describing the form and function of the teaching. Specifically, much of the teaching is

related to academic research and has some integration of vocational skills training integrated into the teaching. Like the Elite University, these attributes of Old University and its teaching fit with the predictions made in terms of the importance of subject knowledge.

Finally, at New University the importance of employability for students is paramount. The university promotes itself as an institution that is driven by helping students develop their careers to the extent that there is a large degree of integrated skills development in the compulsory academic teaching. Their philosophy seems orientated to not simply preparing students for work but helping them find work, this will be explored further in Chapter Seven. The consequent decreased emphasis on subject knowledge fits well with the predictions based on the corresponding attributes of 'proletarianised' graduate work.

While there are some indications throughout this chapter that the predictions made about the conditions of these universities are accurate, it would be too early to draw any major conclusions from these data. The following chapter will elaborate further on the form of education received at these universities to explore the accuracy of these predictions in more detail. Chapter Six will focus exclusively on the actual teaching and learning experiences of the three universities drawing predominantly on the student interview data.

Chapter Six

Exploring hierarchical differences in the teaching and learning of three different status universities

Introduction

This thesis is exploring the extent to which the educational and environmental conditions of different status universities correspond to a stratified graduate labour market. Empirically, this theory is being tested by examining differences in the teaching and environment at three universities that were selected as broad representations of three possible strata in this hierarchy. The previous chapter was concerned with how the three universities differed in terms of their priorities in how the teaching is organised. The data discussed in chapter five generally confirmed a number of the predicted characteristics of the different status universities. The following chapter will present and analyse data collected from the semi-structured interviews with students and staff members at the Elite, Old and New Universities with the aim of exploring the actual form and style of the teaching and learning at each institution. This chapter will outline key differences or commonalties that are observed in the data in a number of relevant, key areas;

- Differences in pedagogy across institutions
- Independent study
- Routines of work
- Student engagement with teaching staff

Firstly, this chapter will present data concerning class sizes and the nature of the time spent in formal teaching settings at the university to demonstrate differing functions of the teaching and further illustrate deliver of differing educational priorities. Secondly, a discussion of the nature of volume and nature of independent work under-taken by students will be presented. The main purpose of this section will be to explore differing levels of autonomy and intensity in the way students work. Thirdly, this chapter will include a discussion about the daily schedules of the students to explore

their own self-management. The final section of this chapter will present an account of the nature of differences (or similarities) in the relationships between the teaching staff and students. The way in which support structures are arranged will be discussed in order to explore what affect the differing interactions between students and staff has on the experience of students.

Differences in pedagogy across institutions

Generally speaking, if the pedagogic practices of the three institutions are to fit in to the predicted correspondence characteristics it would be expected that the lowest status institution would have the most authoritarian teaching styles. This could manifest itself by privileging lectures over other most engaged forms of small group teaching like seminars or indeed using this usually more participatory form of learning for highly structured, didactic teaching. By contrast the Elite University would be expected to place greater emphasis on more participatory and democratic forms of learning that engage the student and rewards their autonomy and independent thought.

Consequently, as in a number of areas the Old University would be expected to fall between these two strategies, possibly striking a balance between authoritarian and autonomous forms of learning. This section can also illustrate differences in the intensity of the course through the volume and regularity of work that students have to perform and the expectations of interactivity in classes.

Predicted difference in class sizes

One useful proxy measure of these differences in pedagogy is to examine what differences there are between the universities in terms of class sizes for the more participatory, small group forms of teaching. Martins and Walker (2006) conducted one of the few studies into the affect class size (or small group teaching in general) has upon attainment for UK universities students. They claimed that there is a positive coefficient between attainment and size, essentially that the bigger the class, then the better the students' attainment. The authors attribute their 'puzzling' result to the assignment of larger classes to 'easier' modules as well as the impact of low attendance which makes actual measurement of the affect of class size difficult.

Bandiera, Larcinese and Rasul (2010) claim that increased class size lowers attainment

for UK university students, but that this affect was minor and only had a significant effect on the largest classes (in excess of 100 students).

While research into the difference made by class size in higher education is limited, there is a wide field that examines its effects in primary and secondary education. While the results may not be quite the same in a higher education setting, many of the same effects surely must occur. For example, McKeachie (1980) claims that instructors behave differently in large and small classes, with their time being spread thinner in big classes a ‘passive’ lecturing type of teaching is more common. Similarly, Blatchford, Bassett and Brown (2011) claim that smaller classes lead to greater levels of interaction between teachers and pupils. As a result, Finn and Achilles (1999) clam that the smaller a class is, then the more engaged students in what they are learning.

Therefore, it would be predicted that Elite University has the smallest class, giving the tutor the opportunity to maximise the involvement of the students in their learning, By contrast the New University would therefore be expected to have the largest classes where it would difficult to ensure that everybody was completely engaged. The key differences that are predicted between the class sizes and their implications are outlined below in table 6.1;

	Elite	Old	New
Class Size	Small	Medium	Large
Student Engagement	High	Moderate	Low
Form of teaching	Highly interactive	Moderate interaction	Authoritarian

Table 6.1: Predicted differences in class sizes

Class Sizes at Elite University

The predictions for Elite University suggest small classes with high interactivity and high levels of engagement in order to create a high intensity environment. This assertion is clearly supported by the student interview data, for example Andrew claims below that the participatory, small group parts of the teaching (in this case, supervisions) have very small class sizes:

When you're in supervision you're only with 3 or 4 people so you do get through a lot. It's almost like being tutored individually really and the people who are supervising you are of course experts so you do learn a lot
Andrew, First Year Elite University

While for law, at least, it would appear that there is never one to one tuition between students the class sizes are certainly very small. One advantage outlined by Andrew was high levels of interactivity, which was particularly beneficial due to the 'expert' status of the supervisor (a concept discussed further in Chapter Five). Other benefits that were commonly praised by the students include that small classes act as a motivation to perform and prepare to a suitable standard as the following quote from Rebecca demonstrates:

I think that the supervision itself is a good self-imposing sanction. If you turn up and you haven't done the work or you haven't done an essay you do end up feeling very stupid and idiotic because it is very obvious. In a big class you can maybe get away with contributing once or twice on the topic that you have read but in supervision if you're silent it's just really obvious.
Rebecca, First Year Elite University

In this sense, the smaller classes act as an effective method of motivating students to both participate and to prepare adequately in their own time. without any direct instruction from the teaching staff, students learn how to function in this high pressure environment autonomously. However, this high level of interactivity can lead to high levels of stress for the students:

The supervisions are good but it is stressful to have to go in and know that you've got to talk for an hour about something and there's no way you can get someone else to do it for you or just sit there in the background
Liz, First Year Elite University

The teaching environment at the Elite University is typified by high levels of engagement that is fostered by high levels of pressure created through the close contact between 'expert' staff and students in very small groups. This ability to perform under pressure and have both extensive knowledge and the ability to

successfully draw upon that knowledge would be key aspects of elite legal work which the Elite University students are being prepared to enter.

Class sizes at the Old University

The small group teaching at Old University was expected to fall somewhat in between the other two institutions (as is the case with many characteristics). Old University was predicted to have larger classes than Elite University and smaller than New University. These 'medium' sized classes were therefore predicted to allow a moderate amount of interaction with teaching staff and some student engagement with the teaching and activities. However, many of the student participants from the Old University made similar claims to their counter-parts at the Elite University about the imposing nature of their tutorials due to the high level of interactivity involved, despite their class sizes being much larger than at the Elite University as the following quote from Katie demonstrates:

[There are] maybe ten, twelve of you. So not many, because you all have to go in having read stuff...it makes you do the work because if you knew you couldn't speak you would just go in and sit there.

Katie, Third Year Old University

With most Elite University students claiming that their small group teaching consisted of between two and four students, this could be a three-fold increase in student numbers. Therefore, it would be expected that there is a large difference in terms of student engagement and the attention paid by teaching staff to students. However, Katie still seems to suggest that these classes are small enough to encourage students to engage with the set reading tasks. Most of the means designed to ensure that students meet or indeed exceed the recommended preparation were tacit, behaviour-based systems of control that worked with varying degrees of success. The expectation that students should participate fully in seminars or supervisions goes hand in hand with the principle that the students must have done adequate preparation in inform this participation as Polly claims:

If you turn up to a seminar not having prepared, unless you're a smart-arse then you're going to have trouble answering it, that's the main measure really

Polly, Fourth Year Old University

While classes at the Old University can be up to five times larger than those in the Elite University they still operated as a self-imposed sanction and Katie (fairly typically of the participants) believed her classes of roughly eleven students to be small enough to facilitate and encourage regular participation. While both Elite and Old University students claimed they had small classes that encourage participation, it is not unreasonable to infer a difference in the extent of this. However, taking the students' interpretations at face value suggests mixed results for the predictions for Old University in the form of their small group study. Specifically, the classes are larger than at Elite University and smaller than at New University (which will be discussed in the next section) but this does not seem to have affected the extent to which they function to encourage high levels of engagement and afford high levels of interactivity with staff members.

Class sizes at the New University

The predictions for New University were that small group teaching would consist of large classes (in relation to the other universities) which would lead to low levels of interaction and engagement. Some of these predictions did seem to fit with the impressions gained from the data collected, but not all of them. Many of the student participants at the New University reported slightly larger class sizes to Old University (12-15 students per class rather than 10-12 at Old University) which while broadly consistent with the predictions is not as large a gap as expected. However, there were some occasions when students experienced much larger tutorial groups which Claudia claimed affects the quality of learning and level of engagement:

K: Um... one of my tutorials there's meant to be about 12 of us but normally there's about 3. The other 2 there's probably about 15 I'd say

SS: Do you think that's too many or too few?

K: You see last term there were so many in one that I think there were about 25 of us. That was a bit sort of um not right. You know in tutorials

there's meant to be a lot of discussion but it wasn't really like that because everyone was a bit overwhelmed. It wasn't as close as a tutorial could be so that was far too many. But I don't know probably about 10 would be a good number

Claudia, Third Year New University

This quote from Claudia would seem to support the suggestion that larger classes lower engagement and interactivity, but this is not quite as common as predicted. The complaint that students often do not attend tutorials is in stark contrast to the other universities where their compulsory status was taken very seriously. There was however no indication that the poor attendance would (or would not) lead to more interactivity and engagement.

David expressed a desire for the staff members leading tutorials to be stricter in their enforcement of compliance with the expected preparation and engagement during the sessions:

D: I think that somebody who'd actually be good for your learning would be someone who is fairly strict on the work that you're giving back and making sure that you give an appropriate amount during tutorials.

Obviously some people wouldn't want that

SS: Are many of the tutors strict?

D: No not really... it sort of annoys me because you get people who don't really work hard and that kind of annoys me even though I'm guilty of it myself occasionally

David, First Year New University

This seems to be in contrast to the environment of self-moderated learning that the students at the two higher status institutions claimed was in effect in spite of the fact that the class sizes did not differ greatly between the New and the Old University. This can be seen as indicative of a lower level of engagement and autonomy from the students as well as a lower level of pressure and intensity in course, all of which would correlate with the predictions made. This further suggests that small group teaching is not as effective in the lower status institution due to lower levels of student engagement with the course.

Class size and pedagogy at all three universities

While there are some indications that there is a continuum between the three universities in terms of class size, interactivity and engagement, these data do not entirely confirm or challenge the predictions made from the correspondence theory warranting further study. The predictions made for Elite University seem to be largely confirmed by the data, namely that they have much smaller classes than the other universities that allow high levels of interactivity and operate to foster high levels of student engagement. This is an aspect of the teaching organisation which is quite intentional as Prof. Davies discusses in the following quote:

In my experience of other non-[elite] universities is that the big difference is the way the small group teaching works. Students [here] are having two or three sessions a week, in pairs or groups of three, typically with an academic, one of the academic staff rather than graduate students, GTA's anything like that, to deal with the work. So it isn't like the small groups you get in other universities of like a dozen to twenty where it's easy for people to hide. When you only have two people in a group then you have to speak and that of course means they learn from each other a lot with someone there holding the reins so I think that's a very big difference

Prof. Davies. Head of Law Faculty at Elite University

The image of an academic 'holding the reins', essentially setting boundaries and guiding students while they progress independently and learn from each other is very consistent with the predictions concerning the fostering of autonomy which will be discussed further in the next section of this chapter.

Particularly interesting in terms of class size and engagement is the Old University which seems to incorporate aspects of both the higher and lower status forms of participatory teaching rather than having a distinctly unique form of its own. However, it manages to create a similar motivation among its students as the Elite University but with significantly larger classes. When compared to the predicted correspondence characteristics (Table 6.1) there were a few results which seemed to go against the expectation as shown in Table 6.2 below;

	Elite	Old	New
Class Size	Small	Medium	Medium (but inconsistent)

Student Engagement	High	High	Low
Form of teaching	Very high interactivity	High interaction	Authoritarian

Table 6.2: Observed differences in class sizes

The class size for Elite and Old University corresponded with the predictions; however the data from New University did not fit as well. The classes were generally only slightly larger than at Old University rather than the large difference expected. Occasionally classes could become very large but also suffer from poor attendance due to low levels of engagement. The inconsistency in size as well as poor attendance are additional factors that would require further study to explore fully. The levels of engagement and interaction at Old University were higher than predicted but it is difficult to determine how similar they are to Elite University without further, in-depth study. This conclusion, namely that the effect of class size is complex and often influenced by other related factors is consistent with other studies into this aspects of university teaching, even when using large-scale data sets (Martins and Walker 2006 and Hargreaves, Galton and Pell 1998).

Independent Study

All law students must undertake a significant amount of independent, private study to support or advance the learning in the more structured aspects of the course. The extent to which students engage with this independent study is directly linked to their engagement with the teaching and the university itself. This private study can serve a number of different purposes both academically and vocationally. Because legal practice places significant value upon research skills this should be reflected by the amount of research undertaken in a law course at university. As such there is an expectation that students at Elite University participate in the highest volume of independent study in correspondence to the amount of research undertaken by workers in the highest status legal occupations. The amount of private study is therefore expected to less for students at Old University while New University students should spend the least time learning outside of contact hours. However, it would be inadequate to simply measure the volume of private work undertaken by students, it is

necessary to demonstrate differences in the type, purpose, motivations for and institutional expectations of independent study.

Predicted differences in independent study

The table shown below (Table 6.3) is a description of the ‘study process’ of students, particularly in tertiary education adapted from the work of Biggs (1987), Gow and Kember (1990) and Biggs, Kember and Leung (2001). The purpose of this table is to display the different motivations that students will have in regards to how they perform on their course and what strategies they undertaken to realise these motivations;

Approach	Motive	Strategy
Surface	<i>Instrumental:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> requirements minimally: a balance between working too hard and failing 	<i>Reproductive:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> limit target to bare essentials and reproduce through rote learning
Deep	<i>Intrinsic:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> study to actualise interest and competence in particular academic subjects 	<i>Meaningful:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> read widely, interrelate with previous relevant knowledge

Table 6.3 Study process learner motivations and strategies

A dichotomy was drawn by Biggs and colleagues between ‘surface’ and ‘deep’ approaches to how students engage with their teaching and learning. These characteristics broadly form the basis of the predictions from the correspondence theory about how students engage with their independent study. The deep approach is expected to be more evident at Elite University due to their high levels of student engagement, creation of autonomous learners and the importance of subject-based knowledge. In contrast to this, New University students are predicted to exhibit characteristics more akin to the surface approach due to the low intensity of the course and reduced focus on academic study leading to lower levels of engagement. Old University students are expected to show signs of both strategies, possibly with some students embracing the deep approach and some embracing the surface approach or with individual students combining both approaches (for example, a deep approach to modules they like and a surface approach to modules that they do not like).

The key predicted differences to correspond with the appropriate level of the graduate labour market are shown in table 6.4;

	Elite	Old	New
Number of hours spent studying	Very high	High/Medium	Low
Work conditions	Intense/high pressure	Moderate intensity	Low intensity
Engagement with private study	Autonomous, 'deep' engagement	Mixed 'deep' and 'surface' approaches	'surface' engagement

Table 6.4: Predicted differences in the nature of independent study

How and why students participate in private study is one of the areas that is most closely comparable to the conditions of work. Therefore this measure is very significant for demonstrating the usefulness of the correspondence theory in contemporary UK higher education.

