

An Investigation of the Social Construction of Labour Markets by Students in Higher Education

By Dean Stroud

Cardiff University

This thesis is submitted to the University of Wales in fulfilment of the
requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

January 2002

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my independent investigation expect where I have indebted my indebtedness to other sources.

I hereby certify that this thesis has not already been accepted in substance for any other degree, nor is it being submitted concurrently for any other degree.

I hereby give consent for my thesis, if accepted, to be available for photocopying and for inter-library loan, and for the title and summary to be made available to outside organisations.

Signature:

Candidate:

Signature:

Supervisor:

Date:

DEDICATION

For Judith Larsen, Peter Bennett and the Access Team
at Coleg Glan Hafren.

This thesis is as much a sign of your hard work
and dedication as it is mine.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This doctoral thesis would not have been possible had the Economic and Social Research Council not provided me with the funding and the School of Education (or the School of Social Sciences as it is now known) given me the opportunity. There is not the space here to mention all who have contributed to its completion, but I hope what follows goes some way to communicating my utmost thanks and gratitude.

A particular and special thank-you must go to my partner Emma Renold, whose first hand experience of the trials and tribulations of the Ph.D. process, has provided me with unwavering support and guidance. I would also like to thank Neil Selwyn, Rachel Heath and Patrick White for sharing their knowledge and friendship.

A thank-you must also go to Joseph Lowe, Natalie Farrell, Heather Fitzsimmons and Vanessa Clee, whose friendship over the last few years has helped lighten my load.

My supervisor Professor Gareth Rees warrants an extra-special thank-you. His knowledge, guidance and experience have made the completion of this Ph.D. possible. Thank you Gareth.

I would also like to thank Dr John Fitz, Dr Anthony Hesketh and Professor Ralph Fevre for their constructive comments and insight. I am also eternally grateful to the Coleg Glan Hafren Access Team, in particular Judith Larsen and Peter Bennett, who started me off on this journey and to whom I have dedicated this thesis.

Lastly, I would like to thank the students who participated in the research for giving up their time and sharing their experiences. The study would not have been possible without them, thank you.

ABSTRACT

This study is concerned with higher education students' social construction of the labour market. It is an exploration of how university students socially construct the labour market and their relationships to it, in the context of the radical and wider restructuring of British higher education. It is a qualitative study focusing on the students of 'St. David's' university in Wales. In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with a number of students of various disciplines to elicit knowledge of how relationships with the labour market are socially constructed. The relationship students socially construct with the labour market is understood in terms of the social construction of a *labour market identity*.

The place of higher education in Britain in the latter part of the twentieth century has altered radically, and the relationship the state has with higher education has been reformulated. An unprecedented expansion of student numbers, predicated on the assumption that Britain needs a more highly skilled labour-force to fulfil the needs of a competitive knowledge based economy, funded in part by student financial contributions, has necessitated an almost wholesale restructuring of higher education's organisation. Moreover, such transformations, and the discourse upon which they have been premised, have reformulated the relationship university students have with their education and the labour market opportunities that might derive from participation.

This thesis seeks to explore students' perceptions of labour market 'reality' and 'graduate employment', in light of such transformations. More significantly, drawing primarily on Pierre Bourdieu's theory of habitus - and also on Ulrich Beck's meta theories of individualisation and risk and Rees *et al's* theories of life-time learning - it is concerned with examining 'differences' in the students' evaluation and knowledge of (transformed graduate) labour market opportunity and choice, as shaped by the interpolation of social and economic relations and structures, i.e. the social construction of a labour market identity.

CONTENTS

Chapter One: Introduction

The Focus Of The Study.....	1
The Purpose Of The Study.....	3

Chapter Two: The Graduate Labour Market and Mass Higher Education Students' Labour Market Perceptions and Orientations: A Literature Review

Introduction.....	11
Graduate Employment: An Overview Of Change.....	12
Mass Higher Education and Labour Market Change.....	14
Higher Education Students' Labour Market Aspirations and Expectations..	19
Employer Screening and Students' Perceptions of Labour Market Opportunity.....	23
The Significance Of The Study.....	28
Theory as Method.....	31
Policies for the Transformation of Opportunity.....	35
Conclusion.....	38

Chapter Three: A Right of Citizenship to Higher Education

Introduction.....	41
'Rights of Citizenship': An Agenda for Higher Education Reform.....	42
The Funding and Expansion of a 'Right Of Citizenship'	46
The Language Of Human Capital Theory Within Rights Of Citizenship.....	52
Higher Education: A 'True' Right of Citizenship?.....	56
Conclusion.....	58

Chapter Four: From Rights Of Citizenship To Consumer Rights

Introduction.....	61
The Massification of Higher Education.....	63
The Financing Of A Mass System Of Higher Education.....	67

Students In A Mass System Of Higher Education.....	72
Higher Education Policy And Market-Liberal Human Capital Theory.....	78
Conclusion.....	82

Chapter Five: Methodology

Introduction.....	84
Why A Qualitative Approach?.....	84
Data Collection.....	85
<i>Negotiating Access</i>	86
<i>Contacting the Students</i>	86
<i>The Research Setting</i>	87
<i>Ethics</i>	87
<i>The Pilot Study</i>	88
<i>Collecting the data: The semi-structured interview</i>	88
<i>Data Collection: Constructing the Interview Schedule</i>	91
<i>Collecting the data: The Sampling Strategy</i>	93
Data Management and the Process of Analysis: Introduction.....	108
<i>Coding the Data</i>	109
<i>Conceptualising the Data: Using Typological Frameworks</i>	111
<i>NUD*IST 4</i>	119
Critical Reflections on the Research Design.....	112
Conclusion.....	115

Chapter Six: Students' Perceptions of Labour Market 'Reality'

Introduction.....	117
The Students' Perceptions Of Labour Market 'Reality'	120
The Students' Definitions and Perceptions of Career.....	123
Higher Education Expansion and Graduate Labour Market Restructuring...	129
Higher Education Funding and the Students' Perceptions of the Labour Market.....	134
The Students' Perceptions of Employer Demands and Employability.....	138
Conclusion.....	145

Chapter Seven: The Students' Expectations and Aspirations

Introduction.....	148
Graduate Employment: ‘High Status’ Occupations and Employment.....	151
The Students’ Expectations and Aspirations.....	154
<i>Aspirations</i>	154
<i>Expectations</i>	160
‘Appropriate Labour Market Recognition’ as ‘Status Recognition’.....	167
A Discourse of Graduate Employment: Raising Expectations.....	170
Conclusion.....	181

**Chapter Eight: The Social Construction of Labour Markets:
Forming a Labour Market Identity**

Introduction.....	184
Section One: Forming A Labour Market Identity: Using A Typological Framework	
Introduction.....	190
The Typologies: ‘Shakers’, ‘Movers’, ‘Settlers’ and ‘High-Fliers’.....	191
The Typologies: Three Criteria.....	194
Section Two: The ‘Movers’, ‘High-Fliers’ and ‘Settlers’: Roots (Routes) of Reproduction	
Introduction.....	204
Home Counties and Other Jobs: The segmentation of labour market opportunities.....	205
The Impact of Gender and Ethnicity (and Age) on Labour Market Identity....	214
<i>Gender</i>	214
<i>Ethnicity</i>	222
<i>Mature Students</i>	227
The Wider Effects Of Educational Institutions on Labour Market Identity.....	229
Conclusion.....	235

Chapter Nine: The ‘Shakers’: Roots (Routes) of Transformation

Introduction.....	238
Section Three: The ‘Shakers’	
Introduction.....	239
James, Nick and Kevin.....	240
Rowena, Pardeep and Salh.....	250
Danielle.....	261
Summary.....	269
Section Four: Labour Market Identity: Further Discussions	
Introduction.....	271
Labour market identity: the forming of labour market futures.....	271
Discourses of Opportunity and their Impact on Young Peoples’ Futures.....	280
Conclusion.....	289

Chapter Ten: Conclusion

Introduction.....	293
From Higher Education to Work: Researching the Student Experience.....	294
Higher Education And Labour Market Change.....	295
Higher Education Students’ Labour Market Perceptions.....	297
Higher Education Students’ Forming of a Labour Market Identity: A Typology.....	298
Labour Market Identity: The Forging of Fates.....	301
The Social Construction of Labour Markets.....	310
The Social Construction of Labour Markets: Some Social Policy Implications.....	319

Appendices

Appendix One: Letter for arrangement of £5 payment to interviewees....	314
Appendix Two: Letter for arrangement of £10 payment to interviewees..	315
Appendix Three: Notice advertising for participants.....	316
Appendix Four: Interview Schedule.....	317
Appendix Five: Key to interview extracts.....	319

Bibliography.....	320
--------------------------	------------

TABLES

Table 3a	Full-time student numbers in British universities, 1962/3 to 1969/70.....	49
Table 3b	Full-time and Part-time student numbers in British polytechnics	50
Table 4a.	Expansion of University and Polytechnic full-time students.....	64
Table 4b	Subject of study by sex, 1996.....	74
Table 4c	Ethnic background of students by university sector, 1996.....	75
Table 4d	Percentage of 18+ cohort entering higher education by socio-economic group.....	76
Table 5a	Single subjects assigned via faculty.....	96
Table 5b	Level of vocationalism via subject/faculty.....	97
Table 5c	First year sample by degree course, level of vocationalism and gender.....	98
Table 5d	Second year sample by degree course, level of vocationalism and gender.....	99
Table 5e	Final year sample by degree course, level of vocationalism.....	99
Table 5f	Breakdown of study sample by ethnic origin.....	100
Table 5g	First Year Students' Parental Occupation and Class, excluding mature students.....	107
Table 5h	Second Year Students' Parental Occupation and Class, excluding mature students.....	107
Table 5i	Final Year Students' Parental Occupation and Class excluding mature students.....	108
Table 5j	Mature Students' Last or Partner's Occupation and Class.....	108
Table 8a	Frequency of four labour market identity categories.....	192
Table 8b	'Shakers' labour market identity students' details.....	201
Table 8c	'Settler' labour market identity students' details.....	201
Table 8d	'High-Flier' labour market identity students' details.....	202
Table 8e	'Mover' labour market identity students' details.....	203
Table 8f	Typology by Occupational Class.....	207
Table 8g	Typology by Ethnicity.....	225
Table 8i	Type of schooling by labour market identity.....	229

MODELS

Model 8a	Typological Framework - Criterion Three.....	197
----------	--	-----

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This thesis is concerned with the social construction of labour markets by students in higher education. It is an exploration of the forces that shape and mould an individual student's perception of the (graduate) labour market. Through sixty-one semi-structured interviews with students attending an established higher education institute (HEI – i.e. St.David's), the thesis maps-out the relationship each student (as an individual within a social group) negotiates with the structures of labour market opportunity that exist more widely. The thesis's concern is with the students' interpretation of objective labour market structures, as derived from their social worlds and lived experiences.

The Focus of the Study

This thesis addresses a relatively neglected area in education/labour market (transitions) research literature: higher education students' labour market views. Certainly much has been written about employers' perspectives and the demands they have of (prospective) employees; the discussion tending to revolve around a competitive knowledge based economy's need for highly skilled labour (see DfEE 1997b; NCIHE 1997a). Much of this stresses the link between higher education and the economy. Indeed, the demands of employers are echoed in higher education reform; increasingly the relationship between the economy and higher education is seen to be direct.

When the Robbins Report (Robbins 1963: i. Emphasis added) reviewed 'the pattern of full-time higher education... in light of *national needs* and resources', the agenda for reform was

set. This link is reflected within the rich body of literature, including policy debates, devoted to an examination of the linear relationship between employer demands, ‘national needs’ and higher education (reform). However, little has been written about how students of higher education negotiate a relationship with the graduate labour market; in the context of a radically restructured higher education system and, in particular, the Learning Society discourse that surrounds it more widely. This study is a contribution to an emerging body of research that seeks to move higher education students’ experiences from the margins of that particular debate to the centre.

Over the last few decades higher education has experienced a radical transformation, finding its way from the elite margins of society to a more central role of which over a third of the British population partake. It is still an experience for the minority, but the higher education population is drawn from a much wider cross section of society than was previously the case. As will be discussed in later chapters, this social transformation is the result of a fundamental restructuring of higher education. Changes have occurred at every level of higher education’s organisation.

However, it is higher education expansion, and in more recent times the mechanisms by which it has been funded, that have impacted most on the student experience. An initial expansion recommended by the Robbins Report (Robbins 1963) was premised upon state responsibility and rights of citizenship. More recent expansion, however, has been conducted upon the principles of ‘market-individual-consumer’ (Plant and Barry 1990). The introduction of loans and tuition fees have fundamentally altered the relationship students have with higher education and the expansion of numbers – together with labour market restructuring – has had far reaching consequences for the nature of graduate employment (Ainley 1994; Brown and Scase 1994; Brown 1995; Rees and Stroud 2001). This is the context within which higher education students today socially construct their relationship with the labour market. In short, the focus of the study is how students socially construct a relationship with the labour market,

within the context of radically restructured higher education and graduate labour market sectors.

The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine, through theoretical and empirical interpretations, how university students socially construct the 'graduate labour market' and their relationship to it, in the context of the radical restructuring of British higher education (and the labour market). To this end, the thesis's concern is with the forces that mediate and structure an individual student's perception of and relationship to structures of labour market opportunity. With this in mind, what is offered is a deconstruction of complex *labour market identity* formations. From labour market identity we might understand how personal preferences and career decisions are mediated by the constraining parameters of 'social location' (for example, as white, working class and female) and the structure of possibilities for action that exist more widely (see Banks *et al* 1992; Hodkinson and Sparkes 1995; Skeggs 1997; Rees *et al* 1997; Hodkinson 1998).

It will be my contention that from this, it is possible to explain how subjective positions serve to produce and reproduce dominant value systems. It is also suggested that the contingent and contradictory ways in which an individual constructs a relationship with the structure of the labour market (a labour market identity), can work to open up spaces of contestation, transformation and resistance to (*reproduced*) predictable patterns of participation (labour market trajectories). The negotiation of these spaces differs between individual (and social group) subject positions and their relationship to (and negotiation of) wider discourses of social and economic transformation.

With the focus of the study centring on the individual student's relationship to graduate labour market opportunities - in terms of the restructuring effects of higher education

developments and discourses - the study locates itself within the growing research on the 'student experience'. It also places itself within the wider context of widespread and radical cultural change. Drawing on higher education policy discussions and the human capital discourse that hitherto dominates debate, wider inferences may be drawn on the nature of social and economic transformation and the normative focus of Learning Society discourses that dominate the transformation of (learning and labour market) opportunities.

The broader purpose of the study, then, is to place the student's social construction of labour markets within wider discourses of social and economic transformation (see Beck 1992; Rees *et al* 1997); that may or may not have an impact on the nature of (and thus the students' relationship to) learning and labour market opportunities. Integral to this discussion is a measure of the students' labour market perceptions - in particular their aspirations and expectations - in relation to the substantive and ideological restructuring of opportunity (discourse) amid the wider dissipation of collective goals (see Beck 1992). Hence, the students' narratives, the descriptions of their different experiences and the articulation of their hopes and desires in relation to wider discourses of transformation, remain central to the thesis's broader imperatives.

The broader purpose of the thesis is to understand the different dimensions of the students' social construction of the labour market. For on the one hand, the students work with discourses (perceptions) of labour market 'reality', where 'flexibility' and 'uncertainty' are believed to be common place. On the other hand, they work with discourses (perceptions) of graduate employment, where expectations (and aspirations) are constructed around the benefits most associated with those available to the graduates of previous generations. However, whilst the students speak with almost one voice about labour market insecurity and uncertainty and the specific advantages that derive from higher education participation, these narratives were not always applied in the same way to the students' *individual and personal* relationship with structures of graduate labour market opportunity. It is the purpose of this

thesis to investigate the space between the students' widely held labour market perceptions and the relationships they might construct with structures of labour market opportunity.

In light of the study's purpose, the thesis takes the following structure:

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Chapter Two has several functions. It describes recent changes in the graduate labour market and the effect they have had on students' education/labour market transitions; in light of these changes it outlines and critically appraises the literature to-date that is concerned with students' labour market perceptions. More importantly, in relation to all of the above the chapter sets out the theoretical and empirical dimensions (and research questions) of the thesis.

The chapter maps transformations in the structure of the graduate labour market and in the structure of graduate employment. For example, there have been some changes in the kinds of occupations to which having a degree has characteristically provided access. That is, the graduates of an elite system of higher education tended to enjoy employment in professional or managerial occupations, characterised by stable career progression to the higher occupational levels: the 'traditional graduate career'. Most graduates still enjoy these types of privileges. However, because they are competing with a greater number of equally well qualified people; the kind of labour market advantage hitherto enjoyed, which they may continue to expect, is not as readily available (Purcell and Pitcher 1998).

This chapter, then, describes the effects of higher education expansion on patterns of graduate employment (e.g. diversification). In acknowledging such developments, space is given to a discussion of how an ever increasing numbers of students struggle to negotiate entry to a changing graduate labour market. Attention is also given to literature on students' perceptions of the labour market, and discussions of how entry to the most coveted graduate employment

is becoming increasingly dependent on cultural capital amassed, rather than some nominal level of qualification (see, for example, Brennan *et al* 1993; Goodman 1993; Brown and Scase 1994; Purcell and Pitcher 1996a, 1996b, 1998). The thesis also looks at where the literature to-date falls short in its analysis of students' education/labour market transitions, and where this thesis - through its research questions and epistemological framework - might address previous studies' shortcomings.

In terms of the latter, the following section of the chapter discusses the thesis's theoretical framework. The thesis draws upon Pierre Bourdieu's (1977, 1979) theoretical schema of habitus and, to a much lesser extent, capital (I also acknowledge Bourdieu's further theoretical dimension of 'field'). These analytical tools provide what is necessary to understand the process by which a student's social experiences, with all personal and intellectual dimensions, shapes a student's relationship to structures of labour market opportunity. Moreover, because habitus emerges not from the context of social location alone, but from the wider context of societal transformations, this thesis also addresses the work of Ulrich Beck (1992, 2000) - and 'late modernity' - and Rees *et al* (1997) - a social theory of lifetime learning - and the context they give to transformations in learning and labour market opportunities.

Chapters Three and Four: Policy Review

The aim of these two chapters is to map the radical restructuring of higher education over the last forty years and explore its subsequent effects on the student experience. The two chapters focus on higher education policy development. They provide a context within which students negotiate a relationship with the labour market. The (changing) student experience *is* a reflection of wider economic and social restructuring within society and will, in part, shape the students' social construction of the labour market. The student experience has changed, and it is in the 'lived experiences of policy encountered by individuals during their day-to-day

lives in different social and institutional contexts' (Hesketh 1999: 394) that the social construction of the labour market exists.

Chapter Three deals with policy development during the 1960s and 1970s, focusing primarily on the recommendations of the Robbins Report (Robbins 1963) and subsequent policy implementation. *Chapter Four's* concern is with higher education policy development from the 1980s to the present day; in particular the recommendations made by the Dearing Report (NCIHE 1997a) and the policy implementation which followed. The primary focus, for both chapters, is with programmes of expansion, the political impetus for expansion and the mechanisms by which, at different times, expansion was funded. Key here is an analysis of policy development, whereby recent changes in student funding clearly reflect a shift away from discourses of 'citizenship-right-common identity' to 'market-individual-consumer' (Plant and Barry 1990).

Chapter Five: Methodology

This chapter is concerned with the theoretical and empirical methodological dimensions of the thesis. It places the study within a theoretical context, justifying its epistemological framework of enquiry. I argue that the thesis seeks to qualitatively understand the 'value laden' *process* by which students socially construct a perception of the labour market (Denzin and Lincoln 1998: 8). Further sections outline the research process: access negotiation, ethical concerns, the forming of an interview schedule and so forth. Particular attention is paid to the sampling strategy, collection of the data by semi-structured interview and the use of the qualitative computer package NUD*IST, in the final analysis.

Chapters Six and Seven: Empirical

The first two empirical chapters explore the students' aspirations and expectations in relation to wider perceptions of labour market opportunity structures. The chapters serve to update the research on students' labour market orientations and perceptions. More importantly they serve

to reconceptualise the student's relationship in terms of competing labour market and employment discourses: discourses of labour market 'reality' and graduate employment. In the two discourses being separate but spoken about by the students as in parallel with one another, a tension becomes apparent in the students' labour market perceptions. Later in the thesis the focus is on the space (tension) between the students' expectations and aspirations and what is 'truly' regarded as appropriate and available within wider structures of labour market opportunity.

Chapter Six describes and discusses the students' *perceptions* of labour market 'reality'. Dealing with the graduate labour market in its wider context, the chapter explores the effects of labour market restructuring and higher education policy developments on the students' labour market perceptions. Key here is a discourse of labour market 'reality', which is used by the students to describe a more competitive and less secure graduate labour market, where 'jobs-for-life' have given way to more flexible patterns of employment.

Chapter Seven examines how the students project onto labour market 'reality' their expectations and aspirations. What becomes clear is that the students use a discourse of graduate employment that coexists and competes with the discourse of labour market 'reality' described above. The purpose of this chapter is to highlight the tension between the two discourses, giving an insight into how the students relate to wider labour market and higher education developments. I discuss the students' expectations and aspirations in terms of them being part of a dominant discourse of graduate employment. The wider discussion is framed in terms of Weberian notions of status honour, status groups and social closure. This chapter identifies what it is that the students expect of graduate employment per se, thus giving context to the later empirical chapters that focus on the relationship each student strikes-up with the labour market.

Chapters Eight and Nine: Empirical

These two chapters explore directly the relationship a student constructs with structures of labour market opportunity. Where previous chapters centre on the students' perceptions of the graduate labour market, chapters eight and nine concentrate on those factors that structure practice more widely. Essentially, the focus of the chapter is the theorisation of students' *labour market identities*, through a typological framework. A labour market identity, as conceptualised within the thesis, embraces the individual student's own perception of him or herself in relation to their knowledge of structures of labour market opportunity. The student's evaluation of alternative courses of action, the conceptualisation of that that is available and appropriate, as the product of labour market identity, reflects his or her personal preferences as mediated by social experience.

The conceptualisation of the students' labour market identities within a typological framework, that is relational in its structure, works to enable the categorisation of different subject positions and their relationship to wider structures (discourses) of labour market opportunity. The intention is to build a framework that draws attention to the seeming rigidity of patterns of labour market participation (labour market trajectories) - even where the expansion of educational opportunities (e.g. higher education expansion) is potentially transformative. Thus, the thesis is also concerned with labour market identities as central to shaping labour market trajectories.

Chapter eight is in two sections. Section one describes the forming of the typological framework and how each student is categorised within a labour market identity type: as a '*Shaker*', '*Mover*', '*Settler*' or '*High-Flier*'. In section two we deal with the forming of three of the labour market identities: the '*Settlers*', the '*Movers*' and the '*High-Fliers*'. The focus of this section is on how 'social location' influences *wholly* the movement and relations of students to other social positions (Skeggs 1997). That is, how the resources of background –

in the broadest terms – lead precisely to (i.e. reproduce) the type of relationship with the labour market that we might have normally expected.

Chapter Nine is also in two sections. The first section focuses on the remaining labour market identity, the ‘Shakers’, who manage to negotiate a new and different set of relations with labour market opportunities to those students previously discussed. This is despite their often working within similar social constraints. Within the theoretical framework of the thesis, my contention is that they transcend habitus, and set up the possibility of following what might be considered unexpected labour market trajectories. A second section (Section Four) to this chapter looks more closely at the implications of labour market identity. I discuss what it means to be a ‘Shaker’, ‘Mover’, ‘High-Flier’ or ‘Settler’. I also look more closely at the way learning opportunities are presented and how this might impact on a student’s social construction of the labour market. I develop further a theme that runs throughout the thesis, where educational opportunities are taken to be part of ‘normative’ Learning Society (human capital) discourse.

Chapter Ten: Conclusion

The final chapter draws together the strands of the thesis to discuss in a broader context the students’ social construction of the labour markets. Where labour market restructuring and higher education developments have changed the face of graduate employment, early chapters have concentrated on providing a context for later empirical chapters. The subsequent empirical chapters focused on the shaping of the students’ labour market perceptions. Firstly, I focused on the students’ reading and internalisation of separate labour market discourses. Secondly, and more significantly, the thesis focused on how differences in social class, gender and ethnicity impact on the students’ internalised perceptions of their employability, i.e. a labour market identity. I draw all of this together into a broader discussion of students’ social construction of labour markets. The chapter (and thesis) concludes by relocating the ‘findings’ of the study within wider policy debates.

CHAPTER TWO

THE GRADUATE LABOUR MARKET AND MASS HIGHER EDUCATION STUDENTS' LABOUR MARKET PERCEPTIONS AND ORIENTATIONS: A LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Higher education has expanded massively over the last few decades, especially during the 1990s. More people, from a much wider cross section of society, are now entering higher education. Government rhetoric has placed as central the economy's need for a more highly skilled labour-force and this has been realised in a system of mass higher education. As a consequence graduates are now entering a very different labour market than was previously the case, precisely because the supply and demand conditions for graduates have changed with the expansion of higher education. However, there is precious little evidence on how an increasing number of students perceive and engage with what is a rapidly changing 'graduate' labour market. In contrast there is much evidence on employers' demands for graduates¹. This study goes some way to addressing this imbalance.

Some studies have attempted to shed light on how students perceive and engage with the labour market. Brown and Scase (1994) - and to a much lesser extent Goodman (1993) - provide a penetrating overview of students' labour market orientations at a time of rapid labour market restructuring. Purcell and Pitcher (1996a, 1996b, 1998) provide an account of

¹ Both the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) and the Association of Graduate Recruiters (AGR) report annually on students' destinations. Some HEIs astutely record their students' labour market activities and numerous other studies exist on the supply, demand and location of graduates (see for example Pearson and Pike 1988; Brennan and McGeevor 1988; Boys and Kirkland 1988a, 1988b; Brennan *et al* 1993; Brown and Scase 1994; NCIHE 1997d; Harvey *et al* 1997; CSU 1999; Purcell, Pitcher and Simm 1999).

undergraduates' aspirations and expectations for employment. In addition to the aforementioned, Purcell, Pitcher and Simm (1999) and the CSU (1999) look at graduates' early experiences of the labour market. Much of this research finds students '...basically hop(ing) and expect(ing) to have the kind of career for which a degree has traditionally provided entry' (Purcell and Pitcher 1996a: 40) and, moreover, largely 'ill prepared for the realities of work in the 1990s' (Brown and Scase 1994: 113).

What this chapter serves to do is introduce the reader to the evidence to date on (mass) higher education students' labour market perceptions and orientations and appraise critically the literature in the context of this study's wider theoretical and empirical aims. In this regard, the chapter also works to set out the significance of this study and the study's research questions. Firstly, however, to provide a context for these discussions (and the thesis's wider arguments), we take a closer look at how the nature of graduate employment has changed in recent years.

Graduate Employment: An Overview of Change

It might be said that the right to work in a job or career of one's choice is an inalienable civil right; 'In the economic field the basic civil right is the right to work, that is to say the right to follow the occupation of one's choice' (Marshall 1964: 75). However, to perform a task one often requires the appropriate training. Hence, the civil right to choose one's work needs to be qualified so that it is 'subject only to legitimate demands for preliminary technical training' (Marshall 1964: 75). It might, therefore, be surmised that if an individual pursues 'training' they would have the necessary skills to pursue the career or job of their choice. Graduates could, then, be deemed to be in the relatively virtuous position of being highly qualified, through 'training', to follow 'the occupation of one's choice'.

However, the restructuring of higher education, industry, organisations and the labour market has led to a change in the demand for graduate skills (Purcell and Pitcher 1996a). For instance, an increasing number of graduates has led to 'graduate employment' becoming less concentrated and more diverse than in the past. Hence, a graduate's future is much less certain than was previously the case (Goodman 1993; Brown and Scase 1994; Murphy 1994; Purcell and Pitcher 1996a). Of course, despite shifts in the nature of the labour market a degree is still on the whole a passport to gainful employment. However, the 'civil right' following 'training' to the 'occupation of *choice*' is, perhaps, much less guaranteed (if it ever was) than previously.

Nevertheless, on average graduates are more likely than others to find employment and likely to earn more than those with A levels (NCIHEa 1997; Connor 1997). However, as far as employment opportunities are concerned, the 1990s graduate tends to experience something quite different to that, say, of a 1960s graduate. Certainly, the stability once afforded to graduates in terms of the well-worn path into a managerial level 'job for life' - or what is often referred to as the 'traditional graduate career' - has been somewhat eroded by the ever-changing demands of a global market economy and subsequent (more local) shifts in the nature of the labour market and education policy, e.g. mass higher education (Brown and Scase 1994).

Of course, this is not to say that graduates have stopped locating in the types of jobs and employment structures that we have long associated with graduate employment. Graduates still tend to be absorbed into 'elite' (e.g. doctor) and 'traditional' (e.g. management) graduate types of work. The number of graduates has increased massively however, and this has created more competition for conventional (or 'traditional') forms of graduate employment. Consequently, some graduates have been displaced into employment that in the past would

have been filled by those with lower levels of qualification. Hence, graduates are entering a far more *diverse* range of occupations than might have otherwise been expected².

Goodman (1993) suggests that traditional forms of graduate employment have become a route for only a tiny share of graduates, although this might be overstating things somewhat. For instance, we might take into account the cyclical nature of graduate employment and the unevenness of shifts in structures of employment per se (see Murphy 1994; Goffee and Scase 1996). However, this is not to deny that significant changes have occurred in the nature of the graduate labour market and graduate employment. Many of the changes in graduate employment have run parallel with developments in higher education. Other changes have emerged from a wider process of labour market restructuring, that have taken place in response to Britain's changing position within a global economy (see Brown and Scase 1994; Brown 2001).

Mass Higher Education and Labour Market Change

Higher education has become increasingly geared toward the needs of employers and the economy. In more recent years particularly, liberal educational ideals have been displaced by higher education's 'increasing responsive(ness) to employment needs and... the development of general skills, widely valued in employment' (NCIHE 1997a: 21)³. More particularly, the responsibility to invest in higher education has increasingly fallen on the individual; with the broader aim of enhancing individual labour market opportunities whilst simultaneously meeting wider demands for a more highly skilled labour-force⁴.

² The CSU (1999) in their analysis of graduate employment experiences refer to 'diversification' as 'underemployment'.

³ The development of higher education policy will be dealt with in more detail in the following two chapters.

⁴ Crucial here is the discourse that dominates higher education policy (and Learning Society) debate more widely: (market-liberal) human capital theory (See Coffield 1996; Rees *et al* 1997; Marginson 1997).

Certainly, it has been argued that global developments necessitate a more highly skilled labour-force and that employers increasingly desire employees that are more highly skilled;

‘The impacts of rapidly developing technologies, increasing international competition and industrial change are powerful and interlinked forces which continue to place increased demands on the skills of the labour force.’

(DfEE 1997b: i)

In fact, the restructuring of employment is more complex than the above statement suggests, with contradictory trends and fierce disputes over what is ‘really’ happening. There is, however, little doubt that labour market and occupational structures are changing. For instance, there has been a decline in the British Primary and Manufacturing industry. The production of motor vehicles and steel, for example, form much less part of Britain’s economy and absorb much less of the labour-force than previously. This has coincided with a growth in the Service industries based on information technology and financial and consumer services. More particularly, the demand for more highly skilled labour - both in services and manufacturing - is argued to have emerged from Britain’s shift towards a ‘knowledge based economy’ (DfEE 1997b)⁵. Of course, the correlation between macro-economic shifts and the need for a more highly skilled labour-force is considerably more complex than is suggested here (see, for example, OECD 2001).

Parallel to wider structural change in the British economy are shifts in occupational structure. For instance, there have been increases in temporary, part-time and contingent employment (Purcell and Purcell 1998). These types of employment absorb more women into the labour-force, whilst the numbers employed full-time in permanent work have decreased (DfEE 1997b). The trends described above are mirrored by the imposition of new productive methods, based on a fragmented labour-force, flexible labour and flatter forms of

⁵ There is more of an emphasis, in employment structure, on ‘knowledge based’ services (and manufacturing) that favour the more highly qualified (CSU 1999). For instance, a shift to a service based economy might not necessarily lead to more highly skilled employment, particularly in sectors dominated by women and ethnic minorities (Rees and Fielder 1992).

organisation. Graduate employment structures, in particular, are claimed to have developed beyond 'bureaucratic' and rigidly hierarchical structures of employment, to be more 'adaptive' and flexible. What flows from this are consequences for skill demands (Brown and Scase 1994; Brown 1995). For instance, it is suggested that employers are placing an increasingly high premium on generic and transferable skills. However, as with sectoral shifts, it is difficult to identify any single shift in the employment experience or the nature and effect of skill change; trends conflict and there is no real uniformity in labour market restructuring (see Rees and Fielder 1992; Parsons and Marshall 1996)⁶.

Nevertheless, despite the complex nature of labour market transformation and the ambiguity surrounding the demand for highly skilled labour (and types of skills), it seems that educational and training qualifications play an increasingly important part in employers' (and government) efforts to satisfy skills demands. In short, there is a shift towards *credentialism* - both in terms of government rhetoric and (some) employers' demands (Tight 1998; Rees *et al* 1997b). Certainly national education targets reflect the need to encourage more individuals to accumulate ever more credentials, with employers and policy makers often reading high levels of credentials to mean high skills (see Young 1998; Fuller and Unwin 1999). Hence, prospects for school-leavers have changed radically. Shifts in the nature of work and the structure of youth employment opportunities have led to the development of a multitude of post-compulsory education and training programmes, fundamentally altering the post school transition (Roberts 1995)⁷.

This said, the expansion of post-school education must *not* be seen to be determined by the need for a highly skilled labour-force alone. This would oversimplify the changes that have

⁶ Arguments as to whether skills levels will necessarily rise (en-skilling), fall (de-skilling) or indeed polarise, depend on the approach an organisation or industry may adopt (See Braverman 1974; Bell 1974; Gallie 1991). Though post-Fordist demands for 'flexibility' appear widespread (Brown and Scase 1994; Brown 1995; Casey *et al* 1997; Purcell and Purcell 1998).

⁷ This is alongside the setting of national education and training targets for qualifications e.g. 60% of the workforce qualified to NVQ level 3 by 2000.

taken place (see Roberts 1995; Rees *et al* 1996). Nevertheless, more young (*and* more mature) people are entering further and higher education than ever before and from a much wider cross section of society; the connection between higher education and the needs of the economy becoming more direct⁸. Indeed this can be viewed in terms of a wider Learning Society discourse, that reduces ‘improved economic growth’ and ‘national economic competitiveness’ to the expansion of educational opportunities and their exploitation by individuals (Coffield 1996; Rees *et al* 1997; Tight 1998).

The nature of higher education has been fundamentally altered to suit the demands of the economy. As Tight (1998: 254-255) argues ‘the British ‘traditions’ of academic/elite higher education and vocational/remedial further education have been swept aside, and replaced by a mass post-compulsory education system’ to meet the national economic imperative. The greater restructuring of the labour market and the reformulation of the relationship that higher education has with the economy - the new political economy of higher education, exemplified in the conditions of its expansion - has created a new labour market environment for graduates (CSU 1999);

‘these changes introduce a degree of uncertainty into the labour market. As new areas of work emerge, new graduates have to ‘carve out’ career routes rather than follow in the footsteps of their predecessors. Not only are graduates having to seek out new areas of work, they also have to compete with a much larger group of equally well qualified contenders.’

(CSU 1999: 2)

The relative value of higher education qualifications, with expansion, is changing and there is an increasing *diversity* in graduate labour market placement, trajectory and the nature of benefits available (See Rees and Stroud 2001). Ultimately, graduate recruitment is altering fundamentally and this is ‘flowing through fitfully into wider and more uncertain job markets for graduates’ (Goodman 1993: ii).

⁸ Indeed the expansion of higher education may be viewed in terms of targets, with both Conservative (30%) and Labour (50%) administrations setting targets for expansion.

The shift to a buyers market has resulted in graduates slowly being ‘forced’ and displaced into jobs and sectors that traditionally have had little need for graduates (Murphy 1994)⁹. Subsequently, and perhaps unsurprisingly, the employment benefits widely available to the graduates of an elite higher education system, have become less easy to negotiate for those graduates of a mass system. Thus concepts of graduate employment need to be redefined to incorporate the increasing diversification of graduate employment - in terms of structure, employment conditions and areas of work;

‘As increasing proportions of the population obtain higher education qualifications, it is likely that the definition of ‘graduate employment’ and the relative advantage of such qualifications to individuals will change as the range and diversity for career outcomes increases.’

(Purcell and Pitcher 1998: 181)

There has always been a degree of diversity to what comprises graduate employment. However, the notion of what graduate employment is has become even more heterogeneous, developing beyond concepts most associated with traditional graduate employment. As graduates begin to experience employment that is increasingly characterised by different career structures and untypical areas of work, the concept of *diversification* becomes central to the understanding of students’ higher education experience and their labour market expectations, aspirations and perceptions. As yet, however, it is only imperfectly understood how graduates relate to and perceive the shifts in graduate employment.

⁹ Of new graduates; a Government ‘Highly Qualified People’ survey found two-thirds of newly recruited graduates in jobs that could be performed adequately by those with A-levels and training or workers with experience (HMSO 1990: 30). Only 65% of graduates in 1995 in employment were in jobs which required their degree, although 82% in employment said they used aspects of their degree (CSU 1999). Moreover, a significant minority of graduates are being displaced into positions and sectors for which, traditionally, a degree would not usually be required (Murphy 1994, Connor 1997, Purcell and Pitcher 1998; CSU 1999).

Higher Education Students' Labour Market Aspirations and Expectations

Higher education is routinely presented as a means of increasing access to more desirable employment opportunities and improved financial returns¹⁰. Indeed, the funding of higher education today is predicated on the wider assumption that individuals benefit most from participation. It is important to recognise this in the analysis of students' social construction of labour markets, for policy changes themselves have taken on a view of the higher education/employment relationship and how students 'should' see it. In this regard, the promise of improved life chances (or raised expectations) - mainly in employment/financial terms - is the axiom upon which (students') individual investment in higher education is (or should be) based. This is what informs students' labour market expectations and, more particularly, gives shape to many students' aspirations for the future.

Graduate employment tends to be most often conceptualised (and presented) in terms of the 'traditional' graduate career - advancement into a secure management position, characterised by steady promotion through a hierarchical structure. This has become an entrenched concept and is still the most coveted outcome by the majority of students. Certainly the majority of higher education based employment studies find many students' primary aspirations, and indeed their expectations, to be constructed around the 'traditional' graduate career. However, some commentators argue that this structure of employment is in rapid decline, and that students' expectations are becoming increasingly out-dated (see Goodman 1993; Brown and Scase 1994; Harvey *et al* 1997).

Studies concerned with students' perceptions of employment opportunities find them continuing to aspire to *and* expect 'traditional' structures and conditions of employment; there is 'not much evidence that graduate expectations are changing' (Purcell and Pitcher 1996a: 1);

¹⁰ Students' strongest motives for entering higher education are instrumental (NCIHE 1997d).

“Once I’m there I can always progress. I might apply to a chartered accountants but I’ll see... Whatever I go into I’ll move up the ladder... but I don’t get a career until I’ve moved into management and then I’ll see myself working my way up....”

(Brown and Scase 1994: 94)

“Being in a stable, secure job where one’s ability is recognised and the chances of promotion are there.”

(Brown and Scase 1994: 95)

Of course, it is not suggested that all students expect or even aspire to this type of employment. Brown and Scase (1994: x), for instance, although working with a ‘relatively small number of students’, identify two clusters of student orientation, the ‘conformist’ and the ‘non-conformist’, the latter of which it is argued reject any notion of ‘career’¹¹. More recently it has been suggested that young people, the highly educated in particular, increasingly seek to avoid such rigid structures of employment and aspire to less linear and more flexible career patterns (Du Bois Reymond 1998).

However, whilst it is acknowledged that students’ aspirations are wide ranging, Brown and Scase found students to possess an overwhelming inclination towards the traditional graduate career or what they term the ‘traditional bureaucratic’ orientation. This claim was made for students from all types of HEI and for students from across all social backgrounds. Similarly, Purcell and Pitcher (1996a: ii, 1998) found students to be quite unreconstructed in terms of either their aspirations or expectations, finding ‘most students still aspired to a traditional ‘graduate’ career and, were reasonably optimistic that they would be able to realise their

¹¹The non-conformists are characterised by orientation as the ‘drop-out’, the ‘marginalist’, the ‘socially committed’ and the ‘ritualist’. In short, non-conformist graduates seek to avoid the notion of a ‘career’. These categories of students have little interest in a career and are more socially than career motivated - regarding work merely as a means to an income. The conformists are categorised as the ‘traditional bureaucratic’, the ‘flexible’ and the ‘entrepreneurial’. Those of the ‘traditional bureaucratic’ orientation seek the archetypal ‘job-for-life’ career structure. Those of the ‘flexible’ and ‘entrepreneurial’ orientations incorporate into their expectations more recent organisational changes in the labour market. However, the ‘socially committed’ category remains problematic. Brown and Scase fail to explain how ‘socially committed’ non-conformists such as those taking medicine, nursing or social work degrees, in many ways choose careers that fit with stereotypical ‘traditional bureaucratic’ career structures.

ambitions'¹². However, many of the same commentators claim that such expectations are unrealistic (see Goodman 1993; Brown and Scase 1994; Purcell and Pitcher 1996a, 1998). Trends towards team working, more flexible working practices and flatter forms of organisation - what Brown and Scase (1994) describe as a shift in 'organisational paradigms' (from the 'bureaucratic' (hierarchical) to 'adaptive' (flatter/flexible) paradigm) - have supposedly signalled the demise of the 'traditional' graduate career.

However, while an increasing number of students might create real competition for the most coveted positions - which might or might not be traditional in structure - real patterns of labour market change are much more complex than some commentators suggest. There is some evidence of flatter and more flexible working practices, particularly in larger organisations. Equally, however, many areas of (graduate) employment have not restructured in this way. As Goffee and Scase (1996) argue, it might be that the predicted end of bureaucratic forms of organisation was premature. Indeed, evidence suggests that it is perhaps not too unrealistic of students to either aspire to or expect this type of employment structure. Indeed, for the most part graduates remain employed in high numbers within companies and professions (e.g. medicine) where 'advancement' does mean climbing some kind of well defined occupational hierarchy and traditional career structure (CSU 1999; Purcell, Pitcher and Simm 1999).

Rather, it is that graduate employment is becoming much more diverse than was previously the case and more graduates are being displaced into types of employment not 'traditionally'

¹² The traditional graduate career grew out of early programmes of higher education expansion and has become an expectation ever since. The 1960/70s increasing number of graduates began to be absorbed into middle and junior management; 'We are approaching quite rapidly now a situation in which graduates, in some disciplines, will be plentiful - possibly in oversupply. Until now graduates have been brought up by the system to expect higher status positions throughout society. Industry, certainly, has competed for them as a scarce commodity. With a profound and surprisingly rapid change in the supply position we are beginning to move into a situation where they become the normal recruits of industry and fill junior and middle management grades' (Flunder 1970: 180). Thus, many graduates located in middle and junior management 'job-for-life' positions and thereafter such employment became defined as the 'traditional' graduate route and structure (Brown and Scase 1994). This quickly

defined as graduate. As such, we might question the university graduates' (hopes for the) well-worn path into professional or managerial occupations. However, at present graduates are still locating in significant numbers in to the more 'elite' and 'traditional' areas of graduate employment, e.g. management, law, medicine, architecture, and so forth. Recent graduate employment studies highlight the success graduates have had in finding employment regarded as conventionally graduate in nature (see CSU 1999; Purcell, Pitcher and Simm 1999). The CSU (1999), for example, found the vast majority of graduates (85%) to be in employment defined (objectively and subjectively) as 'traditionally graduate' three years after graduation¹³. Hence, it is important to emphasise the taking account of students' labour market trajectories over time (see Rees *et al* 1997) – a failing of some previous commentators (e.g. Murphy 1994).

However, there have been real changes in graduate employment for *some* students - particularly non-traditional students. Graduate numbers have expanded significantly in recent years and the number of traditional graduate jobs has failed to keep pace - despite arguments that the economy needs a greater number of more highly skilled workers. The graduate surplus, though small, has been forced (and has chosen) to take-up positions formerly occupied by those with lesser qualifications (see Murphy 1994). It also clear that many employers are using a degree as an access criterion for jobs where A-levels or vocational qualifications were used before (Rees and Stroud 2001). Equally, however, occupations which previously recruited non-graduates may be experiencing up-skilling (Purcell and Pitcher 1996a). Nevertheless, with the number of graduates increasing -and expected to do so for some time - the competition for the 'best' jobs *has* grown and the type of labour market

became part of student aspirations. A study of graduates in 1982 found the primary aspiration for future employment was for 'A job which gives me good long-term career' (Boys and Kirkland 1988a: 21).

¹³ The CSU define a graduate job from two perspectives - the objective and the subjective - 'via an objective assessment of occupations in which they (graduates) worked' and in subjective terms; a graduates perceptions of what skills the job required and how the use of those skills related to their degree course (CSU 1999: 13).

advantage that once could have been expected by graduates is no longer *as* available (Purcell and Pitcher 1998).

Moreover, there is a real cleavage that exists in the type of student forced into 'diversified' employment and those who enter traditional graduate employment. As employers are faced with more graduates than ever before, the means of differentiating between applicants for the best jobs is coming to rest increasingly on a student's 'social profile' - as opposed to some nominal level of qualification (see Brennan *et al* 1993). The evidence of commentators such as Brennan *et al* (1993), Brown and Scase (1994) and Purcell and Pitcher (1996a, 1996b, 1998), indicate that a student's 'social profile' (class, gender, ethnicity, age), including HEI attended and degree course taken, has a real and increasing bearing on labour market opportunity - from the employers' perspective and, as I intend to show later in the thesis, from the students' perspective also.

Employer Screening and Students' Perceptions of Labour Market Opportunity

Brown and Scase (1994: 21-22) argue that whilst 'it remains to be seen whether British companies will make a significant move from bureaucratic to adaptive organisational forms', entry to the more desirable jobs will be increasingly defined by "cultural code" in relation to an individual's social class, ethnicity, gender, HEI attended and so forth. Of course it has always been the case that 'social profile' has been a determinant of (educational and) labour market opportunity. It is simply that with mass higher education the competition is becoming more intense, particularly for those non-traditional students who are on the fringes of 'acceptability'. Graduates are in competition for work with a greater number of equally well qualified individuals. What flows from this is an increasing reliance by employers, when choosing prospective employees, on measures other than nominal qualification levels and the displacement of some graduates into lower levels of employment.

Some commentators argue that the adoption of more 'adaptive' working practices is leading some employers to differentiate between graduate applicants on a new set of criteria. As the type of skills suited to more 'bureaucratic' and rigid hierarchical working patterns lose space to the more adaptive working practices - required by organisations adopting flatter and more flexible occupational structures - the 'suitability', 'acceptability' and 'capability' of prospective employees is measured in more personal and cultural capital intensive terms than previously was the case (Brown and Scase 1994: 116. See also Harvey *et al* 1997). In other words, organisations' wider recruitment strategies are becoming increasingly geared towards identifying those deemed to have the requisite skills and aptitudes in terms of the cultural capital an individual has amassed, rather than by the level of qualification possessed. Of course, it could be that Brown and Scase overstate the organisational paradigmatic/recruitment-strategy link. Indeed, it is perhaps more likely that the 'massification' of higher education has meant the intensity and use of this type of recruitment strategy is spread across *all* forms of organisational paradigm, as *all* types of employers are forced to differentiate between an increasing number of highly qualified individuals.

The expansion of higher education has certainly rendered graduate qualifications more common. Thus, when recruiting for the best and most desired jobs evidence suggests that employers are increasingly screening prospective employees by measures such as social background and the status of an applicant's credentials, e.g. university attended (see Brennan *et al* 1993; Ainley 1994; Murphy 1994; Brown 1995);

'Employers will become increasingly discerning about the status of credentials as well as the personal qualities of the individuals possessing them. As graduate qualifications become more common, some graduates will become more equal than others. A degree from Oxbridge or a civic university will carry more weight than one from a new university.'

(Brown and Scase 1994: 168)

The type of institution attended is a status credential that carries labour market advantage through ‘reputation’, which is subsequently conferred upon the HEIs’ graduates (Brennan *et al* 1993; Brown and Scase 1994, Brown 1995)¹⁴. Of course, this type of differentiation is long-standing, but with an increasing number of graduates and the number of ‘traditionally’ graduate employment opportunities failing to keep pace, the ‘status’ of credentials becomes more telling (Brown 1995);

‘Employers don’t even bother to interview you if you’ve studied here. They go for students from (more established universities)’.

(Male Sociology student, New university. Purcell and Pitcher 1996a: 33)

‘I have been amazed (shocked even) at what a difference having (an Oxbridge) degree makes, particularly in law. The old boy’s network is most definitely alive and well. I have benefited from it but I do think it is very unfair to equally able applicants from other universities.’

(Female History/Law student from Old University. Purcell and Pitcher 1996a: 33)

There is a hierarchy of HEIs and in the type of university a student attends. This moreover, in a similar way extends to degree course completed. These have become critical factors in the measure of a student’s employability (Brown 1995). Principally, for employers, an education system stratified by institution can act as a ‘screening device’ to ensure the recruitment of graduates with the correct set of characteristics from the correct institution.

This ‘hierarchy of academic worth’ reflects ‘social differences’ rather than ‘the outcome of a meritocratic race’ (Brown and Scase 1994: 168). It is about a system of ‘supportive interplay between systems of stratification in both higher education and the labour market’ (Brennan *et al* 1993: 93). Certainly, the process by which a graduate gets a job and which type of job a graduate is likely to get appears to be decided long before entry to higher education; ‘there

¹⁴ It is certainly the case that polytechnic and college (new university) graduates, who are more likely to be of a lower socio-economic group (Metcalf 1993), take longer to gain employment and have higher rates of unemployment than those who attend established universities. This is despite such

is... a strong relationship between student social profile and eventual labour market experiences' - particularly when 'social profile' is distilled to cultural capital amassed (Brennan *et al* 1993: 22). An individual's 'cultural capital' is a reflection of 'social profile' and is increasingly becoming the defining measure of employability. More significantly, in the social construction of labour market opportunity, such factors influence and determine one's perception of and location within the labour market - of what is 'appropriate' and 'available' to the individual (Brennan *et al* 1993; Brown and Scase 1994; Hodgkinson and Sparkes 1995; Purcell and Pitcher 1996a).

To the extent that employers differentiate between applicants on such criteria, graduates from less prestigious institutions, 'non-traditional entrants' to higher education, and those who have completed newly-established or unconventional degree programmes are systematically disadvantaged in the competition for employment (Brown 1995). This is not without an adverse effect on the 'student experience' and is successful in creating a wider labour market neurosis across the student population;

'Many jobs now ask for people who have degrees, which 5 years earlier would never have attracted graduates. It is little wonder that, at present, students like myself are concerned about future employment prospects.'

'When I began the course, I felt certain that a degree in Law would guarantee me a job. I also believed that the career I had chosen would be there for the taking when I left. However, from the experience of other graduates I have realised that the view I had was idealistic.'

(Female Law Mid-century university; Purcell and Pitcher 1996a: 39)

students being overwhelmingly vocational in orientation and suggests a system of informal stratification in the employment destinations of graduates (Brennan *et al* 1993).

‘I am quite apprehensive regarding my future prospects as, due to the experiences of family and friends, I am under no illusions as to the state of employment. I mean not only the number of jobs available (i.e. very few) but the quality of those jobs. In my opinion, hardly anyone can expect to have a career these days. There is no long term security; the days are gone when you had a job for life.I expect I will be confronted, in the main, with part-time, job-share and/or temporary work, or no work at all! It’s not the transition from education to employment that I’m worried about, it’s having an opportunity to make that transition.’

(Female interdisciplinary Mid-century university. Purcell and Pitcher 1996a: 38)

Of course, the evidence suggests that the majority of students will find conventional types of graduate employment (CSU 1999). At the same time, however, evidence also suggests that students feel increasingly vulnerable to labour market developments. Greater competition between students, the increasing diversification of graduate employment and the increasing likelihood that graduates will be forced to (and choose to) change jobs is increasing the levels of insecurity felt by students (Brown and Scase 1994).

Indeed, the effects of increased competition for work and within the workplace have meant that differentiating yourself from the next graduate, through postgraduate study or degree classification for example, is becoming an increasing concern for many students;

‘one of the issues preoccupying them (students) most of the time when they were required to complete the survey was the class of degree they would obtain. The focus group discussions indicated very clearly that there was a general perception that employers are increasingly regarding Upper Second Class Honours as a threshold, below which they do not short-list candidates, and there was much reference ‘to the essential 2.1’ at all the institutions where we talked to students.’

(Purcell and Pitcher 1996a: 20)

‘I came to university in the hope of improving my career opportunities. I previously worked in the Civil Service. Now 4 years later, not only am I in debt but also feel forced to undertake postgraduate study in order to offer “that little bit extra” to potential employers’.

(Female mature Law/Arts student, Mid-century University: Purcell and Pitcher 1996a: 32)

To this end, students exhibit behaviour, and moreover a perception of the labour market, where there is competition for ‘individual career opportunities’, which rests upon the ‘interchangeability of qualifications’ and relies on the individual ‘advertising the individuality and uniqueness’ of their ‘accomplishments’ (Beck 1992: 94);

‘Being in a stable, secure job where one’s ability is recognised and the chances of promotion are there. There’s more to it as well... I think maybe the fact that I’m a black male might actually enhance my chances in certain jobs because I know for a fact that some boroughs are crying out for black social workers, and the probation service as well. Besides which I’m the right age. I’ve got experience of life and experience of working as a social worker, so all of these are plus factors.’

(Brown and Scase 1994: 95)

What all of this suggests is that the student experience has been fundamentally altered. Higher education policy developments have certainly impacted on the students’ relationship with higher education and the labour market more widely. The development of higher education policy, in particular, has taken on a view of the higher education/employment relationship and how it ‘should’ be. This has filtered through into a more nervous student population, whose focus has increasingly become labour market centred - but nevertheless unreconstructed in terms of expectations. It is against this background that this study takes its lead, shaping the significance of the study and informing its research questions.

The Significance of the Study

The development of British higher education to a mass system has changed fundamentally the student (and graduate) experience, especially in relation to the labour market. The insistence by government and others that Britain’s economic competitiveness is shaped by our ability to supply labour for a knowledge-driven economy, has led to a radical restructuring of the supply and demand conditions for graduates. However, the relationship between the student of a mass higher education and the labour market is still only partially understood. This is especially so in relation to the body of research concerned with a wider understanding of

students' own labour market perspectives. The significance of this thesis, then, is that it adds to the body of research that explores the relationship the student of mass higher education system has with the labour market. More significantly, it addresses theoretically and empirically a gap in the literature that asks how students socially construct and manage their employability, against the background of a rapidly changing graduate labour market.

The significance of this study is made much clearer when it is considered against the existing body of research. As can be noted from previous sections, other studies provide interesting insights into overarching patterns of students' labour market perceptions and orientations¹⁵. However, little attention has previously been paid to a closer inspection of the individual student's lived experiences and the subsequent impact they have on shaping students' perceptions of labour market opportunity. It is clear, for instance, that whilst Purcell and Pitcher (1996a) focus on a changing 'graduate' labour market and, in this context, students' aspirations and expectations, they fail to provide a significant analysis of the complexity of individuals' agendas and priorities as the product of their lived and social experience. The study provides an overview of higher education students' labour market perceptions, but in failing to tackle an understanding of the social and economic parameters within which individuals work it lacks sociological depth¹⁶.

Equally, Brown and Scase (1994) are also concerned with a changing graduate labour market, though in the context of how organisations' wider restructuring impacts on the graduate recruitment process. However, whilst they bring forward an understanding of capital relations as central to accessing labour market opportunities, they overlook the contingent and contradictory ways in which an individual constructs a relationship with wider structures of

¹⁵ Moreover, Brennan *et al* (1993) provide a limited analysis of the impact of 'social profile' on labour market opportunity. It also adds to a more recent and wider body of research concerned with the student experience; the mature students experience of higher education (James 1995), the student financial experience (Hesketh 1995; 1999), the student experience per se (Hazelgrove 1994) and the learning experiences at different types of HEI (Ainley 1994).

opportunity (educational and labour market). Indeed, while both studies are important contributions to the wider higher education/student/labour market debate, they fall short of a more penetrating investigation of the impact of the different social contexts in which labour market perceptions of employability are constructed. Similar criticisms might be made of other student/labour market transition studies (see, for example, Boys and Kirkland 1988; Brennan *et al* 1993; Purcell, Pitcher and Simm 1999). Certainly, all of the above mentioned studies fail to get to grips in a satisfactory way with the underlying and culturally determined attitudes that shape students' higher education/labour market transitions.

Ultimately, then, we are trying to understand the influences that shape the students' understanding of and relationship to the labour market. By asking how a student's sense of employability is mediated, it is possible to ascertain an understanding of how labour market opportunity, and thus access to life-chances, is socially constructed. For instance, it has become quite clear that 'social profile' has a bearing on employability, at least from the employers' perspective. Equally, and thus in terms of the study's research questions, we might ask how a student's 'social-profile' shapes their understanding of labour market opportunity? Indeed, as higher education expands to include a wider cross-section of society, the impact of social class, gender and ethnicity becomes more relevant in understanding higher education students' relationships to opportunity structures.

However, it is not only that 'social profile' shapes an individual's perceptions of their employability, we might also ask how structures of opportunity shape practice more widely. Here, the emphasis is on higher education policy developments and labour market restructuring. The question is: how far do policy changes, which as mentioned previously take a particular stance on the higher education/employment relationship and how students should view themselves within it, impact on students' social construction of labour market

¹⁶ Crucially, discussions of social class are omitted from the study entirely, although some inferences on class may be drawn from the HEI attended.

opportunity? The significance of this study, then, comes in both addressing the shortfalls of other studies and how these shortfalls are addressed through this study's research questions. It might also be suggested that further significance comes in the epistemological framework adopted by this thesis - to answer such questions – which, in its concern with the individual's 'social experiences', is different to other studies concerned with students' perspectives on higher education/labour market transitions (see James 1995, Hesketh 1999).

Theory-As-Method¹⁷

A useful starting point for a discussion of the thesis's theoretical framework, lies in reference to my biography. As the author I provide a version of events in the thesis that is my interpretation alone. As Wolcott (1995) attests there is no 'immaculate perception' and my reading of the data is but one single account. Moreover, I produce my interpretation from a particular biographical standpoint - much as higher education students (or indeed I) interpret or perceive structures of labour market opportunity from a particular biographical standpoint. I come from the biographical standpoint of a white, working-class male who, having failed the eleven-plus exam and attended a secondary modern school, entered higher education as a mature student via an Access course (my 'turning-point' (Strauss 1962)). I am a non-traditional student, whose participation in higher education still fosters a sense of bewilderment to close and wider family, where the men have a history of semi-skilled and unskilled manual labour.

My experience of the labour market, before returning to education at the age of twenty-three, was as un-skilled and semi-skilled manual labour. To this extent, the broad cultural context within which I was embedded as a young person informed my values and norms for action; my individual preferences as derived through a common base of knowledge. This is what the theorist Pierre Bourdieu (1979, 1990) would refer to as my *habitus*, which is linked in

Bourdieu's theoretical schema with concepts of *capital* and *field*. However, as a Ph.D. student my cultural context has changed, as have my values and norms for action, and whilst my habitus is still informed by a personal (working class, white and male) history it must also be understood as structured within a framework for learning.

Bourdieu's (1979, 1990) concept of habitus is central to this thesis, in that it is the primary tool of analysis. Habitus provides a medium through which we can conceptualise the way in which various discourses of, say, class and gender, and equally those of (higher education and labour market) policy developments, impact upon the individual. It is a reference to the way in which our approach to the social world has been developed and internalised: a set of dispositions. Essentially, habitus refers to 'a system of durable, transposable dispositions which functions as the generative basis of structured, objectively unified practices' (Bourdieu 1979: vii). Thus habitus is a reference to dispositions and their embodiment, created and reformulated through the conjuncture of objective structures and personal history: a bridging of the agency/structure dichotomy. It provides the tool in which the individual student's relationship to the structures of (educational and labour market) opportunity may come to be seen as more than subjective interpretations or objective structures of practice.

The concept of habitus is intimately linked to notions of capital, 'in that some habituses (those of dominant social and cultural fractions) act as multipliers of various kinds of capital, and in fact constitute a form of capital (symbolic) in and of themselves' (Mahar *et al* 1990: 12). Capital's various forms as recognised by Bourdieu are: *economic capital* which is most often conceived in terms of financial status; *cultural capital* which is conceived of as the possession of 'legitimate' (i.e. valued more widely) knowledge and behaviour; *social capital* which relates to resources derived from significant relationships and connections; and *symbolic capital* which is the accumulation of status through the acquisition of forms of capital recognised as legitimate by others.

¹⁷ James (1995: 453)

Another of Bourdieu's concepts, *field*, is not directly developed in this thesis's theoretical framework, rather it is outlined to enable the reader to grasp the full complexity of Bourdieu's theoretical schema, of which habitus is just a part. Habitus comes into being through an objectively defined *field of forces*, within which the relationship between habitus and field is mutually constituting and various potentialities exist. I understand the concept of field as a structured system of social relations, where individuals, institutions and groupings exist in structural relations to each other (Grenfell and James 1998). From my reading of Bourdieu, the labour market can be defined as *field*, much as Bourdieu (1979) conceptualises higher education as field. Within field, individuals struggle for position utilising the capital at their disposal. An individual brings their capital to the field, with which they 'struggle' to negotiate routes and position, though actions in using capital and availability of capital are constrained and enabled by habitus (see Hodkinson 1998)¹⁸.

Of course, as for any theoretical framework, Bourdieu is not without his critics and his schema can certainly be expanded upon - which I do in the traditions of Brown 1987, Jenkins 1992, Hodkinson and Sparkes 1995, Reay 1998a and others. For instance, Bourdieu is often criticised for conceptualising of and using habitus in a deterministic way (see Brown 1987; Jenkins 1992; Hodkinson and Sparkes 1995). It is claimed that Bourdieu fails to incorporate a theory of learning that provides a mechanism for the change and development of habitus (Jenkins 1992). Moreover, in Bourdieu and Passeron's (1977) use of the concept, habitus is seen to derive predominantly from undifferentiated social (working) class cultures (see Brown

¹⁸ Habitus is the means by which field becomes a 'meaningful world, a world endowed with sense and with value, in which it is worth investing one's practice' (Bourdieu 1989: 44). Positions once attained thus interact with habitus. Thus for an individual their relationship with the field of the labour market is defining of the self. Field (re)structures the habitus. Habitus, of course, is always in a state of flux, developing incrementally and occasionally radically with exposure to new situations and experiences (forms of capital in the field). As Reay (1998a: 141) argues; 'There is no finality or finished identity', it (habitus) is 'always in the process of completion'. Struggles within a given field (derived from habitus) 'transform... the field of forces' (Bourdieu 1983: 312). And where struggles within field are transformative, habitus (dispositions) then is subject to change (though there are constraints on agency; socialising agents mitigate change).

1987). I suggest however, as do others (see Hodkinson and Sparkes 1995), that Bourdieu's writings can be expanded upon and such determinism avoided.

Grounded in the data, the thesis very much adopts a theory of habitus that is subject to transformative potentialities¹⁹, i.e. habitus develops over time. Moreover, where 'action' (as the product of habitus) is claimed to be the product of narrowly defined class cultures (Brown 1987), I believe, like Reay (1998a), it is useful to understand habitus as also gendered and racialised. For instance, habitus 'with its incorporation of both structure and agency seem(s) to provide a way of understanding women's activities in... (work) as a gendered, classed and racialised process' (Reay 1998a: 138-139). Thus the thesis understands each individual student's relationship to the structures of labour market opportunity, as derived from the resources of background. When I speak of background the reference is to the full range of (differentiated, developing and thus potentially transformative) classed, gendered and racialised experiences from which an individual constructs and extrapolates a personal identity.

Habitus, however, must be seen in relation to the structures of opportunity of which it is part. This thesis, then, uses Bourdieu's theoretical schema to conceptualise the relational and subjective aspect of students' lived experiences, within the context of wider structured practices and objective social structures. For instance, my earlier career decisions and, indeed, any life decisions made from here-on-in, are the product of a (personal) relationship constructed with the structures of (educational and) labour market opportunities. As Hodkinson and Sparkes (1995: 195) argue 'habitus and the labour market are interrelated'. Thus, my career decisions and, indeed, those of the students, must be seen in terms of perceptions of what might be considered available and appropriate; 'so that opportunities are simultaneously objective and subjective' (Hodkinson and Sparkes 1995: 195). Indeed, it

seems to me that an understanding of the structures of opportunity - and the wider discourse within which they exist - is integral to an understanding of the way in which individual students construct a relationship with the (graduate) labour market (see James 1995; Hesketh 1999). Indeed, part of what this thesis seeks to test is the way in which opportunities are presented, particularly in terms of policy and how it might structure practice more widely.

Policies for the Transformation of Opportunity

This thesis is concerned with how higher education students socially construct the labour market. To this end, Bourdieu's theoretical schema, as described above, enables us to understand how the individual's relationship to the structure of labour market opportunity is socially constructed. This relies on an understanding of the connectedness between 'on the one hand the actions, practices and experiences of individuals, and on the other hand, the social structures and contexts within which they take place' (James 1995: 454). I am, then, not only concerned with the students' 'actions' as the product of individual social experience, but also with the effect of policy on the structure of educational and labour market opportunity. Certainly, as suggested earlier, an investigation of students' social construction of labour markets involves an understanding of policy changes that take a view of the higher education/employment relationship and how students should position themselves (or interpret their relationship with education and the labour market) in terms of this wider relationship.

The emphasis here, I believe, rests with transformations in the structure of opportunity. This, it might be suggested, is realised in policy transformations that increasingly emphasise the role of the individual as crucial to economic competitiveness and, moreover, frame engagement with opportunity in terms of 'individualised' and maximising 'risk' behaviour (see, for example, Beck 1992, Beck 2000; Furlong and Cartmel 1997. See also Rees *et al*

¹⁹ As Hesketh (1999: 407) points out for example, a less fluid concept of habitus, fails to explain 'the increased participation in higher education of previously under-represented groups', where 'the norms and dispositions of some social groups (e.g. working class women) are clearly modifying'.

1997). Ulrich Beck (1992) and others suggest modern life (late modernity) is becoming increasingly 'individualised' and organised around the distribution of 'risks' (see for example Beck 1992; Beck 2000; Furlong and Cartmel 1997). Indeed, it is argued further that the development of policy at this time is a reflection of this wider societal change; 'the key characteristics of late modernity... are reflected in changes within the British educational system' (Furlong and Cartmel 1997: 11).

It could certainly be argued that the policy for the expansion of higher education is framed in this way, as it is dependent on the introduction and application of market principles to higher education funding that stress individual self-interest and choice²⁰. As Rees *et al* (1997: 486) argue the role of the state (and development of policy) has been 'to ensure that they (individuals) are fully aware of the nature of learning opportunities which are available and the specific advantages which will derive from their participation'. This it is suggested involves individuals in the unwarranted abstraction of social relations from economic behaviour (Rees *et al* 1997).

What is suggested is that learning opportunities today, or the 'Learning Society', are framed largely within a 'normative' discourse of human capital theory. Human capital theory places investment in education and training (by employers and the State) as the prime source of economic growth (Schultz 1961). Of course, this has nearly always been the case. For instance, human capital theory is as evident in the 1960s higher education expansion that followed the Robbins Report (1963) into higher education as it is today. However, where higher education policy was then (perhaps) more concerned with rights of citizenship and investment in the citizen, more recent higher education policy (where expansion is, in part, subsidised by students) relies on a version of human capital theory (market liberal) which emphasises individual investment in the self, i.e. reduces learning behaviour to economic

²⁰ This is part of what Phillips (1998) refers to as a Thatcherite hegemonic project, subsequently adopted by New Labour.

behaviour (Becker 1975; Fulton 1981; Marginson 1997; Rees *et al* 1997). (This will be dealt with in more detail in the following chapters.)

To somewhat extend this hypothesis, I suggest that transformations in the structure of opportunity, in terms of higher education funding and expansion, for example, mean individuals are asked to loosen local networks, make themselves the centre of their own life-plans, and engage with risks (e.g. university, loans, tuition, diversified graduate labour market) to improve and enhance the life-course (e.g. access to traditional graduate employment) (Beck 1992)²¹. This of course, in some instances, involves individuals somehow extracting themselves from ‘social relations’ and ‘biography’ to participate in a form of market behaviour which involves ‘the rational calculation of the total benefits to be derived, setting real income foregone against enhanced opportunities of future rewards’ (Rees *et al* 1997: 486): market liberal human capital theory (Marginson 1997).

The contention of this thesis is that the development of higher education policy and the wider discourse within which it exists, structures wider practice. I will suggest that the policy for expansion - with its emphasis on economic/market behaviour - whilst seeming to provide greater educational and labour market opportunities, works to include some social groups whilst simultaneously excluding others - with its emphasis on economic behaviour. Economic behaviour is ‘embedded’ within systems of social relations, and the crude presentation of opportunity in solely individual and financially maximising terms ignores the networks of biography that structure practice more widely (Polyani 1957). What I intend to show is how ‘social structures and contexts within which they take place’ are crucial factors in the shaping of students’ relationship with the labour market, and, perhaps more importantly, what the

²¹ Beck (1992), for instance, argues that individualised society or risk society no longer adheres to a plan of class society, hence ‘class biographies’ (and gendered and racialised biographies) are transformed into individualised and ‘reflexive biographies which depend on the decisions of the actor’ (Beck 1992: 88). Here, for example, failure (e.g. unemployment) is portrayed as the responsibility of the individual (e.g. a failure to invest in educational opportunities), rather than the product of systemic failures (e.g. recession) (Beck 1992; Furlong and Cartmel 1997).

implications are for (some) students' life-chances in 'late modernity' by the application of this approach to education policy development.

Conclusion

This chapter, to all intents and purposes, sets out the thesis. I began by setting the context for the study; this involved outlining recent changes in higher education and the labour market. It has become evident that higher education and the labour market are changed places for the students of the 1990s and the new millennium. Higher education has expanded massively over the last few decades, but particularly so in more recent times. We now have a mass system of higher education, and the consequences of this are a much changed labour market environment for (some) graduates. The majority of students still locate in conventional types (and structures) of graduate employment. However, graduate employment is much more diverse than was previously the case and a student's 'social profile' is much more important in the recruitment process (at least for the best jobs) (Brennan *et al* 1993; Brown and Scase 1994). This has happened against a wider background of labour market restructuring, which has taken place in response to Britain's changing position within a global economy.

We have learnt from the existing literature that despite the higher education and labour market development that have taken place, the majority of students continue to aspire to 'traditional' types of graduate employment structures and, moreover, that they expect to be able to fulfil their ambitions (see Goodman 1993; Brown and Scase 1994; Purcell and Pitcher 1996a, 1998). However, the evidence also suggests that the student population is a lot more nervous about finding employment than previously. Indeed, students increasingly feel the need to differentiate themselves from each other and make the most of their individual attributes to improve their employment chances (Purcell and Pitcher 1996a)²². However, the

²² The reference to 'employment' is to particular types of 'graduate' employment.

process by which a graduate finds employment and the type of employment they might find is often decided long before entry to higher education (Brennan *et al* 1993).

Having set the context for the study and outlined the literature that presently exists on students' experience of higher education/labour market transitions, it becomes evident that a more detailed and penetrating investigation of this aspect of the student experience is required. This is perhaps made more necessary by recent developments in higher education (and policy discourses) that reduce students' learning behaviour to economic/investment behaviours further than previously. Clearly this sets the wider context for learning (and knowledge of the labour market), but omits any understanding of the role of social relations in students' learning (and labour market) choices. Indeed, the existing body of literature is rather dated, in that it does not incorporate the wider (individualist/human capital) context of 'late modernity' within which relationships with higher education and the labour market might be formed (see Beck 1992, Rees *et al* 1997). More significantly, it fails to adequately get to grips with both the underlying and socially/culturally determined attitudes that shape students' relationship with higher education and the labour market.

From the above emerge both the study research questions and the wider significance of the study. The research questions address the failure of other studies to tackle more fully the role of individual experience in students' constructing a relationship with the labour market. Moreover, it needs to be asked how far higher education and labour market developments impact on students' social construction of labour markets. The significance of the study is, then, contained in the research questions themselves and in the thesis as an addition to (and development of) the present body of literature on students' higher education/labour market transitions. I would suggest, moreover, further significance comes in the epistemological approach to the answering of the research questions. By theorising about the students' social construction of the labour markets, through use of Bourdieu's theoretical schema of habitus

(and capital), it is hoped that a deeper understanding of students' higher education/labour market transitions will be achieved.

The next chapter examines in more detail the higher education developments that led to a system of mass higher education. The following chapter focuses specifically on the influence of the 1960s Anderson (1960) and Robbins (1963) reports in setting an agenda for higher education expansion (as a right of citizenship), which to varying degrees still exists today. This makes clearer the context within which higher education students construct a relationship with the graduate labour market.

CHAPTER THREE

Higher Education as a Right of Citizenship

Introduction

This (and the following) chapter examines how changes in higher education policy have transformed the student experience and thus the students' conceptualisation of labour market opportunity. Chapters three and four deal directly with the developments in higher education policy that established the student first as citizen and then, in more recent times, as investor/consumer. Both chapters, moreover, concentrate on describing a programme of expansion (funded initially by state investment and then, in part, by service users), which ultimately affects the student's relationship with higher education and the labour market. It is my contention that the student experience of higher education, as a direct result of higher education policy initiatives, is a reflection of wider (discourses of) economic and social transformation within society that, in part, shape students' social construction of the labour market.

Chapter three focuses primarily on the recommendations (and subsequent developments in higher education policy) of the Anderson (1960) and Robbins Reports (1963). The discussion revolves round two areas of higher education policy, which are embodied more widely by both reports: the funding of higher education and the expansion of student numbers. Key to the Reports' discussions of funding and expansion is the principle of higher education as a right of citizenship, albeit a right of citizenship qualified - somewhat paradoxically - in terms of human capital theory. This guiding principle, it seems to me, clearly informed and guided the development of higher education policy at this time. It is my suggestion, that it was this notion of citizenship was the backdrop, if you like, upon which both reports made their

recommendations and higher education policy developed. Moreover, it is the ‘backdrop’ upon which individuals subsequently perceived their relationship with a public service and the labour market – in some contexts still doing so till the present day. This chapter, then, is concerned with a closer inspection of the policy for higher education expansion and funding. Moreover, it is also concerned with how the guiding principle of higher education informed higher education policy at this time, and from this the relationship individuals developed with higher education and the labour market.

‘Rights of Citizenship’: An Agenda for Higher Education Reform

The commissioning of the Anderson and Robbins Reports came out of the need to develop an identifiable system of higher education. A system was required that would address Britain’s need for a more highly skilled labour force and cope with a rapidly expanding sector - both in terms of student numbers and in its absorbing of public resources. In 1840 England and Scotland had four universities apiece. However, by 1957 this had grown to twenty-one throughout Britain. Moreover, universities were ‘no longer the sole providers of full-time higher education at degree level’ (Robbins 1963: 4: II: 15). Indeed, whilst post-war university intake doubled, colleges’ intake increased fourfold (Robbins 1963). Overall, before World War II the number of full-time students in Britain was 50,000, by 1959/60 the number was 100,000 (Anderson 1960). More particularly, higher education institutions (HEIs) had become increasingly dependent on state resources²³.

As the above might suggest, before the 1960s, the development and expansion of the higher education ‘system’ largely occurred *ad hoc*. However, it soon became apparent that for expansion to continue the numerous strands of the existing ‘system’ - the various institutions that had developed separately and independently - needed to be drawn together to create a

²³ The funding of the universities was administered through the University Grants Committee (UGC), formed in 1919, which itself was responsible to the Treasury. Its origins are in parliamentary grants to

coherent, publicly accountable structure (Robbins 1963)²⁴. Two reports, the Anderson Report (1960) and the Robbins Report (1963), were commissioned to address the existing muddle of a 'system' and to recommend a structure of higher education that would support Britain's 'national need(s)'.

The Anderson Report (1960) was commissioned in 1958 to address the matter of student funding, its terms of reference being;

'To consider the present system of awards from public funds to students attending first degree courses at universities and comparable courses at other institutions and to make recommendations.'

(Anderson 1960: xii)

An expansion of student numbers had resulted in the 'development of an extensive system of awards from public funds' (Anderson 1960: xii). The systems comprised state scholarships, local authority scholarships and university/college scholarships. The number of students receiving a scholarship in 1958/9, for England, Scotland and Wales, was 66,000 at a cost of £21.6m (Anderson 1960). The commission's role was to draw the disparate funding arrangements together into a cohesive, universal system.

The Robbins Report (1963: 6-7), commissioned in 1960 sought to make recommendations for an expanded higher education system in light of four core aims: 'instruction in skills'; the education of 'not mere specialists but rather cultivated men and women'; the advancement of

the university sector. The UGC's role was to act as a buffer between the universities and the state; for the preservation of academic freedom.

²⁴ Up until this time expansion of the system had been largely precipitated by the lay person, the value of higher education becoming apparent to the leaders of industry and commerce before it did the state. The civic universities of the nineteenth century were founded through an alliance of 'local political, professional, commercial and industrial elites' (Bargh *et al* 1996: 4). A second form of lay endeavour helped form the municipal enterprises, the old polytechnics. Gaining university status was a long process for both the civic institutions and the municipal enterprises; it took Liverpool Royal Institution 66 years to gain university status for example, but eventually the civic and, in the 1990s, the municipal institutions gained the Royal Charter.

learning; and ‘the transmission of a common culture and common standards of citizenship’.

The Report’s wider remit was to;

‘...review the pattern of full-time higher education in Great Britain and in light of national needs and resources to advise Her Majesty’s Government on what principles its long-term development should be based. In particular, to advise, in light of these principles, whether any new types of institution are desirable and whether any modifications should be made in the present arrangements for planning and co-ordinating the development of the various types of institution.’

(Robbins 1963; i)

In terms of the recommendations that flowed from Robbins and Anderson, implicit within them, or their language at least, was the extension to higher education of those rights established in the 1944 *Education Act*²⁵. The discourse of the reports was clearly bound up in terms of citizenship that might be viewed as an extension of the 1944 Act. By citizenship the reference is to the common and ‘exclusive’ rights of a citizen (e.g. British citizens entitled to education or healthcare free at the point of delivery in Britain), which are bound up in terms of both ‘legal protections and entitlements’ and citizen/state duties and responsibilities (Barry 1990).

The White Paper ‘*Educational Reconstruction*’ of 1943 in its very title hints at the impact of R.A. Butler’s 1944 Education Act. After years of *ad hoc* evolution the Act introduced a system of education, that the Times newspaper acclaimed as the ‘greatest and grandest educational advance since 1870’ (Fraser 1992: 221). It ensured free education up until school leaving age: then 15 now 16. The policy reflected the social-democratic consensus of the time, rewards to a people who had been through two world wars. Successive governments adopted Keynes’s economic policies, a reliance on intervention, where unemployment would not be tolerated and was ‘associated with present-day capitalistic individualism’ (Fraser 1992: 198). The notion of citizenship, of intervention to ensure rights of citizenship, became central to policy formation. What the 1944 Act enshrined was the right of citizenship to education.

As T.H. Marshall argues; ‘...when the State guarantees that all children shall be educated, it has the requirements and nature of citizenship definitely in mind’(Marshall 1964: 81). The Education Act meant every ‘citizen’ had the right to a basic education free at the point of delivery. The Act contained inequities (e.g. the 11+ and the Tri-partite system), but nevertheless notions of rights and of citizenship were established. Moreover, the 1944 Act, arguably, was a precursor to the development of a right of citizenship to higher education.

The 1944 *Education Act* had established secondary education for all and following Anderson and Robbins, provided a ‘citizen’ possessed the proven ability (i.e. 2 A levels), this entitlement was extended to higher education. Both reports viewed the function of higher education (indeed education in general), in partnership with the family, as responsible for providing the ‘background of culture and social habitat upon which a healthy society depends’ (Robbins 1963). This function, moreover, whilst important at all times, was regarded as ‘especially important in an age that has set for itself the ideal of equality of opportunity’ (Robbins 1963). Thus the ‘long-term development’ and expansion of higher education policy was to be founded upon the ‘transmission of a common culture and common standards of citizenship’ (Robbins 1963: 7: II: 28). Moreover (and crucially) following Anderson and Robbins it was to be a state funded principle, with the expenditure regarded ‘*as a form of investment*’ in Britain’s economic competitiveness (as well as in the state’s wider well-being).