Independent Study at Elite University

It is expected that the Elite University would create a working environment that would place high priority on intensive, truly independent study determined by the students themselves. This prediction was largely borne out by the data as the following section will explore. Substantial independent study was generally regarded as compulsory by the Elite students that were interviewed for this study. This was both because of the way that smaller classes operate as self-moderating mechanisms and because of stronger institutional bonds (which will be discussed further later in the chapter), indicative of a deep approach to the study process (Biggs 1987). The autonomy typical of Elite University students is consciously fostered and encouraged by the teaching staff with their high expectations of the students as the following quote from Charlotte discusses:

I think the focus here is really on small groups and they'll try and question why you're doing the subject; they'll kind of make you think 'do I really want to do that'. They've done it to me, in the first year they were like 'oh law, it's not going to be fun, its not going to be easy' and they'll keep

focussing on that or they give you too much reading that they know you'll never do. It's that extra element of pushing you and making you do it all by yourself

Charlotte, Third Year Elite University

By constantly challenging their students to better themselves, Elite University attempts to push students to their limits in order to create an environment where they have to perform to a high standard at all times. It seems, according to Charlotte, that the intensity of the course fosters greater autonomy and a sense of self-reliance, both traits that would be required for the highest status legal practice. However, there is an indication that a degree of prescription is present in terms of setting reading for students and not necessarily allowing them to determine their own tasks. Aimee similarly claims that the University never over-extended its students; the purpose is to maintain standards rather than making their students crack under the pressure:

They push you, but not too far. They don't want to push you over the edge but they'll find that point and keep you there for the eight weeks

Aimee, First Year Elite University

This does however suggest that in terms of the private study undertaken, students are not completely autonomous because certain levels and standards have to be attained showing some degree of institutional direction, even if it is limited. When asked about the level of contact time, a number of Elite University students believed that any increase would be untenable due associated increase in the volume of private work required, for example Jane claims:

I think it's a good balance because you have to do the reading for supervisions because supervisions are a consolidation of the reading that you've done, if there were more [contact hours] it would be a lot harder

Jane, Third Year Elite University

There is an implication here that the supervisions are an effective mechanism of ensuring that the students conform to a certain quantity and standard of independent work and that this work is considered of equal importance to contact time. The use of the term 'consolidation' would indicate a degree of autonomy in students establishing

tasks, because they will have to bring together their independent work to satisfy the criteria of the teaching.

In terms of the balance of contact time and independent study, Ronald questions whether the amount of effort spent outside of formal learning settings is appreciated by the teaching staff of the Elite University:

When you're not in contact you have to do a lot of reading and such. There is an assumption that students who are not in contact hours are not doing anything productive, that is quite a bad assumption I think

Ronald, Second Year Elite University

If the teaching staff at Elite University do indeed make the assumptions claimed by Ronald, it may bring in to question the extent to which the university attempts to actively develop a sense of autonomy in their students. Irrespective of the degree to which it is truly autonomous, the intensity level of the course is clearly very high and based around purely academic study (in line with the philosophy of the university discussed in Chapter Five).

Independent Study at Old University

It was expected that individual (rather than simply institutional) differences in independent study would be present at all three universities simply because by its very nature there are no distinct mechanisms in place to ensure that a certain volume or standard of private study is accomplished. All three institutions had recommendations about the amount and variety of study that their students should undertake; however, this was not always recognised by the students themselves or indeed adhered to. Participants from Old University had a tendency to be unaware of how much work was required of them and lacked clarity in what constituted independent work. For example, Rosa claimed that she didn't do any independent study at all, however this misconception occurred because she believed every aspect of the course to be compulsory:

I don't read independently although I think I should to sort of build on my learning. But there is so much to read, we have mandatory and

discretionary reading but I just read both of them so it's all mandatory to me

Rosa, Second Year Old University

Therefore, while this quote from Rosa may suggest a lack of awareness, it does demonstrate a high level of engagement with the course. This is consistent with the prediction that Old University students may exhibit some combination of deep and surface approaches (Biggs 1987), the following quotes provide further support for this prediction. Samantha illustrates that Old University students were also more likely to read beyond simply the course content in order to enhance their understanding:

I always do the core reading first, but I don't ever really get that much from the textbooks, even though that's kind of what you're meant to start off with I don't really I just look into the cases and I find further reading more helpful sometimes because that can summarise the arguments for you and then you learn more from it

Samantha, Second Year Old University

This implies a degree of autonomy among students of Old University in going beyond the course content and defining their own learning tasks. However, some Old University participants developed coping strategies (which were common at New University as the next section will outline) in order to manage the intensity of the work demanded of them:

I'm probably quite unusual in that I tend to do my own reading rather than the reading they tell you to do because I've found in the past that the reading is so full of detail that I'm not actually getting anything out of it. So I tend to, at the start of the course, research my own textbooks and select one that I like to read and I'd like to understand with relevant chapters

Polly, Fourth Year Old University

This quote from Polly displays two divergent behaviour types, one that was typical of many students sample from the New University and one which might be more expected of the students at Elite University. Firstly, due to the level of detail and complexity in the core texts, Polly has developed her own coping mechanisms which, as outlined below is a common practice in the New University. However, the specifics of this strategy demonstrate a high level of autonomy and independent research that would correspond with a higher status type of education and work. This is suggestive that in

many aspects of teaching and learning, Old University occupies a middle-ground between the other two institutions. This seems to support the predictions made about the type of study processes that would be present at Old University.

Independent Study at New University

The predicted characteristics of independent study at New University were that its content would be highly prescribed by the teaching staff, the time spent would be limited and that little discretion or effort would be required from the students. The following quotes from students at New University demonstrate both the diversity in the time spent studying and the disparity in awareness that the students had of how much time they should spend. Few of the participants that were interviewed from New University actually exceeded the amount of independent work that the university required of them, this was justified for a number of reasons as outlined below. Firstly, Michael believed that how long the university specifically recommends students should spend studying was closely linked to the amount of structured contact time:

They ask you to do about 2 hours of work in preparation for a tutorial, but obviously with all the stuff they ask you to do it will take longer than that. If you did it fully and comprehensively then it wouldn't take two hours it would take more than that

Michael, Third Year New University

If, as Michael claims, two hours simply is not enough to adequately prepare for tutorials, this leaves the options of either adhering to the two hours allotted time for the module and preparing insufficiently or spending more time than is recommended studying privately. Michael's strategy was in fact a compromise between these two options that revealed a very instrumental attitude to his degree that was driven by attainment:

For some [seminars] I'd say two hours a day and I've spent longer before preparing for some but it all depends, I don't know if I go to all of them as well because I don't find time to go to all of them. Especially, the ones that don't really help with the overall result at the end of the year

Michael, Third Year New University

This attitude reveals a cost/benefit mentality where Michael was prepared to willingly exceed the amount of recommended independent study provided this contributed directly to his assessment results. Modules or classes that did not seem to either directly or indirectly affect his grades could be left out entirely. This strategy appears to fit very well with the characteristics of the surface approach (Biggs 1987) that the predictions for independent work at New University were based upon.

Michael's instrumental attitude does however place value on independent study and assumes a correlation between studying privately and attainment (when selected appropriately). This is in contrast to the views of Julia who seems to see private study as an encroachment on her time for the assessed aspects of the course rather than contributing to them:

J: Well we're supposed to do about 30 hours but I don't actually do 30 hours. We have tutorial work and last term before Christmas I had like 9 pieces of coursework to do so I was like 'I don't really have enough time to do 30 hours of just reading around the subject'. I think it's a bit unrealistic.

SS: How much do you think you get done?

J: 8 to 10 maybe, in the week

Julia, Third Year New University

Similarly to Rosa at Old University, Julia gives an impression that different aspects of the course can be separated and compartmentalised with independent study being viewed as a luxury that serves the purpose of widening knowledge rather than contributing to the core knowledge required (deep strategy v surface strategy). However, Julia appears to draw a distinction between independent study and preparation for tutorials meaning that it is difficult to determine how much independent work Julia actually does in a week. This misinterpretation could be considered representative of a lower level of engagement with her studies leading to misapprehensions concerning the basic structure and nature of the course. The figure of thirty hours per week is significantly higher than Michael's two hours per tutorial even if it takes account of contact time. This vast difference in knowledge about the nature of independent study and how much is required is further suggests disengagement and alienation from the purpose of learning. Both Michael and Julia develop their own strategies to cope with the demands the course places on them, neither of which involves complete engagement with tasks.

In contrast to the coping strategies displayed by the students above (and typical of many other student participants), Anna seemed to find the recommended hours insufficient for her requirements and questioned the logic of how the course was structured:

Perhaps three hours, something like that [preparation per seminar]...I think you're meant to, in your first year, you're meant to do two hours for every hour of lecture time. Which doesn't really make a lot of sense because obviously in our first year you have more lecture hours, so really if they're saying you should do two hours for every hour of lecture time in your third year you do less? But I think you're personal study time must go up, I think I'm doing about 40 or 50 hours on top and that's to do seminars, coursework extra reading, everything

Anna, Third Year New University

The previous chapter outlined how contact hours for students at New University decreases throughout the course, however Anna claims that there the university does not explicitly expect any increase in the amount of independent study undertaken by students to compensate for this decrease. In practice however, she claims time spending studying privately will naturally increase and she is exceeding the amount of time that is expected. This can once more be attributed to different interpretation of the demands of the course where Anna believes that the university demands two hours of extra reading for every hour of contact time, not just tutorials as suggested by Michael. Anna seems to exhibit more characteristics of the deep approach to the study process that was predicted to be more common at the other universities. While Anna's strategy is unique among the New University students sampled, this is suggestive that the conditions of the university do not shape all their students effectively.

The differing reports of the required amount of private study could be indicative of either a lack of proper engagement with the course by students at the university or a lack of proper information coming from the academic staff about what their expectations are for students. The lack of clarity and in many cases the lack of independent work would suggest that the students are both less autonomous at New University and less engaged with their course and the university. Students are also seemingly alienated from any inherent value of what they are learning and must instead decide on appropriate strategies in order to manage their workload to achieve the extrinsic rewards that success in their assessments will bring.

Differences in the form of independent work at all three universities

As discussed previously, the data suggest that small-group teaching serves as a form of self-moderating sanction to ensure compliance to a particular level of private study. This was true of all three universities, however the following quotations suggest that type and amount of work that is undertaken varies drastically. When discussing the general volume of work required of students at Elite University, Andrew claimed that the amount of recommended private study is very high:

You probably get about a 1000 pages per week reading, minimum
Andrew, First Year Elite University

The necessity of managing a work load this high (and this is simply the reading component, Elite University students also do significantly more writing tasks than their counter-parts at other universities) is indicative of the high intensity work environment that places enormous value upon pure, academic study.

Consistent with the correspondence theory predictions, the volume of reading at Old University is lower than that of Old University; however, if this quote from Rosa is representative of the wider student body then the students are not expected to understand everything in thorough detail:

We have to read a whole lot of stuff; I'd say 300, between 300 and maybe 600 pages of material, so it's a lot of stuff to get through but knowing the gist of it is what I think they want you to know.
Rosa, Second Year Old University

This is still a reasonably large volume of work but significantly lower than Andrew outlined as typical of the Elite University. Even a student like Rosa who claimed to do all of both compulsory and optional reading clearly does not believe it is necessary or expected that students will absorb everything. This could be seen as a further sign that Old University students employ a mixture of deep and surface study processes; reading quite a large amount of work (deep) but not necessarily engaging with it fully (surface).

Generally the workload at New University was reported by the participants to be much lower. In an attitude that is strongly suggestive of a surface approach to study,

Ivy at New University appears to suggest that full preparation is not always required for various reasons:

But if it's not for coursework or I haven't specifically been told to do it then I probably won't. But then I don't read everything I'm told to read either, I'll read the chapters before the lectures and they're like 20 pages long and I'll get to page 10 and think 'bit bored now' and just flick through the rest which probably isn't the best way of doing it

Ivy, Second Year New University

Like many participants at New and Old University, Ivy attempts to delineate between compulsory and optional types of independent study, particularly in terms of its direct contribution to assessment. By her own admission, even when attempting to prioritise essential study she is often unlikely to do all that is required. This is indicative of an instrumental attitude to work as well as low levels of engagement with tasks. This once more seems to display a sense of alienation from any intrinsic value of the learning being participated in.

The very explicit differences in the volume of study undertaken explored above in terms of amount of reading required clearly follows a hierarchical structure, increasing as the status of the university increases. Matched by the increasing levels of work is increased intensity and pressure combined with increased levels of engagement with independent study. These data seem to confirm a number of the predictions made in Table 6.4, in particular those based upon the work of Biggs (1987). A continuum from 'deep' learners at Elite University to 'surface' learners at New University was predicted. Generally, these data suggest that these different strategies predicted in line with the hierarchy of universities are indeed present. In comparing the initial predictions to the results (shown below in Table 6.5), much of the expected characteristics were found in the data;

	Elite	Old	New
Number of hours spent studying	Very high	High/Medium	Determined by coping strategy
Work conditions	Intense/high pressure	Moderate intensity	Low intensity
Engagement with private study	Autonomous, 'deep' engagement	Mixed 'deep' and 'surface' approaches	'Surface' engagement

Table 6.5: Observed differences in the nature of independent study

The only value which has changed from the predicted characteristics to those found in the data is the New University's 'number of hours spent studying'. This has changed from 'low' to 'determined by coping strategy' to reflect the lack of uniformity among the participants in actual hours undertaken (which were occasionally very high). There was consistency in the way in which the hours spent studying were determined upon and for many participants this was due to instrumental analysis of the importance of the work. This section has explored the amount and type of work that is undertaken by the students sampled from the three universities, the following section will outline how this work is managed day to day by the students with particular reference to the role the university plays in determining and supporting the students' routines of work.

Routines of Work

Following on from the discussion in the previous section concerning independent study, this section will explore any variation in the way in which students manage and organise their time at the three universities featured in this study and how that may or not correspond to particular strata of the labour market. As discussed in Chapter Four, graduates working in elite occupations would be expected to undertake long hours, both in structured working environments and outside of their official time spent working. In essence, a demonstration of an ability to perform beyond expectations and boundaries would be required of these elite. This is particularly true in the legal profession, where the highest status lawyers would be expected to undertake large volumes of research and preparation in more independent fields (such as the bar) or put in long hours of overtime in more structured working environments (such as corporate solicitors in high status firms). Correspondingly, students at the elite universities would prepare themselves for this kind of work by undertaking long hours which would be highly structured by the individual themselves (with tacit encouragement from the institution). As with many of the differences between the different status universities, students and graduates, it is an issue of autonomy and intensity.

Predicted difference in routines of work

The expected differences between the three institutions in terms of the students' routines of work are outlined in brief in Table 6.6. As with the discussion on

independent study. much of these predictions draw their inspiration from the student approaches outlined by Biggs (1987):

	Elite	Old	New
Institutional Direction	Implicit	Explicit Suggestion	Explicit Instruction
Necessity of routine	Very Important	Moderately Important	Not very important
Source of structure	Individual student ('Deep motive')	Guided by teaching	Imposed by teaching ('Surface motive')
Student Commitment	Very High ('Deep approach')	High	Low ('Surface approach')

Table 6.6: Predicted institutional differences in time management

This section will discuss the extent to which the university encourages a particular format or structure to the way that their students spend their time working. This can cover both contact hours and private study, including the extent to which the students receive guidance on how to balance these two aspects of their course. This guidance can be delivered in a number of ways including through the teaching staff or through formal guidelines in various institutional documents. Conforming to certain standards of behaviour and a certain volume and form of work can also be fostered through more tacit means, for example the setting of work targets that can only be achieved by committing a particular level of time and effort to the tasks.

Elite University students are expected to structure their study in a way that is only implied by the institution. However, conforming to the expected standards is a tacit requirement of success and the structure will involve intense working hours. In contrast, students at Old University may be given a greater level of explicit guidance on how to spend their private time, which may manifest itself in recommendations of what to do, for how long and when, reflecting their lower levels of autonomy than elite students. Similarly, students at New University are expected to received explicit guidelines from the university about their routines of work, however, it is also expected that greater emphasis will be placed upon this than by Old University and the guidance will be in much greater detail and the substance much more prescribed and low intensity.