Anderson and Robbins, then, were commissioned to recommend a system of higher education that could cope with the post-war expansion and facilitate a further growth in numbers. In this regard, the reports looked to construct a pattern of organisation that would reject the apparent distributive injustices of the existing ‘system’ and structure higher education opportunities in terms of more identifiable rights of citizenship. This, I suggest, set the tone for the immediate development of higher education policy. Crucially, however, such rights of citizenship were

²⁵ In Scotland the 1946 Education (Scotland) Act.

framed not just in terms of ‘rights of citizenship’, but also rested upon notions of investment in the ‘national need’ and human capital value... ‘modern societies achieve their aims of economic growth.... (by) making the most of the talents of their citizens’ (Robbins 1963: 8: II: 32). Thus, in terms of the thesis’s wider concerns, I suggest it is this (somewhat paradoxical) relationship between rights of citizenship and human capital theory that informed higher education reform and continues to inform many students’ beliefs about their educational and labour market entitlements to this day.

The Funding and Expansion of a ‘Right of Citizenship’

The wider effect of the Anderson and Robbins reports was to produce a commitment to state funded higher education, so that all those who might benefit were in a position to do so. Policy recommendation in this regard is clearly consistent with rights of citizenship. Indeed, the Anderson Report’s securing of the financial means for individuals to attend university appears (at first glance) concomitant with this wider guiding principle, (though the social and cultural bias of the entry requirements renders this problematic – see Fulton, 1981)²⁶;

‘All those ordinarily resident in Great Britain admitted for the first time to first degree courses at universities in receipt of grant from the University Grants Committee should receive awards from public funds, provided, for universities in England and Wales, that they have 2 G.C.E. passes at A level or equivalent’.

(Anderson 1960: 95: 14: 320: 3: b)

Indeed, the adoption of this recommendation meant more students (citizens) continuing with education. It was Robbins’s role to recommend an identifiable system of higher education that could cope with the existing numbers and encourage further expansion in light of ‘national

²⁶ However, whilst favouring societal expenditure on a system of maintenance grants (and not loans) to aid expansion, Robbins, perhaps presciently, qualifies this commitment; ‘...if, as time goes by, the habit (i.e. higher education) is more firmly established, the arguments of justice in distribution and of increasing individual responsibility may come to weigh more heavily and lead to some experiment in this direction (i.e. loans)’ (Robbins 1963: 212: XIV: 647).

need'²⁷. Key here is the phrase 'the national need'. For whilst the effect of both reports was to produce a new, more enlightened perspective on higher education, the pervasiveness of the 'national need' in both policy recommendation and implementation qualified the commitment to rights of citizenship. Higher education policy development focused on economic growth through an investment of national resources. More precisely, higher education policy was framed in terms of human capital theory. The subsequent expansion and funding of higher education - detailed in what follows - must be viewed in these wider terms.

In terms of the funding of higher education, the Robbins Report was explicit in its backing of the existing relationship between the University Grants Committee (UGC) and the Treasury - a relationship that overtly favoured the universities and their autonomy. However, with HE in 1962/63 already accounting for £200 million of public monies and Robbins recommending increased public expenditure (Robbins 1963), the government felt a greater degree of accountability for public funds was necessary. Hence, in 1963 the Treasury's authority over the UGC was removed and a new governmental department was created to take control of educational expenditure: the Department of Education and Science (DES)²⁸. Effectively, this meant the universities and their accounts came under public scrutiny for the first time, something the Robbins Report had wished to avoid (Scott 1995)²⁹.

²⁷ It must be remembered that Robbins did not actually initiate expansion, higher education had been experiencing expansionary activity for some time, hence the *need* for the Robbins Report (Becher and Kogan 1992).

²⁸ The DES was given overall responsibility for higher education; the UGC still existed but it was responsible to the DES.

²⁹ The Robbins report did not want to challenge the universities' status and autonomy; in this respect the report's recommendations were overtly conservative. The report set out to create a coherent structure and create a strategy for higher education that was inclusive; framed in the language of citizenship whilst maintaining the universities' hegemony. Quite clearly Robbins's recommendations centred on an explicit defence of academic freedom and modest recommendations for expansion. However, the universities were now largely dependent on the state for funding, despite the more prestigious HEIs having large sources of independent income (Robbins 1963). Consequently, a tension transpired between the state and the universities, as the government sought to challenge the universities' hegemony and to argue that public interests should be determined outside academia. Indeed, such was the mystique surrounding the university sector, that previously a wide ranging inquiry in 1958 was stopped by the Treasury for fear that it may undermine both their own and the UGC's influence (Becher and Kogan 1992).

More significantly, the creation of the new department also signalled the government's intentions for higher education expansion. The reorganisation of funding - with state sponsored expansion in mind - was the first step towards the centralisation of higher education policy. A state funded system had to be seen to be accountable and operate in the public domain. This was to be the basic premise of the higher education system; it was to be a public system and not a system driven by the universities' own agenda (Scott 1995)³⁰. The expansion of the higher education sector - through the creation of a system of polytechnics (see below) - was conducted with the same basic premise in mind.

The Robbins Report's recommendations for expansion were overtly conservative. It has been argued that this expansion was to be one for the 'sons and daughters of the elite' (Halsey 1995: 5). The report recommended expansion of the university sector by promotion of the colleges of advanced technology (CATs), and a selective promotion of the regional colleges of technology with the establishment of six new universities³¹. Amid a series of recommendations for expansion the Robbins Report called for an increase in student numbers from 7.2% in 1962/3 to (merely) 20% of eighteen year olds by 1980/1 (Robbins 1963)³². Initially the government was advised to release enough resources in 1966/7 to offer 'about 10 per cent more (university) places than at present planned for that year' (Robbins 1963: 290: XIX: 170). As it was numbers grew exponentially (see Table 3a)³³.

³⁰ Scott (1995) argues that the decline of the autonomous university tradition originated in the bypassing of the UGC. The placing of the UGC under the control of a department that operated in the public interest meant that university interests were subverted. Somewhat ironically it was the Robbins Report's recommendations for state funded expansion that precipitated a wholesale reorganisation of funding. Therefore, the call for expansion by Robbins was an implicit determinant of the decision to remove the autonomy of the Treasury and UGC in deciding funding.

³¹ The former were eventually added to the UGC list and the latter subsequently formed the majority of the polytechnics.

³² 560,000 students; including 350,000 university places.

³³ It was however maintained that the expansion was not to be to the detriment of (liberal) educational ideals (i.e. education for education's sake). Despite a call for 'a growth in the proportion of students taking science and, particularly, technology' (Robbins 1963: 284: XIX: 99), it was recommended that expansion 'should be achieved without reducing the proportion taking arts subjects.' (Robbins: 1963: 284: XIX: 100). It was further recommended that the expansion should not prejudice standards; 'Student/staff ratios in higher education as a whole should not be allowed to deteriorate' (Robbins 1963: 285: XIX: 106) and that for 1964 and succeeding years the universities capital building programme was increased to incorporate more accommodation, teaching and residences.

Table 3a. Full-time student numbers in British universities, 1962/3 to 1969/70.

	Number (000s)	Annual growth (%)
1962/3	119.0	+5.2
1963/4	126.9	+6.2
1964/5	138.7	+9.7
1965/6	168.6	+21.6
1966/7	182.2	+9.6
1967/8	199.7	+8.4
1968/9	211.3	+5.8
1969/70	219.3	+3.8

Halsey 1995: 93: Source UGC University Statistics.

Ultimately, the wider expansion of HE was fostered through the creation of a second avenue to higher education. The sector would be controlled by local authorities and the DES and it would be a quick response to increasing demand. The expansion was not based around the autonomous universities, but around publicly accountable polytechnics (Scott 1995). Ideologically, the creation of the polytechnics created a departure for the universities. The universities were built upon the pursuit of knowledge; the polytechnics were formed upon the premise that education should serve the economy (Salter and Tapper 1994). The binary system was a ‘dramatic intervention in both the norms and operations of higher education’ (Becher and Kogan 1992: 30), similar to the way in which the undermining of the universities’ autonomy - by a restructuring of funding via the DES - helped subvert the elitist ideology that was endemic in higher education (Salter and Tapper 1994).

Table 3b. Full-time and part-time student numbers in British polytechnics³⁴.

	F/T Number (000s)	P/T Numbers
1965/6	169.7	125.0
1966/7	175.5	123.3
1967/8	171.6	114.1
1968/9	162.3	100.6
1969/70	41.0 (8 polytechnics)	23.6
1970/1	144.0 (26)	84.4
1971/2	162.8 (30)	87.9
1972/3	159.2 (30)	82.1

Pratt 1997. Source: 1965-68, Pratt and Burgess 1974; 1969 onwards DES/DfE Statistics of Education

The (new) expansion of higher education was, then, realised primarily in the formation of a binary system of higher education³⁵. Table 3b gives some indication of the numbers in British polytechnics during their formative years. The White Paper of May 1965, *A Plan for Polytechnics and Other Colleges*, set out and endorsed the principles of a binary system, outlined by Anthony Crosland, the then Education Secretary, in his Woolwich speech of 1965;

‘On the one hand we have what has come to be called the autonomous sector, represented by the universities, in whose ranks, of course, I now include the colleges of advanced technology. On the other hand we have the public sector, represented by the leading technological colleges of education. The Government accepts this dual system as being fundamentally the right one, with each sector making its own distinctive contribution to the whole. We infinitely prefer it to the alternative concept of the unitary system, hierarchically arranged on the ‘ladder’ principle, with the universities at the top and the other institutions at the bottom.’

(Anthony Crosland 1965; cited in Becher and Kogan 1992: 30)

The creation of the binary system led to many developments in higher education. The polytechnics, for example, opened up access to higher education, instituted part-time degrees,

³⁴ There was no data collection during the initial years of policy. However, Pratt and Burgess (1974) compiled data from the returns to the Department of Education and Science for the constituent colleges of the polytechnics from 1965-66 to 1968-69. Subsequently the Des published enrolment data for the polytechnics as designated. So in 1969 these figures include data only for eight polytechnics designated; in 1970 for the 26 designated, and the 30 designated thereafter (Pratt 1997).

established modular curricula and expanded subject choice (Becher and Kogan 1992)³⁶. Moreover, they were a development aimed at opening up the educational franchise, and to a degree they succeeded in this aim. They provided a ‘technical’ education for local people seeking vocational qualifications. It was a centrally funded system, organised by local government and designed to secure parity between polytechnics and universities. The implicit intention was to gain control of higher education from the universities³⁷.

The developments within higher education described above, particularly in terms of expansion and the funding of individual students, are key to a greater understanding of the nature of higher education reform. Perhaps more significantly, the changes remain key to a wider understanding of students’ expectations of higher education and the labour market. Indeed, it seems that the wresting of control of higher education from the universities and the manner in which the expansion of student numbers and resources occurred is complicit with meeting the ‘national need’ for a more highly skilled labour-force. Clearly, the rhetoric was for greater enfranchisement and accountability. However this aim was placed within the wider principle of investment in the citizen, where recognition of the social value of education was on a par with its economic value. Hence, the wider rationale - which is questioned below - was for investment in a right of citizenship (social objective), so that the nation maintained an

³⁵ A further move to cope with the demand for higher education saw the formation of the Open University in 1969.

³⁶ In 1964 the Council for National and Academic Awards (CNAA) was established to award and monitor the quality of degrees conferred on those studying at polytechnics and colleges.

³⁷ However the binary system failed to break the universities’ hegemony (Scott 1979). Rather, an ‘academic drift’ occurred as the polytechnics moved towards ‘the modes and aspirations of the universities’ (Becher and Kogan 1992: 31). As Becher and Kogan (1992: 31-32) argue, this somewhat blurred the distinction between the universities and polytechnics, the higher education system ‘came to resemble the “ladder” Crosland deplored’. The binary system is criticised for not being radical and challenging the hegemony of the universities; rather it became a ‘*rationalisation of the status quo*’ (Scott 1979: 7). Firstly, the polytechnics and colleges never received enough resources from the Government to enable them to establish themselves as an alternative to the universities. Secondly, the level of physical resources that public sector higher education inherited, was ‘vastly inferior’ to those of the still largely autonomous universities. Thirdly, a lack of commitment was shown to the binary system as the numbers attending university have always outstripped those attending polytechnics. Moreover, after the mid-1960s the democratisation of the universities disappeared from the politicians’ agenda (Scott 1979). The introduction of the binary system and the creation of the DES was an attempt to subvert the universities’ autonomy. Nevertheless, to a large degree, the universities did retain their elite and autonomous status. This was due to the introduction of a binary system that was, ultimately, lacking in conviction.

‘adequate position in a fiercely competitive world of the future’, (i.e. met an economic objective) (Robbins 1963: 5: II: 16).

The Language Of Human Capital Theory Within Rights Of Citizenship

The discourse of expansion that surrounds the opening of the educational franchise is derived from human capital theory. Certainly, the Anderson and Robbins reports - and the subsequent policy developments outlined above - attempted to make rights of citizenship to higher education compatible with human capital theory. However, it might be argued that citizenship and human capital theories offer alternative and incompatible discourses. The rhetoric of policy discourse is that investment in education is a capital investment for both the individual and wider society, where it follows that;

‘The first proposition is that the outcome of a process of learning is a new form of productive resource: *human capital*. A second proposition,, is that the decision to spend scarce resources on education is an *investment* decision precisely in the sense in which the term would be understood in plain economics.’

(Majumdar 1983: 1: *Original emphasis*)

Investment by the individual in any resource that increases their ability to maximise their productivity and worth to employers is investment in one’s own human capital value. Human capital is, for example, accrued through investment in learning, which is measured socially through credentials (Becker 1975). The benefits of human capital investment are available to the individual in terms of higher levels of return, e.g. higher remuneration and, therefore, standard of living. Investment in the individual by the state, through education, may also be considered an investment in human capital. This might be evident in a better-functioning democracy and a more competitive economy. Education creates greater human capital value and state provision of educational resources is an investment (Schultz 1961).

In terms of political economy and the national need, the human capital investment recommended by Anderson and Robbins reflects investment in the individual as part of a macro strategy, i.e. investment in terms of societal expenditure in the individual as a productive resource (see Schultz 1961, Becker 1975, Majumdar 1983, Marginson 1997);

‘To devote resources to the training of young people may be, *au fond*, as much entitled to be considered a process of investment as devoting resources to directly productive capital goods. Judged solely by the test of future productivity, a community that neglects education is as imprudent as a community that neglects material accumulation. The classical economists, great supporters of education, had precisely this consideration in mind when they invented the phrase ‘human capital’.

(Robbins 1963: 204: XIV: 621. Original emphasis)

Hence, the recommendation for state sponsored expansion is a societal investment in a productive resource, i.e. a human capital investment. Societal expenditure on the provision of education is made to enhance capabilities, i.e. increase the value of human effort (labour) and yield higher rates of return (Schultz 1961). Investment in any form of capital is measured through rates of return. The incentive to invest in the expansion or improvement of any physical resource, such as education, is dependent on the rate of return expected (Becker 1975). It is the economics of education.

Higher education policy recommendation and subsequent policy formation was based on principles of investment in the citizen, both for the greater social good and economic growth. There are two domains of investment: individual investment and societal investment; although they have different ‘objectives, horizons and purposes’ the goal for each is the same, both wish to improve on differential rates of return (Majumdar 1983). The recommendation for the state sponsored expansion of higher education, is partly one of economic efficacy; the most progressive and economically successful nations are those that have invested in human capital (Robbins 1963). Equally, ‘...when the State guarantees that all children shall be educated, it has the requirements and nature of citizenship definitely in mind’ (Marshall 1964:

81)³⁸. In terms of societal investment the direct social costs are the sum of educational expenditures, and this expenditure has to be measured against commercial returns (Becker 1975); ‘The ultimate cost of higher education is what is foregone by devoting resources, including the potential services of the student, to this purpose rather than something else’ (Robbins 1963: 199: XIV: 600).

Robbins’s recommendations for expansion ‘involve(d) an increase in the percentage of the national income devoted to higher education’. This, without increases in productivity, was calculated to cost £206 million for 1962/63 (Robbins 1963: 216: XIV: 660). The costs were acknowledged to be ‘considerable’, however it was argued that the cost would have to go a great deal beyond what Robbins envisaged ‘before the return in terms of social net product could be said to suggest general over investment in this sector’ (Robbins 1963: 206: XIV: 628). Thus ‘the immeasurable element in the return on suitable investment in higher education is positive’ (Robbins 1963: 206: XIV: 628).

This investment in human capital is based on a notion of reciprocity, on a parity of investment from both the state and the individual. The discourse is one of parity of societal investment balanced by notions of ‘social duty’. It was held that individual gain from investment in higher education was not restricted to an increased capacity to secure earnings advantage (Taubman and Wales 1974). Subsequently, the state invested in education in order to produce economically productive and culturally aware citizens. Although the individual may partake of education in order to achieve higher levels of remuneration, the real return on investment in education was not something to be ‘considered in terms of return to individuals and of differential earnings’ (Robbins 1963: 6: II: 25);

³⁸ In terms of the guarantee that ‘all children shall be educated’, the right of citizenship to higher education must be qualified. The right of citizenship to higher education primarily extended only to those with two A-levels, human capital investment in this resource can be seen to be only available to particular sections of society.

‘Confucius said in the Analects that it was not easy to find a man who had studied for three years without aiming at pay. We deceive ourselves if we claim that more than a small fraction of students in institutions of HE would be where they are if there was no significance for their future careers in what they hear and read; and it is a mistake to suppose that there is anything discreditable in this’

(Robbins 1963: 6: II: 25).

Rather, the need to invest in human capital through education was recognised and a product of this investment was believed to be increased productivity. However, in terms of rates of return the ‘social gains’ are not easy to measure (Denison 1969). ‘Economists have long believed that the incentive to improve physical resources depends on the rate of return expected’, though a similar measure of “investments” in human resources is often neglected (Becker 1975: 71).

Indeed, the suggestion that rights of citizenship can be tied to human capital theory, whether in terms of social or economic benefits to either party is debatable. Clearly, rights of citizenship stand separately from conventional human capital orthodoxy. Ultimately, human capital theory involves individuals making decisions on the basis of economic reasoning (Fevre *et al* 1999). Such a theory assumes people are ‘rational egoists’ who calculate their investment in education against labour market benefits (Fevre *et al* 1999). However, a right of citizenship does not necessarily derive from a rational calculation of benefits. Rather, ‘citizenship’ rests upon an individual’s right as a member of society to participate (e.g. in higher education) regardless of possible economic or social benefits derived. Where human capital theory demands a calculation of a costed ‘utility function’, the intrinsic pleasure of taking part in a right of citizenship stands as a separate entity. Discourses of human capital theory and citizenship seem incompatible in this respect. Certainly, the abstraction of economic benefits from social relations, ignores the wider decision making process by which a ‘citizen’ may properly reason participation.

However, for the Anderson and Robbins Reports investment in higher education reveals rates of return ‘which compare well with returns from other forms of investment’ (Robbins 1963: 205: XIV: 625). The arguments for state sponsored expansion, including free tuition and maintenance grants, when framed in terms of social duty and human capital investment proved convincing to both Commissions and Harold Wilson’s Labour administration. And whilst the right of citizenship was tied intimately to the national need, perhaps evident in expansion through vocational polytechnics rather than academic universities, a programme of state sponsored expansion ensured higher education became in principle a right of citizenship. It was, however, an expansion - or right of citizenship - for the few rather than the many.

Higher Education: A ‘True’ Right of Citizenship?

Theoretically, the right of citizenship to a public service suggests that all citizens possess the right to participate. The considerable increase in student numbers following the Anderson and Robbins reports certainly indicates that more citizens were choosing to exploit their (new found) constitutional right to higher education than was previously the case³⁹. However, whilst the opportunity to participate may to all intents and purposes exist, other determining social and cultural factors are implicit in realising that opportunity. Hence, the right of citizens to participate does not necessarily equate with transformations in patterns of participation. In reality, despite the prevailing ethos that ‘courses of higher education should be available to all those who are qualified by ability and attainment to pursue them and who wish to do so’ (Robbins 1963: 8: II: 31) higher education remained a privilege for the male elite.

³⁹ Indeed, the ‘First Employment of University Graduates 1967-68’ (FEUG) highlights a substantial increase in the total number of men and women who qualified for first degrees, recording a 16.7% increase over the previous year (UGC 1970). The ‘First Destination of University Graduates’ reports for the years 1971/72 and 1974/75 continued to record increasing numbers of graduates, although the rate of increase slowed from then on (UGC 1973; UGC 1976). This is almost certainly as a result of recession, induced by the oil crisis, and governments concluding that investment in human capital does not determine economic growth (Marginson 1997). Nevertheless, there was a positive increase in student numbers throughout the 1960s.

Quite clearly, cultural and social forces have a bearing on the rights of citizenship in terms of gender, race and socio-economic status. In these terms, if economic efficiency and a common culture were goals of the Robbins Report 'social inequality is a major barrier to their achievement' (Halsey, Heath and Ridge 1980: 3). For instance, at this time social classes I and II comprised more than three times of those attending university than from other social classes and any increase in the numbers of students from social classes VI and VII was in the polytechnics (Halsey 1995). Equally, when Anderson referred *not* to an increase in the participation of men and women but to an 'increase in the number of highly educated *mothers*, as well as fathers' (Anderson 1960: 3: II: 13, emphasis added) and when Robbins, in relation to loans, refers to 'what would be in effect a negative dowry', other influences become apparent, such as the interplay and impact of social and cultural forces (Robbins 1963: 211: XIV: 645)⁴⁰. In this regard, the process of social and cultural reproduction renders equality of opportunity (and rights of citizenship) more complex.

Nevertheless, the 'citizenship-rights-common identity' (Plant and Barry 1990) model which underpinned the system inaugurated by the Anderson (1960) and the Robbins reports (1963) engendered a *discourse for expansion* (or *transformation*: that of state human capital investment in the citizen's right to higher education) that was inclusive. Of course, it is plain that the preconditions of entry, whether in legislative terms (two A-levels) or wider (and related) conditions of social equality, did not address the wider barriers to accessing a right of citizenship. However, the expansionary programme and the wider discourse within which it

⁴⁰ Higher education was largely a male dominated arena, with manifold inequalities. Before World War Two less than a quarter of higher education students were women (Halsey 1995). In 1962 only 2.5% of women, as a percentage of the age group, entered university compared to 5.6% of men (Robbins 1963) and by 1970 only 4.4% women went to university compared to 7.6% of men (Byrne 1975). However, more women attended the less regarded Polytechnics, Further Education Colleges and Colleges of (Teacher) Education: in 1970 113,100 women compared to 102,000 men (Byrne 1975, Halsey 1995). Although, as a percentage more men attended polytechnics, 1.9% of male school leavers compared to 1.1% of women (Byrne 1975). As Byrne (1975) argues attendance at these lesser institutions constituted less financial investment in women than men. Moreover, the concentration of women in particular subjects means the feminization of occupational roles, which have been, historically, associated with diminished status and therefore issues of equal pay, opportunity and career prospects (Byrne 1975, Halsey 1995). The education system reflects advantage, both socio economic and gender,

was framed, was the embodiment of a profound educational and social transformation. The expansion of university places implied a fundamental restructuring of the relationships between central government and the higher education sector, implicit in which was a reconstitution of higher education's (and students') relationships with the economy and social structures.

The *discourse* upon which educational opportunities were expanded was wholly consistent with the notion of higher education as a 'right of citizenship'. The state extended the access of citizens to educational opportunities and thereby, improved employment prospects and the potential of social mobility. Hence, the right of citizenship to higher education came to be read more widely as the right to particular terms and conditions of employment. Indeed, implicit within the right of citizenship to higher education is the perceived right by students to access graduate labour market opportunities. Certainly, the graduates that followed in the wake of Anderson and Robbins's recommendations clearly enjoyed enhanced employment benefits and many students continue to do so to this day. However, recent changes in student financing (i.e. the shift to loans and tuition fees) have signalled a change in emphasis in human capital investment (perhaps resulting in an even greater expectation of improved returns). Moreover, the continued expansion of higher education has altered significantly the nature of the employment benefits for graduates. Indeed, some of today's graduates might actually benefit significantly less than expected.

Conclusion

The intention of this chapter, then, has been to draw the reader's attention to quite recent developments in higher education that have contributed to the way in which students presently understand the student experience. The previously unidentifiable 'system', that was developing *ad hoc* and expanding rapidly, absorbing an ever increasing percentage of national

stemming from an enduring social structure, which, ultimately, determines occupational status (Lupton

resources has been transformed in a relatively short period of time. The recommendations of the Anderson and Robbins reports to address the inadequacies of the then 'system', have in many ways carried through into modern day students' understandings of the entitlements and benefits that are part of and flow from higher education.

It is not that the reports' recommendations were fully adopted; many were ignored, particularly from the Robbins Report. However, what was unquestionably incorporated into higher education policy development following Anderson and Robbins was an agenda for expansion. The Anderson and Robbins reports, in effect, only recommended a limited expansion of higher education. Indeed, the expansion was only to be enough to meet the 'national need'. However, both reports also used a broader more inclusive language that encouraged higher education to be viewed as a right of citizenship. In many ways this set a precedent for higher education expansion and participation. Of course, the social and cultural barriers to participation exist now as they did then: the same people were excluded then as they are now. More particularly, no government would allow for an unchecked expansion of higher education and the huge amount of resources this would absorb. However, by using a more inclusive language an agenda for expansion was set.

Policy development immediately following the Robbins Report went much further than was recommended, introducing a public system of higher education that seemed to bring higher education that much closer to those who might otherwise not have considered it an option. A position reinforced by the fact that following Anderson all higher education places were to be fully funded and supported. Hence, the expansion of student numbers in higher education was rapid. Of course, this was not for the good of the citizen alone. The language of human capital theory permeated the reports and was, perhaps, no more exemplified than in the way the subsequent expansion of higher education occurred, i.e. primarily in the vocationally orientated polytechnics.

and Hamilton 1970).

Nevertheless, the creation of a right of citizenship to higher education, a form of ‘training’ associated with the most enhanced of future benefits (as Robbins acknowledged), created an agenda for expansion beyond that envisaged. Indeed, it might be argued that the right of citizenship to higher education came to be read as the right to graduate labour market opportunities and particular terms and conditions of employment. Indeed, this still represents part of student (and others’) thinking today - despite more recent developments in higher education policy.

The next chapter explores further the development of higher education policy, identifying a shift in the policy development and the undermining of the notion of higher education as a ‘right of citizenship’, in the Marshall (1964) sense. Key here is the premise upon which further expansionary measures were introduced. It will be suggested that higher education policy has increasingly become framed within a discourse of market-individual-consumer, signalling a departure from the system recommended by the Anderson and Robbins Reports and the language within which such recommendations were made.

CHAPTER FOUR

Higher Education as a Right of Investment

Introduction

This chapter looks more closely at the direction of higher education policy recommendation and formation from the 1980s to the present day. In the previous chapter the focus was on the development of higher education as a right of citizenship. This chapter looks at how policy has developed to reject the ‘rights of citizenship’ model hitherto embraced by the Anderson and Robbins Reports. Indeed, in more recent times, the student has come to be framed as a customer investing-in/buying-into a service, rather than as a citizen participating in a right. This, of course, has implications for the student experience - in terms of the relationship they might have with both higher education and with the labour market.

The direction of HE policy has been towards a programme of ‘*massification*’ framed within a wider discourse of economic need and facilitated by a programme of centralisation and marketisation. This is not an entirely new set of guiding principles. As discussed in the previous chapter, Anderson and Robbins also argued for expansion in terms of economic need. However, it is the argument of myself and others that the guiding principle of higher education has developed from investment *in* the individual to investment *by* the individual: market-liberal human capital theory (see, for example, Marginson 1997). Most significantly, as far as this thesis is concerned, this has implications for the students’ perceived relationship with learning and labour market opportunities.

In this chapter I examine how human capital theory and more specifically market-liberal human capital theory informs recent HE policy developments. It is argued that within higher

education, and in learning society discourse more widely, the emphasis is on the individual to exploit the opportunities provided by HE expansion and to acquire the requisite skills to maintain Britain's economic competitiveness (see Coffield 1996; Rees *et al* 1997). In this respect, more recent policy initiatives have increasingly sought to frame the individual as the architect of their own destiny. Accordingly, HE funding initiatives are predicated on the assumption that the individual is the primary beneficiary of participation (e.g. tuition fees, student loans).

What flows from this is a programme of HE expansion guided by the belief that widespread participation in education and training opportunities will follow from the individual's 'natural' calculation of future benefits (see Rees *et al* 1997). This 'efficient' distribution of human capital (supposedly) facilitates the linkage between economic demand and human supply (see Salter and Tapper 1994). However, what this policy neglects is the complex set of social relations that inform wider patterns of economic behaviour. More significantly, for this thesis, when learning is presented as the opportunity (or responsibility) to invest in one's own human capital and maximise enhanced future rewards, an agenda is created for participation (or, indeed, non-participation) in both learning and labour market opportunities. The students' relationship with higher education (and the labour market) is transformed.

Indeed, it seems to me that students are asked to view their participation in higher education as a form of investment behaviour. This changes the students' relationship with higher education, reducing it to a form of economic behaviour. Clearly this has implications for the way students view their education (learning opportunities) and for the way they might relate to the labour market. Hence, the human capital discourse that permeates higher education policy, has resulted not only in a profound change in the relationship students construct with higher education, but also in the relationship they construct with the structures of (graduate) labour market opportunity.

The Massification of Higher Education

The British higher education system expanded exponentially over the latter decades of the twentieth century; its place in British society was transformed during this period. The expansion of HE has been founded upon the ‘ambitions of successive governments to bring about long-term improvement in the competitiveness and growth of the British economy’ (Rees and Stroud 2001: 73). As such, the previous system of HE that existed for society’s (predominantly male) elite has been replaced by a mass system. Until the 1960s, the Age Participation Index (API) for 18 and 19-year-olds was only 6 per cent. However, with an expanded higher education system identified as crucial to economic growth, the British higher education system became a mass system. The API for 18 and 19-year-olds has risen to around 35 per cent and far more individuals now participate from a much wider cross-section of society.

As mentioned above, the principal rationale (and major guiding principle) for the higher education expansion of more recent years was to facilitate economic growth and competitiveness. Indeed, it might be suggested that whilst there have been some misgivings about the financial costs of expansion, the support for massification on the pretext of economic growth has been almost unwavering since the Robbins Report⁴¹. Certainly, it could be argued that this was the basis for the quite dramatic growth in student numbers following the Robbins report; an expansion that continued throughout the 1970s - albeit at a slightly slower rate. At the beginning of the 1960s the total number of students was in the region of 300,000; however by the early 1980s this had more than doubled to 800,000 (Halsey 1995). At the tail end of the ‘citizenship’ regime, the API for those aged 18 and 19 years had doubled from 6 per cent in the 1960s to 12 per cent by the early 1980s.

⁴¹ Of course, there is a much wider range of influences for the growth in student numbers, not least an increased demand for places following the expansion of opportunity. However, in more recent times particularly, the expansion of opportunity is often emphasised in terms of the need for a more highly skilled labourforce (Coffield 1996).

Table 4a. Expansion of University and Polytechnic full-time students.

	1970 (000s)	1988/9 (000s)	Absolute addition (000s)	% addition
<i>University full-time undergraduates</i>				
Male	128.3	139.7	11.4	8.9
Female	57.0	109.7	52.7	92.5
<i>Poly/college students full-time</i>				
Male	102.0	147.9	45.9	45.0
Female	113.1	146.7	33.6	29.7

Source: Halsey (1995: 101: from DES Statistics of Education, Further Education and Universities.)

However, where the freeing-up of resources to facilitate and support further expansion was accepted by Robbins, in more recent times this has not always been quite the case. In this regard, ‘the statement that higher education should be available to all who wish to undertake it disguises the contingent nature of such a wish’ (Fulton 1981: 5). Indeed, following the election of a Conservative government in 1979 the pace of expansion was much reduced. This was mostly as a result of severe cuts to the HE budget in 1981 - part of a wider squeeze on public spending at this time⁴². Nevertheless, student numbers continued to grow throughout the 1980s. Those students in full-time higher education increased by 100,000 between 1979 and 1987 (Walford 1991). The increase was mainly in the public (vocational) sector which expanded by 30 per cent between 1979 and 1983 (Williamson 1986). In contrast, the numbers attending universities decreased for the first time since the 1960s. The universities’ growth rate had been falling steadily between 1976 and 1981 and went into an absolute decline between 1982 and 1985 (Halsey 1995). Even so, as Table 4a highlights, the trend in university and polytechnic numbers during the 1970s and 1980s was overwhelmingly upwards. Indeed, by midway through the decade the all important 15 per cent threshold for mass HE had been crossed (Halsey 1995).

The mid-1980s signalled a dramatic shift in Government attitudes to higher education. Indeed, the restriction on student numbers was halted in the most dramatic way. The then

Secretary of State, Kenneth Baker, in the 1987 White Paper *'Higher Education: Meeting the Challenge'* (HMSO 1987) reversed previous policy and sparked the most remarkable expansion of student numbers in the history of higher education. Moreover, Baker's initial expansion was to be the first of a succession of expansions instigated by successive Conservative Secretaries of State. Of course, the political (ideological) agenda that permeated public services more widely, meant that the expansion would be made on a more stringent budget. Indeed, the subsequent expansion occurred predominantly in the more easily manipulated public sector and, perhaps more critically, was led by a gradual marketisation of the system (Bargh *et al* 1996)⁴³.

As a result of the shift in Conservative attitudes to HE, by 1990 the API for 18 and 19-year-olds had risen to 20 per cent. Indeed, the dramatic expansion of HE was to continue unabated. In 1991 Kenneth Clarke announced that it was intended for a third of 18-21 year olds to be in higher education by the end of the century (Higgins 1991). Based on market induced

⁴² A falling number of 18 and 19 year olds in the population also impacted on student numbers.

⁴³ A heavily criticised Green Paper, *'The Development of Higher Education into the 1990s'*, put forward several policy initiatives that appeared to favour the marketisation of higher education and reasserted the need for 'higher education to contribute more effectively to the improvement of the performance of the economy' (HMSO 1985: 3). Much of which derived from the Jarrett (Jarrett 1984) and Croham Reports' (Croham 1987) analysis of the higher education sector's level of efficiency. The Green Paper highlights the need to 'avoid "anti business snobbery",.... foster "entrepreneurial spirit", "positive attitudes to work" and strengthen their (the institutions') links with industry and commerce' (Williamson 1986: 274) and even raised elements of human capital theory with projections of graduate output (Scott 1986). In the mid 1980s the Jarrett and Croham committees were established to look into the efficiency of the university sector. The Jarratt Committee was appointed by the CVCP in 1984 to look at efficiency within universities. The CVCP hoped to head-off any further cuts in expenditure by appearing keen to promote efficiency. The resulting report of the Jarrett Committee highlighted the need for a more 'business like' management structure within universities (Walford 1991). As Walford (1991) outlines, performance indicators were introduced along with staff development, accountability and appraisal. The universities would be expected to work to a corporate plan with Vice-Chancellors as chief executives (Becher and Kogan 1992). It was the Jarrett Report that recommended an examination of the structure of the UGC, as acknowledged in the Green Paper *'The Development of Higher Education into the 1990s'*. The paper recognised 'a change in relations between the Government and the UGC', and accepted the Jarratt Report's recommendations 'that the Government should commission an examination of the role, structure and staffing of the UGC' (HMSO 1985: 36-37). The Croham Committee was appointed in 1985 by the DES to consider the restructuring of the UGC. It made recommendations for a rationalisation of the UGC's management structure, including the co-opting of more members from industry and commerce (Walford 1991). The whole rationale for both of these reports was efficiency and rationalisation. The government wished higher education to be more economically astute and build closer relations to 'the wealth-creating sectors of industry and commerce' (Walford 1991: 172). The government wanted the universities to behave more like private businesses, competing for students and research contracts (Walford 1991, Marginson 1997).

efficiency gains (i.e. cuts to unit costs), expansion satisfied public demand and created, for the New Right, an ideologically satisfying market in student choice. However, such was the success of the drive for expansion that the Government's target was reached by 1993. Hence, as in the early 1980s, the Conservatives again sought to slow expansion and restrict numbers;

'...the attractions of 'efficient expansion' had begun to fade by the early 1990s. The Treasury, ignoring... the impressive 'efficiency gains' produced by this policy, worried about its uncapped obligation to pay fees on behalf of all students that education institutions cared to admit.'

(Bargh *et al* 1996: 17)

In 1993 John Patten, the then secretary of state, moved to finance students according to their subject grouping. Differential rates of funding for different types of subjects were introduced. This effectively capped numbers by reducing funding for the more popular humanities and arts subjects and subsequently reinforced the link between higher education and the needs of the economy (Pritchard 1994)⁴⁴. Certainly, this was part of a broader strategy to prioritise recruitment into science and engineering throughout the 1980s and 1990s, on the grounds that they are more 'vocationally' relevant.

In fact, student numbers continued to grow during the latter part of the 1990s, albeit at a much slower rate - a pattern of expansion left relatively undisturbed by the election of a (New) Labour administration in 1997. Moreover, amid discourses of "opportunity" and "national need" the present government made clear its aspirations to bring about very substantial increases in the size of British higher education. Indeed, David Blunkett, the former Secretary of State for Education and Employment, recommended an expansion of higher education to include 40 per cent of 18 to 21 year olds. Tony Blair, the Prime Minister, has called for an expansion of student numbers to incorporate 50 per cent of young people under 30 - albeit spread across both further education and higher education sectors.

⁴⁴ Moreover, tuition fees were cut twice, reducing the incentive to recruit numbers and any institution going under or over its Maximum Aggregate Student Number (MASN) had its funding reduced by that

However, for such aspirations to become a reality, the seemingly intractable problem of how to finance further expansion of higher education needed to be resolved. The Conservatives had already sought to fund the expansion of student numbers by means other than increased public expenditure. Their squeezing of the student maintenance grant, amongst other measures, was superseded by their wider appropriation of American funding methods: student loans⁴⁵. New Labour's response to the dilemma of funding further expansion was the broader development of the system of student financial contributions.

The Financing of a Mass System of Higher Education

The Conservatives first challenged the assumption that students and their families should advance only a limited contribution towards the cost of participating in higher education. As Hesketh (1999: 386) outlines, with the sector 'groaning under the strain of unprecedented and continuous cuts', the existing funding arrangements for student support were openly questioned. Indeed, it was the late Sir Keith Joseph who first broached the idea of increased student contributions, with a suggestion that such contributions should be widened beyond means-tested maintenance grants to incorporate contributions to tuition fees on the same basis. This suggestion was widely derided at the time. However, not much later the Conservatives took the first serious steps towards introducing greater pecuniary contributions from students and their families. In their 1988 White Paper *'Top-up Loans for Students'* (HMSO 1988) they announced their intention to introduce new arrangements for higher

number (Bargh *et al* 1996). Market led growth was abandoned, for the time being, although the marketised culture continued.

⁴⁵ Previously higher education students had already seen their right to claim any social security and housing benefit during the summer vacation removed and the introduction of students loans was accompanied by the freezing of student grants (until inflation reduced them to loan levels). As it was, student grants, not being index linked, had already been eroded by inflation (MacFarland 1993). The promise to freeze grants was reneged upon in the 1993 budget, the government deciding to cut students maintenance grants by 10% every year for three years (Ainley 1994). The loan was to be increased proportionately thereafter, until it was equal to the maximum grant available (i.e. £2265) to full-time higher education students (Hesketh 1999). Initially the loan was to make up 15% of student finances, rising to 50% by 2006/7 (Williams 1990). However, the unexpectedly fast pace of expansion and the

education students to meet their living costs through student loans⁴⁶. In 1990 the *'Education (Students Loans) Act'* empowered the Secretary of State to make provision for higher education students, below postgraduate level, to receive subsistence loans (HMSO 1990)⁴⁷.

It was the American system that became the unmistakable influence for the British system. The introduction of student loans was based on two American mortgage style models: the Guaranteed Students Loans System (GSL) and the Student Tuition and Repayment System (STARS) (MacFarland 1993). The loans were initially meant to be administered by private banks through 'an administrative mechanism', i.e. the Student Loans Company (SLC). This fitted the then Government's policy agenda for privatisation and marketisation (Hesketh 1999). However, the banks withdrew from the scheme, balking at having to finance the system and facing a barrage of protest from students⁴⁸. The SLC was taken into government ownership with the duty of filling '...the gaping hole left by the withdrawal of the banks, administering *publicly* funded resources to support *private* living costs of students' (Hesketh 1999: 387. Original emphasis)⁴⁹.

As it was, the student loan system proved to be very expensive. Total expenditure in the inaugural year for England and Wales was £1542m (DfEE 1993). By 1995/6 this was a huge £2057m (DfEE 1997b). The Government, in working towards what it perceived as reform based on the 'ideological high-ground', i.e. a post-welfare state that relied on market forces

resultant strain on public expenditure led Chancellor Kenneth Clarke to revise this projection, with the fiscal balance between grant and loan achieved by 1997/8.

⁴⁶ Alan Howarth (1991), the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science, argued further that the introduction of student loans as a more market orientated system of financing students would lead to a more 'equitable distribution of income'. More accurately, the introduction of loans in bringing in elements of privatisation and marketisation to HE and reconstituting students and parents as customers could be viewed in terms of the fulfilling of a wider political and ideological agenda.

⁴⁷ The same act introduced Access Funds to provide additional support for students in cases of real financial difficulties.

⁴⁸ Private banks are, however, now in the process of buying up some SLC contracts.

⁴⁹ As it was, the seeming willingness by students to take-up loans highlights their transition from an 'ambivalent reception' to, on the surface, a readily accepted source of student funding (Hesketh 1999: 388). This is despite their initial introduction leaving students with an average debt of £2,000 (Ainley

(MacFarland 1993), was reaching the end of its 'financial tether with the rising cost of expansion' (Hesketh 1999: 389). As higher education costs spiralled the government was forced to commission the Dearing Report (NCIHE 1997a), the largest inquiry into higher education since the Robbins Report.

The National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education (NCIHE) was appointed in May 1996 to make recommendations on the 'purposes, shape, structure, size, and funding of higher education' (NCIHE 1997a: 3). The report that it produced, known as the Dearing Report, was the first all encompassing inquiry into higher education since the Robbins Report of 1963. It made ninety-three recommendations in all, few of which were accepted in their entirety. Like Robbins it was the 'argument and text' of the report that became its real influence (Wagner 1998). Indeed, the Labour administration in receipt of the report went further than some of Dearing's recommendations. This was most noticeable in the financing of students⁵⁰.

1994). The academic year 1990/91 witnessed 28% per cent of students take recourse to a loan (SLC 1993), but by 1994/5 it was 55% and by 1996/7 it was 63% (SLC 1996, DfEE 1997).

⁵⁰ In terms of the governance of higher education Shattock (1998) accuses the report of being rather vague. The HEFCs are largely left alone with no recommendations made on who should run them, or how, although their powers in some ways may be undermined. Shattock (1998) highlights recommendations to alter the funding of research and the proposal of a new Advisory Council for research. Both recommendations may weaken the Funding Councils influence on institution's funding of research. Furthermore, Shattock (1998) argues that the HEFCs may be undermined by a decision to shift the balance of funding from block grants to a system where funding follows the student. Shattock (1998) argues that it was the disastrous cost-led expansion of post-1988 that led to a cap on student numbers in the early 1990s and finds it difficult to imagine that Treasury would let go of its 'de facto' control of student numbers. However, the matter of student choice, regardless of the implementation of recommendation 72 could still undermine the Funding Councils. Dearing recommends that students bear 25% of the average cost of a degree, thus shifting 'the balance of government to private funding over a period, and to this extent the Funding Councils' powers would be reduced' (Shattock 1998: 38). None of the above proposals were implemented as they stood. Directly, the Funding Councils were left largely unaffected by the policy developments that followed the Dearing Report's recommendations. It was the notion of student choice and policy changes in financing students that challenged traditional conventions of governmental and academic hegemony in higher education - not changes to central funding. Whereas policy development was largely concentrated on the further rationalisation of funds and centralisation of power away from the academics, the state now looked to defer power to the consumer with minimal state intervention. The Dearing Report clearly indicated an imminent expansion along the lines of student choice, calling for 'a target of distributing at least 60% of total public funding to institutions according to student choice' (NCIHE 1997a: Rec.72). And although student choice has not been implemented in the manner of Rec.72, it has, nevertheless, been brought into higher education by the introduction of tuition fees, the abolition of maintenance grants and the extension of student loans.

The Dearing Report made recommendations for the continued expansion of HE and the financing of this, in part, by the extension of student contributions beyond that of the existing system of student loans and parental contributions. It was recommended that students meet at least part of their tuition fees;

‘We do not underestimate the strength of feeling on the issue of seeking a contribution towards tuition costs: nor do we dispute the logic of the arguments put forward. A detailed assessment of the issues put forward has, however, convinced us that the arguments in favour of a contribution to tuition costs from graduates in work are strong, if not widely appreciated. They relate to equity between social groups, broadening participation, equity with part-time students in higher education and in further education, strengthening the student role in higher education, and identifying a new source of income that can be ring-fenced for higher education.’

(NCIHE 1997a: para 20.40: 313)

The Dearing Report considered four different options for student funding⁵¹. ‘Option B’ was favoured by Dearing but was only partly endorsed by the Government. This proposed a system which divided equally support for living costs between a means tested maintenance grant and income contingent loan, in addition to which a contribution to tuition fees would also be made in the form of an income contingent loan.

However, with a real crisis in higher education funding - it was projected that by 1997/98 the whole system would fall into deficit - the government decided to go beyond Dearing’s recommendations. More significantly, the report’s concentration on ‘individuals.... greater investment in their own futures’ (NCIHE 1997a: 304: 20.1) provided the Government with the necessary language to further develop higher education policy within human capital terms - as argued by David Blunkett following Dearing’s final report;

⁵¹ The discounted options were a system that supported 100 per cent of living costs with an income contingent loan with free tuition; a system that supported 100 per cent of living costs with an income contingent loan with a contribution to tuition; and a system which met the costs of living through a means tested grant and contribution to tuition supported by an income contingent loan (Hesketh 1999: 390).

‘Investment in higher education is an investment in the future. It is therefore right that the state should contribute to the costs to help ensure the country’s continued economic competitiveness. But it is right, too, as the Inquiry concludes, that the costs should be shared with those who benefit from improved and expanded higher education in terms not just of employability but also of the quality of their life.’

(Blunkett 1997: 3)

Given that those who ‘invest’ in higher education can expect higher rates of return than those who do not and have more chance of gainful employment, then it was proposed that students should bear more of the financial obligation through student loans and contributions to fees. Thus, to facilitate the expansion of HE, New Labour introduced tuition fees and radically altered the system of support for student living costs. With effect from the academic year 1998/1999, the ‘*Teaching and Higher Education Act 1998*’ introduced front-loaded and means-tested tuition fee contributions (HMSO 1998a)⁵². Moreover, with effect from the academic year 1999/2000, maintenance grants were abolished and replaced entirely with a system of income contingent student loans. The loans are repaid via the tax system when the student graduates and finds employment⁵³.

The report and the Government called for the expansion of higher education and the inspiration and enablement of *individuals* so that they grow intellectually. However, the central aim became the fostering of the individual’s ‘application to the benefit of the economy and society’ (NCIHE 1997a). This is no different to what was called for by Robbins. However the ways and means by which it is achieved have clearly been updated. The onus has quite clearly shifted onto the individual to invest in education and maximise their human capital in

⁵² Students in England, Northern Ireland and Wales must contribute to tuition fees; for the academic year 2000/01 the maximum fee contribution is £1,050 for those whose families earn £28,000 per annum and above. Most students, though, do not pay the full amount and the threshold at which parental contribution is required is being raised from £17,000 to £20,000 for 2001/02. The government estimates that 45 per cent of students will not be required to make a contribution to tuition fees (DfEE 2000). In Scotland however, following the Cubie Report (2000) ‘*The Independent Committee of Inquiry into Student Finance*’ students do not pay up-front tuition fees, but contribute to tuition fees following graduation through a Graduate Endowment Scheme. Similar investigations are taking place in Wales and Northern Ireland which may lead to change in the way students are supported.

⁵³ For the initial year students will be entitled to a loan and a maintenance grant (if eligible) of up to 25% of living costs. The loans continue to be administered by the SLC under the ‘*Student Loans*

answer to the nation's changing economic needs. More significantly, this investment is to be a very real financial investment, predicated on the assumption that financial returns on the investment are also very real.

However, individuals do not participate in higher education for economic reasons alone. Moreover, broader goals of widening access to HE are threatened by a reliance on a theory that assumes people are 'rational egoists' who calculate their investment in education against labour market benefits (Fevre *et al* 1999). Implicit within higher education funding and expansionary policy, is the failure to consider the wider processes of social and cultural reproduction that render equality of opportunity (and the rights of the consumer) more complex. Indeed, cultural and social forces have as much of a bearing, if not more, on consumers' rights to higher education, as they did on citizens' rights to higher education - as discussed in the previous chapter.

Students in a Mass System of Higher Education

The transformation of British higher education to a mass system, financed in part by student contributions, has undoubted implications for the wider student experience. The massification of higher education has clearly brought a great change in the total opportunities available for university education and - as discussed earlier in the thesis - radically altered the types of labour market opportunities available to graduates. Moreover, transformations in funding arrangements have had widespread effects for access to higher education - as a 'right of citizenship' - with some sectors of the population faring better, and in different ways, than others (see Stroud 2001).

Some aspects of the changing social composition of the student population are clear. The long-standing disadvantages faced by women in accessing higher education have been

(*Education*) Act 1998' (HMSO 1998b), though the government is in the process of selling off existing

substantively redressed. Thirty years ago 33 per cent of university students were women, but by 1995/6 the ratio of men to women in full-time study was 50:50 (HESA 1996) and by 1998/9 more women than men accessed higher education (ONS 2000). The overall picture of participation for ethnic minorities also appears positive. The Dearing Report (NCIHE 1997b) highlights that 'non-whites' constituted 12.2 per cent of 18-21 year olds in higher education, compared to 7.3 per cent of the 18-21 year old non-whites cohort in the population as a whole. However, whilst it cannot be denied that some progress has been made in widening access to higher education, the progress remains patchy.

Indeed, whilst women are no longer concentrated in part-time study (Bourner 1991) and are no longer predominantly enrolling at 'New' sector (or old polytechnic) institutions (UCCA 1993; PCAS 1993; NCIHE 1997b), in terms of accessing higher education women 'remain concentrated in certain subject areas' (NCIHE 1997b: 9) (see Table 4b). Women are over-represented in the Arts and Humanities and still under-represented in stereotypically male dominated subjects, e.g. Engineering⁵⁴. Women are also more likely to be an 'alternative student' (NCIHE 1997b)⁵⁵. They are more likely to have entered higher education by an

loans made by the SLC to the private sector (DfEE 1998).

⁵⁴ The location of women in particular subjects is the logical conclusion of gendered specialisation in schooling, 'linked to the general (misguided) expectation that girls do not do well at more advanced levels in some subjects, and to the lack of female role models in those subjects' (NCIHE 1997b: 9: 2.2).

⁵⁵ Edwards (1993) finds that female mature students are often less qualified, face poor child-care facilities, transport problems, timetable and time management difficulties and require greater guidance. As a result drop-out rates for female and part-time students are higher than for male students (Morrison 1996; NCIHE 1997b). Overall, mature students or 'alternative students' comprise more than 50% of higher education students, 'mature' being over the age of 21 and 30% of undergraduates are over 30 years of age (QSC 1996; Coffield 1996; NCIHE 1997b). However the majority of this category of students are located in the 'New' university sector. Mature students also comprise a higher proportion of part-time students and obtaining entry to higher education 'remains a difficult task' without A levels (NCIHE 1997b: 12: 3.2). Most enter via the traditional A level route (61%), with 4% of students using Access courses and 1% using vocational qualifications (Ramsden 1997). 'New' sector universities appear more accepting of non-traditional qualifications than 'Old' sector, as reflected in mature student demographics and also in UCAS (1993) and PCAS (1993) data, that revealed 84% of undergraduates in the 'Old' sector had A levels compared to 59% in the 'New' sector (NCIHE 1997b). This anomaly is mitigated, to an extent, in that different subject areas recruit varying proportions of non-A level students. The difference between A level and non-A level in the 'Old' and 'New' sectors is partially attributable to 'the balance of subjects offered by different institutions' (Webb *et al* 1994; NCIHE 1997b: 12: 3.3). Mature students, as has been discussed in relation to female students, face a particular set of problems on entering higher education, exacerbated by funding inequities between full and part-time students, and tend to have higher drop-out rates (Edwards 1993; Steedman and Green 1996; Hogarth *et al* 1997; NCIHE 1997b). Moreover, they tend to be regarded, particularly non-A level

alternative route (i.e. by Access course), be a part-time student or an ‘alternative (mature) student’⁵⁶. Consequently, their social profile is often different to that of the ‘traditional’ student and is accompanied by a multitude of problems particular to that group.

Table 4b Subject of study by sex, 1996.

Subject of Study	Male (%)	Female (%)
Arts/Humanities	9	18
Modern/Languages	3	8
Social Sciences	13	16
Law	7	6
Business Studies	16	13
Maths/Computing	11	5
Natural Sciences	15	22
Engineering	21	4
Combined Studies	4	7
Not known	1	1
Total	100	100

Source: NCIHE (1997b: 9; Compiled from IER data; Hogarth *et al* 1997)

The broader picture for ethnic minorities is also one worthy of closer inspection. The important factor here is not one of representation; ethnic minorities as a proportion of the population are adequately represented (Modood and Shiner 1994; Connolly 1994; Bird 1996; NCIHE 1997b). Rather, it is that ethnic minorities are disadvantaged on several inter-related levels; the type of institution they attend, the choice of degree course, their ethnic background

students, by Admissions tutors as ‘ill prepared’ for higher education and ‘resource intensive’ despite evidence suggesting they are no worse than traditional students (Hogarth *et al* 1997). Whilst 50% of Access course students go on to HEIs, vocational qualifications, such as GNVQs, are still regarded with suspicion, by the students themselves, in access to higher education (Webb 1994; Smith *et al* 1996; NCIHE 1997b). Moreover, the dominance of women among mature and Access course students highlights a class/gender issue with a persistent under-representation of working class and unemployed men in higher education (NCIHE 1997b); ‘These men do not use the alternative routes into HE to the same extent as women and their continued under-representation in HE presents a particularly difficult challenge to policy’ (NCIHE 1997b: 10: 2.4). Moreover, many of the policy initiatives designed to encourage ethnic minorities into higher education have focused on mature students (Bird and Yee 1996). As Bird and Yee (1996: 35) argue the focus on recruiting ‘alternative’ students is a focus on students who ‘did not complete compulsory education with the necessary qualifications for entry to higher education’. Despite the success of Access courses for both black and white students, the provision is compensatory for the failure of the compulsory education system (Bird and Yee 1996).

⁵⁶ The Higher Education Statistics Agency (1996) record the 1995/6 ratio of men to women in part-time study as 39:61, where the NCIHE (1997b) choose to use Ramsden’s (1997) study that argues women represented 53% of part-time students in 1995/6.

and social class (Connolly 1994; Bird 1996)⁵⁷. Access to the most prestigious universities is denied to particular ethnic groups (NCIHE 1997b. See Table 4c) and there is an under-representation of some ethnic minority students in particular fields of study (Rasekola 1997). There is also a disparity between ethnic minority groups in access to higher education (UCAS 1995; NCIHE 1997b).

Table 4c Ethnic background of students by university sector, 1996.

University Sector	White (%s)	Black	Indian Subcont	Other	Not Known
'Old'	56	27	57	71	46
'New'	44	73	43	29	54
Total	100	100	100	100	100

Source: NCIHE (1997b: 6; Compiled from IER data; Hogarth *et al* 1997)

Moreover, because most ethnic minorities are most often located in the lower socio-economic groups (NCIHE 1997b), evidence suggests they are more likely to have trouble accessing educational opportunities (see Egerton and Halsey 1993; Smithers and Robinson 1996). It is not that ethnic minorities simply suffer as a result of socio-economic status, indeed some ethnic minority groups in relation to such factors have higher levels of participation. Rather it is the conjunction of socio-economic status and racial discrimination that obstructs access to higher education for many ethnic minorities (Modood 1993; Bird 1996)⁵⁸.

⁵⁷ Modood and Shiner (1994) find that Afro-Caribbean and Pakistani students are more likely to be located in the polytechnic and college sector ('New'), whilst Chinese and some other Asian groups are more likely to enter the 'Old' sector. Black students tend to be concentrated in a small number of higher education institutions (Bird 1996) and Modood (1993) identifies a concentration of ethnic minority students in 'New' universities located in particular areas with high ethnic minority populations e.g. London and the Midlands. Ethnic minority women face their own distinct problems, with greater degrees of discrimination in reaching higher education. However, 'it is worth recalling that 'cultural' factors in the White population affected the applications to higher education until recently, with significantly fewer women than men applying' (Connolly 1994: 2).

⁵⁸ Racial discrimination is a key factor in disparity between ethnic groups, for '...even if the middle-class black person is advantaged materially, there is no evidence that that reduces his or her being racially discriminated against' (Bird 1996: 49). The under-representation of ethnic minorities is a result of varying factors; for instance, with 'New' institutions accepting lower entry qualifications, the concentration of ethnic minorities in 'New' sector institutions located in particular areas is as a result of ethnic minority students tending to have lower A level scores and possessing non-A level qualifications and such institutions being more culturally diverse and access friendly (Modood 1993). The socio-economic factor is also, at times, ambiguous; in being classified via occupation it obscures cultural elements for high ethnic minority representation (Connolly 1994). Racial discrimination, therefore, comes to the fore as an explanation for the under-representation of some ethnic minority groups in

Socio-economic status is certainly a factor in entry to higher education. Quite simply you are less likely to go to university if you are from a working class background (NCIHE 1997b)⁵⁹. However, there has been a slow improvement in the number of individuals from lower socio-economic groups participating in higher education. As Table 4d highlights, the percentage of those aged 18 and over entering higher education from social classes III-manual, V and VI has improved significantly since 1960 (NCIHE 1997b). However, the participation rate from socio-economic group I is still nearly 700% higher than that of socio-economic group V. Moreover, whilst the number from non-manual social origins in the higher education population has been increasing, the rise is not relative to their numbers in the population as a whole (Glennister and Low 1990; NCIHE 1997b). In fact, the rate of participation between groups has remained constant and has done so over time (Hasley 1992; Egerton and Halsey 1993; Blackburn and Jarman 1993; Smithers and Robinson 1996; NCIHE 1997b).

Table 4d. % of 18+ cohort entering higher education by socio-economic group.

SEG	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1985	1990	1995
I, II, III _n	8.4	18.5	26.7	32.4	33.1	35.2	36.7	45.0
III _m , IV, V	1.5	2.7	3.6	5.1	6.5	8.3	10.3	15.1
API (UK)	1.8	3.4	5.4	8.4	12.4	13.7	19.3	32.0

Source: NCIHE (1997b: 40; Compiled from Halsey 1980; DfEE 1996)

Certainly the differential propensity for individuals to enter higher education reflects a complex set of factors. Historical patterns of participation may well induce generalised attitudes amongst some social groups that renders entry to university inconceivable (“university is not for me”) (Rees and Stroud 2001). More particularly, evidence suggests that

higher education (Modood 1994). For instance, the concentration of ethnic minorities in the ‘New’ sector, is argued to stem from racism in the admissions procedure (Connolly 1994; NCIHE 1997b). In 1991, according to UCCA data, 53% of white applicants were successful, compared to 27-29% of black applicants, despite allowances for mitigating factors e.g. entry qualifications.

⁵⁹ Data provided by the Dearing Report on socio-economic status covers mainly full-time students under 21 years old. It excludes the socio-economic profile of part-time students and older students’, therefore it does not account for the 33% of students that study part-time and the 50% of students studying over the age of 21 (NCIHE 1997b: 39). It concludes that ‘data on the socio-economic profile of the HE population have been consistently poor, difficult to collate and full of caveats. There is no

changes in student financing - the introduction of loans and tuition fees - may well inhibit applications to higher education from working class families. Concerns also remain about the wider effect of student loans and tuition fees on the widening of access and on the student experience.

Of course it could be argued that the previous system of maintenance grants and free tuition was hugely regressive anyway, given the predominance of the middle-classes in HE (see Watson and Taylor 1998). However, whilst the charging of tuition fees could be justified on the grounds that poorer students are exempt and those paying them would benefit from improved employment opportunities and higher salaries, evidence suggests that tuition fees could be acting to deter 'non-traditional' applicants from applying (Hutchings and Archer 2000). Evidence from Gorard and Taylor (2001), however, questions the link between tuition fees and poor participation rates of non-traditional students, finding no evidence of a drop in participation rates or increase in drop out rates since their introduction.

It is perhaps too soon for a clear link between student contributions and a drop in non-traditional students' participation rates to be evidenced. However numerous studies do highlight the reluctance of less traditional students to incur debt. The expectation of debt brought about by student loans is shown to be a huge disincentive to participation, especially for those from lower socio-economic groups (see Hesketh 1999). Certainly, a reliance on self investment presupposes an equal ability to invest. Equally, for those who do invest, the impact of debt and hardship on the student experience is for many students to detrimental effect, e.g. students taking up part-time employment during semesters to avoid debt may experience grade deflation (Callender and Kemp 2000). More particularly, the increasing number of students and the subsequent 'diversification' of graduate employment makes 'investment' that much more risky for some students.

simple way to draw a conclusive picture on this subject, especially as no relevant data on students over 21 exists' (HEFC 1996: 23; cited in NCIHE 1997b: 39).

A further concern might be that by framing the ‘opportunity’ to participate within discourses of human capital theory (and the right to invest), there is a risk that some groups could become further disenfranchised⁶⁰. Moreover, by reformulating the students’ relationship with higher education in this way, there could be implications for the relationship students construct with (graduate) labour market opportunities. Certainly, it is possible that judgements about investing in higher education influence how prospective students evaluate the costs of participation; and there may be systematic differences between students of contrasting social profiles in these terms. Indeed the reduction of ‘opportunity’ to human capital imperatives, means excluding some investors from some opportunities whilst including others.

Higher Education Policy and Market-Liberal Human Capital Theory

As mentioned previously, central to discussions of the development of higher education policy is the link between higher education and wider objectives of economic growth. In this regard, the development of higher education policy has increasingly been framed in human capital theory terms. This is not new. As discussed in the previous chapter the Anderson and Robbins Reports encouraged state-funded investment in education backed by theories of human capital investment. However, more recently higher education policy has increasingly focused on the individual student’s role in contributing to a competitive knowledge based economy, as part of a greater responsibility to invest financially in their own human capital: market liberal human capital theory (see Marginson 1997).

Marginson (1997) argues that (market-liberal) human capital theory brings to the fore an understanding of ‘micro-level’ individual investments. This understanding is characterised by the governmental practices typically located in market liberal human capital theory through the;

‘Programmes and policies to secure self-managing individual investment: the selective use of student assistance; ‘talking up’ participation, income contingent fees and loans schemes, etc.’

(Marginson 1997: 116)

The ‘private benefits of education’ are talked-up and ‘trends to credentialism, vocationalism, and high participation, and the weakening of expectations about equal treatment’, open the way up to investment behaviours and user charges (Marginson 1997: 116).

There is no doubt that the Anderson and Robbins Reports both drew upon human capital theory to support their recommendations for state investment in higher education. Both reports held that it was in the state’s wider interests to ensure that investment in human capital took place. Indeed, it was taken as axiomatic that where human capital is developed through education or training, such investment will constitute the prime source of economic growth (see Schultz 1961). However, at the same time, investment in human capital was also seen to benefit the individual. Certainly, participation in higher education, or for that matter in any form of education or training, can be framed as market behaviour where investment by the individual in the acquisition of credentials (e.g. in the form of financial contributions (loans, fees), potential earnings foregone) is set against enhanced labour market opportunities (Becker 1975). And it is the contention of myself and others that it is this latter reading of human capital theory that has come to dominate the development of higher education policy - as it has the wider Learning Society debate (see Rees *et al* 1997; Marginson 1997).

As Majumdar (1983) argues there is a ‘jumbling’ of the micro-economic activity of individuals and the macro-economic demands of the economy. Economic growth at a macro level is, for the Government, dependent on market behaviour at a micro level; i.e. the investment behaviour of the individual. Hence, individuals are increasingly expected to foot

⁶⁰ For example, the number of mature student applicants is already falling (ICISF 2000).

the bill for their investment. In this regard, the more recent introduction of tuition fees and loans form part of a broader strategy for higher education massification through marketised and consumer led policy initiatives⁶¹. It is expected then, that individuals' participation in higher education will extend from a 'natural' calculation of future benefits. This is based upon the necessary provision of educational resources (higher education expansion) by government, which are accessed by consumer/investors (students) on a market basis. It then becomes 'the role of the state in this context.... to ensure that (individuals) are fully aware of the nature of the learning opportunities' with the end goal being 'maximum social (and economic) benefits... through the effective operation of market processes' (Rees *et al* 1997: 486-7).

However, just as it is highly questionable that an expanded HE sector is key to Britain's (or an individual's) economic success, it is perhaps more questionable that the introduction of loans and fees has or will open up the educational franchise - in Robbins's terms - to all those who *might* benefit. This we discussed earlier. More significantly, where learning is almost

⁶¹ Integral to this process is an agenda for the centralisation of power and rationalisation of resources (Scott 1995). During the 1970s, economic crises resulted in a rationalisation of funding, the ability of higher education to be self financing was questioned and notions of human capital shifted to a concept of more direct funding of particular sectors. Subsequent policy reflected that an 'undifferentiated expansion of state financed education' was not possible. Rather; 'it problematised the links between education, technology and industry. It implied selective rather than general investment, and placed private initiative and risk taking at the centre of educational management, opening the way to construction of market relations between education and industry in which firms would regulate their own investment in training and research, and education institutions would respond to market pressures' (Marginson 1997: 110).

Overall this meant a rationalisation of funding and demands for more accountability from higher education funding bodies i.e. centralisation. Economic rationalisation resulted in a reorganisation of higher education funding; i.e. the collapse of the quinquennial system of grants (Becher and Kogan 1992). Becher and Kogan (1992) argue that the quinquennial system of grants had been confirmation of the trust society had in the universities' autonomy. However, as the economy struggled, accountability and management, rather than trust, became the issue. An expanding higher education system meant expenditure on universities had in real terms continued to grow and had to be seen to be accountable. This was despite fierce cuts in spending during the 1970s (Becher and Kogan 1992).

In a modern expanding system, absorbing ever more public funds, the UGC needed to reject its previously partisan approach to HE funding and the favouring of university autonomy. Once, 'celebrated as a uniquely successful device for reconciling the public funding of universities with their autonomy,..... (the UGC) become an anachronism' (Scott 1995: 17-18). The increasing number of local authority controlled polytechnics during the 1970s, meant that ministers had to take more control of a system used to pandering to a single autonomous entity. Accordingly, power within 'education' became increasingly centralised both ideologically and politically. Subsequently, education policy developed from a 'value', rather than an 'academic', perspective (Salter and Tapper 1981).

singularly presented as the opportunity (or responsibility) to invest in one's own human capital and maximise enhanced future rewards, an agenda and discourse is created for participation. At the very least this quite clearly signals a departure from the 'rights of citizenship' model embraced by the Anderson and Robbins Reports. More particularly, the reduction of the student to investor/consumer further transforms the relationship the student has with higher education. Hence, the relationship students construct with the labour market is equally subject to change. This is especially so when the much more tangible effects of higher education massification on the structure of labour market opportunities (e.g. graduate labour market diversification) are factored into the 'investment' equation.

Higher education policy discourse has in more recent times revolved around the language of (human capital) "investment", although the political rhetoric often couches this in terms of "opportunity" and "responsibility". What flows from this is the reduction of educational opportunities to economic imperatives, both at the micro and macro levels;

'According to the new economic values, students should base their decisions about their higher education on how it would contribute to their future employment and not, for example, on whether they would find it intrinsically interesting. This would enable them to become part of the 'efficient' distribution of human capital and so facilitate the linkage between economic demand and human supply.'

(Salter and Tapper 1994: 17)

This, I argue, is the context within which students of higher education must now forge their career paths, although as the evidence of the later empirical chapters suggests, not all students (and prospective students) are able to (or necessarily wish to) engage with the wider prevailing political and socio/economic discourse that encapsulates higher education's policy developments.

Conclusion

The student experience has been transformed by the expansion of student numbers and further still by changes in the nature of funding, in particular by the introduction of student loans and tuition fees. The principal rationale for such change has been to bring about long-term improvements in the competitiveness and growth of the British economy, of which the use of loans and tuition fees to fund expansionary programmes is part of a broader political and ideological agenda. Certainly, the link between higher education and the economy has become increasingly more direct. Indeed, higher education today more closely resembles a practical and vocationally orientated system for the masses, so structured as to serve the state's economic needs. While the consequences of such developments are only imperfectly understood, they undoubtedly affect the students' wider experiences of higher education and the labour market.

What is clear, is that higher education is seen as a critical element in economic policy. However, where Robbins placed this 'critical element' squarely on the state's shoulders, students today are made to be more aware of the financial implications of their choices and are forced to act as players in a vocationalised, individualised and marketised system. Moreover, the transition to a mass system of higher education embodies a profound educational and social transformation. Higher education massification implies a fundamental restructuring of the education system and a reconstitution of higher education's relationships with the economy and with social structures more widely. This can be seen to have been foreshadowed by a discourse of economic and social transformation. Indeed, in terms of a 'hegemonic project', it is the discourse of the New Right that appears to remain dominant to this day in shaping higher education policy and ultimately the student experience (Phillips 1998).

Quite clearly, the role of the individual in facilitating economic competitiveness is located 'within the wider relationship between education and training, and economic development, of

which it forms part. This wider analysis... (of which) is derived from human capital theory' (Rees *et al* 1997: 486). The implicit assumption is that all individuals will act within narrow economic imperatives to maximise educational and labour market opportunities. Certainly, the state has significantly extended the access of individuals (citizens) to educational opportunities and, thereby, to better forms of employment and the potential of social mobility. At the same time, the resources of knowledge and skills required in the knowledge-based economy have been substantially strengthened. However, the enhanced employment benefits which are the cornerstone of the 'market-individual-consumer' model (Plant and Barry 1990) are themselves ambiguous – particularly in terms of the diversification of graduate employment - as are the benefits to the wider economy.

The reformulating of the relationship higher education has with the economy and society, has implications for the relationship the individual student has with higher education and social structures more widely. Certainly, the benefits of higher education participation are no longer as clear as was previously the case - even though the majority of students continue to earn more than those with A levels (Connor 1997). The fact that students must now invest to participate in a much expanded higher education system and compete against an increasing number of students, places higher education participation in an entirely new context. Undoubtedly this must impact on the student's relationship with learning (including higher education) and, more particularly, with (the social construction of) labour market choices and actions - albeit not always in the way policy makers might envisage (see Rees *et al* 1997). This thesis attempts to understand better that relationship.

The next chapter focuses on the empirical methodological dimensions of the thesis. The chapter discusses the methodology used to investigate the students' social construction of labour markets. The strategy for the sampling, data collection and analysis is discussed and justified, as is the wider philosophy of my methodological approach.

CHAPTER FIVE

Methodology

Introduction

This chapter is concerned with the empirical methodological dimensions of the thesis. The aim of the thesis is not to simply identify perceptions of the labour market held by students of higher education, rather it is to investigate the wider forces of social and economic relations by which students form perceptions of the labour market, i.e. the social construction of the labour market. This chapter discusses the methodological strategies by which I investigate such a process.

Why A Qualitative Approach?

This study is a qualitative study, that is; methodologically, the data has been collected and analysed using methods that seek not to make precise measurements of a given phenomenon, but to enlighten the understanding of a process. The process this thesis is elucidating is the social construction of labour markets by students in higher education. Thus, where quantitative methods seek to measure ‘quantity, amount, intensity and frequency’ (Denzin and Lincoln 1998: 4), thereby ‘reducing the student experience to variables within a research questionnaire’ (Hesketh 1999: 391); the qualitative methodological emphasis of this thesis was on understanding ‘process and meaning’. This thesis, then, by nature seeks to qualitatively understand the ‘value laden’ *processes* by which students construct perceptions of labour market ‘reality’ (Denzin and Lincoln 1998: 8).

The collection of qualitative data stresses ‘the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational

constraints that shape inquiry' (Denzin and Lincoln 1998: 4). An investigation into the social construction of labour markets demands an approach that elicits 'knowledge' of the process by which students reach a labour market 'reality' (Berger and Luckmann 1991). Hence, my interviews are concerned with uncovering the 'various layers of experience, and the different structures of meaning' that socially construct the students' perceptions of the labour market (Berger and Luckmann 1991: 35).

Of course any subsequent claims made are always conditional and contextual (Denzin and Lincoln 1998), 'The social sciences are denied, in principle, decisive test situations for their theories' (Bhaskar 1988: 83). Certainly, the students' accounts were of a particular moment in time, a 'snap-shot', and should only be taken as their views at that time. In this regard, there is, of course, not a presumption that 'truths' will be uncovered. The search for universal positivist 'truths' is a lost labour and any claim to a 'truth' is superficial (Clifford and Marcus 1986: 8). However, despite this, the (qualitative) methods I used were useful in uncovering and understanding the minutia of detail, concerned with the *characteristics*, *causes* and *consequences* of social phenomena (Lofland 1971), i.e. the social construction of labour markets by students in higher education.

Data Collection

The method of data collection I used was the semi-structured interview - my justification of which will be discussed later in this chapter. Sixty-five interviews were conducted in all and sixty-one used in the final analysis. Ten other interviews were carried out as part of a pilot study. A software programme was used to help organise and analyse the data, i.e. Non-numerical *Unstructured data Indexing, Searching and Theorising Four* (NUD*IST 4), the merits of which will be discussed in a later section of this chapter.

Negotiating Access

Access negotiations were a limited part of this study, insofar as all the interviews took place at one HEI in Wales, i.e. 'St. David's', and permission to conduct the research within 'St. David's' had already been established when the application was made for Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) funds. Students were not approached in person within the university departments. Any student wishing to take part in the study was required to reply to notices placed on student information notice-boards or to an advertisement placed in the student newspaper. The only other form of access that required negotiating was for placing advertisements on the Student Union notice-boards. It was necessary to get permission for the advertisements from the Student Union's promotions representative - this was received.

Contacting the Students

To contact the students I placed notices asking for volunteers to be interviewed on the student notice-boards in the various faculty buildings and in the Students' Union (Appendix 1). The notices were bilingual (Welsh and English) and listed two contact numbers, i.e. my office extension number and my home telephone number. An e-mail address was also made available. This proved to be the most popular method by which students made contact. The same notice was placed in the classified advertisements section of the student newspaper. The advert ran for several editions with costs being deducted from ESRC research expenses. This proved to be the most effective way of contacting students. Students could also sign up to a form attached to my office door.

To encourage students to come forward for an interview, an incentive of £5 cash was offered. This was later raised to £10 for an interview. The offering of a financial incentive is sometimes used to procure respondents. It was deemed appropriate for this study and being a nominal amount did not produce a normative sample. By this, I mean it did not result in only 'hard-up' (working class) students responding to my request for volunteers. Indeed, many of

those who took part in the research, when questioned about their finances - in relation to student loans and tuition fees - reported themselves to be in a relatively healthy position financially.

Of the sixty-five students interviewed, forty-five students received the £5 incentive and twenty received the £10 payment. The increase became necessary when students failed to continue responding to the £5 incentive. Costs were deducted from ESRC research expenses. Permission to offer an incentive was sought by letter from Professor Gareth Rees, as Head of School and as my Ph.D. Supervisor (see Appendices 2 and 3). Two applications were made, one for the original amount of £5 and later when the payment was raised to £10. Each student had to sign a form, drawn up by myself, on receipt of payment and each signature was counter-signed by the Head of School. Payments were made from my own resources and then reclaimed through the HEI Finance Department.

The Research Setting

Initially, I had hoped to conduct the interviews in my own office. However, this proved difficult because I was sharing the space with two other research students. A colleague gave me access to a neighbouring more private office and this proved ideal. It was spacious, comfortable, quiet and informal. All of the interviews were conducted in this office, both for the pilot and main study.

Ethics

This study followed British Sociological Association (BSA) guidelines in dealing with its research subjects. I made sure to follow the guidelines for the informed consent of the interviewees. Each interviewee was fully informed as to the purpose and nature of the study. Furthermore, each interviewee was informed that they were free to stop and leave the

interview at any time. Moreover, they were informed that the interviews were to be taped and transcribed, copies of which would be available to them on request.

There were no real 'ethical' concerns in the forming of the interview schedule, as the focus of the research did not cover particularly (or potentially) sensitive issues.

The Pilot Study

A pilot study was carried out to test the research methodology and the validity of the interview schedule. It involved the interviewing of ten students on a semi-structured basis. The pilot study highlighted some small problems with the forming of the questions for the interview schedule - as will be discussed later in this chapter. The same conditions of access, research setting, contacting the students and ethics were applied as in the study proper.

Collecting the Data: The Semi-Structured Interview

Interviewing itself is perhaps 'the most widely used method of research' (Fielding 1993: 135). An interview is a 'conversational encounter to a purpose', a means of collecting data (Powney and Watts 1987: vii). Yet, as Fontana and Frey (1998: 47) assert, 'Asking questions and getting answers is a much harder task than it may seem at first'. There is always an element of ambiguity in human interaction through written and spoken word (Fontana and Frey 1998). However 'interviewing is one of the most common and powerful ways we use to try and understand our fellow human beings' (Fontana and Frey 1998: 47). Thus, the method of data collection for this study was the interview and though consideration was given to focus groups, the *semi-structured interview* was deemed more appropriate.

Focus group interviews were given great consideration, particularly for their capacity to highlight 'group norms and dynamics', which could give valuable insights into how 'social

constructions' are formed (May 1993). Banks (1957) used a similar strategy in the study of changing working practices in the steel industry, interviewing subjects individually and then within groups. Purcell and Pitcher (1996a) also conducted group interviews with some of the respondents to their questionnaire. As May highlights, the strategy produces 'different perspectives on the same issues';

‘(Banks, 1957)... demonstrated that interaction within groups.... affects us all in terms of our actions and opinions. As most of our lives are spent interacting with others, it comes as no surprise that our actions and opinions are modified according to the social situation in which we find ourselves. For this reason, group interviews can provide a valuable insight into both social relations in general and the examination of processes and social dynamics in particular’.

(May 1993: 95)

In investigating the social construction of the labour market, the use of group interviews may produce information that contradicts, agrees with or gives a totally different perspective to views extracted during the individual interviews (May 1993). However, the group interview is more of a tool for eliciting generalities rather than personal issues (see Ebbutt 1987).

As Ebbutt (1987: 106) argues, the group interview is not really designed to pursue a participant's views with a succession of follow-up questions, but is rather similar to 'a limited sample questionnaire' where general themes and issues can be identified. Moreover, I felt that to understand the student's social construction of the labour market more deeply, extensive questioning and probing about the forces that shape the students' perceptions of the labour market was necessary. Group interviews can merely skim the surface of a subject, lead to a general consensus or fall prey to a forceful and overbearing personality. It was felt, therefore, that the depth of questioning required the more intimate setting of one to one interviews. As it was, arranging group interviews was impracticable. The main obstacle was cost, given that payments were being offered for individual interviews. The cost of financing group interviews would have been prohibitive.

The semi-structured interview is a method that allows the interviewer to ask key questions, but leaves scope to probe for, and to be proffered, further information. This type of interview can be adapted to suit the interviewee, so that the instrument works at the subject's level of comprehension (Fielding 1993). Moreover, I felt it was by far the most suitable method of data collection for this study, as certain major questions needed to be asked and expanded upon. This type of interview leaves room for the subject to be encouraged to expand on issues raised and inform the researcher of what is important (Spradley 1979). Following introductions and so forth, I started the interview by asking standardised questions for age, sex, ethnic background and type of schooling. I then began the semi-structured part of the interview, all the while noting what was said – so that I might come back to issues raised. The interviews followed a process of questioning, whereby I prompted for both clarification and elaboration. It was important that the students' 'social construction of the labour market' could be understood on many levels with the students responding on their own terms. At the same time there needed to be room for comparison of responses in terms of the themes and issues raised (Sellitz *et al* 1964).