Elite University's routines of work

It was expected that Elite University students would spend the longest time studying privately (a prediction that is borne out in the data above) and this study would need to be highly structured by the individual with limited guidance or assistance from the university. This is a prediction that largely correlates with the data collected; firstly Victor identifies the volume undertaken:

We're expected to do forty hours per week, that's their guideline, including lectures but I find that you usually do more but that includes revision and things like that

Victor, Second Year Elite University

Somewhat in contrast to the predicted conditions, the expectation for independent study is not completely implicit and there is some institutional direction (40 hours per week). But this direction seems to serve the purpose of creating further autonomy where students take it upon themselves to study longer hours. Many of the participants from Elite University suggested a tacit expectation to go beyond conventional working hours. This is best exemplified by the following quote from Ronald:

Generally, including contact hours I work from nine in the morning to eleven o'clock at night, so if there's five hours of contact hours then that's still working out as seven hours of independent work per day... I think that's fairly typical, it may vary by courses but law is particularly tough here, I think it's one of the toughest

Ronald, Second Year Elite University

This demonstrates a level of structure and commitment that goes far beyond anything seen at the other two universities (which will be discussed below) and beyond the forty hours that Victor claims is recommended by the institution. This is simply one example, but as Ronald states (a claim made by many other respondents) this kind of self-motivated schedule was fairly typical at Elite University.

As predicted, the Elite University does not appear to explicitly state the way in which one should structure their routines of work, however the intensity of the course means that without the students autonomously organising their time that success is unlikely. For example, Charlotte states how necessary self-management is:

There's no way you could survive without being organised here, you'd be lost after about 2 days

Charlotte, Third Year Elite University

The suggestion is that it is an intrinsic part of the course (or at least success on the course) that the students are organised. The implication is that this organisation should be self-motivated, a concept that was commented on by a number of Elite University respondents. The extent to which the onus for self-organisation is placed exclusively on the students is something that was identified explicitly by Rebecca:

I don't know what it's like at other universities but here they just sort of throw you into it, they don't really give you any guidance of how to be organised or prepare yourself

Rebecca, First Year Elite University

This 'sink or swim' environment is a clear indication of the level of intensity that students face and the autonomy they must demonstrate to survive. Even in terms of the type of work that was required, the Elite students were given more of a free rein over their preparation:

You have some things which you have to read but you have a free choice for the rest of it so if there is an author you particularly like you can go and read them

Andrew, First Year Elite University

Both the structure of the time and the substance of work are the responsibility of the student at Elite University. Although there is a rough guidance on what work to do and how long to spend doing it, this is limited and is generally something that is exceeded by the students. By and large the predictions made about the routines of work at Elite University match up with the data. The high levels of engagement in tasks seems to be one of the key factors in them managing this intense work load autonomously. Due to the intensity of the studying required and performed it is imperative that students managed their time effectively and independently. The one exception to the predictions being confirmed is that rather than the structure of

the work being completely implicit, there is a degree of institutional prescription by setting a recommended number of hours and some compulsory reading.

Old University's student routines and directions for study

It was predicted that Old University students are expected to organise their work and time but with some guidance from university and its staff. The amount of independent work that the university recommends is discussed by Joan in the following quote:

I think in the first year we're meant to do about 40 hours extra a week, I think. That was the standard guideline that they gave us for the first year, I don't really know anymore (laughter)

Joan, Third Year New University

Guidelines are laid down clearly explicitly in the first year but Joan is not aware of any similar guidelines for in the third year. Whether this is due to Joan's own lack of awareness or (a possibly intentional) lack in advice from the university is not clear. This is same amount of hours recommended by Elite University for its students to undertake which suggests a more similar style at Old University than predicted. Where they differ is that students at Elite universally and voluntarily ignored this recommendation to structure their work themselves due to their high levels of engagement. There seemed more confusion among the Old University participants as to what the recommended independent study hours covered and how to conform to them. This could be due to the university expecting students to structure their time autonomously but the students themselves desiring greater structure. This is represented by Joan's lack of awareness of how many hours she should study after the first year and Rosa's unawareness of whether these hours included contact time:

I know studying in general that they recommend a work day, so like 9 to 5, I guess they consider going to lectures and tutorials part of the studying. So say you have a lecture in the morning and a tutorial in the afternoon you go to the lecture, then you go home, revise the lecture, do some studying around the lecture, go to the tutorial, come home, have lunch and then just look over what you did in that tutorial

Rosa, Second Year Old University

While this is clearly Rosa's interpretation of how to conform to the expected scheduling, she claims that the university recommends students to work a full working day. This does not necessarily fit with the predictions made about the level of institutional direction which is much more prescriptive than was expected from Old University.

The extent to which Old University occupies this middle ground between high levels of prescription and completely autonomous work is demonstrated by the following quote. To help him decide on what university to apply to, Samuel visited some friends at their universities and entered lectures in order to get a feel for the practical differences in the teaching environments. Based on this knowledge he gave the following interpretation of the learning environment at Old University:

A lot of the time at the upper echelons, the red bricks they won't actually give you the information because they think at the end of the day they've been chosen because they'll go off and do it anyway and that puts the onus on the students much more than the professors and to some extent that makes the quality of teaching somewhat irrelevant. You find the attitude tends to be 'you're supposed to be clever, go and be clever' rather than 'you're here for an education, we'll help with that'. I think that [Old University] sort of skirts between that and the glass-plate mentality where there's constant information and always people to talk to, but equally there's still a certain amount of expectation.

Samuel, Third Year Old University

Samuel explicitly situates Old University as being a clear combination of the attitudes that are associated with both the New and Elite Universities. There is some expectation of autonomy and discretion but there is ample support and guidance to cultivate this. These data seem would seem to confirm some of the predictions made in relation to creating a corresponding work environment, namely that there is some guidance from the university and the amount of time students spend studying is generally less than at Elite University. However, the confusion about the amount of time that should be spent studying and how may indicative of low levels of student engagement and the recommendation of how students should structure their time is more prescriptive than anticipated.

New University's student routines and directions for study

Students at New University were expected to receive the most structured guidelines and have the lowest levels of autonomy when planning their private study. Similarly, the amount of time that the students are expected to work should be lower than the other two universities. In contrast to the other two universities where the students generally understood how much work they should be doing (if not quite what this specifically meant in the case of Old University), there was more confusion and disagreement among New University participants over the amount of hours that should be spent studying. For example, Daniel suggests the following recommended amount of private study explicitly expected by the academic staff:

The university recommends about 12 hours a week minimum, so I'm just scraping by on that but I'm not sure how much more reading I could find to do

Daniel, First Year New University

The fact that Daniel believes he would actually run out of material if he read more than 12 hours worth per week perhaps demonstrates that New University students lack independence and pressure.

It is possible that students at the New University are simply not equipped to find suitable study material for themselves because such autonomy is not encouraged in this environment. This is most clearly demonstrated by Claudia who feels unsatisfied by the support she has received in her attempts to study privately:

I think in the first year when you're told about all this independent study, it would be nice if the tutor sort of said to you maybe uh, maybe a bit of guidance on what to do in your own time. Rather than just like 'yeah, you've got to work 30 hours read this book, this book, this book' it would be nice if they gave you a bit of guidance on what to do in your own time.

Claudia, Third Year New University

Claudia clearly wants greater structure imposed upon her from the institution even though she identified that they both prescribe a set amount of hours to study and give students lists of what to study revealing further evidence of the lack of autonomy amongst the New University students sampled. The thirty hours that Claudia claims

the university requires of its students is vastly different to the twelve that Daniel identifies. It is unclear as to whether this is a misinterpretation by either (or both of the students) or differences in the way they view the course. For example, Claudia's total may include contact time whereas Daniel's does not. However, both figures are still considerably lower than the other two universities.

The low levels of autonomy experienced by New University students can also be seen in the way that they discuss the freedom that the course allows them. For example, David claims that the course is structured to allow students to choose the level of involvement and commitment that they deem appropriate:

It's fairly free form in that you can do as much or as little as you want if that makes sense. You can really if you wanted to, just scrape it and not do anything or you can do all the extra bits of work like they set you essay questions and stuff on the intranet so you can do those and really work hard. It's anywhere between those you can do as much as you want to I guess

David, First Year New University

While David's interpretation of the nature of the course appears to be encouraging autonomy, this independence is in fact a choice of the extent to which a student engages with highly structured private study. David seems to suggest that even the hardest working student is merely engaging more with the prescribed study opportunities directly provided by the university, rather than independently finding material to read or self-generated tasks. This is consistent with the quote from Daniel (in term of his perception that he could not find additional reading) and Claudia (who demands more guidance in spite of being told what material to read). The fact that David claims it is possible to survive the course without engaging with any of this additional study at all would also seem to suggest low demands in terms of knowledge or commitment (surface strategy, Biggs 1987).

Student routines and directions for study at all three universities

While there are distinct differences between the three universities that are arguably hierarchical they do not necessarily directly confirm the predictions made from the correspondence theory (in table 6.6). Therefore a number of changes are present in the results table (6.7) shown below;

	Elite	Old	New
Institutional Direction	Minimal Guidance	Explicit Recommendations	Explicit Instruction (misunderstood)
Necessity of routine	Very Important	Moderately Important	Not very important
Source of structure	Largely the Individual student ('Deep motive')	Guided by teaching	Imposed by teaching ('Surface motive')
Student Commitment	Very High ('Deep approach')	Moderate (confused)	Low/confused ('Surface approach')

Table 6.7: Observed institutional differences in time management

There does appear to still be continuum from Elite to Old to New in terms of how they engage with their studies and time management. Rather than Elite students being left to operate completely autonomously, there was a limited amount of guidance from the institution. However, this was still less than the other two universities and still functioned to create high levels of commitment and autonomous structuring. Old University also had a greater level of prescription than expected but that was still consistent with its position between the other two status universities. Student commitment and engagement were lower than expected, in particular many respondents seemed confused about the how they were expected to structure their time. The data for New University were the most consistent with the predictions of the three universities. The results table does still reflect some differences largely due to the importance of students' confusion, possibly stemming from their low engagement levels. The next section will further explore how particular student behaviours and characteristics are developed by exploring the differing ways in which teaching staff and students interact at the different status universities.

Student engagement with teaching staff

One of the key differences anticipated would be in the form of the relationships and contact between staff and students. Moore (1972) claims that autonomous learners are not cut off from teachers or other forms of instruction like an "intellectual Robinson

Crusoe” (1972:82) and that the autonomous learner is one who recognises the importance of surrendering a limited amount of their autonomy in order to discover their own problems, aptitudes and solutions. Autonomy requires guidance that is unobtrusive and does not condition or instruct but rather helps the learner to develop by themselves. This section will explore the ways in which relationships between staff and students differ at the three universities.

Predictions for student engagement with staff

It would be predicted that the Elite University students have relationships with the staff members that would involve extensive help being made available at any time if it is sought by the student to support their growth as true autonomous learners. It was also expected that students and staff at the Elite University would have a closer and more collaborative relationship. This would facilitate the students having greater levels of engagement in determining the form of their learning. Relationships between staff and students at the Old University were expected to be generally more formal, largely because the ratios of staff to students would be higher meaning that the staff were not able to devote as much attention to their students. Students at Old University would be expected to have a lower amount of contact with staff outside of teaching but that within formal contact time staff will assist students in engaging with their work and in developing some autonomy. Finally, New University students were predicted to have very restricted contact with staff members and little personal help, generally experiencing a more rigid and instructive type of assistance as part of the structure of the formal teaching. The relationships between teaching staff and students at the New University were expected to be more distant due to a more didactic and routinised learning experience. The different, predicted, institutional characteristics for the relationships between staff and students are summarised in table 6.8 below;

	Elite	Old	New
Staff availability	Constant	In formal settings	Largely unavailable for personal contact
Relationship	Personal attention	Personal attention in group settings	Impersonal attention in group settings

Purpose	Engagement, belonging and autonomy	Engagement and some autonomy	Instruction
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Table 6.8: Predicted institutional differences in staff-student relationships

The extent to which the data collected confirmed this theory and the way in which these differences operate will be outlined below.

Student engagement with teaching staff at the Elite University

If the purpose of Elite University's teaching is to foster autonomy in a high pressure environment then the relationship between the university staff and students should function to develop independence. In practice, following from Moore (1972), it was predicted that this would function by the staff being readily available to students for any purpose, but that the student would have to approach the staff themselves to support the creation of autonomous learners. A high level of personal contact between staff and students was suggested by the data, as the following quote from Ronald explores. In particular, Ronald (who had studied a previous undergraduate degree at another institution) states the level of commitment the teaching staff have to their students differs from other universities:

Another thing that affects your education here is what college you end up in... This decides your supervisors and professors and that can work quite well if you have a good relationship but there's no central organisation... I'd be surprised if any other university had their supervisor, if you want them to, emailing you with information or advice leading up to an exam. It's balanced where the exams are very difficult but you have a lot of support if you want to use it

Ronald, Second Year Elite University

The de-centralised collegiate system contributes to a close bond between teaching staff and students and a more personal experience. As such Ronald states that the staff will offer students personal guidance rather than waiting for the students to approach them with problems. While these data suggest that there are strong, personal bonds between the staff and the students, this does raise questions about the extent to which the main focus is developing autonomous learners (and ultimately workers) when staff are providing such a high level of assistance.

However, one of other key factors that was suggested for creating a work environment that corresponds to elite graduate work is intensity, which Ronald suggests is not alleviated by the help received but rather balanced.

Ronald seems to allude to the fact that the quality of the support (and teaching) for students from the staff attached to their college can differ significantly between colleges. While in theory having more staff responsible for a small number of the students in a close environment should lead to a high standard of care and strong relationships, individual differences in style of teaching or levels of engagement can affect the relationships:

The supervisions are arranged by your college and it differs greatly on a college to college basis. Our director of studies is sort of 'you go off and do your own thing' but there are other directors at other colleges which are very hands on and organise study sessions and skills sessions and we don't get any of that.

Rebecca, First Year Elite University

Decentralisation does appear to give more freedom to the staff to engage with the students to whatever degree they see fit. The behaviour of Rebecca's director of studies seems more consistent with the teaching staff at the university, creating a 'sink or swim' environment conducive to student autonomy

It would appear that the form and function of student-staff relationships at Elite University are heterogeneous, varying dependent on what college students attend. This makes it difficult to assess the nature of the relationships at the whole university in terms of the expected characteristics. While the data reveal different relationships for the participants dependent on their college, many participants commented on the availability of staff when needed and the seemingly personal nature of the help provided. Also, it would appear that due to the close environment created by the college system that the high level of contact in some circumstances appear to go against the conception of Elite University giving students an amount of independence.

Student engagement with teaching staff at the Old University

The predictions for the nature of staff-student relationships at Old University were that while staff would be willing to provide individual attention to students, this would

usually only occur in formal teaching settings due to the lower staff-student ratio at Old University. The function of these restricted but personal relationships would allow students to develop some characteristics of autonomous learners. These predictions were not necessarily consistent with what was suggested by the data as the following section will discuss. Firstly, the following quote from Samuel would appear to suggest that the staff at the Old University are often willing to offer assistance beyond compulsory contact time, but sometimes this is restricted by their workload:

Personal tutors are always available to help; I got lucky because my personal tutor is also my tutor for jurisprudence which is a very in-depth and kind of research-based kind of entity. In terms of academic support, primarily through personal tutors, tutors from individual subjects tend to be quite heavily bogged down. Although I would assume hmm, last year I had a little trouble with an individual subject and there was support there, not from my tutor but she could refer me to someone

Samuel, Third Year Old University

To some degree, this idea of occasionally restricted contact is consistent with the predictions. However, it was suggested that there would be very little (or no) contact outside of formal teaching, whereas these data suggest that this can be the case but often support was forthcoming if required. Both academic and pastoral care operate in a highly structured way, where particular staff are assigned to deal with particular problems in order to free up academic staff to focus on their particular responsibilities. This is an interpretation that is illuminated further by Bashir when discussing seeking help with formative work:

You could apply, um you could put in a paper for a private session with the lecturer to see how things are going along and show them some answers you have prepared, with tutorials we have enough time to ask questions even with lecturers, they're quite helpful here so there are enough opportunities to talk to people if you something comes up

Bashir, First Year Old University

Bashir indicates a degree of formality in relationships between staff and students where there are mechanisms in place to apply for private sessions with staff. This can be seen as supportive of the initial predictions due to the highly formal nature of the time spent but the personal attention students receive. However, it is not consistent with the prediction that the student engagement with staff members would take place

exclusively in compulsory teaching. While the predictions made for Old University are not entirely consistent with the picture gained from the data, the high level of structure and formality to relationships but the personal attention provided if sought could still be indicative of a correspondence to mid-level graduate work. These relationships could be seen to foster limited autonomy in a structured environment which is consistent with the broader predictions of the conditions at Old University.