Alternative methods of interview (structured and unstructured), either alone or in conjunction with semi-structured interviews, were not deemed suitable in line with this thesis's aims. Structured interviews were deemed too rigid and inflexible in their questioning. At the same time the unstructured interview would have had insufficient focus for this study. In this case the greater structure of the semi-structured interview allowed more scope for comparison of answers in the final analysis (Sellitz *et al* 1964, May 1993). Certain questions needed to be asked and certain views elicited and compared. I wanted the interviewee to 'inform' me of what was important (Spradley 1979).

Data Collection: Constructing the Interview Schedule

The interview schedule was constructed in order to draw-out information about a defined area of study: the social construction of labour markets by students in higher education. It was paramount in forming the questions to *understand* the students' social construction of labour markets (Spradley 1979, Silverman 1993, Fontana and Frey 1998). That is, I wanted to elicit a deeper *understanding* of the wider forces of social and economic relations by which students form perceptions of the labour market. I am interested in the how's and why's of students' social constructions.

Indeed, this is perhaps where I went wrong in the initial forming of the interview schedule - uncovered in the pilot study - with too specific questions prompting too specific answers. What I learnt from my pilot study was that I needed to give the students a 'voice' to describe their 'life worlds' (Weil 1989)⁶². The questions I needed to ask should generate data that gives 'an authentic insight into people's experiences' (Silverman 1993: 91). I needed to understand the defined area of interest by being informed by the interviewee about what is important (Spradley 1979). To *understand* a 'social construction' it is necessary to give the student a 'voice' and be *informed* by the interviewee about their experiences (Weil 1989).

It is, then, paramount (to any study) that the right questions are asked - as the failings of the pilot study highlighted. The construction of an interview schedule relies on the researcher having a 'clear definition of the topic and a clear idea of the information that is required about the topic' (Foddy 1994: 38). Indeed, 'a necessary precursor to a successful question-answer cycle' is that the researcher and the participant have a 'shared understanding of the topic' (Foddy 1994: 36). To this end, the area of study needs to be clearly defined.

⁶² Of course 'voices' cannot be viewed in isolation but must be heard within the 'social structures and contexts in which the student experience takes place' (Hesketh 1992: 392).

In terms of the 'social construction of labour markets', I had to ask myself the question to what is the investigation alluding? The intention was to investigate the wider forces of social and economic relations by which students form perceptions of the labour market. In asking questions on this topic, I had to be sure the subject for discussion was properly defined;

'...unless all respondents focus upon the same topic and respond in terms of the same dimensions, the answers that they give cannot be meaningfully compared with one another.'

(Foddy 1994: 31)

The respondents had to be sure about the parameters of the discussion, both 'globally' (i.e. the labour market) and more 'specifically' (e.g. their degree scheme) (see Foddy 1994). Specific dimensions for consideration were raised by the literature review (e.g. degree scheme, institute, social profile and so forth). They were introduced into the interview schedule as themes/variables for discussion (May 1993)⁶³. 'Globally', it was made clear to the respondent at the beginning of the interview what the wider dimensions of the interview included. This was reflected in my subsequent questioning of the interviewees.

The interview questions were generally open, and not leading, enabling the subject to inform me of *their* influences, not what I, the researcher, deemed as influences⁶⁴. I wished the interviewee to describe their experiences and by making the opening question; "*Why did you come to university?*" several avenues were opened. This, firstly, put the area of study into some sort of context for both the interviewer and interviewee. The area for discussion was, to

⁶³ This said, I could have asked very specific questions as to how each variable influences the student's social construction. However, by asking questions such as these I would have been leading the interview data in a predetermined direction. Constructing the interview around leading questions alone does not assist in the drawing-out of an understanding of the essential personal factors that have led the individual to form, say, a particular perception of the labour market. As has been argued I wished, in the main, to be informed. Therefore, in order that I did not lead the interviewee, the themes/variables I identified as crucial were listed and used as prompts during the interviews in order to ascertain their significance. Certainly, having identified several themes from existing studies, I wished to elicit information concerning their influence on and significance to the social construction of the labour market.

a degree, defined - I wanted the interviewee to think about why they were at university, what were their motivations for being there?⁶⁵ Is it, for example, for a job? Just for fun? Or is it because their parents wanted them to go? Secondly, the question acted as an opening to a discussion of the social construction of the labour market. The next question would probe deeper their response. If their answer was, for example, along the lines of "to get a good job", then I needed to ascertain what a "good job" was and probe to find out how far they believed attaining the 'good job' job was possible within the wider context of, say, their social experience. The interviews flowed quite freely from here, with students quite happy to talk about their and their family's experiences (and perceptions) of school, college, work, etc. A copy of the complete interview schedule is in Appendix 4.

Collecting the Data: The Sampling Strategy

The sampling methodology, in many respects, borrows from a study mentioned in the literature review, i.e. the '*Great Expectations*' (Purcell and Pitcher 1996a) study⁶⁶. The Purcell and Pitcher (1996a) study examined final year undergraduates' perceptions of and attitudes to the labour market. It was the first study to examine 'student expectations of higher education and employment' (Purcell and Pitcher 1996a: ii). The study took in the views of 5000 randomly-selected UK final year undergraduate students from 21 HEIs, by means of questionnaires and group interviews. This thesis is in many ways the next logical step to the '*Great Expectations*' study. What I have attempted to ascertain was exactly what it is that shapes undergraduates' labour market 'expectations', 'aspirations' and 'perceptions'.

⁶⁴ By allowing the interviewee a degree of control over the focus and letting the researched talk about the defined area in the manner they wished, there is a contribution towards the equalising of the power relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee.

⁶⁵ A "don't know" meant asking the opening question again in a revised format, or a similar question, e.g. "Okay, why did you choose to study English?"

⁶⁶ This was conducted by the Institute for Employment Research at the University of Warwick on behalf of the Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services (AGCAS) and the Higher Education Careers Services Unit (CSU).

The study population is full-time 'home' undergraduate students in attendance at a single HEI. Initially it was planned to interview and have a sample of sixty students. However, sixty-five interviews were carried out due to some tapes proving unintelligible. The final study sample comprised sixty-one full-time home students. The extra one student was a final year female mature student, the last to be interviewed. Mature students were a group that proved quite difficult to attract to the study and for this reason it was decided to include the final interview for analysis. This was despite the target of sixty students overall having already been reached⁶⁷. Despite the inclusion of this interview, the sample still fell short of the number of mature students required to give a representative sample.

The study sample of sixty-one students also consisted of smaller sub-groups; in terms of year of study and degree scheme. Efforts were also made for representativeness in terms of gender, ethnic background and age (mature students). The final sample consisted of twenty first year, twenty second year and twenty-one final year undergraduate students. The rationale for this falls within the aim of the study. By comparing and contrasting students' views at different stages of their degree schemes and, furthermore, in contrasting circumstances (e.g. first years' payment of tuition fees), it was felt that the social construction process would become more visible.

As it was, in the final analysis, year of study proved of little significance. Of course, there was evidence of change over the three years of a degree course. However, the change was limited to the students' different priorities. First year students tended to be more interested in "having fun", whereas final year students were more concerned - as might be expected - about interviews, career opportunities and so forth. All of the interviewees had opinions on fees and the replacement of maintenance grants with loans, whether subject to the new support arrangements or not. However, what did not surface, was any significant difference between

⁶⁷ I was reluctant to omit another interview to include this final interview, as I was quite happy with my spread of students across choice of degree scheme - another sample concern.

first, second and final year students in terms of the ‘social construction’ of labour markets in relation to this issue⁶⁸. In these terms, the three years at university appeared to have little impact - certainly less so than degree scheme, or indeed issues of class and gender.

A variable that was considered to have a potentially wide significance was the students’ choice of degree scheme. Certainly Purcell and Pitcher’s (1996a) study, amongst others, highlights how attitudes can differ between those students on vocational courses and those on more academically orientated courses (see also Boys and Kirkland 1988; Brennan *et al* 1993). What I was looking for was a fair distribution of students, both in terms of the degree subject they studied and in terms of the level of vocationalism of degree schemes. If I had concentrated on levels of vocationalism alone I may have ended up with twenty engineers or business studies students. Equally, if I had taken students of any subject - as and when they came forward - I may have ended up with 30 Archaeology students⁶⁹. I wanted a more diverse spread of students with different orientations. Purcell and Pitcher’s study and the Annual Report of St. David’s, which records applications by degree subject and faculty, provided useful reference points for the categorisation of the interviewees’ degree schemes.

Purcell and Pitcher (1996a) draw distinctions between subjects studied in terms of them being highly vocational, mixed orientation and low vocational. This, with a few adjustments, helped decide the level of vocationalism of a student’s degree scheme. ‘St. David’s’ distributes applications to the university via subject and via faculty (see Table 5a). This helped produce a more even spread of students from across all faculty and subject areas. Table 5b is the faculty and subject cross referenced with high, low and intermediate levels of vocationalism. Table

⁶⁸ Indeed, differences are more likely to be apparent amongst those who did not go to university because of (perceptions of) financial issues (see Hesketh 1999; Hutchings and Archer 2000). Those first years already in HE would have been aware if they were paying fees or not (maintenance grants were still being paid at the time) and whilst it may be expected that the paying of fees may have hardened attitudes about the instrumentalism of HE this did not really appear to be the case.

⁶⁹ This, in truth, could have been the case, humanities students were particularly keen to participate - as were women.

5b was the framework from which I attempted to get an even spread of students across faculty, subject and levels of vocationalism.

Table 5a. Single subjects assigned via faculty.

FACULTY	SUBJECTS ASSIGNED TO FACULTY
A. Business studies and Law	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Business 2. Law
B. Engineering and Environmental Design	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Architecture 2. Engineering 3. (Foundation) 4. Maritime Studies and International Transport 5. City and Regional Planning
C. Health and Life Sciences	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Biology 2. Molecular and Medical Biosciences 3. Optometry 4. Pharmacy 5. Psychology 6. Neuroscience 7. Preliminary Year
D. Humanities and Social Studies	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Education 2. English, Communication and Philosophy 3. European Studies 4. History and Archaeology 5. Music 6. Religious Studies and Theology 7. Social and Administrative Studies 8. Welsh
E. Physical Science	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Chemistry 2. Computer Science 3. Earth Science 4. Mathematics 5. Physics and Astronomy 6. Preliminary Year

Source: St.David's University Annual Report 1997/98: 176

Table 5b. Level of vocationalism via subject/faculty

LEVEL OF VOCATIONALISM	FACULTY	SUBJECTS ASSIGNED TO FACULTY
Vocational	A. Business studies and Law	1. Business 2. Law
Vocational	B. Engineering and Environmental Design	1. Architecture 2. Engineering 3. (Foundation) 4. Maritime Studies and International Transport 5. City and Regional Planning
Intermediate	C. Health and Life Sciences	1. Biology 2. Molecular and Medical Biosciences 3. Optometry 4. Pharmacy 5. Psychology 6. Neuroscience 7. Preliminary Year
Intermediate	D. Physical Science	1. Chemistry 2. Computer Science 3. Earth Science 4. Mathematics 5. Physics and Astronomy 6. Preliminary Year
Intermediate	E. Humanities and Social Studies	1. Education 2. Modern Languages
Non vocational	F. Humanities and Social Studies	1. English, Communication and Philosophy 2. European Studies 3. History and Archaeology 4. Music 5. Religious Studies and Theology 6. Social and Administrative Studies 7. Welsh

Another consideration was to include at least six students from each vocational category for first, second and final year students (i.e. six from vocational, six from intermediate and six from non-vocational). This was so that each orientation for each year of study were quite equally represented. However, as can be seen from Tables 5c – 5e this was not quite achieved⁷⁰. Tables 5c – 5e show the students interviewed by subject and level of vocationalism. As can be seen from the tables, overall the sample is a little uneven in terms of levels of vocationalism, with twenty-six students studying Intermediate subjects, nineteen studying Vocational and sixteen studying Non-vocational. However, I do believe I had a

reasonable number (and variety) of students across different degree schemes and faculties. Indeed, overall I was quite satisfied with the spread of students across degree scheme and level of vocationalism, believing they incorporated enough students of different persuasions to allow for a diverse range of different perspectives.

Table 5c. First year sample by degree course, level of vocationalism and gender

NAME	SUBJECT	TYPE	GENDER
1. Helen	Education	Intermediate	F
2. Kerry	Biology	Intermediate	F
3. Caroline	Education	Intermediate	F
4. Rowena	Religious and Theological Study	Non-Vocational	F
5. Katherine	English	Non-Vocational	F
6. Jody	English	Non-Vocational	F
7. Beth	History	Non-Vocational	F
8. Amanda	English	Non-Vocational	F
9. Kirstyne	Mechanical Engineering	Vocational	F
10. Kamay	Accounting	Vocational	F
11. Ian	Geology	Intermediate	M
12. Ben	French and Spanish	Intermediate	M
13. Joseph	Psychology	Intermediate	M
14. Leo	Astro Physics	Intermediate	M
15. Dean	Politics and Sociology	Non-Vocational	M
16. Bob	Politics and History	Non-Vocational	M
17. Ross	Sociology	Non-Vocational	M
18. John	Mechanical Engineering	Vocational	M
19. Mehul	Business	Vocational	M
20. Chris	City and Regional Planning	Vocational	M

⁷⁰ However, given the lack of significance to year of degree scheme in the final analysis, the overall representation by orientation proved adequate.

Table 5d. Second year sample by degree course, level of vocationalism and gender

NAME	SUBJECT	TYPE	GENDER
1. Katy	Psychology	Intermediate	F
2. Georgina	English and Education	Intermediate	F
3. Sian	Psychology	Intermediate	F
4. Danielle	Archaeology	Non-vocational	F
5. Hannah	History	Non-vocational	F
6. Claire	Communication	Non-vocational	F
7. Jessica	Nursing	Vocational	F
8. Melanie	Medicine	Vocational	F
9. Salh	Management and Accounting	Vocational	F
10. Rajeka	Medicine	Vocational	F
11. Jeremy	Micro-Biology	Intermediate	M
12. David	Physics	Intermediate	M
13. Peter	Journalism	Intermediate	M
14. Max	Psychology	Intermediate	M
15. Richard	Music	Non-vocational	M
16. Tim	Architecture	Vocational	M
17. Rob	Management and Economics	Vocational	M
18. Gordon	Optometry	Vocational	M
19. Tom	Law	Vocational	M
20. James	Business Admin.	Vocational	M

Table 5e. Final year sample by degree course, level of vocationalism and gender

NAME	SUBJECT	TYPE	GENDER
1. Rhian	Education	Intermediate	F
2. Sarah	Zoology	Intermediate	F
3. Emma	Education	Intermediate	F
4. Llinos	Mathematics	Intermediate	F
5. Louise	Sociology	Non-vocational	F
6. Kay	English	Non-vocational	F
7. Laura	Social Policy	Non-vocational	F
8. Kate	Law	Vocational	F
9. Hayley	Civil Engineering	Vocational	F
10. Pardeep	Optometry	Vocational	F
11. Delyth	Statistics and Management	Vocational	F
12. Declan	Physics and Music	Intermediate	M
13. Martin	Education	Intermediate	M
14. Maurice	Mathematics	Intermediate	M
15. Paul	Mathematics	Intermediate	M
16. Alex	Marine Geography	Intermediate	M
17. Kevin	Medical Physicist	Intermediate	M
18. Michael	Biology	Intermediate	M
19. Nicholas	Bio-chemistry and Chemistry	Intermediate	M
20. Steve	Archaeology	Non-vocational	M
21. Douglas	Business Administration	Vocational	M

The sample comprised thirty-one female and thirty male interviewees (as can be seen from Tables 5c – 5e). This roughly mirrors the ratio by which women and men attend university;

for which the 1999 cohort of full-time undergraduates nationally is 51:49 (UCAS 2000). As mentioned previously, four mature students were interviewed (those 25 years of age and over): three male and one female or 6 per cent of the sample⁷¹. The recruitment of mature students to this study proved a lot more difficult than anticipated. Indeed, no second year mature students came forward at all. The effect of this anomaly is discussed within the context of the research findings.

Table 5f. Breakdown of study sample by ethnic origin.

Ethnic Origin	Total	% Total
Black Caribbean	-	-
Black African	-	-
Black Other	-	-
Indian	2	3.2
Pakistani	1	1.6
Bangladeshi	-	-
Chinese	1	1.6
Other Asian	2	3.2
Other	-	-
TOTAL ETHNIC MINORITIES	6	9.8
White European	59	90.2
TOTAL	61	100

Six members of ethnic minority groups were included in the research sample. This amounts to 9.8 per cent of the total students interviewed. According to ethnic minority admission rates to higher education, this is slightly above the average representation in British universities (Modood and Shiner 1994, Purcell and Pitcher 1996a)⁷². Table 5f is a breakdown of the ethnic origin of the study sample in terms of self classification⁷³. Concerns regarding the ethnic

⁷¹ The composition of Purcell and Pitcher's (1996a) study provides a useful framework for this variable. Purcell and Pitcher's (1996a) study followed LEA funding guidelines that categorise mature students as being of 25 years and over. Purcell and Pitcher's (1996a) age distribution was used as a framework for sampling the mature student population, their sample being composed of 85.1% of respondents 24 years and under, leaving a study sample of 14.9% of mature students. However, this study fell well short of even this figure.

⁷² Modood and Shiner (1994) carried out this research on behalf of the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS). Modood and Shiner (1994) examined the differential rates of entry to higher education by ethnic minorities presenting a summary of 1992 UCCA and PCAS admissions; ethnic minorities were found to encompass 8.4% of the total admissions to higher education institutions.

⁷³ Members of ethnic minorities were asked to self classify and then defined in terms of Modood and Shiner's (1994) analysis of the UCCA and PCAS admissions, i.e. Black Caribbean, Black African, Black other, Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Chinese, Other Asian and Other. Purcell and Pitcher's

minority sample, are the inclusion of only one ethnic minority male (an 'Other Asian' male), leaving the sample predominantly female. The sample is also entirely Asian in origin. It would have been interesting to be able to incorporate the views of, for example, Afro-Caribbean students. Again, the effects of these anomalies are discussed within the context of the research findings. However, overall, both for ethnic minorities and mature students alike, it is taken that the 'numbers of non-standard students are... small and findings should be treated as indicative of the need for further investigation than of significant trends' (Purcell and Pitcher 1996a: 5).

Social class is a key variable in terms of student identity and profile. It was therefore essential, in terms of analysis, to classify the students carefully. Understandings of class takes several forms; the hierarchical ranking of groups in society; an indication of social action/prestige; general description of structures of material inequality such as the income groups and occupations of the Registrar General's classifications; and actual and potential actors which have the capacity to transform society (Crompton 1993: 10). Hence, much consideration was given to the literature on arguments of classification and great thought given to the categorisation of the students' social class.

An individual's social class can be an important determinant of life chances, both in terms of educational and work opportunities (Brown and Scase 1994). As Scase (1992) argues if patterns of economic reward are stratified so can patterns of opportunity be stratified. Patterns of opportunity can be replicated and fed through to individuals. This is evident in student identity and, for instance, in employers' use of screening in recruitment and promotion procedures (see chapter two);

(1996a) sample included 8.1% ethnic minorities, largely agreeing with the sample Modood and Shiner (1994) analysed. However, unlike Modood and Shiner's (1994) study, (and to an extent Purcell and Pitcher's (1996a)), this study did not achieve a representative sample in terms of ethnic diversity i.e. the study was unable to incorporate a member of every ethnic minority attending the HEI.

‘Men and women of working-class origin are likely to be destined to occupy middle and junior management positions, with their work assessed according to performance-related criteria. For those destined for the most senior corporate posts, however, personal sponsorship and patronage are additional factors that are nurtured within various ‘informal’ organisational networks and relationships.’

(Scase 1992: 57)

This study seeks, in part, to understand how an awareness and most probably for some a lack of awareness of this set of circumstances impacts on the student’s social construction of the labour market.

The study made use of the occupational class measure the Hope-Goldthorpe scale to classify the students (Goldthorpe and Hope 1974). The Hope-Goldthorpe scale is a well established ‘relational’ classification of class by occupation (Crompton 1993). Goldthorpe and Hope (1974) created their scale with reference to British Census procedures, producing a coherent system for grouping occupations. Goldthorpe and Hope’s primary objective was to;

‘...construct a scale, which we would interpret as a measure of the ‘general desirability’ of occupations, on which occupations of all economically active men (sic) could be projected with some, small, uniform and estimable degree of error.’

(Goldthorpe and Hope 1974: 22)

There are seven categories of occupation, collapsed into the three categories of service, intermediate and working classes (Crompton 1993). They are;

‘Class I... (Service)... : all higher-grade professionals, self-employed or salaried; higher grade administrators and officials in central and local government and in public and private enterprises (including company directors); managers in large establishments; and large proprietors.

Class II... (Service).. : lower grade professionals and higher grade technicians; lower grade administrators and officials; managers in small business and industrial establishments and in services; and supervisors of non-manual employees.

Class III... (Intermediate)... : routine non-manual - largely clerical - employees in administration and commerce; sales personnel; and other rank-and-file employees in services.

Class IV... (Intermediate)... : small proprietors, including farmers and small-holders; self-employed artisans; and all other 'own account' workers apart from professionals.

Class V... (Intermediate)... : lower grade technicians whose work is to some extent of manual character; and supervisors of manual workers.

Class VI... (Working)...: skilled manual wage-workers in all branches of industry, including all who have served apprenticeships and also those who have acquired a relatively high degree of skill through other forms of training.

Class VII... (Working)...: all manual wage-workers in industry in semi- and unskilled grades; and agricultural workers.'

(Goldthorpe 1987: 40-42)

Blau and Duncan (1967) argue that social class, as a concept, cannot be measured consistently by occupation alone. However, occupation does reflect status and power - in terms of the hierarchy of economic resources and the hierarchy of political power and authority (Blau and Duncan 1967). Indeed, whilst the Hope-Goldthorpe scale is, as previously mentioned, a relational scale in that it 'reflects the structure of class relations', its measures of 'social grading' and the 'general desirability' of occupations is potentially hierarchical (Goldthorpe and Hope 1974). This reflects the 'hierarchy of economic resources' and the 'status and power' to which Blau and Duncan refer, which may influence students' social construction of the labour market. An occupational (and hierarchical) scale is therefore the measure of classification adopted by this study.

Goldthorpe (1987) distinguishes between various levels within a generic occupation. For example; there is difference in classification between a 'self-employed plumber', a 'foreman' plumber and a 'rank and file' plumber (Goldthorpe 1987: 40). Hence, Goldthorpe and Hope stress;

'...that official occupational designations or 'everyday' names of occupations are not enough, and that what should be given where-ever possible is a full description of the actual activities and operations in which the individual is involved in the day-to day performance of his (sic) occupational role.'

(Goldthorpe and Hope 1974: 70)

When establishing the parent's/spouse's occupation and/or last occupation of a research participant, I made sure to gather as much information as possible about the said occupation(s) (Goldthorpe and Hope 1974; Goldthorpe 1987). However, some of the students were quite unsure about what their parents/spouses did exactly.

The choice of the Hope-Goldthorpe scale is, however, treated with some caution. Indeed, the Hope-Goldthorpe scale is open to criticism on several fronts. It is, for example, accused of resembling a hierarchical scale that reflects prestige, instead of being the relational scale Goldthorpe and Hope insist it is (Crompton 1993). The scale is also criticised for endorsing class boundaries by allocating particular occupations to particular class categories (Crompton 1993). More significantly, it is perhaps most heavily criticised as not being suitable for women's employment and Goldthorpe's (1987: 296) argument that the classification of women is not "an optimal strategy" for measuring occupational class (see Heath 1981; Heath and Britten 1984; Stanworth 1984; Marshall *et al* 1989; Crompton 1993).

Goldthorpe (1987: 277) acknowledges criticism by 'feminist' sociologists, but refutes the accuracy of their assertions. It is argued that the 'basic 'unit' of class analysis' is the family and, therefore, women can be measured via the 'male breadwinner' (Goldthorpe 1983; Goldthorpe 1987). For Goldthorpe (1983) women's employment is subsumed by male employment as it is often part-time and intermittent. Moreover, women's class is most often determined by the male partner's class position. Therefore, male employment appears to be the most optimal taxonomic strategy (Goldthorpe 1987). Although, as Marshall *et al* (1989) highlight, Goldthorpe does concede that the head of the household in terms of employment may indeed not be male.

Heath and Britten (1984) argue that Goldthorpe fails to recognise the effect female employment has on measures of occupational class. For example, it is argued that a family where the female partner has non-manual employment and the male partner has manual

employment, differs distinctly in terms of ‘class and family behaviour’ from a family where both partners have manual occupations. Heath and Britten (1984) in applying a measure of class argue that it is perhaps more accurate to use a system of joint classification. Stanworth (1984) also criticises Goldthorpe for the reliance placed on the ‘male breadwinner’ as the determiner of class status. Goldthorpe is criticised for his adherence to functionalist perspectives on the division of labour. Stanworth (1984) suggests that the subordinate nature of women’s employment confers an altogether different class experience on women, even within marriage. Hence, it is argued that within the family, women’s class status should be determined independently from that of men.

Marshall *et al* (1989: 68) consider that ‘Goldthorpe and Stanworth may both be correct’. They argue that the critiques of Goldthorpe’s scale outlined above ‘talk past’ his analysis of class, or rather they talk past each other. What must be understood is the wider picture. Like Stanworth, Marshall *et al* suggest that women have different experiences of employment that may not be reflected by the Goldthorpe schema. They also agree that you cannot divorce the demographic measures from the socio-political issues. The class experiences of men and women are different. What is also conceded is that ‘class experiences’ are interdependent. Thus, by definition this makes women’s employment pertinent to the analysis of demographic class formations that Goldthorpe embraces (Marshall *et al* 1989). Marshall *et al* (1989) therefore propose that the unit of analysis should be on an individual basis, a family basis being too narrow. This is, however, dependent on the ‘objectives and parameters of the enterprise itself’.

All these arguments considered; my classification for students’ social class reflects the occupational class of the parent/spouse/last occupation uppermost in the Goldthorpe scale. Hence, I chose to place the *employed individual* (in most cases the parent) or *individuals* (in the case of both parents being employed) within the Goldthorpe schema and deduced the occupational class hierarchically. Of course, I recognise that Goldthorpe asserts that the scale

is not hierarchical but relational. However, the scale can be interpreted hierarchically, and reading the scale in this way makes more visible the inequalities between classifications (see Tables 5g, 5h, 5i and 5j).

Mature students were classified by their last occupation or by the occupation of their current partner. This takes into account their own occupational history, which is more long-standing than the 'average' student in the sample. Where conventional employment had not been taken up for many years, e.g. homemakers, classification was by occupation of the partner. No occasion arose where someone had been out of employment for many years and did not have a partner. However, although this is the means by which the social class of mature students is defined, in the discussion of the data the mature students' parents' social class (the mature students' biographies) is also taken into account - but not in their classification. This is to make more complex the narrative of their labour market trajectories.

The class demographics of the study reflect the nature of the institution. The HEI chosen, as an 'Old' institution, attracts more students from Occupational Classes I, II, and III, than, say, one of the newer universities. The HEI at which the study took place, 'St. David's' is in Wales. According to UCAS (2000) in 1999 Wales as a whole attracted more students from social classes III_m to V than elsewhere in the UK (using ONS Standard Occupation Classification). St. David's, however, tends to attract a higher proportion of those from Service Classes I and II, than from other socio-economic groups (UCAS 2000). As can be seen from the tables below the majority of the participants were of the Occupational Classes I and II, which is a fair reflection of the St. David's class demographics.

Table 5g First Year Students' Parental Occupation and Class
(excluding mature students)

Name	Mother's Occupation	Father's Occupation	Occupational Class
Chris	Sales Personnel	Sales Personnel	Intermediate Class III
Ross	Sales Personnel	Sales Personnel	Intermediate Class III
Amanda	Homemaker	Low Grade Technician	Intermediate Class V
Jody	Homemaker	Factory Supervisor	Intermediate Class V
Mehul	Homemaker	Director	Service Class I
Kamay	Nurse	Doctor	Service Class I
Kath	Optometrist	Broker (Deceased)	Service Class I
Helen	Nurse	Director	Service Class I
Kirstyne	Senior Administrator	Flight Navigator	Service Class I
Dean	Homemaker	Business Manager	Service Class II
Ben	Vicar	Teacher	Service Class II
Beth	Social Worker	Teacher	Service Class II
Caroline	Teacher	Business Manager	Service Class II
Ian	Business Manager	Micro Biologist	Service Class II
Joseph	Teacher	Teacher	Service Class II
Leo	Teacher	Teacher	Service Class II
Jonathan	Teacher	Teacher	Service Class II
Kerry	Homemaker	Builder	Working Class VI
Rowena	Homemaker	Factory Worker	Working Class VII

Table 5h Second Year Students' Parental Occupation and Class (excluding mature students)

Name	Mother's Occupation	Father's Occupation	Occupational Class
Claire	Sales Personnel	Carpenter	Intermediate Class III
James	Homemaker	Gas Installer	Intermediate V
Danielle	Homemaker	Senior Administrator	Service Class I
Georgina	Homemaker	Director	Service Class I
Gordon	Nurse	Senior Lecturer	Service Class I
Peter	Homemaker	Senior Civil Servant	Service Class I
Rajeka	Practice Manager	Doctor	Service Class I
Rob	Hospital Manager	Doctor	Service Class I
Tom	Art Gallery Owner	Director	Service Class I
Tim	P/T Classroom Asst.	Civil Engineer (Manager)	Service Class I
David	Clerical Assistant	Business Manager	Service Class II
Hannah	Social Worker	Administrator	Service Class II
Katy	Homemaker	Civil Servant	Service Class II
Max	Homemaker	Teacher	Service Class II
Melanie	Teacher	Sales Personnel	Service Class II
Richard	Teacher	Teacher	Service Class II
Jeremy	Lab Technician	Personnel Manager (Rtd)	Service Class II
Jessica	Teacher	Teacher	Service Class II
Salh	Process Worker	Engineer (S-Skill Manual)	Working Class VI
Siân	P/T Factory Worker	Factory Worker	Working Class VII

Table 5i Final Year Students' Parental Occupation and Class (excluding mature students)

Name	Mother's Occupation	Father's Occupation	Occupational Class
Delyth	Clerical	Policeman	Intermediate Class III
Kevin	Registrar	Caretaker	Intermediate Class III
Paul	Classroom Asst.	Bank Cashier	Intermediate Class III
Rhian	P/T Clerical	Sales Personnel	Intermediate Class III
Sarah	Clerical	Electrician	Intermediate Class III
Hayley	Homemaker	Engineer (Sales)	Intermediate Class III
Emma	Homemaker	S/E Photographer	Intermediate Class IV
Nick	Homemaker	Telephone Engineer	Intermediate Class V
Alex	Professional Tutor	Senior Lecturer	Service Class I
Declan	Teacher	Architect	Service Class I
Douglas	Homemaker	Director	Service Class I
Kate	Teacher	Lawyer (Deceased)	Service Class I
Kay	Teacher	Systems Analyst	Service Class II
Laura	P/T Language Teacher	Administrator	Service Class II
Llinos	Teacher	Teacher	Service Class II
Martin	Technician (High-Grade)	Engineer (Manager N/M)	Service Class II
Michael	P/T Cleaner	Civil Servant	Service Class II
Pardeep	Factory Worker	Engineer (S/S Manual)	Working Class VI

Table 5j Mature Students' Last or Partner's Occupation and Class

Name	Last Occupation	Partner's Occupation	Occupational Class
Stuart	Musician	N/A	Intermediate Class III
Louise	Clerical	Director	Service Class I
Maurice	Nurse	Student	Service Class II
Bob	Engineer (S/S Manual)	N/A	Working Class VI

The sample was chosen from students attending an 'established' HEI. The institution was chosen partly for its proximity to where I live. It is referred to in this thesis as St.David's University. St.David's is a well established institution and by different measures it is often classified in the top twenty HEIs in the UK. In 1997 10,759 undergraduate and 1,704 postgraduate students attended St.David's and as an 'Old University' a significant majority of those were Service Class I and II.

Data Management and the Process of Analysis: Introduction

This section deals with my approach to the management of the data and the process of data analysis. Data analysis is a process of: reading, reflecting and coding, the sorting and sifting

for patterns, themes, differences and relationships (Miles and Huberman 1994), a cyclical process and reflexive activity (Tesch 1990). This section explains my approach.

Coding the Data

The 'real' "stuff of analysis" is in the continual reading and re-reading of data and processes of coding and categorising. Becoming familiar with the data requires 'interactive reading', through reading and annotating (Dey 1993:88), it is necessary to interrogate the data, ask questions of it, note impressions and make comparisons. The coding of the data is essentially a device for its analysis (Miles and Huberman 1994). More creative than mechanically 'cutting up' the data, coding, as a heuristic device, is a way of thinking with and about the data, making interpretations and conceptual decisions (Seidal and Kelle 1995)⁷⁴. Using Miles and Huberman's (1994) notion of "pattern coding", or what Coffey and Atkinson (1996) refer to as 'data simplification', allowed me to 'chunk-out' (Tesch 1990) the data under 'meta-codes' which "pulled together a lot of material into more meaningful and parsimonious units of analysis" (Miles and Huberman 1994:65).

The coding was made in several stages and involved the use of broad themes. It followed Dey's (1993) definition of coding by attaching tags/labels to a data 'bit', thus producing a category of data 'bits'. The data was coded in four stages. Firstly, the data was coded for the BASE DATA (i.e. gender, class, ethnicity, degree scheme, degree year, school, age, sixth form). Secondly, the data was coded along broad themes (THEMES ONE) raised by the literature review and incorporated directly into the interview schedule (i.e. Labour market, Family, School, Credentials, Higher Education, Degree Schemes; Education Policy, Skills and Media). Thirdly the data was coded on a conceptual basis (THEMES TWO), the coding here relied on a more abstract interpretation of the data in form of what is essentially ideas about the data (i.e. Risk, Aspiration, Expectation, Perception, Human Capital, Choice,

Boundaries, Time, Geography and Space, Marketisation, Consumerism, Rights, Privilege, Screening, Class, Gender, Age, Positive, Negative). Lastly, the data was coded in terms of the TYPOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK (i.e. ‘Settlers’, ‘Shakers’, ‘Movers’ and ‘High-Fliers’).

Conceptualising the Data: Using Typological Frameworks

In order to understand and conceptualise the data, I made use of a typological framework. The thesis’s general concern is with the forces that *shape* the students’ social construction of the labour market. I felt that by conceptualising the students’ different experiences and aspirations within a typological framework, the individual student’s ‘various layers of experience, and the different structures of meaning’ instrumental in constructing the student’s relationship with the labour market, becomes more illuminated (Berger and Luckmann 1991: 35).

The use of typologies is often criticised for the masking of complexity and conveying of fixity (Mac an Ghail 1994). However, I feel their use here, within a wider theoretical framework, serves to highlight the complexity of students’ relationships with the labour market by conveying how ‘social constructions’ are informed more widely by the fluidity of different structures of meaning.

The interviews focused on the process of students’ social construction of ‘knowledge’ of the labour market. What was found was an almost dichotomous labour market relationship. This I believe is best articulated in terms of typologies of labour market identity. The students appeared to exhibit either a ‘reproductive’ labour market identity (one of three) or a (single) ‘transformative’ labour market identity (see Reay 1998a). The students’ positioning within this dichotomy provides the basis for the typological framework and thus the elicitation of the

⁷⁴ This is as opposed to Coffey and Atkinson (1996) who distinguish between coding/categorising and analysis.

students' socially constructed labour market relationship. This becomes clearer when I discuss it in more detail in later chapters.

The next section explores the use of computers to assist in the analysis and organisation of qualitative data.

NUD*IST 4

Quantitative computer packages have been an accepted part of data management and analysis for some time. Since the 1980's the use of computer programs designed specifically to analyse qualitative data has increased (Tesch 1990; Fielding and Lee 1991; Dey 1993; Weitzman and Miles 1995; Kelle 1995). Whilst Lofland and Lofland (1995: 201) critique the use of computer assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS), it is accepted that "much of data collection and storage does seem easily and appropriately computerised". However, there are strong arguments against the use of CAQDAS; it is accused of distancing the researcher from the data, sacrificing depth for breadth of analysis, misappropriating the application of quantitative logic to qualitative data, conferring quasi validity and reliability and it is even accused of being from the "dark side" (Seidel 1991).

However, there are equal benefits in the use of CAQDAS. The *Non-numerical Unstructured data, Indexing, Searching and Theorising Four* (NUD*IST 4) package, in particular, allows the user to organise and manage data, but also allows one to search, retrieve and rigorously theorise data, codes and categories (Weitzman and Miles 1995). Weitzman and Miles (1995) stress the importance of choosing the program most suitable to the focus and methodology of the study. ETHNOGRAPH with its static approach to both data and codes, and its poor representation of relationships among codes (Weaver and Atkinson 1995; Weitzman and Miles 1995), placed NUD*IST 4 in an impressive light. NUD*IST 4 is useful for storing the data in its original 'raw' form in one database and storing ideas about the data, and conceptual

links and categories in another data base (termed the “index-tree”). It therefore became the software of choice.

My own use of NUD*IST 4 included:

1. Organisation/management of data (interviews) and subjects (students)
2. Coding and retrieval of data and subjects.
3. String (text) searches (with up to 20+ words/phrases) to fracture the interview data into broadly defined categories using the student’s words/terms and research themes.

My use of NUD*IST 4 did not see the package used to its full potential, particularly its theory-building potentials. It was, however, particularly useful in managing and organising the data. Moreover, coding with NUD*IST 4 in several stages, allowed me to gain further insight and familiarity with the data than reading alone.

Critical Reflections on the Research Design

There are several concerns with this study’s research design. However, none of the criticisms are considered by the author to detract in any meaningful way from the robustness of the methodology and the validity of the thesis’s findings. In what follows I discuss critically where the research design falls short, and where improvements might have been made.

The first and most glaring criticism of the thesis’s methods is in the sample of students being drawn from just one HEI. Brown and Scase (1994) and Purcell and Pitcher (1996a), amongst others, in similar types of studies to this one draw their research samples from different types of HEI. A similar approach by this study would most probably have improved this thesis in two ways. Firstly, whilst the sample of students perhaps reflects the demographic composition of St. David’s students quite accurately, the fact that the study is conducted across one type of

HEI means that some social groups are included in the sample in small numbers and others are missed entirely. As detailed earlier, there were problems attracting a diversity of ethnic minority students, mature students and students of working class origins. This is in part because the study was conducted across one type of HEI only.

The impact of this is that the ‘social construction of labour markets’ by some groups of students has been neglected or may have been compromised. There are, for example, no Afro-Caribbean students in the study sample. Indeed, this study’s ethnic minority sample is drawn from Asian students only. Thus, any claims made in terms of ethnicity are restricted to Asian students only. Moreover, any claims made about mature and working class students’ social construction of the labour market might be deemed vulnerable, because they are based on small numbers of students. Certainly the number of mature students is particularly low, amounting to only four. Equally, students of working classes VI and VII comprised just 6 of the 61 sample of students.

What could be claimed is that by drawing the study sample from different types of HEI – for example from an old established university like St. David’s *and* a new university (i.e. old polytechnic) – the sample might have comprised a broader social spectrum of students⁷⁵. That is, new universities tend to be populated in greater numbers by mature, ethnic minority and working class students. In drawing the sample from across different types of HEI more students might have come forward from the social groups the study had problems attracting. This might have given a greater robustness to the thesis’s findings.

A second and related issue is what might have been gained for the study by conducting it across different types of HEI. Ideally, perhaps, as with many studies into this subject area I

⁷⁵ Old universities being those that have been long established such as, for example; Oxford, Cambridge, London and the civic red-brick universities. Mid-century universities are those which includes the campus universities and former CATs. The new universities are those that, with the 1992 Higher Education Act, changed from Colleges of Higher Education and polytechnics to universities.

could have explored comparisons in data collected from the students of different types of HEI – in terms of institutional habitus for example (see Reay 1998b). As others have found there are some distinctions between the attitudes of students attending old and new universities (see Brown and Scase 1994; Purcell and Pitcher 1996a). Hence, it might have been useful to compare and contrast the social construction of labour markets by students from different types of HEIs, given the often widely differing composition of the student bodies from new and old universities.

There has been much evidence produced by studies to highlight the difference in attitudes to and perceptions of higher education and the labour market between students of old and new universities⁷⁶. For example, much evidence exists in support of the assertion that graduate employment is easier to find depending on where a student attended university (see Brown and Scase 1994, Purcell and Pitcher 1996a, Murphy 1994). As discussed in previous chapters it is acknowledged that employers ‘screen’ students by type of HEI attended, with ‘top positions’ being filled by Oxbridge graduates. It might therefore be surmised that a ‘new’ university’s students’ social construction of the labour market would differ significantly to that of students attending an old university.

However, there were good reasons for conducting the study across one HEI. A primary reason for conducting the study across one HEI was a lack of resources. Doubling the number of students to be interviewed would have doubled the interview costs. The costs from this would have proved prohibitive. This said, the original sample of 60 students could have been split between two HEIs. I preferred not to do this however, and risk diluting considerably the other variables by which I wished to construct my study sample. There is also some theoretical reasoning for choosing to conduct the study across one HEI. This thesis takes the view that conducting the study across one, two or even three universities would, in all probability, *not* have had a profound impact on its findings. Of course, it is acknowledged that a greater

diversity of students would have been recruited to the research sample had the study been conducted across different types of university. However, I believe that the ‘social construction’ typology used by this thesis and detailed in later chapters would map onto the students of any type of HEI, regardless of its status. That is, the social construction of labour markets by students in higher education does not differ significantly across different types of HEI. It is just that the numbers categorised by type, within the typological framework, would be different according to the type of HEI at which they studied.

Conclusion

This chapter has set out the empirical methodological dimensions of the thesis. In investigating the social construction of labour markets by students in higher education, the concern is with the individual student’s socially constructed ‘knowledge’ of labour market ‘reality’ and the students’ wider relationship with the structure of labour market opportunity (Berger and Luckmann 1991). Thus, I am concerned with the connection between ‘individual perception, action and practice’ and the ‘social structures and contexts in which the student experience takes place’ (Hesketh 1999: 392). To this end, I felt the project necessitated a qualitative approach.

The relationship that each student enjoys with the labour market is derived from the nexus of social and economic relations that exists more widely. Here individual biographies, higher education policy development, labour market restructuring and so forth inform the student’s ‘final’ negotiation of a labour market identity. The accounts given through conversation with students, guided by a qualitative approach to *understanding* the value laden ‘reality’ of the students’ perceived ‘knowledge’ of ‘graduate’ labour market opportunity structures - helps abstract an understanding of the social relations that influence and shape future labour market behaviour.

⁷⁶ Brown and Scase (1994); Ainley (1994); Purcell and Pitcher (1996a)

The employment of NUD*IST 4 facilitates the management of this data, by which the diversity and complexity of the student's individual experiences, which are instrumental in the forming of the relationship with the labour market, may be interpreted. Thus, the interpretations of the students' accounts, that structure the empirical chapters, communicate the 'truths' of 'experience' and the forming and construction of the individual student's labour market identity.

The next two chapters are empirical chapters and explore the students' aspirations and expectations in relation to wider perceptions of labour market opportunity structures. These chapters serve not only to up-date research on students' perceptions of a transforming labour market 'reality', but provide a context for the individual student's relationship to the structures of opportunity.

CHAPTER SIX

Students' Perceptions of Labour Market 'Reality'

Introduction

There are different dimensions to higher education students' social construction of the labour market. The following chapters are an account of those different dimensions. This and the following chapter focus on the students' perceptions of the labour market, albeit outside the constraints of the typological framework. This chapter looks at students' understandings of higher education and labour market restructuring. In the following chapter I outline and locate the students' aspirations and expectations within these discussions. This sets the context for the two remaining empirical chapters, in which I try to understand more fully how students negotiate (socially) a sense of their employability. What students understand as a 'real' labour market opportunity might not agree with how they perceive the labour market to be structured or, indeed, meet with their aspirations or expectations. Chapters eight and nine examine the space between the students' labour market perceptions and their socially constructed relationship with labour market opportunity.

This chapter, then, explores the students' perceptions of the labour market. The broader aim of the study is to understand how higher education students socially construct the labour market and their relationship to it. To facilitate a clearer understanding of this relationship, it is necessary to describe and discuss the students' *labour market perceptions*, which I talk about in terms of perceptions (and discourses) of labour market 'reality'. Previous discussions of higher education students' labour market perceptions (see chapter two), have concluded that students continue to invest in a labour market 'reality' that is at odds with the effects of

higher education policy development and labour market restructuring. The evidence here agrees with this to an extent, but also suggests that the participants in this study possess a more acute awareness of such developments and are beginning to internalise more fully the effects of change. However, a tension between perceptions of labour market ‘reality’ and students’ aspirations and expectations still exists. In this chapter I look more closely at how the students’ perceptions of the labour market have developed from those described earlier in the thesis. This is in order to flag-up the marked differences between how the students as a social group perceive the graduate labour market and how different social groups of students relate to those same ‘opportunities’.

As discussed in previous chapters, higher education students largely find their way into particular forms of employment: ‘traditional graduate employment’. The structure of ‘traditional graduate employment’ is changing somewhat, but for the majority a position (career) in middle management beckons. Of course, some other graduates continue to be absorbed into the more elite sectors of graduate employment. More significantly, an increasing number of graduates are being recruited into jobs for which a degree was hitherto not required. Nevertheless, for the majority of graduates there is an actual pattern of behaviour, whereby an individual’s educational and career paths might be identified in terms of a largely predictable learning-labour market trajectory (transition).

This ‘trajectory’ may be referred to as a ‘traditional graduate labour market trajectory’. A trajectory in this sense is;

‘...based on the idea that the autonomy of the individual is bounded to a large extent by external structural and social constraints mediated by an internalised view of the value of opportunities.’

(Gorard *et al* 1998: 401)

The traditional graduate labour market trajectory is, then, ‘determined by the resources which (a student) derive(s) from their social background’, their perceptions of labour market opportunities and the ‘kinds of knowledge which they possess of.. (those) opportunities available’ (Rees *et al* 1997: 490). There are then, for some individuals, ‘discernible regularities’ and ‘predictability’ in terms of labour market trajectories towards traditional graduate employment (Gorard *et al* 1998: 401). Equally, similar claims could be made for ‘elite graduate employment trajectories’ and ‘diversified graduate employment trajectories’.

Graduates are now a mass group drawn from a much wider range of the population, who enter higher education from a far more diverse set of routes (Access courses, BTECs, etc.). One of the consequences of a much expanded higher education system, is that the graduates of mass higher education are having to find work in a more dynamic, restructured and diversified graduate labour market. It follows that graduate labour market trajectories are now more diverse. However, the same resources of social background and value laden perceptions of opportunity maintain a predictability in terms of labour market trajectory for individuals within a social group, (i.e. higher education students). That is, the same constraints of background that might have once informed us that higher education was an improbability for an individual, inform us that the same individual who now participates in higher education will face restricted (diversified) graduate labour market opportunities.

If, as Rees *et al* (1997) argue, trajectories are for the most part determined by social background, then the trajectory an individual enters university with tends to remain with a student throughout their degree scheme and in their social construction of labour market opportunity. Of course, ‘turning points’ remain a possibility (Denzin 1989), but evidence suggests trajectories for the most part remain predictable (see Rees *et al* 1997; Gorard *et al* 1998). Thus, it might be suggested that the social construction of labour market opportunity, the students’ evaluation of what is available and what is appropriate, is subject to the construction of a *labour market identity*. A labour market identity is a measure of how

individuals come to construct a 'personal, social, sociological, experiential and intellectual' relationship with the labour market over time (see Weil 1986). However, the evidence here suggests that there is space between an apparent uniformity of the students' perceptions of labour market 'reality' and each student's evaluation of what is available and appropriate to them in the labour market (or in their labour market identities).

Before I embark on an analysis of the social and structural constraints that impact on the students' construction of a labour market identity, I need to describe and discuss the students' perceptions of labour market 'reality'. After all, the key analytical distinction is between the students' perceptions of the labour market and their understanding of their relationship to the labour market (labour market identity). Thus the rest of this chapter is concerned with outlining and discussing the students' labour market perceptions.

The Students' Perceptions of Labour Market 'Reality'

As may be expected there are similarities in the labour market perceptions held by the participants involved in this study and the students' perceptions, as discussed in chapter two, of previous studies (See Brown and Scase 1994; Purcell and Pitcher 1996a, 1996b, 1998). There is, for instance, congruity in the labour market being viewed as a hostile and competitive environment;

DS: So why do you think it might be hard to find a job?

Leo: I don't know, It's the kind of impression that I get from being around you know. People, news stuff. It's like there's always unemployment thing that people always talk about, about how difficult it is to find a job, along with the fact that I can't think of anything to do with my degree.

Leo: First Year Astro-Physics

Insecurity and uncertainty are primary concerns for the majority and unemployment is a real fear, despite the latter not being viewed as a threat in the long-term. Most of the students eventually expect to achieve gainful employment. Indeed, many of the students *hoped* to

embark 'on a career structure for which a degree has traditionally provided entry' (Purcell and Pitcher 1996a: 180). This is the focus for a tension between two coexisting but competing discourses, whereby the students' perceptions (narratives) of labour market 'reality' and their aspirations and expectations clash openly⁷⁷.

However, there is a clear departure from previous studies' findings. Indeed, the majority of the students, far from carrying an 'expectation' of traditional graduate employment and being 'ill prepared for the realities of work in the 1990s' (Brown and Scase 1994: 113), exhibit a familiarity with concepts of 'diversification' and 'flexible' working practices and appeared to have internalised the 'realities of work' in the new millennium. Indeed, it seems to me that the students in this study exhibited a somewhat greater awareness of the precariousness of their position in relation to perceptions of labour market 'reality' than has been revealed in previous studies. This said, it is acknowledged that previous studies (e.g. Purcell and Pitcher 1996a) do highlight students' increasing nervousness about the labour market – as outlined in chapter two.

The overall impression here, or what the evidence suggests, is that students appear much more informed about what it is exactly that is meant to be occurring in the labour market;

Katy: I think it's less likely that you'll stay in one position, because companies downsize, I don't know what the opposite of downsize is, but whatever it is it's not stable, and there's competition if they find the best person is a new person they might think that's better. although they can't just get rid of you, it would be better to move out rather than stay in one place. People tend to get bored in one job as well and want a change.

Katy: Second Year Psychology

Certainly the students perceived shifts in structure of graduate labour market opportunity. This appeared to stem from a greater awareness of labour market restructuring and an

⁷⁷ The tension is not referred to directly, but becomes visible in the incompatibility of the students' understandings of labour market reality and their aspirations and expectations of graduate 'status' employment – see chapter seven.

internalisation of the impact of developments in higher education policy, particularly regarding higher education expansion.

It is no longer that students still *expect*, although some continue to, traditional forms of graduate employment - in the bureaucratic sense of progression within one organisation. Rather, it is that the majority of students still *aspire* to 'career' in the sense of progression through tiers of management, albeit in recognition of career in its more flexible and adaptive form. The students recognised that graduates are finding work in a more diverse range of occupations. The majority of students are also aware of the slow demise of 'career' in its traditional bureaucratic form. It is not that this type of career path is perceived to have disappeared altogether. Indeed, it has not and this should not be overstated (see chapter two). Rather, it is that such a path is correctly viewed to be less available because of labour market restructuring and increased competition - a result of higher education expansion.

Moreover, it is because the traditional bureaucratic graduate career path is *such* an entrenched concept, that the students are able to perceive shifts in long standing conceptualisations of the traditional graduate labour market trajectory. Certainly, graduates have a greater awareness of the relative precariousness of their labour market position. The struggle, then, is an internal one, between definitions of what career should mean for a HE graduate and the students' acute understanding of the effects of higher education policy development and labour market restructuring on the traditional graduate's labour market trajectory.

More significantly, insofar as this study goes, the students' labour market perceptions appear to be fairly uniform - even across different social backgrounds. This is a *very* important point. There was very little difference between students in their perceptions of the labour market and what it is like for graduates. All of the students appeared to work with a similar knowledge of graduate labour market opportunities and structures - as informed by historical concepts and more recent opportunity (human capital) discourses. That is, the students bought into

historically based concepts of what constitutes graduate employment and this is reinforced by more recent Learning Society discourses. Where the students do differ is in how they *relate* to the perceived structures of opportunity. This, I suggest, as will be discussed in later chapters, is where understandings of the social construction of labour markets lie. For now, what follows is a more in-depth discussion of the students' *perceptions* of 'career' and the labour market.

The Students' Definitions and Perceptions of Career

The idea of 'career' is often conceptualised in terms of a particular occupational structure, synonymous with progression, stability, and hierarchy, where experience and expert knowledge are built up over time. More significantly, 'career' in its form as a designated path allows an individual to shape a coherent narrative from it and inscribe a personal signature on their lives. People identify themselves, and we identify others, in terms of their career. In particular, for HE students this emanates from the notion of (graduate) 'career' as an entrenched concept. When discussing the concept of career with the students in this study, such definitions of 'career' remained 'true'. However, the students also maintained that 'graduate career', when defined in this more 'traditional' way, is no longer as available.

Indeed, clear patterns emerged from wider discussions of 'career' with the students. Roughly, four-fifths of the students, a significant majority, indicated that they believed 'graduate career' in its 'traditional bureaucratic' form no longer really existed. In this sense, definitions and perceptions of career appeared to have transformed. However, four-fifths of the students, often the same individuals, also *aspired* to 'traditionally' defined notions of career, albeit slightly modified conceptualisations. Herein lies the tension, for the majority of students aspired to what is to all intents and purposes a 'traditional' definition of the graduate career. The 'graduate career' continued to be broadly defined by the majority of students as equal to high levels of stability, structure and status. However, whilst high levels of status continued to

be expected, the same majority did not necessarily *expect* to locate within a ‘career’ when defined in this way. What the majority of students did expect to achieve, as will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter, was a more flexible, less linear and more insecure version of career.

The vast majority of the students’ definitions of career were clearly constructed around notions of stability, structure and hierarchy. This quite clearly fits with the more entrenched concepts of the ‘traditional graduate career’ discussed earlier in this thesis. Equally, such definitions might also fit with the human capital discourses of investment in higher education discussed in chapter four, where increased and improved opportunities of future rewards (of which a ‘traditional career’ may be part) extend from participation;

DS: How do you define career?

Declan: Stability, a regular job, pays quite well, getting an interest. Something quite regular and structured.

Declan: Final Year Physics and Music

DS: So, how would you define a career?

Chris: A job that you work at and get better at it and therefore you go higher up the hierarchy in the job and end up being the manager or the boss or something.

Chris: First Year City and Regional Planning

This is perhaps not too surprising as elements of structure, hierarchy and high status still characterise much of graduate employment. To this end, such notions (perceptions) of career were often reinforced and perpetuated by parents and others - for example by teachers and in government rhetoric⁷⁸. Indeed, it might be suggested that such agents tended to reinforce and perpetuate historical discourses of career, both explicitly and implicitly.

⁷⁸ This was particularly so of the father’s experiences, given that the mothers’ careers had often been interrupted by the starting of a family; DS: *What do you make of what they do for a living?* Hayley: *My mum doesn’t work since she had us, my dad left school at 15, but he did go to college and do his City and Guilds in welding and stuff like that.... he started at the bottom, leaving school at 15 and he worked his way up to foreman and then he was General Manager and he worked for that company for years....* Hayley: Final Year Civil Engineering Design and Management

Certainly the majority of the students spoke of their parents' careers in terms of structure, progression, hierarchy and temporal factors⁷⁹. More often than not it was described in linear terms, where a parent had followed an apprenticeship or degree straight into career, whilst for others it was the result of entrepreneurial endeavour. For most, the former appeared to be the template for 'career'. Moreover, such concepts of career also appeared to be perpetuated explicitly by parents, teachers and others, who often reinforced such discourses by relating their own experiences and buying quite heavily into both traditional graduate employment orthodoxy and more recent 'opportunity'/'responsibility' (Learning Society) discourses;

DS: Did the teachers push you that way?

David: The teachers and the school system in general. In doing A levels quite a lot of teaching time was taken up with filling in UCAS forms and getting into university. They devoted a lot of time to it, saying it would set us up for life.

David: Second Year Physics

"It was from my parents and people at work thinking that you get a degree and then you get a brilliant career. They don't seem to realise that there might be a degree but there might not be a job for you. They don't see that there's competition."

Emma: Final Year Education

⁷⁹ However, a few of the students did not view their parents as having had a career at all, rather a series of jobs or a job of long-standing. In this regard, career was defined in terms of fields of employment and what their parents did not have experience of or access to; DS: *So your father has a career?* James: *Yes and no, I think career is something more long term.* DS: *What's the difference between your father's career and the career you want?* James: *Well career is something where you can work for a company and progress.... that's the main one, but my father's never really had that opportunity, not where he works.* James: *Second Year Business Administration.*

DS: Can you tell me more about your mother's views?

Martin: What I'd say would be a basic traditionalist attitude. She's straight from school to degree and she views it as the only way forward to get a good career and life.

DS: What do you think she means "good career and life"?

Martin: Comfortably well off, secure and stable.

DS: So she's adamant you go to university?

Martin: Yes. That's the right thing to do. I think it's the way she's been brought up as well, what my sister and I have been like is basically carbon copies, give or take the arguments, because she's achieved a comfortable lifestyle and a well paid job. She seems to be having a good life.

Martin: Final Year Education

A discourse of 'career' became constructed around notions (and perceptions) of status and structure synonymous with the traditional bureaucratic career. Here, the entrenched concept of a 'traditional graduate career', and its association with positions of status and structure, is held onto both as a self defining concept and as a discourse (and perception) that exists more widely. The students clearly incorporated their parents' and others' experiences and perceptions in to their own definitions. It might also be suggested that wider discourses of human capital theory infiltrate and steer the students' (and others') definitions – although direct evidence of this was not obtained.

The overwhelming majority of students appeared to work with definitions of career that some commentators might consider anachronistic (see Brown and Scase 1994; Harvey *et al* 1997). Quite clearly, however, some of the 'anachronistic' characteristics of career (e.g. high status, hierarchical progression) still plainly exist in today's graduate labour market - albeit for some more than others. For the one-fifth of students that did work with less 'traditional' definitions of career, it was often because they had more of a grasp of what impact labour market and higher education restructuring might have on their futures. Equally, this smaller group of students (who tended to be from Service Class I) were more inclined to conflate their personal plans with definitions of career;

Tom: With me it's more as I can deal with it (career) and as I learn the skills to get there... yeah, with me it's more as I can deal with it and as I learn the skills to get there myself then I can take it further.

DS: So you understand it to be more flexible?

Tom: Yeah a bit like my mothers, she did work her way up but she also set it up and built a name for herself and she set up a gallery and did something of her own, and became her own director of the gallery, there's still a traditional element to it, but with more of a personal twist. I can relate more to that.

Tom: Second Year Law

Indeed, this fits with more recent theories of young people's (particularly the more highly educated) life plans and the individualisation of futures, which could easily translate into individualised and more personal understandings of what 'career' means (see, for example, Beck 1992; Du Bois Reymond 1998).

When students were asked explicitly about the type of career they expected as a graduate, the students' *perceptions* of labour market 'reality' made it impossible for more 'traditional' definitions to have any real meaning. This is where the majority of students caught up with their more informed counterparts. Whilst the students still defined and aspired to career in its traditional bureaucratic form, their expectations were for something quite different;

DS: Do you expect to have to change your career, re-train, be flexible and fluid?

Beth: I hope not, but I think people do tend to change their careers a lot. I think it's different generations, I mean my dad has never had to change his work.... I don't know I think it depends if I found something I really enjoyed. But once I'd gone into something and decided that's what I wanted to do hopefully I'd be prepared for it and I hope I wouldn't want to change my career choice. Perhaps step across to a different company or something, but not a complete career change.

Beth: First Year History

DS: Do you think the traditional career is still available, careers like your parents?

Martin: I think it's still an option, but there's not so much of it about.... I think the labour market has changed in that we may be encouraged to mix and match. We can move around fairly easily.

Martin: Final Year Education

Notions of career in terms of hierarchical progression are maintained, albeit in a less linear and more flexible form. The substantial proportion of students when internalising perceptions of labour market reality, expected a career and constructed a discourse of career more synonymous with a 'flexible' organisational paradigm (Brown and Scase 1994; Brown 1995);

Yeah it's certainly that you have to be more flexible, it's far more common. The idea that you'll get a job and stay there isn't there so much. My brothers and sisters have had to move around a bit, you need to I think, but they also thought it was a good career move, progression through training and that sort of thing.

Declan: Final Year Physics and Music

It might, therefore, be surmised that the continuing *expectation* by students for career in its traditional bureaucratic form, as documented by other studies, is weakening (see Goodman 1993; Brown and Scase 1994; Purcell and Pitcher 1996a). Indeed, whilst the majority of students defined career in traditional bureaucratic terms, their expectations for employment appear more consistent with a modified conceptualisation of career, e.g. flexible working practices. Whilst progression is still expected, and aspired to, in the hierarchical sense (partly because it still exists), the process is not expected to be so linear, movement between companies and, indeed, employment fields is expected.

Equally as evident were perceptions and definitions of what might be expected of a graduate career in relation to a return on students' investment. In this regard, whilst the students' expectations and definitions of career described above signal a perhaps more accurate perception of the labour market, there was also a clear idea of what a graduate career means in relation to non-graduate types of employment. Certainly, among *all* of the students there was an evident distaste for work considered outside the realms of the 'graduate career', particularly of work for which few or no qualifications were necessary. Most of the students had experienced such types of employment on a casual or temporary basis;

Chris: It was quite boring, it was working in a factory as well, like a warehouse so it's quite dirty. We started at 7.30 in the morning, so it was quite an early start.

DS: What's the difference between that sort of job and the job you want as a career?

Chris: Well a career will be a lot cleaner I suppose, the money will be probably be better as well. I think it will be more relaxing, there won't be carrying heavy boxes around.

Chris: First Year City and Regional Planning

The students perceived the graduate labour market to be associated with certain pay and conditions of employment, certainly a moderate level of status, if no longer with 'career' in its traditional sense. However, there was also the very clear perception that the direction of higher education policy has had ramifications for the students' employment prospects, particularly regarding the policy for expansion.

Whilst the students, on the whole, did not expect to pursue a career in a warehouse, at least not in the long-term, increasing labour market competition was perceived to be creating; firstly, a diversification of graduate employment, where students are employed in positions not usually associated with graduates or for which their degree has no practical application; and, secondly, making periods of unemployment more likely. This, moreover, appeared to be compounded by the real financial 'investment' students are now expected to make and shifts in employers' mechanisms of recruitment.

Higher Education Expansion and Graduate Labour Market Restructuring

The nature of work has developed; the shift from a manufacturing to service sector economy has been largely consolidated and brought about changes in skill demands. Labour market developments have been paralleled by the expansion of higher education. Certainly, the link between a more highly educated and skilled work-force and economic growth and expansion has become more direct (Anderson 1960, Robbins 1963; Brown and Scase 1994; Brown 1995; DfEE 1997a; NCIHE 1997a; Purcell and Pitcher 1996a, 1998). Consequently, as argued in chapter two, an employer today has at their demand an ever expanding number of

graduates having completed degrees in an ever more diverse range of subjects (Purcell and Pitcher 1996a). This means organisations have had to re-think how best to use and match the highly educated to the jobs they now have to offer (Goodman 1993).

Hence, the labour market for graduates has changed, and today graduates are located in a broader and more diverse range of work, in some cases displacing the less well-qualified (Willman 1989, Murphy 1994; Scase and Goffee 1996, Connor 1997; CSU 1999). It is not that higher education students are now only to be found in work for which a degree has traditionally been considered unnecessary, the elite positions (e.g. doctors, barristers) and traditional graduate jobs (middle management) still absorb most graduates. Rather it is that the expansion of higher education has created a more diverse outcome for graduates, in this sense the immediate availability of elite and traditional graduate occupations has declined. For many graduates their degree is not gaining the kind of labour market advantage hitherto enjoyed, which they themselves may continue to expect (Purcell and Pitcher 1998).

The substantial proportion of the students in this study decided to enter higher education to improve their employment prospects. Of course, when probed deeper other motives surfaced. However, the human capital imperative, though not being the sole rationale for making the decision to do a degree, was certainly a key factor. Typically;

DS: Can you tell me why you decided to go into higher education?

Douglas: To increase my chances of getting a decent job, a better salary and once I get that job to get the promotion and advancement, because I appreciate that it's quite easy for people to get jobs from A levels, but the type of career I'm looking for I thought a degree was needed.

Douglas: Final Year Business Administration

This, of course, is predicated on the assumption that the benefits of doing a degree, e.g. a career, outweigh the draw-backs, e.g. the likelihood of debt. Indeed, this is the basis of the present government's higher education funding strategy. Moreover, as we can see from

Douglas's comments, the perception persists that a degree offers a particular form of career and type of job, i.e. "*a decent job*". Indeed, as will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter, the students perceived at least two labour markets: graduate and non-graduate. Douglas, for instance, points to labour market differentiation in terms of qualifications, i.e. between A levels and a degree.

However, the expansion in higher education numbers was perceived by the majority of students to have had a detrimental effect on students' labour market prospects by increasing competition within the graduate labour market. Indeed, *all* of the students made a connection between the expansion of student numbers and increasing labour market competition. A typical comment being;

Rhian: At the end of the day it's more competition for jobs, because more people have the qualification.

Rhian: Final Year Education

As a consequence of this, a substantial number of students believed that graduation might result in one of several negative ways; unemployment, employment not usually associated with graduates or in employment for which their degree has no real use. This was particularly so of those on less vocational courses. Indeed, the respondents fell into two groups: vocational and intermediate/non-vocational. For instance, Optometrists and Medics were much less fearful of unemployment than, say, Geologists and Archaeologists⁸⁰;

DS: What about the risk of job loss, unemployment?

Pardeep: Well it's possible because obviously technology and the fact that more people are doing optometry... so there may be less jobs available. I'm not so worried at the moment, because I feel it's secure at the moment, which is another reason I did my degree.

Pardeep: Final Year Optometry

⁸⁰ However, those students doing vocational courses whose fields of employment are perhaps more subject to market forces, e.g. business studies, architecture, engineering, etc. did feel some vulnerability to the possibility of unemployment.

“Unemployment is always a possibility, but I think I’m pretty safe with Medicine”

Rajeka: Second Year Medicine

DS: What about unemployment, are you anxious?

Danielle: Yeah.

DS: You imagine you’ll be unemployed?

Danielle: Oh yeah... but I’d rather take something that I wasn’t trained in.

Danielle: Second Year Archaeology

“I’d imagine I’d have job changes and periods of unemployment. That doesn’t worry me because that’s what I think will happen, I know I’ll be very, very lucky to get a permanent position.”

Ian: First Year Geology

DS: What informs you it’s so competitive?

Amanda: I don’t know really, it’s just something that you pick up on I suppose, from the media or looking at the unemployment figures. All those people they’re not all unskilled, there must be some skilled people. And also people who I know have graduated and they’ve got jobs that don’t really fulfil their potential.

Amanda: First Year English

Indeed, evidence suggests that increased competition for conventional ‘graduate jobs’ has forced some graduates into occupations normally filled by people with lower levels of qualifications or into jobs for which their degree had no practical application (CSU 1999; Purcell, Pitcher and Simm 1999). Graduate unemployment, however, tends to be short-term and graduates still tend to maintain a position of relative advantage over their degree-less contemporaries (CSU 1999; Purcell, Pitcher and Simm 1999);

“...before I go into say whatever there’s things I want to do. I want to go to Spain and do a TEFL and things like that before I settle down. But no I know there’s a relatively high rate of graduate unemployment, but I think it gives you an advantage over people that have just left school.”

Caroline: First Year Education

Indeed, as if to reassure Caroline (and the others), the CSU (1999: 13) find that ‘Three and a half years after graduation only two per cent of economically active university leavers are

unemployed seeking work'. Moreover, graduate underemployment is also found to be merely 'transitional', as it 'does not appear to have become a permanent feature of graduates' working lives' (CSU 1999: 13). Nevertheless, the majority (two-thirds) of the participants in this study perceived both unemployment and the diversification of graduate employment (underemployment) to be direct consequences of the policy for higher education expansion.

Certainly the diversification of the graduate labour market means, for some, that the more traditional occupational benefits may be harder to come by, as employers increasingly screen prospective employees by HEI, degree scheme and other factors (Brennan *et al* 1993; Ainley 1994; Brown and Scase 1994; Brown 1995). Indeed, a large number of the students were anxious that employers would favour, for example, those from Oxbridge;

Max: Well people from Oxford, Cambridge get the best jobs... it's like a hierarchy. People think you have a higher standard of education, better.

Max: Year Two Psychology

However, an equal number of the respondents felt St. David's was good for their job prospects, a university that finds favour with employers;

"I think it's very important I don't see the point in going to a Polytechnic. I wanted to go to a large, well known university because I know when people look at my CV, if I had a polytechnic or institute by my name it wouldn't be good for my CV as St.David's or Newcastle."

Dean: First Year Sociology and Politics

Of course, some students, such as medics and optometrists, felt more relaxed about their futures - at least career wise. However, like the less vocationally orientated students, even here there was a recognition that the graduate labour market and the returns that might be available are less predictable than was previously the case. These concerns appeared to be heightened even more by the introduction of fees and the replacement of maintenance grants with a full system of loans.

Higher Education Funding and the Students' Perceptions of the Labour Market

As discussed in chapters three and four, the policy for higher education expansion has been paralleled in more recent times by a shift of emphasis in higher education funding. Certainly, the 'massification' of higher education has not been matched by increased funding per student. Instead income contingent loans and tuition fees have been introduced on the basis that graduates are the primary beneficiaries of higher education. A consequence of a shift in the burden of funding has been an increase in student debt. Debt affects the options students envisage for themselves, some may be forced into unsuitable employment and others might put off travel plans or postgraduate study (Purcell and Pitcher 1996a). Similarly, the possibility of debt may act to enforce more pragmatic decision making in terms of course choice.

Indeed, the ongoing expansion of higher education and the onus of funding shifting slowly from the state to the individual has increased the risk of taking a degree. Not only is there more competition in the securing of traditional graduate employment, but an increased financial burden on the student will see higher education expansion financed, in part, by lower rates of return for the student (Ashworth 1997). As Ashworth (1997) argues, ultimately the student will invest for a lower rate of return from their financial investment, particularly for that group of students low in 'acceptable' forms of capital - marginal students. Ashworth (1997: 172) identifies; '....a group of students - the marginal students - for whom the returns are low enough that they are making a very risky private investment'.

From the view point of the individual in the marginal group of students, the only reason for undertaking higher education, other than for cultural benefits, is a belief that the investment will lead to growth and hence increased earnings. However, without associated macro-economic growth, 'the returns will be very low and may be close to zero' (Ashworth 1997: 165; 51; 2). As Halsey (1995) argues; the differential in the 'earnings and life earnings of

those with higher education... (has)... begun to decline' and there is a tightening of the graduate labour market. Moreover, given that there is already a segmentation of labour market opportunities in relation to socio-economic status, particularly in terms of the effects social background has on type of HEI attended, the introduction of fees and loans may have a negative effect on increasing the participation of 'non-traditional' applicants (Brennan *et al* 1993; Brown and Scase 1994; Halsey 1995; Stroud 2001).

However, insofar as the financial 'risk' of doing a degree is concerned, the majority of the students in this study appeared to be quite relaxed. Of course, whilst debt in itself was a concern for many students, the majority adopted quite a 'Confident' approach to the issue, especially as most carried the comforting knowledge that they could rely on their parents' economic capital (see Hesketh 1999). Many took the line that debt was to be expected and that it would "*sort it self out*", a line that, as Hesketh (1999: 398) argues, best represents 'the government's thinking on the student financial experience'⁸¹. The majority of the students participating in this study had already weighed up the 'risk' of doing a degree, including the debt factor, and had reached the decision that any debt would easily be covered by getting a "*good job*", if not by having their parents pay the debt⁸².

There was clear evidence that many students considered themselves as investors and in light of this believed themselves entitled to the benefits of higher education, in terms of higher occupational status and remuneration;

DS: So you'll be in debt by the time you finish?

Peter: Yeah, especially with loans.

DS: Will it affect your choices in the future?

⁸¹ For a more comprehensive discussion of the economic sociology of the student financial experience see Hesketh (1999).

⁸² It seems to me, that in many ways this reinforces the tension between the students' narratives of 'career' aspirations and expectations.

Peter: I don't think so, because I will get a job at some point, I'm pretty confident about that and I'll get the job and even though I'm not comfortable with it I'll be happy to earn money to pay off those debts and that money now is helping me for the years to come and in ten years I'll think I'll be that much better off than if I'd gone straight from school to work where I may have had no debt at all, but I'd miss out on the experience and the maturity that comes with it.

DS: So it's an investment?

Peter: Yeah.

Peter: Second Year Journalism

Certainly, despite the students' recognition of a less stable labour market for graduates, the overwhelming confidence of the majority for a degree to ease them into employment that would enable them to pay off their debts did not waver. This perhaps extends from the students' awareness of the terms and condition of student loans, i.e. that they did not have to start paying off their debt until they were earning over a particular amount... *"If you don't get a job, you don't pay back the debt so..."* (Chris: First Year City and Regional Planning).

However, not all of the students were as laid-back about debt and a small number were considerably more 'Anxious' (Hesketh 1999), particularly in relation to future employment. For a minority the financial benefits of actually doing a degree appeared tenuous, especially in relation to the earnings they had forsaken in going to university;

DS: Will the debt affect your prospects?

Emma: I just think by the time I get a job the debt will account for the money that I would have had in the first place if I'd got a job straight after school.

DS: And tuition fees?

Emma: I think they're terrible. I wouldn't have been able to come if they had tuition fees when I started. I'm thinking of not doing the PGCE because I'll have to get a loan out. And that's even more debt. When I came to college I was told that no matter what happens with tuition fees I'll still get the same as I get now to do the PGCE, but now they've changed it. They'll pay tuition fees but you have to loan the grant. So it's even more debt and I don't want even more debt.

Emma: Final Year Education

Indeed, it might be suggested that the possibility of poor returns on their investment in higher education, particularly given the students' increasing sensitivity to the possibility of

unemployment, may end in students perceiving it necessary to concentrate their investment on the more 'lucrative' courses for fear of debt (Carvel 1998);

I'm putting myself into so much debt for something that might not even get me anywhere. I think after my third year I'm going to do a more vocational year in something.

Claire: Second Year Communications

Certainly, for students of less vocational courses debt was more of a concern. This makes the service more responsive to 'customer' demands, opening up the determination of funding to the market and changing the nature of what is provided (Ainley 1994).

However, for most of the students, university was an experience for which getting into debt was considered a negligible risk - against the potential for enhanced future rewards or the reward of the university experience itself. Overall, the students felt that going to university would benefit them. Further discussion of the effects of student and parental financial contributions tended to be concentrated around either its benefits, in terms of improving access, or the injustices of the funding system, in terms of its inequity. The more altruistic of them expressed concern for those that would be put off by, or not be able to afford, making a financial contribution;

I don't agree with them (tuition fees), there are so many people who want to come to university that it can be more accessible. But I guess it is against what the Labour government stands for... it used to stand for equal rights and everyone having access to free education, not everyone has a thousand pounds.

Amanda: First Year English

However, what became more of a consideration for a substantial proportion of the students, in light of both increased student debt and graduate labour market diversification, was an emphasis on matching the perceptions of their own employability with what they perceived as graduate employers' mechanisms of recruitment.

The Students' Perceptions of Employer Demands and Employability

Previously it has been argued that the majority of students define career in one way, in terms of rigid and hierarchical structures, but perceive the 'reality' of career to be rather different, i.e. hierarchical, but less linear and more flexible. Certainly the conditions that gave rise to the type of traditional graduate career that the students speak of initially, have been, in part, replaced by forces that demand more flexible and adaptable employees, that fit new organisational structures and employer requirements (Goodman 1993; Brown and Scase 1994; Brown 1995). The extents to which such changes have actually occurred however, are far from clear. Nevertheless, all of the students were conversant and appeared to have internalised employer demands in terms of flexibility, transferable skills and team-work.

Certainly, the labour market for graduates has changed in many ways. Some commentators describe changes in employer demands and an increasing desire for 'transferable skills' and flexibility (Brennan *et al* 1993; Brown and Scase 1994; Harvey *et al* 1997). It is suggested, moreover, that employers are becoming more concerned with the personal attributes of potential employees than was previously the case. Whilst the majority of higher education students continue to locate in traditional graduate positions, their career paths and the conditions of employment have become more flexible and diverse⁸³. More significantly, different types of employers require different types of skills. Indeed, rather than there having been a broad sweep of changes in employers' demands and mechanisms of recruitment, it really depends on whether a graduate finds themselves going for a job in the 'city', in the operating theatre or in the benefits office (as an employee or claimant!).

⁸³ However, it may be a case that the students are ahead of the game, as Goffee and Scase (1995) argue the believed demise of bureaucratic structures is perhaps premature. Moreover, according to Green (2000) there has been overall stability in the pattern of job tenure over the last thirty years, it is just that job insecurity is now more strongly felt by professional workers. Thus, there is a confusion for HE students. On the one hand they may witness parents and lower qualified workers who have or have had 'jobs for life'. This, on the other hand, is juxtaposed with organisational shifts in professional sectors, changes in employer demands, increasing competition and the media and other sources reporting increasing uncertainty for professionals. Although, even this must not be overstated.

Nevertheless, broadly speaking, amongst the students there did appear to be a universal language of employers' demands. The 'flexibility' that was in many ways expected in terms of 'career' was perceived to be just as applicable to the attributes demanded by employers of their employees. Indeed, a substantial proportion of the students exhibited a particular awareness of employer demands, often contrasting them unfavourably with the skills they acquired, or did not acquire, on their degree schemes;

DS: But does a degree not give you those skills?

Paul: I don't think so I think being at university you have the opportunity to enhance those skills by taking part in stuff, like, I don't know, the staff/student panel or working for the newspaper or things like that. They give you the skills to go forward and be successful, whereas the degree doesn't, it teaches you how to work to your own routine and become independent. But that's as far as it goes.

Paul: Final Year Mathematics

Moreover, as the following quotations exemplify, the students articulated their perceptions of employer demands primarily in terms of flexibility and transferable skills;

DS: So what does the job market demand then?

Ross: Good IT skills, good communication and team work skills and each particular job has its own particular skills which can be covered by training quite easily.

Ross: First Year Sociology

I think at the moment the buzz word is team work and also being an individual within that group, having your own ideas and being able to contribute.

David: Second Year Physics

DS: Do you expect to have to train, retrain at all?

Chris: Probably yeah, nowadays.

DS: Why nowadays?

Chris: Well jobs aren't for life anymore, people are expecting to be retrained all the time.

DS Why is that, what do you think that is about?

Chris: Well the jobs market, I think people have to be more flexible, it's the changing nature of jobs.

DS: If you were employing a graduate, what would you be looking for?

Chris: Confidence and team work I think. But also on his own as well. He'd have to be flexible I think.

Chris: First Year City and Regional Planning

I think they want you to be able to cope with different situations, take responsibility, pick up new skills, learn things for the job quickly and easily, being able to work with a wide range of people.

Salh: Second Year Management and Accounting

Llinos: They're all looking for somebody who is ambitious, clever, brilliant, confident, and different to most people I suppose. Cockiness as well I think is valued. The bloke who got the job, he'd sit in the meetings or we'd have group discussions and he'd be like staring out of the window and he'd put his ideas forward and say they were best and he got it.

DS: So you think that's what employers want?

Llinos: It seems to be... all the people I've spoken to who've gone for interviews like that it's always been the same, they're all looking for somebody who is outstanding, who can be a leader but not too much of a leader and who can contribute and that.

Llinos: Final Year Mathematics and its Applications

The language of the adaptive paradigm appeared universal. The students consistently brought up key phrases and “buzz words” such as “training”, “team work”, “flexibility” and “communication skills”. The majority also regularly mentioned as necessary conditions of employment personal attributes like “confidence” and “leader” skills.

The students spoke in terms commensurate with adaptive paradigmatic recruitment strategies (Brown and Scase 1994). They identified employer demands in terms of *suitable* specialists and *capable* employees that can work together and move across boundaries, that are ‘flexible, adaptable and willing to engage in regular training’, who possess ‘raw talent’, ‘intellect’, ‘quality of mind’ and a high degree of transferable skills. They were also highly aware of appropriate measures of ‘acceptability’ connected with the right speech, dress, interests, connections, hobbies, and so on (Brown and Scase 1994: 116-145);

Because I went to a private school we do get quite a lot of links and things like the old boy network. I thought it was all a myth but as soon as you leave you realise how important it is. I'm like a member of two clubs in London and although I don't go there I put it on my CV and when I have interviews with the army they say oh you're a member of the Old Boys Club are you.