Student engagement with teaching staff at the New University

The relationships between the staff and students at New University were predicted to be rigidly organised and impersonal. Very little individual attention could be paid to students due to the even lower staff-student ratio and the more instructive style of teaching this required. The data suggest that in many ways the relationships between staff members and students at the New University are similar to those at the Old University. It would not be surprising to find that the staff are highly committed to helping their students, however it was expected that it would be difficult for New University to devote as much time as they may want to this. The data suggest a similar form of contact to Old University in the sense that staff make themselves available to students outside of teaching hours in a way that is mediated through formal structures. Firstly, the students seemed confident that they could contact staff regularly about any problems they experienced as outlined by Anna:

Really, really good, especially in the third year now they sort of know you by name which is really nice. Um, I feel like they're always just an email away, if I email them in the morning they usually reply in the afternoon so they're really, really helpful. Every lecturer is different, there's only one lecturer I know of that hates you emailing him he only wants you to contact him during tutorial time which is really weird because sometimes you can't or sometimes you don't want to. Especially with coursework you just want it one-on-one just in case it's wrong or even if it's not and it's the points that they don't know. Every tutor's different but the majority of them are approachable

Anna, Third Year New University

Anna seems to suggest that over time a good rapport develops with the teaching staff and that this is aided by a sense that they are available and that the majority are willing to talk to students. Private contact time with teaching staff that is only possible due to

their availability and willingness to be contacted can be useful for students who may be unwilling or unable to resolve problems in class time.

One possible explanation for the lack of significant difference between the Old and the New University in this area is simply the level of commitment of the individual staff to teaching. While a more structured, institutionally controlled aspect of the working environment of the New University does appear to correspond to the characteristics of a Proletarianised form of graduate work, the freedom the staff have to determine their own level of involvement is one of the ways the routinised environment is ameliorated. This is an argument that was alluded to above by Anna and also supported by Michelle:

In the first week me and my mates sort of realised who are the ones you can approach with questions and who are the ones you shouldn't. But in general they're all quite good for that sort of stuff just go down after a lecture or a tutorial and they're all quite willing

Michelle, First Year New University

With some of the teaching staff clearly giving students the impression that they are unwilling to interact with them outside of structured contact hours would suggest it is more individual choice by the staff how far they get involved. If this area of the educational experience were consistent with the predictions then the working conditions for the staff would limit the amount of either discretion or enthusiasm that the staff have for teaching.

While the amount of time and the form it takes may be more similar to Old University than predicted, the quality of the assistance provided at New University often seem lower as represented in this quote from Leo claimed:

I had an issue with my dissertation supervisor, now she's a lovely lady but sometimes it takes ten days to get a reply by email and that's my only communication with her. I doubt that's her fault I'm sure she's run ragged, this university like all the others is under cuts and everything but that's not ideal. I had a situation in my first year where I asked for advice on something and was told that what I had was fine and then I got my lowest ever mark. That sort of thing angers me intently; I spent a lot of time on it, if it was wrong then put a line through the whole lot and say 'no you've missed the point'. That might suck but I'd rather hand in something that represents what it's supposed to be

Leo, Third Year New University

Leo's experience of seeking formative feedback which significantly differed from his assessed feedback seems to suggest that while staff were willing to be contacted they may be able not commit the same amount of time and effort to students and therefore the quality of this assistance available may be low. This is more consistent with some of the expected characteristics, namely that staff are simply unable to put the time in and while these data seem to suggest that the staff attempt to help students they are unable to provide a high standard of support.

Student engagement with teaching staff at all three universities

In terms of the predictions made in Table 6.8, these data seem to paint a different picture of staff-student relationships than was expected. These different characteristics are summarised below in Table 6.9:

	Elite	Old	New
Staff availability	Regular-contingent upon college	Through formal process	Through formal process (contingent upon staff member)
Relationship	Mixed- contingent upon college	Personal attention in private structured settings	Personal attention in private structured settings
Purpose	Development of autonomy-contingent upon college	Feedback and some autonomy	Inconsistent feedback

Table 6.9: Observed institutional differences in staff-student relationships

This is the first time that no single predicted characteristic has corresponded to those observed in the data. This could be suggestive that staff-student relationships are one area where the correspondence theory is largely insufficient for understanding the nature of students' higher education experiences. While all three institutions had similar mechanisms in place for facilitating contact between the students and their teachers, the main differences came in the levels of availability and also the different benefits that having regular contact with staff could bring. This table does suggest minor differences that could be seen as broadly hierarchical, but further study would be required to explore these differences properly.

Conclusion

The central focus of this chapter has been to illuminate the ways in which the teaching and how students engage with it differs at the three different status universities. The purpose of this analysis has been to explore the extent to which the format of teaching differs between these universities in terms of how it can create autonomous learners, the amount of pressure on the students and the type of knowledge being taught (subject specific, vocational or generic). The assertion of this thesis is that these three aspects of teaching are also present in graduate work but vary hierarchically by status. For example a graduate working as a barrister (elite legal practice) would have more autonomy, pressure and requirement for subject knowledge in their work than a legal secretary (low status legal practice). Exploring the extent to which a hierarchy exists in the teaching and learning at universities to help reproduce this stratification was the purpose of this chapter.

In many of the areas explored in this chapter, the picture of the experiences of students fits well with the one predicted in line with a correspondence to particular strata of graduate work. There was a distinct hierarchy among the universities in terms of the size of the classes and the interactivity this promotes. Although further study may be required to clarify a number of confusing points that emerged, such as the fluctuating class sizes at New University and how they function. This hierarchy between the universities was even more explicit in how they engage with independent study. Elite University students devote tremendous amount of time to studying privately in order to cope with the intensity of the course. This is in stark contrast to New University students who develop individual strategies to cope with the significantly smaller work load.

One area where the predictions were not confirmed was in the nature of staff-student relationships. All three universities showed signs that teaching staff were willing to make themselves available to help students for various purposes. There did appear to be a hierarchy in the 'quality' of time that staff could commit and the formality of initiating contact. Generally the individual agency of the teachers appears to over-ride some of the rigidity of the predicted correspondence. The next chapter will move somewhat beyond the teaching and beyond more implicit differences between the universities to explore the way they explicitly prepare students for the labour market.

Chapter Seven

Exploring engagement and relationships with the labour market at three different status universities

Introduction:

This research attempts to empirically assess the hypothesis that contemporary higher education (HE) in the United Kingdom operates to reproduce social inequality in a process akin to that identified by Bowles and Gintis (1976) in their correspondence theory. The intention of this thesis is to explore differences between the environment, organisation and education of different status universities and illustrate how this corresponds to characteristics of particular types of graduate labour in particular differing levels of autonomy and intensity in students work and differing requirements of the use of subject-specific knowledge.

Chapter Five explored the different ways in which the universities present, create and employ a specific ethos and the effects that this has on various aspects of the university. Then, Chapter Six explored differences between the three universities in their teaching and learning environments including class sizes, independent study, work routines and staff-students relationships. This chapter will discuss the much more explicit ways that the universities featured in this study interact with the labour market. However, attempts will be made to interpret any similarities or differences through the lens of correspondence theory. This discussion will be framed around the following topics;

- Graduate destinations
- Labour market preparation
- Professional networks

Firstly, there will be a brief discussion of the labour market destinations of law graduates from the three universities selected. The purpose of this section will be to broadly illustrate differences between the destinations as well as how the universities present these data. Secondly, an exploration of how the students at these universities

are prepared for the labour market by their university will be presented. This will include a discussion of careers guidance that the universities offer as well as what skills training is available. Thirdly, any differences among the way the student participants engage with the labour market will be explored. This will largely focus on how students develop professional contacts and networks.

Graduate Destinations

The first section of this chapter will briefly outline the labour market destinations of the three different status universities. The focus of this research on the whole has not been to ascertain the existence of direct career paths of students. It is exploring whether the structural and educational conditions of these universities could be perceived as corresponding to the equivalent conditions in the labour market. However, it would be remiss to not include any discussion of typical labour market destinations for graduates of these three universities. The purpose of this section is to place the remainder of the chapter in context, which will focus on the various ways in which the universities prepare their students directly for the labour market and how these students engage with this process. These data will focus upon the destinations of law graduates when possible but more general university wide data will be used for context and if the law data is absent or insufficient.

Destinations of Elite University Graduates

The most recent data that Elite University publish publicly is about the destinations of their 2009-10 law graduates. These data were drawn from the Destinations for Leavers of Higher Education (DLHE) report. When measured six months after graduation, this cohort of graduates destinations were as follows:

Employment	Further Study	Unemployed	Unavailable
30%	59%	3%	8%

Table 7.1. Destinations of Elite University law graduates

A large majority of students were undertaking further study. This is not a surprising result considering the necessity of further professional qualifications if graduates

intend to pursue a career in legal practice. Unlike the other two institutions, the Elite University specifically reports those graduates who have entered legal training when breaking down the numbers of leavers continuing on to further study. These graduates account for 63 percent of graduates who have entered further study, 28 percent are studying a taught degree course and 8.8 are undertaking a research degree. Of those that were employed six months after graduation, The most common stated destination was teaching/lecturing (13%). Legal service, public service and the service sector each attracted 11 percent of the Elite University leavers. However the largest proportion of the employed graduates (22%) reported ‘Other’ or there was insufficient data in which to categorise the respondents’ occupation. Across the whole of the Elite University, 55 percent of graduates were in employment six months after completing their studies and 36 percent were undertaking further study. The most common occupational destinations for graduates who had entered work were Health (10%), Banking and Investment (9%) and ‘Other Service Industries’ (9%).

To summarise, it would appear that the vast majority of law graduates are pursuing further study with many of these following a career in legal practice by taking the next logical step on to a vocational course. The data do not specify how many students were studying for the Bar Professional Training Course (BPTC) to become barristers or the Legal Practice Course (to become solicitors). It is therefore not possible to make any statistical analysis of the status of legal practice these graduates are studying for. For those students that are employed, this employment seems to be in relatively high status ‘graduate’ sectors. Only a very small number of students are not employed at all (excluding those not available for work) which is a strong indicator of the employability of Elite law graduates.

Destinations of Old University Graduates

As with Elite University, the most recent DLHE data that was publicly available for Old University was for the academic year 2009/10. The destinations of law graduates are displayed in Table 7.2:

Employment	Further Study	Study and Working	Unemployed	Unavailable
34%	51%	8%	5%	2%

Table 7.2. Destinations of Old University law graduates

With the necessity of further study as mentioned in the previous section, it is not surprising that the majority of Old University graduates are also in further study. While the difference is only 8 percent, fewer graduates from Old University are in further study than their Elite counter-parts.

It is unclear from how Old University has presented their DLHE data whether the courses being undertaken are the LPC, BPTC or other further study. In particular the two vocational legal practice courses could come under any of three different categories that Old University present; Higher Degree Taught (11% of those in further study), PG Diploma or Certificate (29%), and Professional Qualification (10%). Therefore, the number studying for professional legal qualifications could be as high as 50 percent. Elite University does not report statistics for those who are studying and working. Interestingly, this statistic has increased from 3 percent in 2008/9 for Old University law graduates, possibly as indication of the growing competitiveness due to changes in the economic climate become more entrenched. This is of course speculation and this is still only a small percentage of students. Of those in employment, the most common occupational areas are Professional, Public Service and Legal activities. So while only a small percentage is in work, they are generally working in areas that could utilise either their generic graduate-level skills or subject specific skills and knowledge.

Across the whole of Old University, 64 percent of graduates were in full-time work six months after graduation in 2009/10 with the largest employment sectors being categorised as Professions/Commerce (23%), Public Service (34%) and Health/Community (28%) all of which might be considered broadly 'graduate jobs' but more information would be needed to draw any such conclusions.. Further study was being undertaken by 21 percent of graduates with a further 5 percent working and studying at the same time and a total of 5.7 percent were unemployed.

Destinations of New University Graduates

While the data for the previous two universities were publically available, New University only makes the most up-to-date data from the DLHE available to people with password access to their website. In Chapter Four, various problems with gaining access to New University (and other similar status universities) were outlined and this is a further hurdle. While it might be specious to suggest that this was because New

University was reluctant to allow outsiders to view their destinations data because they may give a negative impression, it is certainly notable when compared to the ease of access to the other universities' data. Therefore these data come from documents provided by Debbie, the teaching and learning co-ordinator at New University.

Across the whole of the New University, using the 2007/2008 Destinations for Leavers of Higher Education report, 66 percent of their graduates were either employed six months after graduation with 80 percent of these working full-time. Five percent of students were unemployed and 21 percent had entered further education. Of those students continuing their education, 57 percent were studying for a first degree and 18 percent were studying higher degrees. Interestingly, 72 percent of the employed graduates from New University had remained in the local area. This could be seen as an indicator of the way in which New University only focuses on a narrow part of the labour market that is directly relevant to the local economy as opposed to the more nationally or internationally focused higher status institutions.

The occupational areas that employed graduates were most likely to enter were Education, real estate and retail/wholesale trade. While the field of education is a 'traditional' graduate occupation, it is unclear the extent to which graduate skills would be required for these other two fields of work. The faculty through which the LLB Law degree is offered had 70 percent of its graduates in employment and 14 percent in further study. Real estate was the largest occupational destination for graduates from this faculty with approximately 30 percent entering this field.

Data were available regarding the destinations of people who have graduated with a degree in Law from New University; however a lot of these data were less specific than those available for the whole university or the faculty which includes law. Table 7.3 shows the destinations of New University students for the academic year 2008/9,

Employment	Further Study	Unemployed
43%	41%	11%

Table 7.3: Destinations of New University law graduates

Again, due to the requirement of professional qualifications for entering legal practice it is not surprising that a high proportion are entering further study. However, this is only university where those in full-time employment outweigh those in further study

and this is a further decline of nine percent from Old University (17.6% less than Elite University). There does appear to be a decline in numbers following a course into the legal profession as the status of the universities decline. Additionally, of those that entered work, 53.7 percent were working in what New University classified as a ‘non-graduate job’.

As part of New University’s annual report of leavers, they include a discussion of their graduates’ occupational destination according to the SOC(HE) classification developed by Elias and Purcell (2004). Across the whole university, the proportion of students in the different types of graduate work along this classification are displayed below;

- Traditional graduate occupations- 14%
- Modern graduate occupations- 13%
- New graduate occupations- 12%
- Niche graduate occupations- 19%
- Non-graduate occupations- 42%

At 42 percent, the most likely destination for graduates six months after they have completed their studies would appear to be ‘non-graduate’ occupations. New University states that this occupational level might be appropriate for graduates but that a degree is not a pre-requisite for entry. As was discussed in Chapter Two, it is the view of this researcher that the work of Elias and Purcell in developing the SOC(HE) classification performs a categorical error of essentially referring to any job regularly taken by graduates as a graduate job irrespective of the skills involved (Keep and Mayhew 2004). In practice this seems to manifest itself as at best an attempt to validate over-education as being of benefit to the individual graduate in question or the economy and therefore justifying the massification of higher education. The fact that the highest proportion of New University graduates who are in so-called ‘graduate’ work are in ‘niche’ graduate occupations, many of which do not seem to require graduate skills at all is also very revealing.