Although it hasn't brought about career moves yet I can see it helping in the long run. And a few friends who have graduated from university have got jobs from links made in school, some work in the city and most of them have got quite a stable job.

Dean: Year One Sociology and Politics

DS: So what do you think employers are looking for?

Tim: There's a whole range of things, I suppose if looking at things like the Duke of Edinburgh Award if you've had the experience of working in teams or leading groups, or being part of groups all that sort of thing, they would look at that whether that's an indicator of that I suppose it would be quite useful because that's obviously an important part, particularly at bigger firms how you work with others or how you can be with others whatever..... academic kind of ability, sort of exams..... and I suppose experience...

Tim: Second Year Architecture

The students, to various extents, identified and exhibited awareness that it is no longer sufficient to simply possess a degree. Indeed, they quite clearly identified the ability to work both independently and as team, good communication skills and more personal attributes as important as, if not more so than, good academic skills⁸⁴;

I think if you look hard enough then you can find the job you want or a similar kind of line, I don't think a degree is enough... I think these days most employers are looking for leadership qualities, personal qualities, outside interests, they're looking for more rounded individuals more than the people who are desperate to get a first.

Dean: First Year Politics and Sociology

'having been to job interviews and assessment centres, they seem to be more interested about what you're like as a person and what your skills are rather than your ability to do maths and do whatever you're doing for your degree. I think what you are and you can do is more important than the qualification.'

Paul: Final Year Mathematics

However, whilst such attributes and skills were perceived to be integral to labour market success, an individual's choice of degree scheme, and indeed university, were also viewed as

⁸⁴ Indeed, arguments have been made in relation to degree classification and HE students' preoccupation with achieving a first in order to gain labour market advantage, see for example Purcell and Pitcher (1996a) and CSU (1999). However, the students in this study only voiced concerns in relation to postgraduate study and getting a good enough classification to continue with study. The students were rather dismissive of the value of a first to employers. This said, the students did not want to slip below a 2.2 classification. A poor degree classification was viewed to adversely affect employment opportunities. It may be that St. David's students' overall lack of concern over degree classifications is due to the HEI's position as an 'established' institution. A degree of any classification

important determinants of one's employability. Vocational degrees were perceived to be more acceptable in the labour market, although the overall perception was that choosing a vocational degree narrows choice. It was more generally held, however, as mentioned previously, that employers were more accepting of degrees from "*recognised*" universities.

The students perceived the labour market as being more accepting of particular degrees and graduates from the more prestigious HEI's. They tended to subscribe to the view that 'the possession of a degree is no longer sufficient, where you got it and what you took it in are more important' (Brennan and McGeevor 1988: 4). Certainly, in the measure of employer demands, the majority of the students perceived labour market advantage in terms of HEI attended;

"Like employment statistics, St.David's, it gets a Times rating doesn't it and there's like one for employment, graduate employability at the end and I did look at that when I chose the universities".

Jon: First Year Mechanical Engineering

Moreover, the students, as a group, often compared their institution unfavourably with, for example, Oxbridge where privilege was perceived to be even greater - reflecting an awareness of the status of institutions and their position relative to others in the hierarchy of academic, social and labour market worth (Brown 1995). In the competition for jobs, with an ever increasing number of graduates, the type of university attended was perceived as a key form of cultural capital that would facilitate entry to the most desirable jobs.

The strong relationship between 'subjects and early employment status' - with graduates of more vocational courses gaining employment more readily (Brennan *et al* 1993: 55) - was also a factor in perceptions of employability and labour market acceptability, although less so than HEI attended (see also Boys and Kirkland 1988; Brennan and McGeevor 1988);

from such an institution is perhaps considered to be of greater labour market value than a first from a

DS: So is a degree a passport to a good job?

Kate: Not necessarily no. There's so many shoddy degrees around, like golf studies and things like that, it's just ridiculous. So not necessarily no. For you to take a degree with a well recognised subject from a good university it is possible.

DS: So what's it going to be like trying to get a job?

Kate: It could be quite depressing, because it's a competitive market and you have to sell yourself and there's a lot of other people out there and there's not a vast amount of jobs to go around. But I think law is different, because the moment you get to university you know where you're going. You know how it is and how to get there. I did want to do a vocational degree, I didn't see any point in doing anything else.

Kate: Final Year Law

Certainly it was not the case that all the students felt that their courses should necessarily be more vocational in content or that they should have taken a more vocational course. Indeed, many students, particularly those of a more 'inner directed reasoning' or 'hedonist' orientations (Brennan *et al* 1993; Purcell and Pitcher 1996a) took the view that vocational courses narrowed opportunities;

"I think it's probably more risky to do a vocational degree, because if you do something general then it can apply across all fields. If you do something vocational, you're tied down to that particular thing."

Alex: Final Year Marine Geography

However, for a significant minority it was a concern and, moreover, many concurred with the CSU's (1999: 13) finding that at the very least they will 'find it necessary to undertake further periods of study to enhance their employability';

Sarah: Unless you do a vocational degree, like a science or medicine or even engineering or law I don't think they actually train you to do anything other than show that you've got the ability to study, to apply yourself and use transferable skills and all that sort of stuff. But at the end of your degree you're not able to go out and do a job without further training and that's what I'm finding in applying for jobs.

DS: So that's how you see your degree, do you wish you'd done something more vocational?

Sarah: I think degrees ought to be more vocational

'lesser' HEI.

DS: Why?

Sarah: Just so that you can get a job at the end of the day?

DS: Isn't education good just for it's own sake?

Sarah: Yeah, but you've still got to earn a living and it's no good being educated and not being able to get a job.... just so you can get a job at the end of the day really.

Sarah: Final Year Zoology

The students, in course terms, certainly showed an awareness of what is most marketable - particularly with students graduating with greater debts into a more competitive labour market. However, in terms of perceptions of employability, it was the university from which one graduated that appeared key rather than subject studied.

The students' perceptions of what employers demand are very clear. They appear to exhibit a clear understanding of the effects of labour market and organisational restructuring, although the extent to which actual restructuring has taken place is debatable (See Goffee and Scase 1995; Green 2000). Nevertheless, the "buzz-words" appear to have been internalised. The students certainly possess an acute awareness of their own employability and what it is that makes them appealing to employers. They appear to have internalised what may be necessary in order to gain employment. Moreover, the students appeared conversant with the effects that labour market restructuring and education policy development may have on their labour market opportunities. For example, the students' awareness of the effects of credential inflation on employers' mechanisms of recruitment, is certainly evidence of their insight into employer demands. Indeed, the students' acute understanding of what makes them employable may be seen as a direct consequence of a perceived vulnerability to the dual and related impacts of increasing graduate labour market diversity and, moreover, the direction of higher education policy development.

Conclusion

What all of the above highlights so far, is the students' perceptions of labour market 'reality' in the context of wider labour market and higher education restructuring. I have shown that whilst career is still defined and aspired to in traditional terms, it no longer appears to be seen as an inevitable consequence of participation in higher education. Moreover, with the 'traditional graduate career trajectory' being undermined, partly due to changes in the workplace and partly due to HE expansion, I have illustrated the students' awareness of changing employer demands and articulated their concerns about the effects of higher education expansion in creating greater labour market uncertainty.

The intensification of competition for graduate jobs has meant that employers are increasingly screening their candidates by HEI attended or degree course. Moreover, they appear to differentiate between particular sorts of students, where measures of acceptability, suitability and capability follow predictable social codes, e.g. HEI attended (see Brown and Scase 1994; Brown 1995). An increasing number of graduates also means graduate employment is more diversified than was previously the case. Graduates are increasingly locating in work for which traditionally a degree would have been unnecessary, as employers up their entry requirements. Hence, some graduates will not enjoy the benefits that students could normally have expected, although they still consider the risk of doing a degree worthwhile. As will be discussed in the following chapter, this has more to do with students' entrenched and historically based understandings of what graduate employment should mean than their perceptions and understandings of a labour market 'reality'.

Most significantly, however, the students' *perceptions* of labour market 'reality' appeared to be almost universal. Any differences in the students' perceptions were really quite small. Indeed, it may well be that because the concept of the 'graduate career' and 'graduate employment' is so well established and defined it tends to be read the same across such

variables as, for example, social class and gender. That is, all types of students buy into prevailing and dominant perceptions of what *should* comprise graduate labour market ‘reality’ – regardless of what they might experience or perceive as otherwise. This is especially so where it is reinforced and perpetuated by families, teachers and others. Certainly, the ‘opportunity’ (human capital) discourses upon which more recent educational policy is founded, seem to perpetuate and reinforce popular perceptions of the ‘graduate career’. Perhaps we should not be too surprised by the students’ broad acceptance of the ‘traditional’ orthodoxy, as many students still tend to locate themselves into ‘traditional’ graduate employment spaces and earn more than those without a degree. What was also clear, however, was the students’ more acute understanding of a slightly less predictable ‘graduate labour market’, allied to which was an increased sense of vulnerability.

However, what is most significant is that these perceptions were held universally. This finding suggests that the rhetoric surrounding ‘graduate employment’ cuts across social divides. What it also suggests is that the students’ aspirations and expectations might also be informed by widely held (mis)conceptions about the robustness of traditional graduate labour market trajectories. That is, where students buy into widely held perceptions of labour market ‘reality’, they also buy into widely held perceptions (and notions) of what they *should* aspire to and expect of the graduate labour market. This is integral to an understanding of the students’ social construction of the labour market. Indeed, if a particular level and pattern of return is perceived as what *should* be aspired to and expected on their investment, then we must ask how far this might influence the students’ relationship to structures of labour market opportunity.

The next chapter deals with the students’ perceptions of the labour market, in terms of their own aspirations and expectations. It is asked if they fit with the students’ perceptions of labour market ‘reality’ described in this chapter. In this sense, we achieve an understanding of how far the students internalise the effects of labour market restructuring and higher

education expansion. Here, we begin to understand how far students' perceptions of the labour market – which seem to me to become realised in a discourse of labour market 'reality' – inform (or not) students' expectations and aspirations (or perceptions of what should be expected and aspired to). By looking more closely at the students' aspirations and expectations, we also begin to get some understanding of the space between higher education students' conventional understandings of graduate employment and their sense of labour market availability and appropriateness – as shaped by the experiences of background.

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Students' Aspirations and Expectations

Introduction

The previous chapter discussed the students' perceptions of the labour market. I have suggested that whilst the students' perceptions were quite clearly guided by traditional notions of graduate employment and the graduate career, they also revealed more contemporaneous understandings of labour market restructuring. The students had incorporated into more entrenched concepts of graduate employment, the wider effects of mass higher education and labour market restructuring. What I wish to outline and explore in this chapter is what the students *aspired* to achieve and *expected* to experience in the labour market. Indeed, what other research in this field sometimes fails to make clear, is that a students' understanding of the labour market does not necessarily mirror what a student might aspire to or what a student might expect. I will show that there is somewhat of a contradiction between what the students envisage for their futures and their perceptions of labour market 'reality'.

In the preceding chapter, I have argued that the students' perceptions of traditional graduate employment are less rigid and unreconstructed than was previously the case. Indeed, whilst definitions of the 'traditional graduate career' continue to inform the students' perceptions, the students are equally aware that patterns of graduate employment might be more flexible and less secure. What I intend to show here is that whilst the students' perceptions of labour market 'reality' are in many ways consistent with more recent developments, this does not extend to the students' aspirations and expectations. In some ways this mirrors previous studies' findings on students' labour market perceptions. The difference here is that this group

of students tended not to aspire to and expect the 'traditional graduate career' - as other studies have found - rather they aspire to and expect the high 'status' most often associated with graduate occupations and graduate employment. In this regard, the students fail to internalise the effects of greater diversity in patterns of graduate occupations/employment to their aspirations and expectations. This is particularly in terms of the much altered pay and conditions now available to (some of) the graduates of a mass system of higher education (see chapter two).

This chapter has two purposes. The first is to highlight the tension between the students' perceptions of labour market 'reality' and their aspirations and expectations. There is a contradiction (tension) between the students' widely held graduate labour market perceptions and what the students aspire to and expect from the labour market. Despite some overlap between them, the students work with slightly conflicting perceptions of the labour market. They perceive on the one hand a graduate labour market that is fluid, flexible and less reliable than previously. On the other hand, the students perceive a graduate labour market that comprises particular sets of rewards. This latter set of perceptions is historically based and, I suggest, is bought into and informs more widely the students' aspirations and expectations.

In this respect the students work with two competing discourses: a discourse of graduate employment and a discourse of labour market 'reality'. The discourse of labour market 'reality' I have described in the previous chapter. It is constructed around the students' labour market perceptions and incorporates, for example, the language of flexibility and diversity. The discourse of graduate employment revolves around perceptions of what should comprise students' aspirations and expectations, which are informed by historical notions of high status occupations and employment. This is most evident in the pay and conditions of employment aspired to and expected by the students.

The second purpose of the chapter is to make clear that what a student may aspire to or expect of the labour market might not be the same as what they feel is appropriate or available. My claim is that a student's graduate labour market aspirations and expectations are often distorted by long-standing and entrenched concepts about what a graduate *should* be entitled to. Most typically a student's ideas of what a graduate should be entitled to is constructed around the types of benefits and rewards of yesterday's graduates rather than what might be available to today's. Indeed, in this regard the students' aspirations and expectations reflect a general uniformity - hence in this chapter the students' expectations and aspirations tend to be spoken of in more general terms, rather than disaggregated to the particular individual⁸⁵.

However, as will be discussed in much more detail in the following two chapters, the student as an individual might not regard these graduate entitlements as available or appropriate. What became clear is that when I asked the students about how they perceived the graduate labour market to be, the replies were *always* in terms of what has been discussed in the previous chapter. However, when I asked the students about their aspirations and expectations, the replies were built around what it is that higher education students should be perceived to be aspiring to and expecting. It was only by questioning the students more closely on what is really a possible and plausible labour market future for them as an individual, that better understandings of labour market relationships became apparent. That is, what *should* be expected of and aspired to as a graduate often obscured more complex understandings of what comprises a socially constructed relationship with the labour market.

Indeed, an individual in their labour market identity - their relationship with labour market opportunity - might not be able to bridge the space between the constraints of background and their knowledge of what graduate labour market opportunities *should* mean - in terms of pay and conditions (i.e. status). What this and the following chapters seek to explore, is the space

⁸⁵ This approach helps serve the purpose of the chapter, whilst also being a fair and accurate reflection of the data.

between labour market identity and students' conceptualisations of graduate labour market expectations and aspirations, i.e. high status occupations and employment.

Graduate Employment: High Status Occupations and Employment

The concept of 'status' is at the heart of the tension between the discourses (perceptions) of labour market 'reality and graduate employment. As argued previously, the students recognise the diversification of graduate employment and - for some (always 'other') students - a diminution of employment status. Employment status embodies the pay and conditions of employment. However, *none* of the students are willing to apply the former graduate labour market discourse to their own aspirations and expectations⁸⁶. One way of developing and framing these arguments might be in Weberian terms, where status is conceptualised in terms of the determination of life-chances (see Collins 1979).

My use of Weber is rather condensed, in that it is largely restricted to this chapter. However, it does serve to make clear - but at the same time more complex - our understandings of the students' aspirations and expectations. I work with Weberian notions of 'status groups', 'status honour' and 'social closure' (Weber 1948). Weber (1948) defines 'status groups' as those always conscious of their common position and differentiation from others (Weber 1948). Status (and status groups) - in Weberian terms - is distinct from class, it is an element (rather than a system) of social stratification. It describes certain collectivities, and is used to distinguish between social groups in a society by some socially defined criteria of status, e.g. by caste or ethnicity. In my use of status groups, the socially defined criteria are occupations

⁸⁶ I must reiterate here that a student's aspirations and expectations of the labour market are *different* to a student's social construction of the labour market. What a student aspires to and/or expects of the labour does not necessarily match - and often clearly does not - with what a student views as appropriate and available to them, as an individual, in their relationship with the wider structure of labour market opportunities.

(graduate occupations) and credentials (degree holders). These status groups can be defined by one another, and by their own socially defined criteria⁸⁷.

Graduates, it might be suggested, identify with a common position as graduates; this differentiates them from others (non-graduates). Graduates are a 'status group'. In a similar way graduate occupations can be differentiated from other types of occupations. Hence graduate occupations might be conceptualised as a 'status group'. Groups of occupations are differentiated by the 'status honour' accorded to them by society more widely and the credentials needed to access them. 'Status honour' refers to the distribution of prestige; it is for example of more prestige to be a doctor than it is to be a plumber. What is being claimed, is that graduates as one status group imbued with status honour, manifest their distinctiveness from others by being degree holders and by locating within particular 'status groups' of occupations imbued with status honour.

Indeed, the prestige of higher education is automatically transferred on to the types of occupations within which graduates locate - although the diversification of graduate employment means that this is perhaps no longer always the case. Nevertheless, I define status groups of occupations as types of employment that are measured by individuals (and society more widely) in terms of the credentials one needs to gain access to them, i.e. qualifications are expected to confer status (and material benefits)⁸⁸. Included in this 'status group' are 'traditional' types of graduate employment, which are associated with particular employment benefits, e.g. high remuneration, 'career', and, indeed, high status.

⁸⁷ Of course, we might also acknowledge how status and class become linked, particularly in this instance where occupations and occupational hierarchies (status groups of occupations) mirror and flow through to measures of social class by occupation. More particularly, access to status groups of occupations (and credentials) is often determined by social class in the first place.

⁸⁸ Of course, the status of an occupation is a lot more complex than this and is read differently in different social contexts. However, the limited understanding here is instrumental in reflecting the students' reading of what participation in higher education *should* be equal to.

Status positions are often perceived by students to operate 'social closure' (Weber 1948). In other words, those without a degree do not have access to the same high status opportunities as those with a degree (and in many cases a degree from the 'right' institution). Ultimately, the students both expected and aspired to 'status groups' of graduate occupations, or more particularly the pay and conditions of employment recognisably of graduate status. This was true even where an individual's favoured area of employment or life-style would not normally be associated with such returns.

This is where the tension lies, because although many graduates continue to enjoy higher levels of pay and employment rates (NCIHE 1997a; Connor 1997), the 'reality' of graduate 'status' employment today is that it is much diluted. Indeed, it seems to me that the students and graduates of mass higher education continue to aspire to and expect the employment (status) benefits that were once derived from when higher education was the preserve of the 'elite'. However, individuals do not enjoy a level playing field in the access to such opportunities. Where many may well achieve 'their' aspirations and expectations, a significant number will not be able to access the 'determination of life chances' that the 'status' of being a graduate once accorded to all who participated.

This understanding is crucial to the wider aim of the study. For when probed deeper it is clear that some of the students' aspirations and expectations fit less closely with how they relate to structures of labour market opportunity. In other words, what an individual might aspire to or expect might not necessarily fit with what they regard as an 'available' and 'appropriate' labour market opportunity. This, I suggest is where the understanding of the social construction of a labour market identity is centred and it will be discussed more extensively in the following two chapters. The rest of this chapter is devoted to a closer look at the students' aspirations and expectations, which in themselves must be understood as different to perceptions of labour market 'reality' and social constructions of the labour market.

The Students' Aspirations and Expectations

In this section I describe the students' aspirations and expectations. I outline just what it is that the participants in this study aspire to and, in relation to this, what it is they expect. Clearly, my sample may present a rather one-sided reflection of graduate aspirations and expectations, given that the sample was extracted from a single 'established' university and predominantly comprises relatively advantaged students (see Tables 5g – 5j).

Aspirations and expectations are of course different things; the two must not be confused. The students' aspirations reflect their constructed worlds, where one's desires are borne out of individual preferences. A student's expectations, however, more closely reflect their perceptions of labour market reality and the limitations such 'realities' place on one's preferences. What will become clear, however, is that in both their aspirations and their expectations, the students' 'preferences' and 'realities' were for the pay and conditions of employment appropriate to 'graduate' status. In this regard, there is unanimity between the students' widely differing aspirations and expectations and in their aspirations and expectations as a group of students. These are most often equal to the benefits associated with traditional graduate employment - but not necessarily the 'traditional graduate career'. This is even where they do not aspire to or expect to experience the latter. What I am claiming, is that the benefits associated with the traditional graduate *employment* are uniformly aspired to and expected by the students in this study.

Aspirations

In the previous chapter we have seen how the students articulated the need to come to terms with the flexibilization and rationalisation of graduate labour. Indeed, the perceived 'new' conditions of employment were not always received negatively and well over half of the students expressed a desire for a more dynamic and diverse labour market experience. For two-thirds of the students such an environment matched more closely their desires and

aspirations for the future. Certainly, where personal life-styles and interests were concerned, this new found flexibility of employment was hoped to be incorporated some way into working lives;

DS: In five years time, where do you expect to be? Ideally.

Tim: I think I'd be maybe be in London, preferably abroad, definitely travelling.... I don't think I'd be married.... I wouldn't have kids by then and earning... £30K yeah. I think working in a fair to big size firm probably in commercial type stuff... I don't know..... in the middle of the company say managing a section of people... with a team, working on a project. I don't want it to be too... erm, routine , you know 9 to 5 and all that, I dread being bored

Tim: Second Year Architecture

Of course, the flexible working practices and more diverse career patterns described in the last chapter do not map directly on to Tom's (and others') aspirations. However, what is revealed is the aspiration for a more satisfying labour market experience. For some the more flexible working practices referred to in the last chapter might be seen to sit more easily with the desire for a more diverse and dynamic labour market experience where personal interests (e.g. travelling) may be indulged. Indeed, as Du Bois Reymond argues (1998: 65), for some of the students it appears that 'Post materialist life values, such as self-actualisation and communication, (make) nine-to-five jobs appear unattractive; (and) work experience might result from travel experiences and vice versa thus dissolving the clear-cut division between the public and private spheres'.

However, the remaining third of the students aspired to something distinctly more traditional. Indeed, the students fell into two quite distinct groups. In direct contrast to those students seeking something outside 'traditional' working patterns, a slightly smaller number (twenty or so) aspired to more 'traditional' graduate career paths. These students aspired to entering clearly defined professions and employment at an early stage. Moreover, this often coincided with entering a fixed relationship to start a family (see Du Bois Reymond 1998);

DS: Ideally, five years from now what will you be doing?

Paul: I will be working for GCB, I will be manager of my own group, unit, taking a team into a company and asking what can we do for you, what's your problem and saying right yeah, you should do this, you should do that. Home-life: One child with another on the way, nice house somewhere.

Paul: Final Year Mathematics

Of course, the 'flexibility' desired by some does not preclude the former group of students aspiring to more traditional career paths eventually (and vice-versa). Equally, Paul's "team" of trouble-shooters might be considered more 'adaptive' than 'bureaucratic' (see Brown and Scase 1994). However, what was clear was that the students tended either to aspire to a more dynamic labour market experience or to something more sedate and traditional.

More particularly, if we look closely at the students' aspirations, it was more likely that ethnic minorities (Asian) and working class students aspired to the more traditional structures of graduate employment. Equally, men and women of Service classes I and II tended to aspire to more flexible and dynamic career patterns. I believe these trends are indicative of how students of different backgrounds relate to the structures of labour market opportunity. This is discussed in greater detail in the chapters that follow. Indeed it might be suggested that it is only when you ask how the students relate to wider structures of opportunity that real differences become apparent. That is, what students actually believe is really available and appropriate to them as individuals in the labour market is quite different to understanding how they might perceive the labour market to be or what they might aspire to or expect of the labour market.

What is being claimed in this chapter is that the students' aspirations (and expectations) are virtually uniform across all social divides, in that they all aspire to similar pay and conditions of employment. By pay and conditions I mean the enhanced future rewards available to graduates as an exclusive (status) group. Aspirations for the 'traditional' *pay and conditions* of graduate employment appeared to cut across all social backgrounds and all types of labour

market aspirations - whether traditional or not. The students appeared to be governed by a *perceived* market knowledge, and thus aspiration, for particular material returns (Martinelli and Smelser 1990).

Certainly, the students' more individual aspirations for the future were not all the same⁸⁹. Indeed, the students' aspirations differed widely, where one student wanted to be a high-flying corporate executive, another wished, say, to be a geriatric nurse or doctor;

DS: So ideally five years from graduation, where will you be?

Mehul: The thing is I'm not sure because I'm not exactly sure what my dreams are, I have an idea that I will be working five years from now in an investment bank or possibly in senior management. The thing is I like travelling, that also has to be another part of the equation, if I'm allowed to travel with my job....

Mehul: First Year Banking and Finance

DS: What is it about medicine you're attracted to?

Melanie: I like the idea of helping people, I like the idea of making people better... physically. I've thought about what I can do and I need to work in something where people are involved and have that interaction, like I could teach but I couldn't be a computer programmer or something... where I may not speak to some one for hours, days on end..... I think I'd want to be a doctor even if it wasn't very well paid, it's something I've always wanted to do, I've talked about it with my friends of the course and we all feel the same, but there is the added incentive of a good wage, of status... it's like you want to do something you really want to do and you get respect and money. Can't be bad.

Melanie: Second Year Medicine

Broadly speaking, however, the students uniformly aspired to the more 'traditional' benefits of graduate employment. Of course, it is not that the medical or nursing students aspire to the same returns as the corporate executive. (Although it might be said that Melanie appears to.) For the doctor or nurse, there is perhaps less of an emphasis on material returns than there is on more socially rewarding dimensions. However, what is aspired to is historically based

⁸⁹ The students' aspirations for the future were varied and diverse, indeed, in employment terms, where some sought 'self development' and 'personal enrichment' in a 'traditional', 'flexible' or 'entrepreneurial' future, others sought to be 'drop-outs', 'marginalists', 'ritualists' or 'socially committed' (Brown and Scase 1994: 86-115).

concepts of status and remuneration ‘traditionally’ associated with graduates – particularly those from an HEI such as St. David’s.

Indeed, where the students attempt to carve out their own ‘personal’ employment niches, the students’ aspirations for the future are varied and diverse, rooted, as they are, in the complex relations of class and individual habitus (Bourdieu 1984). However, whilst the students aspire individually to different futures, there is also a *unanimity* in the students’ aspirations for pay and conditions of employment that are conventionally understood as of graduate status. It is just that the means by which such desired objectives are to be achieved were varied. In this regard, the students failed to internalise the wider effects of labour market restructuring and higher education development when considering what might have happened to the pay and conditions of graduate employment in more recent times.

This said, there was a broad realisation that their personal and private hopes and desires must be reconciled, in a limited way, with their perceptions of labour market ‘reality’. For instance, the substantial majority of the students involved in this study realised that they *must* take advantage of education and training to facilitate entry to the best jobs (i.e. get the job of their choice) or simply to minimise risk, e.g. unemployment. We might even take this as some evidence of how far ‘Learning Society’ (human capital) discourses have permeated discourses of education/labour market transitions - in terms of the expectancy for individuals to be aware of the specific advantages which will derive from participation (see Rees *et al* 1997);

‘Well I wouldn’t say it (university) was a great risk, it’s more a risk you have to take. It is a risk to go into any sort of debt, but you kind of know that by going into debt you’re investing, and enhancing your employability by getting a degree. I’ve never thought of it as a great risk because I think I’ll get some sort of job that pays enough...’

Declan: Final Year Physics and Music

DS: Is it a risk doing a degree?

Kay: It's more of a risk not doing a degree, they're always telling you at school how you won't get anywhere without qualifications and, well, you can't get much better than a degree can you...

Kay: Final Year English

Indeed, Declan and Kay are quite right, and their confidence is not misplaced. Evidence suggests that as university graduates they can expect to earn more and find employment more readily than non-graduates (Connor 1997). In this respect, you cannot do much better than possess a degree. A degree certainly makes more plausible finding the job of choice. What the extracts also reveal is the students' growing awareness about the precariousness of their labour market position, and the 'risk' of "not doing a degree" and making yourself more employable in the face of an increasingly competitive and insecure labour market: "you won't get anywhere without qualifications".

Indeed, it might be suggested that within a wider 'learning society' discourse and human capital imperative (Rees *et al* 1997), allied to the more entrenched concepts of graduate employment, the students work within a discourse of graduate employment tied to the status of credentials. This, it seems to me, shapes the students' aspirations. The pay and conditions of their graduate employment confer 'respectability', which 'has always been a marker and burden of class, a standard to which one should aspire' - both personally and professionally (Skeggs 1997:3). This is the dominant discourse that *all* 61 students buy into, invest in and aspire to. Of course there are subtle variations on a theme, where one student's main ambition is help others another student's will be to earn £40,000 per annum. More generally, however, the students' aspirations are for good rates of remuneration, responsibility, good prospects and with a reasonable amount of stability and security;

DS: Where do you see yourself in five years time? Ideally.

Llinos: Married. Or engaged. In a good stable job on about £28K. Living in a nice house. With somebody obviously somewhere in Britain, probably around the Cardiff area. That's where I'd like to be.

Llinos: Final Year Applied Mathematics

DS: So where do you see yourself five years from graduation? Ideally.

Jon: Probably with a job, obviously with a job. A house as well and hopefully doing something I enjoy, because when I come out of university I'm not going to be going into something that I can initially use all my skills. So by then hopefully I can use all the skills I've picked up.

DS: Tell me more about the ideal job?

Jon: Erm, well... obviously a good wage... over twenty thousand... using my skills.... a stable job... although I want to travel a bit... I don't want it to be boring, going into the same office everyday, 9-5 y'know.... but I'll have the skills so it's not like I'd be stuck with the same job... with the skills I've picked up I can be a bit more of my own boss... maybe move-on if I'm bored/

Jon: First Year Mechanical Engineering

DS: Where would you see yourself in five years after graduation? Ideally.

Max: Playing at Wembley in front of 50,000! No. I suppose I'd be settled into the first stage of a career, a nice sort of basic job on about £25,000.

Max: Second Year Psychology

Such returns are not restricted to 'traditional' graduate employment; the desires of the students are still largely available today in a more diversified labour market. However, it is my contention that the desire for these rewards rests in the more historical and traditional concepts of graduate employment, which are subsequently perpetuated and reinforced in learning society rhetoric. More significantly, such desires are not merely confined to aspirations, but remain also a central part of the students' expectations.

Expectations

This section is about what the students actually expect of the labour market, outside of their aspirations. When interviewing the students I routinely asked what the students aspired to, or where 'ideally' they would be five years after graduation. I would then ask how realistic they believed their aspirations to be. This I took to be their expectations. This was quite revealing, for it seemed that the students' expectations might be informed by both learning society discourse and more entrenched concepts of graduate employment (as were their aspirations). Indeed, it might be suggested that learning society discourse when allied to graduate

employment as an historical concept impacts quite heavily on the students' expectations for employment. The impact of the two sets of influences is difficult to separate. However, the students' 'risk' narratives appear to tie in more closely with the more individual, human capital investment discourses of the 'Learning Society' than the more entrenched concepts of graduate employment which are rooted more in the students' aspiration and expectation narratives. By looking at where both narratives meet (in terms of enhanced rewards through 'risking' an investment) the influences of the separate discourses becomes more visible.

Rees *et al* (1997: 485) argue that, 'the official discourse of the Learning Society is dominated by human capital theory'. Moreover, whilst parts of this discourse relate to the needs of the economy and wider society, the emphasis is primarily on the individual. Individuals are asked (coerced) to seek 'access to desirable employment opportunities', where 'self-interest will be served by personal investment in the acquisition of qualifications and experience' (Rees *et al* 1997: 486. See also Tight 1998). Increasingly, as Beck (1992: 34) argues, the 'center (sic) of risk consciousness lies not in the present, but in the future', where in the 'learning society';

'We become active today in order to prevent, alleviate or take precautions against the problems and crises of tomorrow and the day after tomorrow..... Anticipated, threatening unemployment is an essential determinant of the condition and of the attitude towards life today.'

(Beck 1992: 34)

As such, the coercive and normalising language of learning society discourse often makes the 'risk' of not doing a degree untenable. This is reinforced by opportunity discourses that emphasise improved labour market prospects (Beck 1992; Rees *et al* 1997; Du Bois Reymond 1998; Tight 1998). Indeed, the 'normative focus' of the learning society debate in being constructed around notions of human capital theory and personal investment and, moreover, the wider more entrenched belief that 'graduate employment' is synonymous with particular benefits, has created the illusion that 'specific advantages will derive from participation' (Rees *et al* 1997: 485-487).

Of course it would be wrong to argue that higher education participation derives from economic maximising behaviour alone. The material benefits enjoyed by the graduates of a previously elite system and potentially those of a mass system, do not provide the only or, indeed, the prime motivation for participation. Indeed, evidence suggests, both here and in other studies, that individuals partake of education for reasons other than the pecuniary (see Fevre *et al* 1999);

DS: Can you tell me why you decided to go into higher education?

Alex: OK. It was partly because I didn't have any fixed ideas about what I wanted to do, so it seemed like a fairly sensible way of doing something constructive without getting a job. Also, because I had the academic ability to do it I thought I may as well make use of that and it sounded like good fun at the time.

Alex: Final year Marine Geography

However, whilst it is acknowledged that the students do not view the decision to go into higher education in human capital terms alone, the choice to participate *is* often made with an *expectancy* of the 'specific advantages' of both increased chances of employment and improved pay and conditions. This, I suggest, widely informed the students' expectations.

The 'specific advantages' that are believed to derive from participation in higher education stem from a dominant discourse of graduate employment constructed around a 'knowledge' of the benefits believed to derive from participation of an elite higher education system. The students work with competing discourses (perceptions)⁹⁰. At one level they work with a discourse (perception) of labour market 'reality', where 'flexibility' and 'uncertainty' are believed to be common place. On another, and often predominant, level the students tended to work with a discourse (perceptions) of graduate employment, where expectations (and aspirations) are constructed around the benefits available to graduates of previous

⁹⁰ Of course, these discourses are not mutually exclusive, there is some overlap. For instance, discourses of flexibility, etc. are not wholly inconsistent with expectations of relatively privileged work conditions.

generations. Or as the students perceived them, benefits consistent with employment of graduate status. Indeed, whilst the students spoke of labour market insecurity and uncertainty, this narrative was never applied to their own expectations. The students recognised that not *all* students will gain access to privileged segments of the labour market, but on an individual level they expected to do so.

In the pay and conditions of employment, the students' expectations were remarkably uniform, extending, as they did, to high levels of remuneration, managerial status and secure and stable employment (just like their aspirations)⁹¹;

DS: So what do you imagine doing five years after graduation? Ideally.

Kerry: In a job I really enjoy, working my way up, maybe getting somewhere, reasonable wage, quite a few responsibilities, doing something worthwhile.

DS: Are they realistic expectations?

Kerry: I think they are, but because I haven't gone through the process I don't know.

DS: But would you say those things are within your grasp?

Kerry: Yeah... I guess so, it's why people go to university... isn't it?

Kerry: First Year Biology

DS: Ideally, where will you be five years after graduation?

Kamay: Married with a good job, stable job, earning £25000 after tax, about £35000. With.... in a job where I had respect, promotion, people think I'm worth being there and with a home and a Herb garden and thinking about children. And having travelled.

DS: And how realistic are these expectations?

Kamay: Quite I think.

DS: Why are they realistic?

Kamay: Because I think I will do well enough in my degree to do that and I think I'll be married by then. Yeah I think I'll get there.

Kamay: First Year Accountancy

⁹¹ The desire for "job satisfaction" was also a top priority for the students, the "interest" factor being often quoted. Job satisfaction was a principal desire for many of the students, and was often said to be "more important than money". However, the conditions of employment that were aspired to, in terms of particular levels of remuneration, responsibility, stability, etc. were, with the odd exception, always consistent with those of 'graduate status'.

The substantial majority of the students did not *expect* to locate in traditionally ‘bureaucratic’ structures of employment. It is rather that the benefits that extended from graduate employment at a time when higher education was the preserve of an elite, and indeed when graduate employment was most often bureaucratic in structure, have remained part of the graduate employment discourse. This discourse, moreover, in being tied to the expectations (and aspirations) of a particular occupational status, further still in being reinforced by the discourse that surrounds educational qualifications and achievements in ‘learning society’ discourse (Rees *et al* 1997), remains dominant. It is that the students, in the main, fail to reconcile fully their perceptions of labour market ‘reality’, a discourse of uncertainty and insecurity, with their perceptions of what it is that should extend from graduate status, the discourse of graduate employment.

Of course, the extent to which some students internalise either discourse is different. Indeed, whilst the expectation for particular pay and conditions of employment was maintained, a significant minority (one-third) were not quite so ‘expecting’ or certain of the availability of such benefits. Certainly, the evidence suggests that the discourse (and perceptions) of labour market ‘reality’, where a less stable and more crowded graduate labour market creates a degree of uncertainty for the future, contests the dominance of graduate employment discourse;

DS: Ideally where will you be in five years after graduation?

Beth: I'd like to be earning enough money about £25,000 at least. Working for some sort of... well with people but I'd like to be managing really, perhaps for a charity...

DS: And how realistic are those expectations?

Beth: Not that realistic at the moment because I can't imagine it at 19, but quite unlikely. I think realistically I'll be at least in my 30s before I reach that stage.

DS: Why is that?

Beth: Well... it's harder to get a good job, it's more competitive... I just think I'll have to do at least a few crap jobs before I get the job I really want.

Beth: First Year History

However, I would suggest that this indicates a delay in expectations, rather than an end to them altogether - we must take account of trajectories over time (and students' understandings of them). Indeed, it may serve the students well to be a touch more circumspect. Nevertheless, their expectations (and aspirations) for enhanced future rewards, particularly as prospective graduates from one of the more prestigious institutions, are not too divorced from what in all likelihood they might receive. Indeed, whilst they may not have internalised fully the effects of a tightening graduate labour market, the evidence to date suggests that their expectations are not too wide of the mark - graduates continue to earn more than non-graduates, enjoy lower rates of unemployment and will, depending on numerous factors, locate in a position for which their degree is deemed necessary (Connor 1997; CSU 1999)⁹².

Indeed, when we include the students' understandings of what it means to *not* do a degree, we become aware of discourses that might influence the students' (aspirations and) expectations more widely. Learning Society' discourse - as a social theory of lifetime learning - is dominated by human capital theory. This locates individuals' learning behaviour within economic development. That is, the emphasis is on the individual to improve economic growth by participating in learning, or more precisely by accumulating of credentials (see

Rees *et al* 1997; Young 1998; Tight 1998). The other side of the human capital coin is that *investment* in learning by individuals is also of benefit to the individual, by improving the individual's level of employability and enhancing opportunities of future rewards. In this regard, we might also understand Learning Society discourse as part of late modernity's risk society discourses, where not accumulating credentials (and therefore benefits) is labour market suicide (Beck 1992; Furlong and Cartmel 1997; Du Bois Reymond 1998);

DS: So you have to have a degree to succeed?

Alex: Yeah, subconsciously. Nobody's actually said so, but that's the way you think about it.

DS: The struggle through university, it's been worth it then, you'll succeed?

Alex: Yes I think so. It's an investment.

DS: You see it as an investment?

Alex: Yes, I'll be able to earn more with a degree.

DS: So it's not a risk, with the debt and everything?

Alex: It's only a risk if you get nothing at the end of it. I've got a friend who has dropped out a couple of months before getting his degree. It's only worth it if you come out it with the degree.

Alex: Final Year Marine Geography

This meeting of two discourses becomes meshed with the students' expectations, as this and previous extracts highlight. Certainly it is clear that the students regard it as a risk to not do (or get) a degree. Indeed, to not do a degree would not only make an individual less employable, but separate them from 'the specific advantages which will derive from participation' (Rees *et al* 1997: 487); "*it's the norm that if you've got a degree you'll get a good job and be socially acceptable*" (James: Second Year Business Administration). Thus, it might be suggested that risk society discourse is very much part of Learning Society (human capital) discourse, as expressed through the students' labour market expectations, i.e. their discourse of graduate employment - a discourse that recognises and values qualifications in terms of rewards.

⁹² The "numerous factors" being 'class of degree, subject studied, institution attended and personal characteristics' (CSU 1999: 13).

However, the propensity for the students to articulate both their aspirations and expectations in terms of particular benefits, often consistent with those of traditional graduate employment, highlights a failure to internalise fully the increasing need for graduates ‘to ‘carve out’ career routes rather than follow in the footsteps of their predecessors’ (CSU 1999: 2). Indeed, it also signals a failure to comprehend fully what effects the massification of HE has had on the kind of employment ‘status’ once routinely enjoyed by graduates. Certainly, higher education carries with it the expectations (and aspirations) of a particular occupational status. This, in part, is because it is tied to a discourse that surrounds educational qualifications and achievements. Consequently, students invest in the discourse, because it marks and positions them in terms of both perceived occupational status and educational achievement. It is not enough to have the qualification, they need ‘appropriate labour market recognition’ (Purcell and Pitcher 1998: 180), i.e. a recognition of their status as graduates. Thus notions of traditional graduate employment are held on to, because it is important in terms of the way students, or any other individual, manage their identity within society. Particularly within a society, a ‘learning society’, that is perceived to value and reward skills and qualifications.