Destinations at all three universities

At all three universities, a large proportion of law graduates were currently studying for a further qualification. With the necessity of studying an additional vocational programme after graduating in order to practice as barrister or a solicitor, this is not

surprising. Of the three institutions, only Elite University specifically stated whether the graduates who were undertaking further study were following a legal training course. This could be seen as indicative of the greater likelihood of Elite graduates to enter legal practice. Generally when looking at the graduates who were in further study, there was a decline as the status of the university decreases with New University being the only institution that had more graduates in full-time work. There does appear to be differences, particularly between the destinations of graduates from the two pre-1992 institutions and New University in terms of entering either further study or entering graduate work. However, this cannot be explored in any further detail with the data available. The following section will move on to discuss the services that are available for the students at the three different status universities for developing their careers.

Labour market preparation

As explored in Chapter Five, one of the ways that New University prepares its students for the labour market is by integrating the teaching of (and raising awareness of) transferable skills into the curriculum. This contrasts to the Elite University where giving students the best purely academic education is seen as the best way of preparing them for entering work. As with many aspects of their structure and environment, Old University takes elements of both where they believe that a largely academic focus is important but this is supplemented by some explicit skills integration and attempts to persuade students to attend their external skills teaching sessions. The following section will elaborate on the actual form this labour market preparation takes, whether it is part of the teaching or externally. This discussion will draw upon data from interviews with students and staff members at all three universities to illuminate the form that careers guidance takes and how students engage with the help on offer.

Predictions of labour market preparation

The following table (Table 7.4) explains the characteristics of careers guidance and labour market preparation that would be expected at each university in line with their relative position in the hierarchical system of higher education;

	Elite	Old	New
Form of guidance	Personally tailored	Discipline specific	Generic/broad
Student engagement	High	Moderate	Low

Table 7.4: Predicted characteristics of labour market preparation

Differences were expected to be found in the form that this guidance would take with Elite University's careers guidance being predicted as featuring services individually tailored to students needs (due to the decentralised, collegiate system). The service at Old University by contrast was expected to provide advice that was broadly relevant for law graduates but did not necessarily fit with the personal requirements of students. Finally, the provision at New University was predicted to be generic and broad, not focussing on the specific requirements of law students at all. Differences were also expected to be found in how engaged students were with the services on offer, with Elite students being very engaged, Old students moderately so and New students disengaged from developing their careers. Halpern (1994) showed that fifty-three percent of Oxbridge graduates had attended some form of recruitment activity compared to twenty-one per cent graduates from new universities. This section will explore whether this similar results were apparent for the students sampled here.

Careers guidance at Elite University

As discussed in terms of staff student-relationships, at the Elite University all students are members of a constituent college that is responsible for coordinating their academic studies, providing accommodation and pastoral care. Significantly for this discussion, each college has a discipline specific director of studies, one of the functions of which to help students with labour market preparation as outlined by Jane:

You get so much extra, like beyond the course, careers advice and help and whatever that you don't really need any in the course... It really depends if you want to be a barrister or a solicitor but constantly you're getting emails about various events that you can attend that would help you with your career... then you get individual meetings with our director of studies which are focussed on our careers and things like that in the future, he helps us a lot and you can always email him if you have any questions about your

career or your future I think my director of studies is brilliant, he's amazing and I love him and I can approach him about anything really.

Jane, Third Year Elite University

This de-centralised system allowed for a closer relationship between staff and students because staff simply had fewer students in their care and greater loyalty to those students that was an extension of their loyalty to their college. With the director of studies at a student's college being an academic member of staff in their students' discipline, their careers assistance can be made specific to the legal profession. Jane suggests that contact with the director of studies is regular but student initiated. This supports the suggestion that labour market preparation is something that students have to voluntarily and autonomously seek. However, being a member of a college does mean that you are in a position of benefit from being invited to various functions which will assist your career development that are individually focussed and discipline specific. With directors of studies only being responsible for a small number of students they can be very hands on, even to the extent that they use their contacts to secure employment for their students (which will be discussed in later).

The availability of contact with practising legal professionals and law firms is one of the main ways in which career guidance is organised. The following quote from Aimee shows how this interaction with high status practitioners is a regular occurrence that is not simply limited to corporate firms attempting to recruit talent:

Obviously they're training everyone up to be barristers or solicitors, well you don't have to be but there is the perceived intention that you might do that in the future. So they give you opportunities to go to loads of talks and things but the actual course itself is quite theoretical. But you have options, there are talks going on almost everyday where you can go and meet solicitors or barristers or go to extra-curricular talks if you want to expand your subject knowledge... I went to a barristers' talk the other day and they talked about how you get into it which was really useful because I was a bit confused, I looked it up but it was a while ago... so they're explaining what you have to do, how you get in what makes a good candidate which was really useful...it's nice to expand it rather than just reading it in books we get to see it come to life as it were

Aimee, First Year Elite University

Aimee seems to suggest that links that the university has with high status legal professionals allows the course to remain highly academic (which was established in

Chapter Five). Any vocational or professional knowledge is imparted separately from the course by leaders in the field and occurs with great regularity. This not only serves the role of imparting knowledge based upon direct experience it also serves to make the students familiar with the social conditions of elite work and gives them experience of interacting with Elite legal professionals.

When Professor Davies was asked ‘how does the law course prepare people for the labour market?’ he replied

In all the ways that our friends in the City tell us it prepares them for the labour market [laughs]

Prof. Davies, Head of Law Faculty at Elite University

The strength of the links to some of the highest status legal practices is astounding. While Prof. Davies was quick to deny any influence that the faculty’s ‘friends in the City’ might have on the teaching, this relationship almost goes beyond a correspondence with Elite University and elite legal practice directly and explicitly shaping one another.

In terms of the assistance offered to students, Professor Davies said how, in terms of gaining work experience that Elite students do not need help:

They don’t seem to need help getting [work experience], but we’re giving them advice and writing references for them we certainly advise them they ought to be doing it. I don’t know of any who have the remotest difficulty finding it so we don’t have to call in favours or something like that for somebody who is good but for some reason isn’t being picked up.

Prof. Davies, Head of Law Faculty at Elite University

Due to the high demand for Elite students, very little assistance is required. This again indicates how the university allows its students to function autonomously in finding placements, however it is also a strong indicator of the reputational capital associated with attending Elite University (Rolfe and Anderson 2003). While students may not require help in securing work experience, the university provides many opportunities to learn more about the field:

One thing we do there, it’s in colleges so I don’t know if it’s on all colleges but we do foster good relations between students and alumni who are lawyers. What you may need quite a lot is advice from people who are

doing this work already, not anything formal like a placement or something like that but just to talk to someone who you happen to know already, you've maybe had drinks with them three or four times in the past. Saying 'I'm thinking of going to do commercial property law, what sort of firms would you recommend for that'. That's the type of thing we have some knowledge of but people on the ground know it so much better. Someone who isn't sure that they'll make it at the Bar and wants to get some advice from some practicing barristers would find it quite useful. Those informal relationships are quite good

Prof. Davies, Head of Law Faculty at Elite University

The informal relationships that are created by the high levels of engagement through the collegiate system give Elite students' significant advantages in understanding the nature of the legal profession in a familiar and personal way.

As a further indication of the level of engagement of Elite University students and their independent, proactive strategies to preparing themselves for work is the extent to which students seek guidance:

High (highest engagement of students with the Careers service of any UK university - High Fliers Report but the law students are so targeted by London/City law firms that they can often get themselves sorted if straightforward...we probably connect with about 50% of them.

Brian, Deputy Director of Elite University Careers Service

While Brian identifies that students may not even need help due to how in demand they are from the highest status law firms, they are the most engaged students in the country in terms of seeking careers guidance. The individual focus and quality of the provision available is further outlined by Brian when discussing what services are available (more of which will be discussed in the section on skill development):

B: Information/vacancy spotting ("I know what I want I want but can't find it"). They can store search profiles on our vacancy system to automatically generate relevant vacancies; they can sign up for targeted news emails according to their career interests.

SS: How do you think your provision compares to other universities?

B: Significantly more - our students are very fortunate. We have three law careers advisers out of a complement of 10 (we cover other areas but we also know our stuff for law).

Brian, Deputy Director of Elite University Careers Service

These comments indicate the extent to which the careers guidance provided is very individually focussed and discipline specific with assistance provided for finding students very specific jobs tailored to their interests and a careers team with high levels of expertise in the legal profession.

To summarise, the predictions made for the careers guidance at Elite University were that the advice and assistance available would be focussed on the needs of the individual. Additionally, it was expected that student would engage with this advice to a very high degree when compared to any other university's students due to their high levels of autonomy and engagement. These predictions do seem to largely correspond to the nature of careers guidance revealed by the data. It is particularly worth identifying that the close institutional bonds developed by the college system afford a form of informal, personal careers guidance from elite, practicing alumni that is simply not possible at lower status universities.

Careers guidance at Old University

The predictions for the careers guidance at Old University were that it will be broadly relevant to the legal profession (for law students anyway) but not specific to the individual's specific aspirations. It was also predicted that the students will engage with the careers guidance a moderate amount, which may manifest itself in either students not utilising the opportunities available fully, or some students using them and others not. The extent to which these predictions are supported by the data is outlined below.

Joe claims that, in terms of support for career development, Old University seemed keen from the outset to create an atmosphere where the students were aware that it was a collaborative effort between them and the university to secure them employment after graduation:

One of the things which drew me to [Old University] once I looked around was the open day actually. I went to [Other Old University] open day as well and I found that here it was '*we* will need to get experience and *we* will need to do this' it was a very supportive atmosphere career-wise whereas in [Other Old University] it was more '*you* need to go and do this and *you* need to go and do that'. It's not that I don't want to do stuff for myself but the supportive environment was appealing

Joe, Third Year Old University

The way Joe identifies that this supportive atmosphere allowed him to ‘do stuff’ for himself fits in with the conception of a correspondence to a work-place environment with some constrained autonomy. However, it must be noted that Joe was a student who was particularly career focused when compared to other Old University participants and displayed a higher level of awareness, enthusiasm and engagement with career development. This is not to say the other student participants did not engage with career development. This quote from Samantha, who seemingly reluctantly, but regularly attended a number of careers guidance sessions, outlines her experiences:

I’ve gone to a few lectures and workshops for help with CV’s stuff like that, but I haven’t done any real work experience... They are quite frequent that we get emails saying ‘go to this, go to that’ but most of the time people don’t actually get around to doing it. I guess the help is there but I recently went to the careers to get someone to check over a letter I’d written, but I was just laughing at the end because the guy, the whole time just read my letter went ‘hmm, hmm’ and then didn’t actually say anything and then he was like ‘your time’s up, bye’. Then I went to see this other careers woman and she told me what to do but at the end of it I felt really low, like she’d had a go at me really

Samantha, Second Year Old University

Samantha’s account of her experience of engaging with the careers service indicates the extent to which the students are regularly encouraged to attend various sessions (suggesting a lower a degree of autonomy than Elite students) but that these sessions do not necessarily provide a high quality service. There does appear to be an individual focus to the careers advice, as evidenced by the one on one meetings, but these are clearly restricted by time constraints.

As explained previously, the Old University undertakes much (but not all) of its skills teaching externally to the academic aspects of the course. This is voluntary but viewed by Amanda as being of paramount importance for success in the labour market, making student participation a big issue:

We do careers and employability very seriously. One of the problems with the students is that if you tell them you’ve got a careers session on they’re not interested, if you call it something else then they’re more interested. So we’re relabeling things which might be a bit sneaky... we put the word employability in there, employability is a very trendy word at the moment..., but it’s a driver. Universities are now picking up that they have

to get it right and make it prominent for students. So our careers programme is an employability programme now, it may be a subtle change but if you get students to think about employability and graduate careers from year on you have more chance of them engaging with it as they go along.

Amanda, Law Careers Advisor & Tutor at Old University

The strategies involved in making the external skills preparation seem more attractive to students demonstrate how essential a part of the learning it is for Old University students. This also suggests a low level of engagement and autonomy from the students when it comes to preparing themselves for the labour market.

To summarise, the predicted characteristics of the careers guidance at Old University were that the assistance on offer would meet the basic requirements of the students, but not be as individually focussed as at Elite University. The guidance available appears more individually focussed than expected at first glance, however the advice provided in personal sessions was identified to be generic or unhelpful. It was not clear from the data collected if individual, discipline specific advice was available however there is a suggestion that most advice pertaining to law careers was offered in large, impersonal sessions. Another prediction was that the students would only 'moderately' engage with the services available, this is seemingly substantiated by Amanda's description of the way in which students will attend sessions if they are made to seem enticing.

Careers guidance at New University

The careers guidance offered at New University was predicted to consist of advice that would be general and broad (i.e. non-personal) and would not focus on the subject discipline of the students. This was because proletarianised graduate workers would not have the need to use their subject knowledge in the labour market and therefore the advice given was expected to correspond to this. Additionally, it was predicted that the level of voluntary engagement would be low. The following data explore the accuracy of these predictions.

In terms of career aspirations and development, the teaching staff at the New University were seen as particularly supportive:

They're really supportive of the whole career path thing, they're constantly sort of saying 'oh and if you want to be a lawyer when you grow up, you really need to pay attention to this bit' so that's definitely what they're nudging you towards, I feel they're pretty supportive

Daniel, First Year New University

Similarly to the Old University, a general atmosphere of encouraging students with their prospective careers seemed to pervade the New University and be a key part of the teaching. The extent to which career development was a central aspect of the teaching is outlined below by Debbie:

Basically we incorporate career planning within our core modules so they get advice in year one in a mainstream module and also because we do personal development planning in each year, in year two the main focus of their personal development planning is career planning, they'll have already have drawn up a CV but they're expected to look at what they might want to do in the future and how they might get there... Then in year three we have the work-based learning modules where the students go out into the workplace as part of their actual study, all of which gives them a foot in the door as part of finding work

Debbie, Director of Teaching and Learning at New University

This quote from Debbie reveals a very hands-on approach from the staff at the New University in making their students aware of how and when they should be preparing themselves for finding work as part of the core curriculum. This clearly goes beyond the teaching of vocational, legal or transferable skills and is actually teaching students how to enter employment as part of their studies. This strategy seems more about making students seem employable rather than actually providing them with high levels of 'employability', seemingly confirming the predicted generic nature of the careers help.

Arguably, the extent to which careers guidance is prioritised could suggest a high quality of service, however this is not necessarily the perception of students:

They bang on about this thing, and they have been banging on about it since I started called PDP. They mention it periodically but nobody seems to know anything about it. So I'm not really sure what that is really and I don't really have the time to work it out. I'm not really sure what that is but I guess it's to aid me in working out what qualities my degree brings in a universal way

Leo, Third Year New University

The lack of awareness that Leo displays of what is seemingly a key aspect of student careers development could suggest that integrating careers guidance into the teaching at New University is not an effective strategy. While this could be seen as due to low levels of engagement, Leo generally came across as dedicated and studious to the extent he criticised other students for their lack of engagement.

The extent to which career planning is incorporated into the teaching would seemingly support the prediction that the provision is not individually focused. This is further confirmed by the following quote:

I've gone down there [points to the ground floor] the careers service is down there and I've asked them to look at my CV and I've asked for a meeting with someone to talk about my CV and my career aspirations and all they said was they'd do a group CV session. I don't see how that helps me personally, it goes back to the group work thing, I don't want group work I just want to talk about it one on one so I just left that.. I'm hopefully going to have another meeting with my work based learning module leader and hopefully if he agrees to that we can talk about my careers in more depth. That's one thing they could work on here, is having like a one on one, sitting down and going through your options, someone with like a legal mind to sit down and go through would I should do, what would be good what would be bad for getting a job after uni

Michael, Third Year New University

Here, Michael quite explicitly says that careers guidance sessions take place in a group setting and do not focus on your personal career aspirations. To the extent that one-on-one assistance is available, Michael seems to be left uncertain about whether a desired session will be confirmed.

It would appear from the data discussed here that the predictions for the nature career guidance at New University were largely accurate. As predicted, the careers advice is generic and does not have either a legal or student specific focus. As such it appeared to be perceived by students as insufficient for their needs or that they were unaware of it. There are some signs that the students did not engage fully with the opportunities available but this was not made explicit from the data. Due to generic career development being integrated into the teaching it would appear that whether students want to engage with it or not they have to, but this still does not necessarily lead to them gaining much benefit from it.

Careers guidance and all three universities

There were signs from the data collected for all three universities that the form, quality and engagement with career development largely corresponded with the predictions made. In general, there does appear to be a clear hierarchy between the three universities in terms of the quality and form of the careers guidance, including what students seem to get out of it. While these data do make some contributions to the characteristics that are central to identifying a correspondence (in particular autonomy), because this aspect of the university experience is so tightly linked with the labour market these results almost speak for themselves. There is a clear advantage for students attending Elite University, particularly in terms of demystifying the process of finding work as well as this guidance being of specific to the aspirations of the individual seeking help.

Professional networks

One of the key differences expected between the universities will be the extent to which they can provide their students with useful links to the labour market in the form of professional networks and contacts. This is of particular importance in the legal profession, where Shiner (2000) claims that networks make a statistically significant contribution to what type of work graduates enter. The following section will explore differences between the three universities in the opportunities they provide students to develop these networks and contacts. If the universities reproduce the social status of their graduates then the following characteristics in Table 7.5 were predicted;

	Elite	Old	New
Professional networks	High status	High/medium status networks	Low status networks
Type of access	Personal	Impersonal or structured	Impersonal and structured

Table 7.5. Predicted access to professional networks

These predictions are very broad because rather than being based upon anticipated characteristics of correspondence they are from interpretations of how this type of

advantage may manifest itself. Elite University is perceived to offer the best opportunities for developing contacts and concurrently New University has the worst opportunities.

Professional networks at Elite University

Due to its position as the highest status institutions, Elite University was predicted to provide its students with the best opportunities to develop these professional contacts with such opportunities involving the highest status of legal practitioners. The basis for this prediction is the large volume of elite graduates who have entered the labour market, but due to the high level of engagement and close institutional bonds remain loyal as alumni and will privilege their former institution. The extent to which this prediction is substantiated by the data is revealed in the following quotes. Before any institutional influence is discussed, the following quote from Aimee demonstrates the role of personal connections in securing work experience places:

I did four pieces in the end; I did one in [my home town] at a barristers' chambers and one in a solicitors, then through a contact in my school I managed to get a solicitors in London and another barristers... some of them were through the school because they had a little higher education and work experience and they had a few contacts so I did it that way. The one in London I got myself because I happened to be working on a magazine and I was doing a piece about Old Girls and I spotted this Old Girl who was a solicitor in London and I thought I might as well contact her and say like 'I'm an Old Girl, you're an Old Girl how about you give me some work experience' and she did which was nice

Aimee, First Year Elite University

Having access to informal networks and contacts gave Aimee an advantage in securing work experience. This clearly due to Aimee's own educational and social background rather than the university itself. This quote does suggest the pivotal role that having connections plays in attaining work experience with work experience being another statistically significant contributor to the type of graduate work entered (Shiner 2000).

Many participants discussed the various ways in which their college teaching staff, the broader law faculty and the careers service would all provide numerous opportunities to liaise with high status legal practitioners. For example, Claire reveals

that students at the Elite University (due to the collegiate system) do not just benefit from strong bonds between staff and students but from the status of those staff:

From what I know, everyone doing law at [College] last year got law places, whether or not they were doing what they wanted to do. But I think that's because my director of studies has all the right connections so I don't know whether that is because she's put people in touch. You kind of get the impression that there are jobs because every week there are two or three law events so some company, a solicitors company or a barristers company are absolutely throwing themselves at you saying please come to our cocktail evening. So I assume there must be jobs then because they throw money at law students and give you freebies and all kinds of things.

Claire, First Year Elite University

In this quote, Claire claims that her director of studies was responsible for securing employment in the legal profession for graduating students of her college. This opportunity to access to elite sectors of the profession is a huge advantage for Elite students which is completely shut off to lower status universities. Rolfe and Anderson (2003) illustrate that while many law recruiters make their processes more meritocratic, gaining access to work experience was still largely influenced by a form of nepotism. In this sense one of the most effective forms of preparation for the labour market that occurs at Elite University is access to networks and contacts.

Claire also outlines the broader ways in which law firms will court Elite University students by offering freebies and hosting functions. This quote from Victor discusses his experience of attending dinners and functions with high status legal practitioners and explores the detailed level of understanding that this contact provides:

But the gateway and insight into how they work and their work ethic, especially for a how a solicitor that does well varies from company to company, even in their organisation. If I remember correctly one company has all their trainees on one floor competing with each other. [A 'Magic Circle' Law Firm] I believe has one trainee per office with a supervisor as it were, and their supervisor's office setting them tasks. So it varies wildly, but it's good to meet up with them to see what the people that out there already are like, the part I found best was that we could ask questions about it. Some people went for the free food and drink though... From what I've noticed so far they go for a no expense spared approach so it gets to the point where, if nothing else you have the thought of 'Oh I wish I could do this, I wish I was like them'. I haven't personally felt that but I have

noticed that after every event everyone else is like ‘I want to work for this company now’

Victor, First Year Elite University

Victor claimed to have little interest in becoming a solicitor; he has attended functions put on by magic circle firms for the opportunity to gain more knowledge and experience of the field. As such he has accumulated an understanding of the nature of the work and training undertaken by the highest status, corporate solicitors’ firms in the country. This would serve to demystify expectations of students about the nature of elite work, it also gives students practice in making social connections with elite employers, advantages that are not available to students at the Old or New University. Sommerlad and Sanderson (2002) show that elite law firms’ recruitment processes involve practices and require characteristics that can only be gained from experience of the business, these events seemingly help students develop this knowledge. In a highly competitive job market, the highest status legal practice firms are courting students at the Elite University; this is quite suggestive of how strong the correspondence between elite education and elite work is.

The deputy director of the careers service at Elite University, described the full extent of this contact:

The Careers Service arranges an event for intending solicitors and a different one for intending barristers. 66 firms attend the Solicitors event in October. In addition there are evening presentations we arrange about 20 in the winter term.

Also the [Elite] University Law Society and each of the college law societies can arrange events, socials or careers talks especially delivered by alumni.

Brian, Deputy Director of Elite University Careers Service

Compared to the number (and scale) of events at the other two universities (which will be discussed below), this is a staggering amount, further demonstrating the significant advantage in terms of contact with the labour market that is available to Elite students. The fact that the careers service offers specific events for barristers (something absent at the other two universities) is suggestive of the correspondence from Elite University to this very high status field of legal practice. The role that alumni play in reinforcing the relationship between high status graduate law employers and the law department at

Elite University is key. Because Elite graduates are more likely to enter high status jobs they can return to help recruit future generations as well as demystifying the process for those students, a practice that is made more straight-forward by the strong bonds forged through the collegiate system.

The extent to which law firms attempt to court the students at Elite University is further outlined in this quote from Prof. Davies when he was asked about what type of firms have links with the faculty:

Typically, its people we have contacts with already, unsurprisingly we have contacts with firms and they ask us if we would be interested in doing that. On the whole they're interested in trying to pass on some of their skills in things that they specialise in and we wouldn't even profess to have any ability in. One firm, or we have had in the past a firm who comes in and does negotiation because that's not something that any of us does, negotiating unless one of us by chance had been doing that in practice. So that's quite a useful skill that people might pick up if they want to know something about it. But it's usually the firms that would approach us

Prof. Davies, Head of Law Faculty at Elite University

This quote makes it clear that the opportunities for contact with legal professionals are initiated by the firms but based upon existing working relationships with the university. These firms volunteer to help students gain skills that will be required with the apparent function being to simply gain access to the next crop of elite graduates early on.

Professional Networks at Old University

The predictions for Old University based on its hierarchical position are that the amount of contact available will be lessened when compared to Elite, but Old students will still have some opportunities to interact with employers. Some of these firms were predicted to be high status, however it is expected that many of the networking opportunities will be with lower status practitioners. Another way in which the experience of networking and developing contacts was predicted to differ at Old University, is the level of contact. Rather than the personal experience at Elite University, the networking opportunities were predicted to be in more impersonal environments.

While there was greater emphasis on vocational teaching as part of the main course at Old University (see above and Chapter Five), externally arranged careers events were also provided. The data discussed below however suggest that these events differed significantly from those at the Elite University in terms of form, structure and purpose. The following quote from Samantha seems to suggest the more impersonal form of interaction with legal practitioners:

Maybe it's more worthwhile getting the right business skills and the university should make more of an effort to get people work experience. Like there's law fair, but people just go to the law fair, wander around and get the free stuff and come home and still feel completely lost... [the course is] not structured how to get into it at all, I'm in the second year and I only really know now how to get into it. It's not very straight forward at all, it's very um, it's not like clear or anything it's difficult and in this transition now you don't know whether to be more business-like or um, coming in to it you're told how important it is what contacts you have but then what about all those people who haven't got contacts. Even though it's moving in a business direction there is still inequality in a way where law is all about the people you know and that normally stems from the richer you are, that's the reality, I've met quite a few successful people who only really know people 'cause of who they're related to

Samantha, Second Year Old University

Samantha suggests that the university does not do enough in terms of helping students understand the nature of the legal profession and how to gain access to it. She claims that the legal profession is increasingly moving away from being 'professional' to being more 'business-like' but that her university is not adapting their teaching style accordingly leaving her unsure of the best strategies for securing employment. While the university attempts to provide students with links to work they are large, impersonal events which are often difficult to take full advantage of. Samantha seemingly assumes that contacts can only be utilised by those who already have contacts, rather than them being something that can be developed, particularly with the assistance the university. However, the situation at Elite University shows this is not the case.

With barristers of any status being regarded as an elite form of legal practitioner, it is quite revealing that the Old University focuses a lot more on employment opportunities as solicitors;

Career-wise for law, I think that [Old University] is very good in terms of putting on events and things. I think maybe they do more for solicitors than for barristers in terms of professional careers work. So wanting to be a barrister is not as supported as if you wanted to be a solicitor but I think that's more the nature of the profession. The main solicitors firms have recruitment teams and departments; they literally pay people to go and get people whereas barristers are all self-employed and a bit stingy they just kind of expect people to go them more... I've been to the law fair, just because I knew it had some bar stuff, I haven't really been to any of the solicitor things just because it's not the kind of thing I wanted to do. But then I have been to, uh they run quite a few workshops and things in terms of interview techniques and application forms which apply equally to both.

Joe, Third Year Old University

With aspirations of becoming a barrister, Joe felt that his particular career development needs were not being met; however he attributed it to the career itself rather than the university. As discussed above, the Elite University gives students opportunities to interact with and learn from legal professionals from all manner of fields because of the connections it has. Because it is an expectation that many Elite graduates will become barristers it is almost taken for granted, however because few people beyond the Elite institutions enter this field of legal practice it seems more mysterious, leading Joe to believe the nature of the work itself is responsible for his lack of opportunities.

In contrast to these student accounts, Amanda, Law Tutor and Careers Advisor at the Old University claimed that there was a high frequency of events that were attended or hosted by law firms and other employers:

A lot of the law recruiters' milk round starts in October, November, December. It's extremely busy in November all of the law fairs are happening and because we are Russell Group we are targeted by lots of the City Firms, International firms so we hold a law fair every October/November and we have about 50 exhibitors and all of the year groups are invited to that... Every Thursday, certainly in the first term but most of the second term there's an event going on, a careers event and it's usually an outside speaker so we'll get a mixture of law firms and non-law firms to come in and talk about careers in the law.

Amanda, Law Tutor and Careers Advisor at the Old University

It would appear that while regular opportunities for contact are available that students are perhaps not making the most of them. This is consistent with Samantha's assertion that students who attend law fairs generally find little value to them. There is a

suggestion from this quote from Amanda that the regularly scheduled events are fairly impersonal and instructional in nature so perhaps do not provide good opportunities to liaise with professionals. As a simple comparison of the provision, Brian, the careers advisor at Elite University said that 66 law firms attend their annual fair, with Amanda claiming around 50 for Old University, this is still quite high but less than Elite University.

It would appear from the data that the predictions for access to professional networks at Old University were largely substantiated. While there was some access to high status employers this was impersonal in nature and not as frequent as at Elite University. One aspect that was not predicted was poor student engagement with the opportunities provided something that is arguably more consistent with the predicted characteristics of New University potentially challenging the correspondence theory.

Professional networks at New University

The predictions for New University were that access to professional networks would be more restricted for their students. It was not expected that they would have no access to such contacts but these would either be low status or local in nature. Additionally, such contact would be impersonal and likely to follow similar structure to the Old University, but perhaps more rigidly structured and with fewer opportunities available. These predictions reflect New University's position as the lowest ranked institution of the three featured in this study. The extent to which these predictions are substantiated in the data will be explored in this section.

The prediction of the low status contacts available at the New University is supported by this quote from Ivy:

I'm a member of the Law Society but they don't really do a lot. They just organise socials...they do cheese and wine evenings at [local tourist attraction] where if you want to go you pay a certain amount and they get solicitors or barristers and policemen, people from a variety of careers and you can sort of mill around and talk to them and find out what they like about their job and how they got into it which is really useful really

Ivy, Second Year New University

There are a number of notable things in this quote. Firstly that the New University students have to fund the events by paying a fee in order to attend the meetings. This is the opposite of the experience of the Elite University students who have fairly lavish meals paid for by law firms as well as other 'freebies'. Secondly, the different status of the professionals including members of the police force, a career in the police would of course only use a limited amount of the subject knowledge gained from a law degree and be relatively low status. It is usually only the most elite professionals who attend the comparable functions at the Elite University. Thirdly, the personal nature of these events, this goes against the predictions from the correspondence theory and also seemingly offers something that the higher status Old University does not. The personal nature of the function however differs to those at Elite University where the representatives of firms would approach the students to secure their interest, at New University the onus is on the students to approach people.

In terms of the contacts that staff can provide, Debbie, Teaching and Learning Director for Law had the following to say:

The university careers service hold a database of all of the local employers who do vacation placements or those sort of things. They help with the process of applying and we help with the process of applying. Then in year three we have the work-based learning modules where the students go out into the workplace as part of their actual study, all of which gives them a foot in the door as part of finding work

Debbie, Teaching and Learning Director for Law at New University

While the firms may or may not be of a lower status (although the implication of them being local firms would suggest lower), more interesting is the rigidly structured and formalised process through which the university assists its students in making contacts.

In many ways the nature of access to professional networks and the development of contacts at New University fits with the predictions made. Namely that the contact is limited (or even restricted in terms of having to pay a fee to attend functions) and the networks consist of low status or local legal professionals. However, the nature of the contact made is in a much more personal, interactive style than would have been predicted and that was not present at Old University (or at least not revealed in the data). The highly formalised and structured way in which work experience

contacts are gained suggests restricted autonomy for the students which is consistent with the predicted pervasive routinisation.

Professional networks and contacts at all three universities

In a broad sense, the nature of how the students are provided with or supported in making contacts and professional networks at all three universities corresponds with the predictions made. Some of the specific details from the data gives a mixed impression of the goodness of fit of the predictions, such as the personal form of interaction with professionals at New University. Generally, the data reveal a pronounced difference in both the form and amount of opportunities to have contact with professionals and the status of those legal practitioners. This explicitly follows a hierarchy with Elite University providing personal contact with the highest status law firms to New University requiring students to pay to access low status or local legal professionals.

Conclusion

This chapter has focused largely on the processes of student engagement with the labour market at the three different status universities in this study. This discussion explored the broad first destinations of graduates six months after they graduate, mechanisms of labour market preparation (such as careers guidance) and the opportunities that students have to engage with professional networks. Exploring these differences has allowed an understanding of the more explicit ways that the universities prepare their students for entering the world of work after graduation.

While in some ways these aspects do not directly relate to the correspondence theory, they do illuminate the more direct links between university and the labour market and any stratification in this relationship by status. Some of the differences can still be critiqued in terms of the broad predictions made about the varying attributes of the universities in line with the suggested correspondence. For example, the way in which students engage with the careers advice can be plotted along a continuum of autonomy, which was one of the key differential characteristics of graduate work. The over-riding conclusion of this chapter is simply that Elite students seemed to have a clear advantage over their counter-parts from other universities in terms of the

opportunities available to them. Due to the environment of the university in how it promotes autonomy and engagement, Elite university students also took more advantage of these opportunities.

While Elite University goes to great lengths to prepare students for work the students are also courted by high status practitioners and law firms. The implication of this being, in spite of the recession and a difficult jobs market for many graduates, Elite University graduates are still so in demand that they are all but head-hunted before they even leave university. Personal contacts are one of the key ways of finding high status work in the legal profession (Shiner 2000, Rolfe and Anderson 2003), if students do not already have these contacts they are essentially provided with them. Crozier and Reay (2011) claim that the highest status universities have so much invested in students' academic success that they are essentially not allowed to fail and are provided whatever assistance they need for this. This comprehensive personal assistance goes beyond simply ensuring high attainment towards giving their students the best possible advantage in entering high status work.

Chapter Eight

Conclusion

Introduction

In this thesis it has been argued that changes in the mode of production have led to the growth of a higher education (HE) system that is stratified to reflect structural inequality in the division of labour. This thesis explored the extent to which the different educational and social experiences of students attending different status universities in the UK corresponds to the type of work they will perform in a hierarchical labour market. This research is exploring the usefulness of a new application of the correspondence principle first advocated by Bowles and Gintis (1976) in *Schooling in Capitalist America*.

Briefly, Bowles and Gintis argued that more important than the substance of learning in schooling are the social conditions. These conditions are hierarchical along social class boundaries and help to reproduce structural inequality by preparing young people for a type of work that corresponds to their type of schooling. Essentially, working class children will be faced with a rigid and highly disciplined form of education that is structured around extrinsic rewards. This thesis is exploring the extent to which similar correspondence processes can be found in contemporary UK HE. This thesis was structured around the following research questions:

- How does the educational environment and experience of students vary between different status HE institutions?
- How useful is correspondence theory for understanding contemporary links between higher education and the labour market?

To address this first question, a number of predictions were made about the characteristics that each university was expected to exhibit if their environment corresponded to a particular stratum of the labour market. These predictions were based upon existing research into graduate work characteristics (including Thompson and Warhurst 1998, Elias and Purcell 2004, Felstead et al 2007 and Brown, Lauder and

Ashton 2011). Three key different characteristics of graduate work were identified; autonomy, intensity and use of subject-based knowledge. These three characteristics were determined to exist along a continuum from high to low status graduate work, for example, high status work is highly autonomous while low status graduate work is rigid and routinised. The central proposition of this thesis is that these characteristics are reflected in the social and educational environment of the corresponding level of university. For the purpose of empirical comparison, a distinction was drawn between three different strata of a hierarchical university system;

- Elite Universities- the highest status universities for teaching and research
- Old Universities -established and respected institutions that do not rise to the standards of the Elite
- New Universities-more vocationally orientated post-1992 institutions

The data collected incorporated various documents from or about the institutions and in-depth interviews with students and staff members of Law faculties at three different universities that were selected to represent this broad hierarchy. These data explored various aspects of the teaching, organisation, ethos, environment and student experience at these three universities. To address the second research question, the extent to which the empirical findings revealed hierarchical, structural difference between the three universities would be assessed through the lens of correspondence theory. This assessment will form the bulk of this chapter.

Correspondence predictions

In Chapter Three, the following three key points were drawn out of *Schooling in Capitalist America* as forming the basic tenets of the correspondence theory;

- The reproduction of class inequality through corresponding conditions of schooling and work
- The restriction of the development of class conscious and potential social change through repression and alienation
- The legitimisation of class inequality through the maintenance of the hegemonic ideology of meritocracy and ‘individual’ achievement

Exploring class consciousness explicitly was determined to be beyond the remit of this study. Exploring social reproduction through a correspondence between the conditions of (higher) education informed the theoretical basis of this research and this was explored with reference to the legitimisation of class inequality.

In order to turn these broad statements into useable, conceptual and analytical tools for the framing of fieldwork, they had to be synthesised into testable attributes. This was achieved by drawing out some key characteristics of graduate work from existing literature in this field. Additionally, as was outlined in chapter three, Bowles and Gintis have been widely criticised since the publication of *Schooling in Capitalist America* for a number of problems with methodology and over-looking cultural explanation of social reproduction, including the actual day-to-day functioning of classroom. Therefore, methodological and theoretical progressions in the correspondence theory found in the research of Anyon (1981) and Carnoy and Levin (1985) were also incorporated into this research framework (for a detailed discussion of how these characteristics were determined see chapter three). Table 8.1 outlines the broad characteristics and categories of difference that were predicted to exist at the three different status universities if there was indeed a correspondence between their social conditions and a stratified graduate labour market.

Level	Autonomy	Pressure/Intensity	Subject Knowledge
Elite	<p>High levels of student involvement in defining tasks</p> <p>Regular access to teaching staff</p> <p>‘True’ independent study</p> <p>Self-imposed structure of work</p>	<p>Small class sizes for high levels of interactivity (2-5 students)</p> <p>Heavy workload</p> <p>Longest working hours</p>	<p>Close proximity to knowledge creation (e.g. world experts teaching their research)</p> <p>In-depth academic knowledge and skills</p> <p>Understanding of the basis of knowledge (e.g. Jurisprudence instead of Law)</p>
Mid-level	<p>Independent study encouraged but not mandatory</p> <p>Managed access to teaching staff</p> <p>High levels of student engagement with set tasks</p> <p>Institutionally suggested structure of work</p>	<p>Medium size classes for some interactivity (5-10 students)</p> <p>Moderate work-load</p> <p>Regular working hours</p>	<p>Some/limited proximity to knowledge creation (e.g. mixed status staff teaching their own and other higher status research)</p> <p>Emphasis on a mixture of academic and transferable skills</p> <p>High levels of knowledge and its practical applications</p>
Proletarian	<p>Limited independent work</p> <p>Limited access to teaching staff</p> <p>Low student engagement in tasks or their definition</p> <p>Institutionally imposed structure of work</p>	<p>Large class sizes (10-20 students)</p> <p>Light workload</p> <p>Few hours spent working</p>	<p>Separated from knowledge creation (e.g. non-research active teaching staff, reliance of core texts over research)</p> <p>Employability and transferable skills of the highest importance</p> <p>Low levels of knowledge and its application</p>

Table 8.1: Predicted characteristics of the correspondence between HE and stratified graduate work

How does the educational environment and experience of students vary between different status HE institutions?

The extent to which the analysis of the data collected matches up with the predicted characteristics formed the discussion in Chapters Five, Six and Seven. Some of these findings will be summarised below in order to frame the discussion of the usefulness of correspondence theory. This summary will therefore draw together the results of the study to address the first research question, this will subsequently allow the second research question to be answered. The three key characteristics of autonomy, intensity and subject-knowledge will be discussed in turn to address the how these characteristics differed at each university

Differences in autonomy at the three different status universities

Autonomy was identified from a number of existing literature sources as being a defining characteristic of 'elite' graduate labour. For example, one of the character traits that elite employers look for in potential recruits according to Brown and Hesketh (2004) is how 'self-directed' they are. By contrast, Thompson and Warhurst (1998) outline how changes in the dominant form of labour, specifically a move from blue-collar work to predominantly white collar environments has not increased the levels of task discretion in the workplace. This idea has been further developed through technological development into the 'digital taylorism' identified in further research by Brown (Brown, Lauder and Ashton 2011). This process replicates the codification and restructuring processes of Fordism and applies them to knowledge intensive industries through computer software, meaning that the manipulation of knowledge can be undertaken by anyone, anywhere with minimal knowledge of their own in a structured, routinised environment.

In chapter three it was argued that such routine work would be typically undertaken by graduates from low status universities (in countries such as the UK). This would contribute to developing a false consciousness where graduates could have a perception of themselves as performing 'knowledge work' that used their degrees in spite of the routinisation. This would seemingly justify attending university to the graduates in question. In the correspondence theory based research of Anyon, she identified that pupils attending 'working class' schools would be faced with a form of

learning that was typified by routine tasks and highly structured whereas greater academic freedom and involvement in tasks was more common in high status schools.

Therefore, autonomy was determined to be a key characteristic of both contemporary graduate work and exploring the nature of social reproduction in educational settings. A continuum of autonomy was proposed, firstly with Elite University being predicted as doing the most to help create ‘autonomous learners’ (Moore 1972). Secondly, Old University would allow and encourage its students to develop a degree of autonomy within restricted conditions and finally, it was predicted that little or no autonomy would be allowed for students at New University.

Evidence for a hierarchy of autonomy

In terms of the way in which the universities developed autonomous learners, there did appear to be a hierarchy from Elite to New. However, the predictions made in Table 8.1 did not necessarily always reflect the nature of this hierarchy accurately. For example, Elite University students actually experience a very hands-on approach to teaching which tries to accommodate any needs the students have to ensure they reach their potential. Therefore, in many ways this environment is more controlled than expected, however this only serves to increase the intensity of the course which reinforces the need for more self-directed study. A high volume of demanding tasks created a ‘sink or swim’ environment but this was not devoid of support, but this mainly came in the form of extensive pastoral care rather than academic guidance.

Old University appeared to allow autonomy in a way that loosely matched up with the predictions. By their nature these predictions were broad-ranging and therefore while some of the details in the data do not directly match the predictions this more an issue of the distance between the broadness of the predictions and specificity of the data. Demonstrating how the Old University occupies a position between the other two universities, many participants reported that there were many compulsory readings (a sign a controlled environment) but that in practice the students often engaged with work in their own way, such as reading alternative texts they found more suitable (showing autonomous engagement with tasks and research skills).

The data collected for New University showed that the students’ experience of work was highly prescribed, with most students not having to locate readings themselves due to them being provided on the departments’ intranet. Also, compared

to the other universities the volume of private study undertaken was small but often was still substantial enough to make students develop strategies to cope with workload, namely privileging modules or work that was deemed more important. Part of this difficulty arose due to conflicting or confused responses from students when asked what the university expected of them in terms of private study suggesting low levels of engagement.

To summarise, in terms of the attributes that were determined as suitable for measuring the way in which the three universities developed or restricted autonomy, the data collected broadly matched the predictions. The fit between what was observed and predicted was by no means perfect, but there was little data to suggest these predictions were drastically wrong. The extent to which this contributes to the usefulness of correspondence theory will be discussed later in the chapter.

Differences in intensity at the three different status universities

The next attribute of differential graduate labour that will be discussed is the varying levels of intensity or pressure that typify different status graduate work. This concept can be seen as inter-related with autonomy, it stands to reason that in particular circumstances, having more independence in functioning in occupational roles places more pressure on the individual (although it could also be suggested the opposite is true). Brown and Hesketh (2004) discuss how elite graduate jobs often involve intense working conditions (coupled with self-directness) and therefore an ability to cope under pressure is something that employers look for. Again, when discussing class divisions in schooling, Anyon (1981) identified that varying levels of intensity typified each level in the education related to the class hierarchy. Specifically, the education received and environment at the highest status school was defined by pressure to work hard and succeed coupled with much more rigorous topics of study. Such pressure and intensity were not present at the working class university where conformity and obedience were more important.

It was predicted that Elite University's teaching would place the greatest pressure on the students supported by a broader, high pressure working environment. Old University would have conditions that occasionally place high pressure on their students with an expectation that the work would be generally be 'moderately' intense. With expected routinisation at low status universities it was predicted that New

University would be typified by a lower level of intensity for its students in terms of the work and environment.

Evidence for a hierarchy of intensity

The intensity of the law courses at the three universities was assessed by comparing their relative work-loads and the expectations on the students to participate and engage fully with tasks. These attributes were measured by exploring amount of time spent studying and the interactivity of classes. Again, many of the broad predicted aspects of a hierarchy of intensity were borne out in the data but some of the specifics differed from what was expected.

For example, class sizes were used as a proxy measure of promoting autonomy because in a learning environment with only a small number of other students, high levels of participation would be expected. In an interactive form of learning like small-group teaching this would therefore mean being prepared to respond to questioning regularly and demonstrate depth of knowledge and understanding.

While the number of students in small-group teaching classes did decrease from Elite to Old to New, there was not a large size difference between classes at Old and New University. However, even though Old and New University had roughly similar size classes, there were much lower levels of engagement by the students at New University who would find safety in numbers and ‘hide’ in the class.

As with the data collected to explore differing levels of autonomy, while the actual details of observed differences in intensity may not have matched the predictions, there did appear to be a hierarchy that broadly corresponded to the expectations. Again, there was no indication from any of the data analysed that would directly challenge or refute this predicted stratification, although what this means in terms of a correspondence to stratified work will be explored later.

Subject-based knowledge

The final aspect that was determined to be a significant indicator of differences in the status of graduate work was the extent to which that work utilised the subject-specific knowledge and skills of graduates. Dolton and Vignoles (1997) and Mason et al (2006) both show that there were signs that a significant number of graduates are in jobs

which do not use skills or knowledge that are specific to their degree when they enter the labour market. It was asserted in Chapter Three that this would be more likely to occur in low status graduate jobs with high status graduate work often being predicated on using subject knowledge. Therefore, it was decided that if there is indeed a correspondence, and the use of subject-specific skills was an important difference in types of graduate work that this would be reflected in different status universities. If graduates (particularly from lower status universities) are using subject-based skills and knowledge less then presumably they require more transferable skills.

Additionally, differences in types of knowledge were a significant part of Anyon's qualitative research based upon the correspondence theory. Anyon claimed that at working class schools, the pupils were taught facts separated from context and with no awareness of how knowledge was created. If subject specific knowledge is unimportant for graduates of low-status universities then it is possible that the teaching is delivered in similar ways. By contrast, the highest status schools taught the most rigorous and academic forms of knowledge that prioritised context, broad understanding, complex topics and awareness of knowledge creation, it could be expected that similar process may be found at elite universities if their graduates have a greater need for their subject specific knowledge in the labour market.

It was predicted that the most significant difference would come in terms of integrating vocational, transferable or employability skills into the formal teaching curriculum. Specifically that the lower the status of the university the more important that transferable skills would become with New University being predicted to place greater importance upon making students employable as part of the teaching than academic studies. Elite University was predicted to be purely academic, with no focus on generic or transferable skills and Old University was predicted to be largely academically focussed but with some degree of integration of transferable skills into the teaching to correspond to mid-level graduate work which may or may not use subject knowledge.

Evidence for a hierarchy of subject knowledge

Once again, exploring differences in the type of knowledge taught at the universities seemed to indicate a continuum that broadly matched the predictions but differed in some minor ways. Taking the example of the embedding of transferable skills into the

teaching curriculum, all three universities fitted the predictions exactly. With Elite University having no explicit skills teaching, Old University having some as a minor part of the curriculum and New University placing transferable skills at the centre of the whole experience. However, it became apparent from the data that Old University is considering a move towards more integrated skills teaching in the future suggesting a slightly different attitude to the teaching of employability than predicted.

Differences in autonomy, intensity and subject knowledge at all three universities

This section has briefly summarised the differences between the three universities in terms of their levels of autonomy, intensity and subject knowledge as revealed from interviews with staff and students and institutional documents. Examples were provided to illustrate how broadly speaking many of the predictions made for differences in these attributes were substantiated by these data, however some of the specific details do not necessarily correspond to what was expected. This can arguably be put attributed to problems with the research design, for example, a need for clearer framing of the expected differences that draws on a wider range of research evidence.

With the data fitting with the predications (albeit roughly), this can be seen as indicative of a stratified hierarchy between the three universities. With the predictions of the various environmental, organisational and educational differences being drawn from literature concerning structural differences in the graduate labour market then this is strongly suggestive of a correspondence between stratified HE and labour. The results of this study are somewhat weakened by its research design. The small sample size and exploratory nature mean that irrespective of how compelling these data are, their generalisability depends on further study. The implications of these results and the usefulness of correspondence theory in contemporary HE will be discussed in the following sections.

How useful is correspondence theory for understanding contemporary links between higher education and the labour market?

Analysis of the data collected for this thesis appears to indicate that there is indeed a hierarchy of universities and that various characteristics of the different strata in this hierarchy are shared with different status graduate jobs. Exploring differences between

universities was only one of the two main aims of this thesis, the second aim was to assess how useful correspondence theory was for explaining these differences. This section will explore a number of strengths and weaknesses of this correspondence based approach while drawing on the results of this thesis. This will include a discussion of how framing the fieldwork around correspondence theory revealed elements that may otherwise have been overlooked while also discussing elements of the educational environment that were not covered by this theory

Strengths and weaknesses of applying correspondence theory

In many ways, revisiting the correspondence theory and re-applying it in a new setting is inherently valuable because it can allow a different perspective on taken for granted social processes. Because this thesis was framed by the previous research into schooling by Bowles and Gintis (as well as Anyon 1981 and Carnoy and Levin 1985) certain aspects of the university experience which are under-researched were made central to this research. For example, there is minimal research on class sizes in universities and those studies that have explored this area largely focus on its relationship to attainment (Martins and Walker 2006 and Bandiera, Larcinese and Rasul 2010). In many ways, attainment was unimportant because this thesis would demonstrate that the substance of the learning was structurally different and existing research has demonstrated that for many employers the institution which awarded the degree is more important than the classification (Shiner 2000, Smetherham 2006). Framing the fieldwork with correspondence theory drew attention to the important function that the nature of the interaction and contact with academics in small-group teaching plays in developing the learner identities of students.

Part of the problem in using correspondence theory is one shared by all deductive research and that is the danger of either overlooking that which does not fit the theory or taking too narrow a view of the field. This was particularly compounded for this thesis because the theory being used was focused on different social settings and structures. Structuring the data analysis around previous research into schooling could arguably miss any elements of the education which do not translate into universities. For example, one of the key attributes of proletarian labour and the corresponding working class schools for Bowles and Gintis was the level of discipline imposed on the workers and pupils. This form of discipline was not likely to be present

in universities, so attempts to conceptualise comparable forms of control such as rigidly structured classes were developed. This focus on drawing parallels between schooling (particularly American schools) and UK higher education could also lead to aspects of the universities structure, teaching or environment that are not present in schools being ignored because they were not present in previous correspondence-based research. Attempts to overcome this problem were obviously made, but a lack of research on the role of universities in preparing students for work made this difficult.

Some of the more interesting findings that describe how different status universities prepare their students for the labour market were discussed in Chapter Seven. For example, this chapter showed the major differences between the universities in the how they can help students develop professional contacts and networks. While the correspondence theory informed the analysis of these data, these results are explicit differences between the institutions rather than the more 'hidden' differences that Bowles and Gintis originally explored. Viewing the HE system through a lens of correspondence (namely a three-tiered hierarchy influenced by the labour market) allowed the identification of these differences but they were not explicitly identified because it of it nor were they necessarily evidence of a correspondence, although perhaps a form of 'neo-correspondence' (Saunders and Machell 2000). In this sense, perhaps a more appropriate use for the correspondence principle in analysing HE is as a loose framework rather than an over-arching theory with implications of structural reproduction.

Using the correspondence theory in this way did not allow for any assessment of causality to be made. Simply put, it is unclear whether the findings simply happen to coincide with conditions in the labour market, whether the relationship is more reproductive with both conditions in work and university mutually affecting one another or if the environment of universities is dictated by the labour market. This is not necessarily a weakness of the correspondence theory in general but rather its usage in this study. While the research question being discussed in this section explicitly states that it is concerned with the usefulness of correspondence theory in contemporary HE and the labour market, this thesis arguably only contributes to half of this picture. The correspondence principle broadly informed the brief analysis of existing labour market conditions drawn from the literature, however it was really only applied empirically to education. However, framing a research design around correspondence theory did illuminate areas of HE which are under-researched which

would suggest that there is some value to applying this theory in a contemporary setting.

Future implications of this research

Policy implications of this research

This research has been conducted at a time when access to higher education has been widened to allow more people from ‘non-conventional’ backgrounds to attend. It is almost a common-sense assumption to many people that there is a hierarchy of universities, demonstrated not least of all by the number of different league tables created to attempt to chart this hierarchy. What these understandings overlook are what constitutes this difference, how the nature of the teaching and experiences of these universities differ, is a largely under-researched area..

This study has shown that various coherent, hierarchical differences at universities can contribute to how a graduate performs in the labour market. This would seem to suggest that universities do play a bigger role than simply filtering and credentialising existing talent. All universities by definition have degree awarding powers; while it might be a naïve perspective, surely the purpose of such a qualification is to be a value-free indicator of attainment or a certain level of ability, skill or knowledge. However, if not only is there variation in the teaching on offer (which can be largely agreed) but these universities are preparing their students for different types of work then this raises questions about the extent to which higher education in the UK can continue to be considered on homogenous entity, particularly at a time when the majority of universities are introducing fees of £9,000 per year for the majority of their courses.

If an elite education exclusively provides the tools for elite work should these students not pay more? Or taken to the extreme, should the current system of higher education not be broken up? For arguments sake, the introduction of a tripartite system based upon the broad divisions used in this thesis, with the elite universities, old/mid-level universities and new/vocational universities all offering distinct forms of education and qualifications would arguably be a more fair system of allocating people to strata of a hierarchical division of labour. This system would allow a greater a degree of transparency in the system, something particularly important with the

increasing way in which students are being treated as consumers in education. At the very least, if education is indeed a commodity to be consumed, this would allow people to get value for money from their education in a clear cut way with it being much more transparent as to which education would get people which jobs. However, in terms of policy suggestions, such a prospect is obviously highly unlikely to say the least and also against this researchers' personal convictions as it possible that such a codified stratification of higher education would further entrench class inequality with a clearly defined elite form of education being retained for and by the elite.

Implications for future research

The research discussed in this thesis was only ever intended to be of an exploratory nature. The main purpose was essentially that of an extended pilot study to test the possible application of the theories of Bowles and Gintis to a different area of education in a different time period and arguably a different form of socio-economic organisation. Empirically this research was therefore limited in size but its intended scope was broad-ranging. While there is a large body of high quality research in this field (and a few dubious ones) it is the opinion of the researcher that there is an absence of satisfactory, theoretical explanations of the relationship between higher education and the labour market that look at the whole picture as one process. This could be because the process is more complex than one macro-economic theory can encompass or that such grand theories have for various reasons lost their traction in the social sciences. This thesis has at least shown that correspondence theory has enough analytical value to at least merit further study.

One of the main ways that this study has attempted to move beyond the work of Bowles and Gintis is the incorporation of more cultural explanations of behaviour and inequality. Any future study would need to continue to engage with this in order to offer more nuance and contemporary relevance than a simple replication of *Schooling in Capitalist America*. One of the key philosophical aims of Bowles and Gintis' work was to demonstrate that the democratic notion of meritocracy in the education system is a deception. While the prevailing cultural and policy attitude in contemporary Britain is that access to universities should be meritocratic, it is widely recognised that there is a hierarchy of those universities. Demonstrating that such access is unequal however was not a central goal of this research.

Instead, this study attempted to test the extent to which the conditions at different universities differed by status and how strongly these differences were related to the labour market. This study effectively demonstrates, albeit on a small scale, that there are noticeably different structural and environmental conditions at different status universities. It is also clear that these conditions do share many similarities to particular strata of the labour market. An effective way to enhance the theory and strengthen the evidence to support it would be to conduct a wide-ranging analysis of the relationship between a stratified graduate labour market and the HE system.

One of the main drawbacks of the methodology used in this thesis is the small number of institutions used. Investigating three different status universities was deemed the most appropriate because it offered enough variation in order to draw reasonable comparison and it echoed the stratification identified by Bowles and Gintis. With the general value of this theory being established, a broader replication of this research that analysed data in a more inductive fashion could be used to further assess the theory's usefulness. A potential next step in determining the nature of the relationship between HE and the labour market is to collect data from a much wider range of institutions without explicitly looking for evidence of correspondence. Student experiences, pedagogies or environments would be grouped together based on what they had in common with each other in the first instance rather than what they had in common with different characteristics of graduate work. The data collection would be informed by the results of this study but no pre-existing hierarchy would be imposed to order the data. This would allow any segmentation within the HE system to emerge from the data organically in order to verify the existence of university stratification in a more rigorous fashion than this research allowed. Another constraint of this thesis was the decision to conduct the research on exclusively law students. Investigating a variety of subjects to allow comparisons within and across disciplines and institutions would bolster the findings of this thesis. This new research design could also incorporate class-room observation in order to gain a deeper understanding of the processes involved in teaching and learning at universities first hand rather than as recounted by students or staff.

In *Schooling in Capitalist America*, Bowles and Gintis attempted to draw parallels between the personal characteristics that people displayed while working to the structure of education they received as identified by their co-workers and supervisors. Replicating this methodology in relation to different status graduate work

is a potential avenue for further research. Once the broader, more inductive replication of the research in this thesis is completed, a study of the characteristics of graduate work in a similar form to Bowles and Gintis would enhance the validity of any claims of correspondence. Rather than relying on existing literature to determine the nature of the labour market, primary data that more directly suits the purpose can be collected. Where this methodology would diverge from Bowles and Gintis would be to collect data on the types of characteristics that would be explored. Bowles and Gintis were exploring a labour market that was much more rigidly and clearly segmented along class divisions than is present in the contemporary graduate labour market. Therefore, rather than exploring characteristics such as rule orientation or dependability (although similar categories may emerge) this proposed study would focus on the key areas used in this thesis - namely worker autonomy, the intensity of work and the use of subject knowledge.

With the preceding study of universities taking a more inductive, grounded theory approach, other categories may emerge from that data which will also be explored. Such a study would need to be broad in scope exploring all forms of work in which graduates are found in reasonable numbers. Once the key determining characteristics of different status university environments have been identified, workers and employers could be sent questionnaires asking them the extent to which they believe their colleagues or employees conform to particular behaviour traits. This particular methodology would allow for large amounts of data to be collected in a short period of time as well as providing the opportunity to replicate the form of statistical analysis used by Bowles and Gintis. The qualitative data collected from university students would overcome a number of problems with Bowles and Gintis' methodology, namely that it over-looks cultural understandings of social reproduction. But the characteristics identified in this way could be then quantified for comparison to the data subsequently collected in this survey. This would necessarily be combined with a detailed analysis of the labour market destinations of graduates from particularly universities (or any groupings of universities that could be identified). This could be achieved using existing secondary data sources such as the Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education survey.

Conclusion

Despite the various shortcomings of this research, it has illuminated significant differences between different status universities that are arguably structural and reproductive in nature. Given the shortage of research that explores the role of universities in this way, this research makes a valuable contribution to our understanding of the experience of students. This thesis has also shown that the correspondence theory can be used to further our understanding of the relationship between HE and the labour. In this sense, the exploratory purpose of this research has proven fruitful and will potentially open up new avenues of research to further apply this theory.

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Appendices

Appendix One: Interview Schedule

- Educational background
 - Demographic data
 - Educational history
 - How and why they applied to university
- Teaching and learning
 - Amount of contact hours
 - Views on teaching staff
 - Class sizes
 - Structure of time
 - Form of independent study
- Legal profession
 - Why the participants study law
 - Views of the legal profession
 - Suitability of education for work
- Social experience
 - Extra-curricular activities
 - Living arrangements
 - Finances
 - Part-time work
- Labour market awareness
 - Career/life plans
 - Perceptions of graduate work
 - How to get graduate work

Appendix Two: List of student participants

Elite University Students:

Name	Year of Study	Form of Secondary Education	A Level Results	Place of origin
Aimee	1 st	Private (All Girls)	A*A*AA	National
Andrew	2 nd	'Selective' Church of England	AAA	National
Charlotte	3 rd	Comprehensive ('not the best')	AAB	National
Jane	2 nd	Comprehensive and Grammar	AAAA	National
Jennifer	3 rd	Comprehensive (All Girls)	AAAA	National
Claire	1 st	Private (All Girls)	A*A*AAA	National
Liz	1 st	Comprehensive	A* A* A* A*	National
Rebecca	1 st	Grammar	A*A*A*AA	National
Ronald	2 nd	Private (boarding)	Missing	National
Victor	2 nd	Mixed (some private and public)	N/A	International

Old University Students:

Name	Year of Study	Form of Secondary Education	A Level Results	Place of origin
Bashir	2 nd	Private (Malaysia)	N/A	International
Emily	3 rd	Comprehensive	AABC	Wider local
Joan	3 rd	Comprehensive	AAB	National
Joe	3 rd	Selective Entry State School	AAAA	National
Katie	3 rd	Comprehensive	AAA	Wider local
Polly	4 th (year abroad)	Comprehensive	AABB	National
Rosa	2 nd	Public high school (Canada)	N/A	International
Ruth	2 nd	Comprehensive	AAB	Wider local
Samantha	2 nd	Comprehensive	AAB	National
Samuel	3 rd	Grammar until 16 FE College for A level	Access to HE course	National

New University Students:

Name	Year of Study	Form of Secondary Education	A Level Results	Place of origin
Anna	3 rd	Comprehensive	BBC	National
Claudia	3 rd	Comprehensive	CCDD	National
Daniel	1 st	Grammar	BCD	National
David	1 st	Comprehensive	ABBC	National
Ivy	2 nd	Comprehensive	CCCD	Wider Local
Julia	3 rd	Catholic School	CDDD	National
Laura	1 st	Comprehensive	A*AB	Local
Leo	3 rd	Mature student	Missing	Local
Michael	3 rd	Comprehensive	BC	National
Michelle	1 st	Comprehensive	280 (points)	Local

Key:

Local- Same city as the University attended

Wider Local- Short distance from university attended

National- Elsewhere in the UK

International- Outside the UK

Research Project:

Title: Investigating the role of UK universities in reproducing inequality in graduate employment

Researcher: Stuart Sims

Participant Information Sheet

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

What is the purpose of the research?

The main purpose of this research is to explore how different status universities prepare their students for particular destinations in the labour market. The research seeks to understand how different teaching practices and environments lead prepare students for the labour market in different ways. Understanding both the priorities and styles of teaching and how students experience and engage with university are essential to this research. This research attempts to answer the following questions:

- How does the present Higher Education system reproduce social inequality among the graduate population?
 1. How does a hierarchical HE system prepare students for a stratified graduate labour market?
 2. How does the educational environment and experience of students vary between different status HE institutions?
 3. To what extent does UK HE serve to legitimate inequality in the graduate labour market?

Who is the researcher?

My name is Stuart Sims and I am undertaking this educational research as part of my PhD study at Cardiff University. Two senior research professors in the Cardiff School of Social Sciences supervise me and the research has been approved by the Cardiff University School of Social Sciences Ethics Committee.

Why have I been chosen?

This research requires participants who are currently engaged with the higher education system to explore any differences in the student population at different status universities. You have been chosen based upon your academic subject and how far you have currently progressed through your studies.

What do I have to do?

You are invited to participate in an interview which will cover a number of topics relating to your experiences at university. Topics covered in the

interview will include your motivations for going to university, why you chose this particular university and course and your goals for the future. During the interview we will also discuss your opinions of your university and course, particularly the style of teaching and how you engage with the university as a whole. The interview will be audiotaped and subsequently transcribed in order to accurately record what was said. The interview may take up to an hour of your time.

What will happen to the information that I give?

Only I will have access to the transcribed recordings of the interviews which will be securely stored in strict accordance with the data protection act. They will not be used for any other purpose. Any personal information that may be used to identify you will be anonymised for any publication; your participation is completely confidential. An analysis of the interviews will form part of my report at the end of the study and may be published in academic journals. You are welcome to see a copy of the articles prior to publication.

What if I wish to withdraw?

Your participation is entirely voluntary and you can withdraw at any time you wish, without giving a reason.

Contact Information

If you would like further information about the research, please do not hesitate to contact me at the following:

Stuart Sims
simssa@cardiff.ac.uk

If at any point during the research you have concerns about the way the project is being conducted, please contact:

Professor Tom Horlick-Jones
Cardiff University
Cardiff School of Social Sciences
Glamorgan Building
King Edward VII Avenue
Cardiff
CF10 3WT

Consent Form

Title: Investigating the role of UK universities in reproducing inequality in graduate employment

1. I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason.
3. I agree to take part in this study

Name of participant

Date

Signature

Name of researcher

Date

Signature

Two copies: 1 for participant and 1 for research file.