‘Appropriate Labour Market Recognition’ as ‘Status Recognition’

The students in this study made much of the segmentation of labour market opportunities. They were concerned with how jobs are allocated relative to an individual's level of education and training (see Hodkinson and Sparkes 1995; Hodkinson 1998). To be a graduate is, as argued earlier, to belong to a status group. Belonging to this status group means access to another status group: a status group of occupations. This is how labour market opportunities are segmented. Moreover, to locate in graduate employment is to negotiate appropriate labour market recognition or what I prefer to call ‘status recognition’. Status recognition comes through the pay and conditions of employment. This certainly informed the students’ aspirations and expectations. The students appeared to be well aware that it is often the level

of an individual's qualifications that determines what type of job, and indeed, what pay and conditions are available to an individual. The students believed participation marked them out as having high status and, in turn, demanded 'appropriate labour market recognition'. The discourse is one of qualifications as necessary for access to particular pay and conditions of employment. The reality of course is sometimes very different.

It is argued, then, that the students see the acquisition of credentials as integral to the segmentation of labour market opportunities (see Hodkinson and Sparkes 1995; Hodkinson 1998);

"I think you need a degree if you want to get into higher positions, it's not always necessary a lot of people go far without it, but in a lot of cases a degree, a piece of paper, managers or whatever will take you on because of that."

Claire: Second Year Communications

This is how the students, both in terms of their perceptions (and discourses) of labour market reality and graduate employment, largely perceive the role of credentials. To this end, forms of education and training can be seen in terms of being positional goods (and, indeed, investment goods) (Halsey 1995). There is 'competition in status' in the 'vertical differentiation' of credentials where some credentials carry greater labour market value because, in positional terms, they are imbued with greater status (Marginson 1997: 163), i.e. in Weberian terms 'status honour'⁹³.

Indeed, it is credentials that are perceived to confer status honour to occupations. Credentials are recognised by students as providing one of the criteria of access (and indeed exclusion) from status groups of occupations. In this sense, educational credentials are also used to operate 'social closure', where the prestige of the occupation is defended by a process of

⁹³ Credentials are certainly used to reproduce position and status (See Bourdeiu and Passeron 1977). Accordingly, whilst hierarchy is becoming less of a feature of the corporate structure, 'educational credentials are used to provide the means to build specialised professional enclaves, along with hierarchical staff divisions' (Brown 1995: 30).

‘secrecy and idealisation’ (see Collins 1979). Indeed, credentialism leads to status positioning and ‘social closure’ in terms of ‘greater discrimination between credentials at the same formal level’, in, for example, the ‘field of study or institution attended’. Here, there are ‘social differences in academic performance and employer definitions of ‘acceptability’’ (Brown 1995: 35). It is that the status of a credential has become part of a wider employment discourse where, particularly in the learning society, perceived high ‘status’ carries with it the expectation of specific employment advantages, both for the employer and the employee.

When the students discussed their aspirations and expectations, it was certainly the case that the participants in this study spoke in terms of a hierarchy of credentials and occupations, using a discourse of graduate employment which can be analysed in terms of Weberian notions of ‘status honour’, ‘status groups’ and ‘social closure’ (Weber 1948). As Collins (1979: 134) argues, ‘status groups are formed on the basis of common and distinctive experiences, interests and resources’. Thus professions can become ‘status groups’ of occupations, or as Collins (1979: 134-35) terms them ‘status communities’, where, in order to maintain their status, access to ‘esoteric and easily monopolised skills’ is restricted - for instance, to degree holders. These processes apply not only to professions, but also to a wider range of occupational groupings.

Indeed, at the most elementary level, the students, in always being conscious of their position or high ‘status’, distinguished between graduate employment and non-graduate employment. They openly exhibited a desire for graduate employment, identified as a ‘status group’ that operates ‘social closure’, from which non-graduates are precluded entry by virtue of not having the ‘status honour’ of a degree (Weber 1948);

DS: Do you think there's two labour markets, one for graduates and one for those without degrees?

Alex: I think there are several job markets. There's a graduate market, but the non-graduate market is split into sub-divisions.

Alex: Final Year Marine Geography

DS: Where does status come into all this?

Pardeep: Well the doctor has spent more time doing study, it's down to education. A receptionist may have done training, but it's less than the five years a doctor has done. The receptionist could perhaps do what the doctor does, but only if they'd gone through that route. And the same way round. The status thing is... if someone has a skill, they have a skill and do lesser skills.

Pardeep: Final Year Optometry

Of course some jobs are more easily classifiable as of graduate status, in that they necessarily belong to (and perceived to be) a 'specialised professional enclave' that demands that an individual holds a particular credential (e.g. a medical doctor). However, it also became apparent that the students needed a means to identify jobs less obviously of graduate status. In this respect, the distinction is between occupations where entry is precluded for those who do not fulfil the entry requirement of (at least) a degree and those where the conditions of employment are such that they are 'appropriate' to graduates.

Certainly, it was clear to many of the students that particular occupations are only available to those with the appropriate, often vocational, qualifications. It goes without saying that the majority of people would not like to be tended to by a doctor or represented by a barrister who did not possess the requisite credentials. This, then, means that graduate employment itself may be viewed, and is *perceived*, in terms of a hierarchy of 'status groups' of employment. Here, the students identified distinct 'status groups' of employment that are regarded as the preserve of the few. They operate as particular 'status groups' with their own form of 'social closure', often measured, by the students at least, in terms of intelligence or aptitude and the ability to acquire specific skills (see Ainley 1994);

DS: Why not a doctor?

Pardeep: Because I couldn't do it. I'm not good enough and looking at my friend's course I don't think I could do it. It's so intense, five years as opposed to three, I couldn't study for that long. I'm going to be studying now when I'm working, but the volume of work is so much more.

Pardeep: Final Year Optometry

Of course, in this instance, Pardeep's qualification (Optometry) could also be seen to be 'specific' and 'idealised' and may lead her to employment of definable graduate status - both in terms of entry requirements and in its pay and conditions (Collins 1979).

However, some degrees are less vocational than others are. More significantly, some jobs are less clearly of graduate status. Graduate employment is becoming more diverse, as a wider range of employers request degree status as an entry requirement. Indeed, graduates increasingly find themselves working alongside non-graduates;

"...in my mum's office there are people there who've got degrees and they're doing the same work."

Jody: First Year English

As graduates increasingly locate in such positions, the difference between non-graduate and graduate jobs becomes more ambiguous. Therefore, the students in their aspirations and expectations for a graduate job appeared to rely more and more on discourses of graduate employment, e.g. as in particular levels of remuneration.

Indeed, unless a degree was required for access to a particular profession (e.g. teacher), graduate employment was often discussed, and distinguished from non-graduate employment, in its pay and conditions e.g. "a good wage", "having responsibility", "a level of stability", "working in an area of interest", "good prospects" and, indeed, "high status"⁹⁴. Moreover, the expected benefits of graduate employment were often commensurate with those of more

⁹⁴ A "good wage" perhaps measures occupational class, more so than the 'status' of an occupation. A "good wage", for example, can be earned in relatively low status occupations.

entrenched and historically based concepts of traditional graduate employment, i.e. ‘appropriate labour market recognition’ (Purcell and Pitcher 1998) or status recognition. However, whilst the students, perhaps, believed finding ‘appropriate labour market recognition’ is more difficult, the tightening of the graduate labour market was not believed to have resulted in diminished returns (in any form).

In exploring the students’ hopes for the future there appeared to be a level, defined in terms of employment benefits, below which the students refused to contemplate going. The students’ discourse of graduate employment was constructed around such factors as: how much a student believes they can expect to earn; at what level of the organisational hierarchy they can expect to operate; their level of security; and so forth. This in turn was perceived in terms of ‘specialised professional enclaves’ or ‘status groups’ of occupations, that carry ‘status honour’ and operate ‘social closure’ to non-graduates;

“Well in a graduate job I'd expect to have a moderate starting salary, they often have a certain level of benefits, you often get some sort of pension scheme etc. if you went into a specifically graduate position. If you didn't I don't think you would, I think you'd have an hourly wage and that would be it.... You expect a certain amount of responsibility, 'cause you wouldn't be going in sort at the very bottom you'd be going in a little way up so you expect responsibility, salary, perks.”

Alex: Final Year Marine Geography

DS So what is it about a graduate job and other jobs?

Amanda: Well I think with a degree I'll be doing a job I enjoy more and I'll be better qualified to do a job, whereas you don't need any qualifications to be a waitress... and the thing is always in the back of people's minds is that they could get the sack because they're not qualified for anything, whereas if I have qualifications for something and was needed and good at my job....

Amanda: First Year English

Thus, it seemed that the students’ aspirations and expectations, when internalised, were concentrated around the benefits most typically associated with traditional graduate employment. It was clear that for the students access to the ‘right’ pay and conditions meant access to ‘status recognition’. Equally, this informed the students’ aspirations and expectations, or what they *should* be. This is how the students’ aspirations and expectations

are constructed – on one level at least. What follows is a closer look at how the students' aspirations and expectations are perpetuated and reinforced.

A Discourse (Perception) of Graduate Employment: Raising Expectations

It has been argued, thus far, that the students' aspirations and expectations are constructed around a discourse of graduate employment. What I wish to suggest here is that this discourse is informed, produced and perpetuated by the students themselves and various others (e.g. parents, siblings, friends, employers, teachers, lecturers, etc.) perceptions of what graduate employment should mean. I have discussed at length how the students' aspirations and expectations have been informed by more entrenched concepts (perceptions) of 'traditional' graduate employment. Similarly, I have suggested that the 'coercive' (*risk*) and 'normative' (human capital) discourse of the learning society contribute to the production of a discourse of graduate employment (Rees *et al* 1997; Du Bois Reymond 1998; Tight 1998). What I will now suggest is that 'others' also play a key role in the students' expectations of their education and beyond.

In the previous chapter I have discussed how the students' definitions of career were, in part, constructed around the experiences of those around them, particularly their parents⁹⁵. Indeed, where the students incorporated their parents' and others' experiences into their definitions of career, they may also have internalised their parents' and others' expectations of the benefits that extend from a university education and the graduate labour market⁹⁶. Indeed, the students often juxtaposed their position with that of their parents. They often alluded to a time when entrepreneurial endeavour and hard work, and not credentials were the route to success.

⁹⁵ There is certainly 'sufficient evidence' to suggest that families 'play a key role in the transition from initial to post-compulsory education and training, and probably beyond' (Gorard *et al* 1998b: 24).

⁹⁶ Indeed, the NUS (1999) suggest that such expectations are problematic when it comes to the offspring of those families with a tradition of HE participation and their understanding of systems of students support (tuition fees, loans and grants). Often, students from these families were confused about their entitlements and expected a full maintenance grant and fees paid.

Indeed, even in a time of dot-com millionaires, qualifications, and degree status in particular, were viewed as the surest (least risky), and most secure, way to guarantee the best returns.

However, certain trends and differences did become apparent in terms of parents as reference points. Certainly, where the students' parents had been to university, or where 'legitimate' forms of cultural and social capital were present, there was the reproduction of status and position. As may be expected, this was the case for the significant majority of students at 'St. David's' – in terms of the university's class demographics. Thus, the students' participation in higher education was considered by many to be part of a 'legitimate heritage', and by extension there was a 'legitimate' expectation, often directly reinforced, of economic privilege (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977);

DS: So, what types of job are you thinking of?

Douglas: I mean in the long run Director, Senior Manager.

DS: And what informs you that a degree gives you access to this?

Douglas: That's what my father did/

DS: And this tells you that a degree is the route?

Douglas: Partly.... well at school; careers, teachers, friends. It's all imposed on you the whole time, especially the type of school that I went to. Anyone who didn't want to do a degree was seen as deviant almost. Which is wrong, but true.

Douglas: Final Year Business Administration

However, for a smaller number at 'St. David's' higher education was not part of a legitimate heritage and was therefore 'an effort and constant struggle' (Jenkins 1992: 111). These students' expectations of graduate employment appeared to be juxtaposed with their parents' and others' experiences and framed by the students and others (e.g. parents, teachers, etc.), in terms of social mobility. Here the individual 'loosens local ties' in the expectation of new labour market opportunities (Beck 1992: 94);

DS: Do you think your parents ever reflect on their education, the opportunities?

Jody: Yeah. I suppose my dad had no qualifications, he's got his painting and decorating certificates which he had to go to college to do and my mum has got a couple of O levels, but they've always said if they had the opportunities.... My mum has always wanted to go onto university but she said the opportunity for her just wasn't there. She said it was just instilled in her that she finished school and got a job. And she went to a grammar school as well.

DS: Did you feel pressured to go to university, by the school and your parents at all?

Jody: No not really. I've always said I'm going to university and they've not said anything else.

DS: You didn't feel that the choice to leave school was taken away from you?

Jody: It wasn't taken away, you had the choice whether you did want to leave, it's just they tried to show you the benefits of staying on.

DS: What did they outline as the benefits?

Jody: I think it was more for furthering your own education and career prospects.

DS: So do your parents have an expectation of what you'll end up doing?

Jody: I think they think I've got more opportunities and I'll get a highly paid job and make them even more proud of me, boast to the neighbours.

DS: How do you view these "opportunities"?

Jody: I'd say in the workplace, well you're looked upon differently compared to someone who hasn't got qualifications just because of the opportunities you received going to university.

Jody: First Year English

What flows from this is the expectation of better opportunities for degree holders than those without. Such expectations are informed by a discourse of graduate employment produced, perpetuated and subscribed to by others (parents, teachers, etc.) and the students themselves. This is of course rooted in perceptions of what should be aspired to and expected from graduate employment. More significantly, whatever the students' background, it became apparent that the discourse (and perceptions) of labour market 'reality' became subsumed beneath discourses (and perceptions) of graduate employment. Ultimately, this is what informed (maintained and raised) the students' aspirations and expectations.

Of course, it is certainly not the case that the students took on, unquestioningly, the expectations of others for the benefits traditionally believed to derive from higher education participation. Whilst discourses (perceptions) of graduate employment remain dominant,

competing discourses (perceptions) of labour market 'reality' work to moderate the students' expectations⁹⁷;

DS: Do you think they (Family) have an idea of what a degree is going to lead to? Is there a difference between what they and you think it is going to lead to?

Claire: Possibly. Well all my family ask what does Claire want to do when she leaves, there's only another year and she's finished and they just say she wants to teach or work with special needs children... it's just what I've told them that that's what they think. I think they think I've got more opportunities being at uni.

DS: So do you think they expect you to be making thousands in a few years?

Claire: Yeah I think that's what they expect, but I probably won't start work for a couple of years yet. I'll probably do part-time jobs and a bit of travelling.

DS: Why do you think they expect you to be earning loads?

Claire: They know it's hard work and know that I need experience and that kind of thing, they just think it's a bit of a magic thing.

Claire: Second Year Communications

Indeed, where the direct experiences of those around them might act to maintain and raise expectations, they could also inform expectations for a more uncertain, perhaps less rewarding, future;

I think I'm going to have to do a lot of temping work, a lot of... all my sisters had to do that... a lot of temping work and they took time to decide what to do... I think I'm going to have to do that... at least to a degree.

Beth: First Year History

Certainly the expectations and experiences of those around the students often appeared to produce mixed messages. In a 'learning society' that puts credentials above all else, raised expectations clashed with perceptions of labour market 'reality'. Nevertheless, the discourse of graduate employment as a popular discourse left little room for the construction of new discourses (perceptions) of expectation - a discourse constructed around the expansion of higher education and the increasing diversity of graduate employment. Discourses of labour

⁹⁷ Equally, Claire's remarks could be framed within theories of extended or 'post-adolescence', where the desire to prolong 'youth' delays and transforms the way in which young people seek to build a

market 'reality', in this sense, and what the students otherwise perceived of the labour market failed to be fully internalised.

Indeed, the students' 'lived' experiences of a working environment also appeared to raise their expectations of graduate employment and reinforce their perceptions of what constitutes graduate employment. With two-thirds of full-time students now working on a temporary basis during term time (Callender and Kemp 2000) and school work experience programmes playing an integral part in the school curriculum, a 'lived' experience of a working environment is quite commonplace. Indeed, all of the students in this study had some kind of work experience. The range of work experience included: school work experience schemes, temporary paid employment, degree placements and voluntary work, whilst a few of the students (all of the mature students) had experience of a full-time working environment.

As far as the students' experiences of a work environment were concerned, they often appeared to reflect the occupational class of their parents (including the mature students). However, whether spending one's school work-experience loading (and unloading) bags of soil at a garden nursery or helping with the paperwork at a friend of your father's production company, the experience reinforced expectations of graduate employment - albeit in different ways. The students used their different experiences of work to reinforce and maintain the relevance of discourses of graduate employment. Not only did this reproduce and perpetuate expectations, but also, for some more than others, raised them.

For the significant majority of the students, their experiences of employment, paid or otherwise, were of what they considered low status work. The students tended to work in employment sectors demanding few or no credentials, low pay and with limited prospects. The students used credentials as a reliable measure of occupational status, in the way I have discussed previously. The characteristics of the jobs themselves, i.e. types of benefits (or lack

career (see Du Bois-Reymond 1998).

of them), were similarly used. As might be expected, these types of employment (particularly casual and temporary employment) were often compared unfavourably with what was expected at a graduate level;

DS: What sort of experience of work have you got?

Kate: I've worked in factories, horrible yeah. Nightmare. I was packing ceramic goods for Boots, it was for a firm in Devon who made all their candles and things. I had to put them through quality control and things like that. I worked there straight after my A levels and some time in the summer. The odd day and weekends. The last time I worked in a graphic design factory packing, I've also done a bit of clerical work and loads of baby sitting.

DS: How did you find the clerical work?

Kate: Easy, just a bit filing really and typing the odd letter. Temping.

DS: Any of these for a career?

Kate: No way!

DS: Why? People do.

Kate: Yeah but I'd be so bored.

DS: Do you think they're not?

Kate: They probably are, but I don't want to be rude to them because it's their job but I'm more intelligent than they are so they haven't got the opportunities which is sad but a lot of people I work with didn't even have GCSEs you know. Anything. Nothing. That's what their friends did, that's what they were used to doing, all the girls if they didn't have a baby by the time they were 18 were gutted.

DS: What do you see for yourself in a graduate career then?

Kate: A graduate career...I don't know..... money, better prospects than people without one generally.

Kate: Final Year Law

In the absence of any 'lived' experience of graduate employment, such experiences acted to raise the students' expectations for something better. The students (including mature students) tended to juxtapose their experiences with those they expected as a graduate. Indeed mature students, particularly those with experience of semi-skilled or unskilled manual labour, identified most clearly the benefits that extended from "a little bit of education";

"It always struck me when you were at the machines or whatever, that you would see people coming in and they'd have bits of paper and they'd be standing around talking and drinking

coffee and you'd think to yourself well what do they do all day. You know they come in at 9 and go home at 5 and I was there 5 in the morning, working Saturday nights and I was thinking there's something wrong here. A little bit of education and what do they do?"

Bob: First Year Politics and Modern History.

More particularly, when framed within the 'normative discourse of the learning society' (Rees *et al* 1997) and, moreover, historical understandings of graduate employment, the status of credentials is integral to the understanding of the students' expectations for a 'graduate career'. In this respect, the 'status honour' of a degree, as opposed to the credentialessness of their co-workers - who "*didn't even have GCSEs you know*" - provides the framework upon which the discourse of graduate employment is constructed.

A lesser number of students, mainly those of Service Class I in the sample, had experience of employment at what might be considered to be a graduate level. This provided what was perhaps a more accurate understanding of what constitutes graduate employment. Certainly, it might be suggested that it gave students with a 'legitimate' history of access to the more privileged sectors of the labour market a better understanding of what to expect from more conventional forms of graduate employment⁹⁸;

DS: So have you had work experience?

Helen: Yes.

DS: Who with?

Helen: I've worked for the BBC and I've worked for schools and things. For the BBC I worked in Production.

DS: How did you get that?

Helen: That was through one of my Dad's friends.

DS: And the school thing?

Helen: That was at a private nursery, an infant and junior school.

DS: Was this paid employment or/

⁹⁸ More significantly, it is the students of more privileged backgrounds whose families have tended to be employed at this level over time that are more likely to gain access to similar opportunities once they have completed their studies (see Brennan 1993; Brown and Scase 1994)

Helen: The school was volunteer and the BBC was paid.

DS: Did you enjoy the work at the BBC? Is that like something you'd like to do as a career?

Helen: Yeah, maybe.

DS: But would you think of working at Tesco's as a career?

Helen: Not really.

DS: So what is 'career' to you? What is the career that is appropriate to you?

Helen: Something that I can work my way up and is a respected job and what people recognise as an important job. I know working in Tesco's is an important job but I can't imagine myself doing it.

DS: You said working your way up, an important job. So you want status.

Helen: Yeah.

Helen: First Year Education

Here, the link between occupational status and the status of credentials is reinforced. Work experience at this level is viewed as an extension of the graduate labour market environment, where the occupational status of the work acts to confirm and reinforce aspirations and expectations for high status employment and its associated benefits. Nevertheless, work experience at whatever level, and within any context, worked to maintain the graduate labour market discourse. Work experience acted as a positive example of what may be expected as a graduate or served, through negative associations, to reinforce the notion that employment at a graduate level was consistent with greater things.

Of course, graduates are not wrong to expect more than the degree-less and it might well be holding a degree brings them that much closer to achieving their aspirations. Certainly, the majority of this sample will access far better pay and conditions than their erstwhile colleagues in the factories and warehouses. More significantly, evidence suggests Helen (and those like her) will more than likely find her way into the type of employment she has already experienced. This, I suggest, is integral to the wider understanding of the students' social construction of labour markets. It is interesting in itself that Helen has access to particular opportunities where others do not. However, it is perhaps of more significance that in the

wider structure of labour market opportunities, Helen will perhaps view the types of opportunities that she has already been exposed to as more ‘appropriate’ and ‘available’ than might her equally well qualified but less socio-economically privileged counterparts.

In this regard, integral to an understanding of the social construction of labour markets, is how the students relate to the structures of opportunity that exist more widely. Critical to this analysis is how the students’ relationship with these structures is influenced by more recent shifts in higher education policy and learning society discourses, themselves dominated by human capital theory (see chapter four). It is my contention that these discourses not only permeate the students’ aspirations and expectations on a more superficial and general level (so that all the students sing from the same hymn sheet, as it were), but that they also work on a deeper level to include some students, whilst excluding others from the full range of graduate opportunities. This means that some students’ expectations are raised and then let down.

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the students’ hopes for the future, focusing on the production, reinforcement and perpetuation of a dominant discourse of graduate employment. This, I suggest, is tied to the *perceived* status of credentials and informs the students’ aspirations and expectations for future employment. In the previous chapter, the students used a discourse of labour market ‘reality’ to describe their perceptions of the labour market. The increasing expansion of higher education, which has resulted in ‘élite occupational groups fending off a growing number of well qualified people entering the labour market’ and forced graduates to locate in a far more diverse range of employment, has created a discourse of uncertainty and insecurity (Brown 1995: 738). I have argued in this chapter however, that this discourse (and such perceptions) are subsumed beneath a discourse of graduate employment – the latter is

constructed around perceptions of what *should* be aspired to and expected as graduates and, thus, highlights a tension between the two discourses.

This alternative and competing discourse is produced and perpetuated by the students and those around them. It is a dominant and popular discourse, constructed around perceptions of the benefits that once extended to the graduates of an elite system of higher education. Such benefits are still available. However, the nature of those benefits has altered significantly and a large number of students have to settle for substantially less. In part this stems from the perceived (and historically based) status of a university degree. It also emerges from 'learning society' discourse, which emphasises the benefits of credentials and the risks of credentiallessness. These are part of a wider 'coercive' and 'normative' (human capital) policy discourse, that acts to reinforce aspirations and expectations for the pay and conditions of employment most associated with traditional graduate employment.

It is argued that the discourse of graduate employment carries with it the aspirations and expectations of a particular occupational status, particularly in being tied into a discourse that surrounds educational qualifications and achievements. Indeed, the perceived 'status' of the credential is integral to the understanding of the students' aspirations and expectations. The 'status honour' of the credential is perceived to facilitate entry to an exclusive 'status group' of occupations that operate 'social closure' to non-graduates. Students invest in these discourses, because it marks and positions them in terms of both perceived occupational status and educational achievement. It is not enough to have the qualification, they need 'appropriate labour market recognition' (Purcell and Pitcher 1998) i.e. a recognition of their status as graduates. Thus notions of traditional graduate employment are held onto.

In this regard, there is unanimity between the students' widely differing aspirations and expectations and in their aspirations and expectations as a group of students. Here, in the 'learning society', where government rhetoric promises 'improved employment prospects and

pay' (NCIHE 1997a: 288: 18.24) and teachers, family and friends alike extol the virtues of higher education, students still expect, though not a 'job for life', most of the benefits that have traditionally extended from employment of graduate status. Indeed, students of higher education are more likely to find gainful employment and attain higher rewards than their degreeless contemporaries (CSU 1999).

However, the full range of graduate opportunities are not, I contend, accepted as available and appropriate by many of the students in this study. The kinds of enhanced futures aspired to and expected – as described in this section – are not then open to all. Indeed, because career decisions are rooted in habitus and labour market discourse, there are differences in perceptions of what is available and what is appropriate (Hodkinson and Sparkes 1995). I suggest, moreover, that more recent higher education policy discourse, which is part of a wider learning society ('late modernity') discourse, works to further exclude some students. Equally, however, the normative human capital theory focus of these discourses simultaneously works to include others. The next chapter conceptualises this within a typological framework and looks more closely at the relationship students construct with structures of labour market opportunity.

CHAPTER EIGHT

The Social Construction of Labour Markets: Forming A Labour Market Identity

Introduction

The discussion, up till now, has centred on the students' perceptions of the labour market. I have suggested that they view the labour market from two different perspectives. Firstly, the evidence suggests that the students possess a greater understanding of the more deleterious effects of higher education and labour market restructuring, than has been previously found. These perceptions I have framed in terms of a 'discourse of labour market reality'. Secondly, when referring to their aspirations and expectations, I have argued that the students use a 'discourse of graduate employment'. This discourse is largely constructed around perceptions of what pay and conditions of employment are most associated with traditional concepts of graduate 'status' employment. I suggest, moreover, that there is a tension between these two discourses that the students fail to reconcile fully. The tension being evident in the rather different language used by the students to describe perceptions of labour market 'reality' and their aspirations and expectations.

At an almost generic level the students' hopes and fears - as a group of students - are the same. That is, all the respondents in this study - of all social backgrounds - buy into both discourses in similar ways. What has also been suggested is that the students' labour market perceptions are the product of two other, separate but related, discourses: learning society discourse and the more deeply entrenched discourse of 'traditional' graduate employment. The intention in this chapter is to show that whilst these latter discourses inform the students of what it is possible to attain with a degree (and, therefore, why they should participate in higher education), they do not adequately reflect the different ways in which the students

relate to the wider structures of labour market opportunity. In short, the graduate labour market might be perceived by the students in a number of ways, but the holding of such views does not necessarily reflect the ways in which an individual student might *relate* to structures of graduate labour market opportunity.

In the context of the relationship individuals have with the structures of labour market opportunity, a key concept in the understanding of the latter is that of a labour market identity (see Rees *et al* 1997). A labour market identity encapsulates how the student's relationship with the labour market (choices) is shaped personally, with emotional and intellectual dimensions (Sennet and Cobb 1972), and is the product of social experience (see Weil 1986; Hodkinson and Sparkes 1995; Rees *et al* 1997; Gorard *et al* 1998a). I locate this concept at the heart of my theoretical concerns. What I am exploring is the space between the students' labour market perceptions (evident in their hopes and fears) - the knowledge they possess of the labour market that is part of wider discourses - and the students' knowledge of what 'choices' are available and appropriate as shaped by the individuals' social experience - a student's labour market identity.

As Hodkinson and Sparkes (1995) suggest, when individuals consider the opportunities in the labour market, no one really regards all of them as available or appropriate. The choices which individuals exercise over their participation in the labour market merely reflect the *kinds* of knowledge which they possess of the labour market opportunities available, as shaped by the interpolation of social and economic relations and structures (Rees *et al* 1997). That is, labour market identity largely shapes and determines patterns of labour market participation - albeit within the limits imposed by available opportunities. This, it might be suggested, leads to predictability in labour market trajectories (see chapter six). A labour market identity, then, is central to an individual's labour market trajectory - similar to the way in which Rees *et al* (1997) place a learning trajectory as subject to a learning identity.

Of course, it is always possible for individuals to pursue courses of action that deviate from established trajectories;

‘even where individuals’ behaviour is consistent with typical patterns of learning (trajectories), it is always possible for them to do something else; their actions thus remain the product of choices’

(Rees et al 1997)

This argument allows for an understanding of changes in labour market identity or, more significantly, how a labour market identity may develop to incorporate discursive change and hence cultural change. For instance, the way that higher education opportunities are now presented – within both ‘traditional’ graduate employment and learning society discourses – might be instrumental in the individual’s mediation (and knowledge) of choice and thereby explicit in the undermining of established trajectories⁹⁹. Indeed, I will argue that there is real sense in which these discourses enable individuals to broaden their ‘horizons for action’ (Hodkinson and Sparkes 1995).

However, it is equally as likely that such discourses will fail to map onto the labour market identity of some individuals and characteristic trajectories will be reinforced. Hence, it might be suggested that the opportunity for some individuals to access enhanced future rewards (labour market choices) - as talked about in the graduates’ aspirations and expectations - is impaired by the very discourses that work to broaden other students’ ‘horizons for action’. In this regard, I will look to develop arguments first raised in chapter four. That is, my particular concern is with the emphasis of human capital theory in learning society discourse, and how its ‘normative focus’ has implications for the types of relationships individuals construct with structures of labour market opportunity (see Rees *et al* 1997).

⁹⁹ Indeed, it seems to me that both discourses have become meshed with one another, as education policy is constructed increasingly around a discourse of why individuals *should* invest in their futures through educational opportunities, i.e. because of enhanced future rewards. In this regard, the discourses mirror one another.

The purpose of this (and the following) chapter, then, is to explore fully the ways in which the construction, or forming, of a labour market identity is ‘embedded in social relations, and take proper account of the interaction of (higher education students’) individual choices and constraining parameters in the determination’, and perception, of labour market opportunities (as, for example, Rees *et al* 1997: 490 and Gorard *et al* 1998a, do for learning identities/trajectories). What follows, is an in-depth discussion of the students’ forming of labour market identities and how this has implications for the students’ future labour market trajectories (see Rees *et al* 1997; Gorard *et al* 1998a). The discussion takes place across two chapters, which each comprise two main sections. This chapter (eight) comprises sections one and two and the following chapter (chapter nine) comprise sections three and four. The four sections are outlined below.

Section One

To discuss the forming of a labour market identity I make use of a typological framework. From the sixty-one students interviewed I have identified four labour market identity types: the ‘Shakers’, the ‘Movers’, the ‘Settlers’ and the ‘High-Fliers’. The students’ value laden perceptions of the labour market when conceptualised through the typological framework highlight relationship patterns consistent with ‘social location’ as defined through the social relations of capital (Skeggs 1997);

‘Our social locations influence our movement and relations to other social positions and hence our ability to capitalise further on the assets we already have.’

(Skeggs 1997: 9)

Whilst the individuals of the four labour market identities show unanimity in perceiving graduate labour market trajectories in terms of high status, there is differentiation in conceptualisations of appropriateness and availability that are consistent with ‘social location’. Hence, the typological framework positions ‘career decisions’ in terms of perceived

availability and appropriateness in relation to ‘social location’ and the ability to capitalise on assets, e.g. ‘legitimate’ forms of social and cultural capital.

The identification of the typologies is based on the application of three criteria - each of which is discussed in section one.

Section Two

In section two I describe and discuss three of the typologies: the ‘Movers’, the ‘Settlers’ and the ‘High-Fliers’. Here, the forming of a labour market identity is consistent with the expectations (and determinants) of ‘social location’ (Skeggs 1997). Here, parental patterns of labour market participation often determine the pattern of participation for a child (Gorard *et al* 1998b). Hence, these students’ labour market trajectories are likely to correspond directly with (and reproduce) predictable patterns of labour market participation.

Section Three

In section three I describe and discuss the ‘Shakers’. These are a small but significant number of students. What makes them interesting is that their labour market identity is shaped by the determinants of their social location to ‘shake’ predictable patterns of labour market participation. Thus, where three of the labour market identities correspond with ‘discernible regularities in (perceived) patterns of participation’ (Gorard *et al* 1998a: 401), the fourth departs from this position.

Section Four

In section four I discuss further the implications of labour market identity. In particular I discuss the relationship different labour market identities have to patterns of perceived labour market participation. Where the framework tells us something about labour market identities being subject to both ‘attitudinal constraints’ and ‘structural barriers’, it also informs us about the (un)predictability of labour market trajectories. Here, factors such as the transformation of

learning opportunities (e.g. higher education expansion) enable individuals to honour or betray 'characteristic' labour market trajectories. This section also hypothesises about the extent to which modern day discourses of opportunity (Learning Society discourses) impact on young peoples' futures.

SECTION ONE

Forming A Labour Market Identity: Using A Typological Framework

Introduction

The students' relationship with structures of labour market opportunity, of what they view as available and appropriate in the labour market, differ significantly. This becomes evident when we explore the students' 'career decisions' through the typological framework¹⁰⁰. The emphasis here is not so much on the 'decision' to, say, be a teacher - this alone is not the determining factor in the construction of a labour market identity. Indeed, in some respects a student of any of the four labour market identities could choose such a career path. What we are concerned with is how the decision to be a teacher is constructed as both available and appropriate. The concern is with how the decision is made in relation to the wider structure of labour market opportunities and is mediated by such factors as social class, gender, ethnicity and age (Hodkinson and Sparkes 1995). And, 'it is habitus itself that commands this option' (Bourdieu 1977: 10);

'We can always say that individuals make choices, as long as we do not forget that they do not choose the principles of these choices.'

(Bourdieu 1977: 10)

Accordingly, it must be recognised that 'career decisions' do not simply reflect the constraining effects of structures of labour market opportunities. Rather, a course of action - and thereby a labour market identity - must be seen and understood as an individual choice as mediated by social experience *and* a knowledge of labour market opportunities (Rees *et al* 1997; Hodkinson 1998).

Labour market identities, then, represent an evaluation of labour market opportunities, ‘developed and evolved through interaction with significant others, and with the culture in which the individual has lived and is living’, i.e. habitus (Hodkinson 1998: 97). In using habitus as a conceptual tool, the students’ perceptions are framed in terms of their classed, gendered and racialised experiences (Hodkinson and Sparkes 1995; Reay 1998a; Hodkinson 1998; Tett 2000). Most telling is the student’s ‘social location’, and how the ‘capital’ at the disposal of an individual student becomes significant in the context of perceived labour market opportunities (Skeggs 1997)¹⁰¹. Thus, as essentially descriptions through habitus, the four labour market identities best represent the students’ relationships to the myriad of opportunities that exist in the labour market.

The Typologies: ‘Shakers’, ‘Movers’, ‘Settlers’ and ‘High-Fliers’

I have chosen to present the relationship a student socially constructs with the labour market in terms of the individual student’s labour market identity. By this, I refer to the value laden perceptions of their employability as constructed through habitus and the structure of labour market opportunities that exist more widely. To this end the project makes use of a typological framework to describe and discuss the forming of a labour market identity. As mentioned previously the sixty-one students have been classified into four distinct ‘labour market identity’ types: the ‘*Settlers*’, the ‘*Movers*’, the ‘*Shakers*’ and the ‘*High-Fliers*’ (See Tables 8a, 8b, 8c, 8d, 8e). What follows is a brief description of each that concentrates primarily on the dominant factors in each labour market identity’s demographic composition and descriptions of their more general defining characteristics.

¹⁰⁰ I use ‘career decisions’ with reference to Hodkinson (1998: 93) where, in utilising Bourdieu’s (1988) ideas on choice, ‘choices’ are ‘determined responses to the relation of forces within which (individuals) are locked’.

¹⁰¹ All capital being context specific (Skeggs 1997)

Table 8a Frequency of four labour market identity categories

Labour Market Identity	Frequency	Percentage
Movers	29	49
High-Fliers	17	28
Settlers	8	12
Shakers	7	11

- **‘Shakers’**: this is the smallest grouping, comprising just 11 per cent or 7 students (See Tables 8a and 8b). They are, however, the most anomalous and interesting group. The group is predominantly of low socio-economic status, fairly evenly split in terms of gender and comprising three members of ethnic minorities - half the ethnic minority sample. The ‘Shakers’ are apparently unhindered by ‘attitudinal constraints’ and shake up the predictability of ‘predicted’ labour market trajectories. In this regard, they perceive labour market barriers as relatively permeable. Indeed, whilst in many ways the ‘Shakers’ labour market identity is relative to ‘structural and social constraints’, their internalisation of the structure of labour market opportunity reflects few limitations in terms of ‘availability’ and ‘appropriateness’.
- The **‘Settlers’** are the second smallest grouping: 8 students or 12 per cent of the sample (See Table 8a and 8c). The students in this group comprise mainly women of low socio-economic status. Generally, they appear to construct a rather ‘fatalistic’ relationship with the labour market. It is not that they necessarily lack ambition, rather that the students of this ‘identity’ are far more circumspect in their attitudes to the labour market than the ‘Movers’, ‘Shakers’ or ‘High-Fliers’. Certainly labour market opportunity for ‘Settlers’ is viewed to be largely circumscribed by social constraints. The Settlers literally ‘settle’ for an occupation, the ability to engage with labour market opportunities seemingly suppressed.

- The *'High-Fliers'* comprise 17 or 28 per cent of the students and were the second largest grouping (See Tables 8a and 8d). The group was split evenly in terms of gender. It comprises mainly students of Service Class I and included three students of an ethnic minority background. In terms of upward mobility, this group of students' sense of availability and appropriateness was largely unbounded. Indeed, the desire for upward mobility was restricted simply because there was little higher that the students could travel - in terms of their occupational class. The 'High-Fliers' maintained a very positive outlook towards their futures. It was moderated only by an awareness of increasing labour market competition and insecurity. 'High-Fliers' always believed the very top of the occupational hierarchy to be within reach. In this sense, an occupational status (and income) equivalent to that of their parents was viewed as available and appropriate.
- The *'Movers'* are the largest group of students. This group comprises 29 students or 49 per cent of the sample (See Tables 8a and 8e). There is a small majority of men and it is mainly students of Service Class II. The 'Movers' attitude to the labour market can best be described as relaxed, a more accurate description might be that they are almost ambivalent. Indeed, it might be said that they have an indifference to future possibilities which appears to limit their 'horizons for actions' (Hodkinson and Sparkes 1995). This is despite the structures of opportunity being largely enabling for this group. However, they are not 'Settlers' and are distinguishable from them in that they do not view their futures as blocked.

A 'Mover', then, is labelled so, not because they are dynamic and move quickly up the occupational hierarchy to be 'high-flyers', but because they happily and quietly invest in the capital at their disposal to 'move' modestly in terms of status and/or occupational field beyond previous family patterns of labour market participation. In this regard, they maintain (reproduce) occupational status. However, they do not 'settle'. Rather, because of the expectancy that results from increased educational status or through a desire to create

distance between their and their parents' life-courses - for first generation students in particular - occupational mobility (movement) occurs across the occupational hierarchy rather than vertically.

These brief descriptions give a flavour of the characteristics and disposition of each labour market identity. They do not, however, reveal the complex principles upon which allotment to a category is based. What follows now is the discussion at length of these criteria.

The Typologies: Three Criteria

The criteria for allotment to any of the four labour market identities are three-fold and each student's labour market identity typology categorisation is subject to the uniform application of those criteria. The criteria are as follows.

1. Firstly, categorisation is subject to a student's habitus. A student's individual reading of labour market opportunities is embedded in a broad cultural context (habitus). Certainly individual students' 'career decisions' are not open to the same constraining (enabling) influences of 'background'. 'Career decisions' betray 'choices' 'which emphasise their relation to factors such as social class, gender, ethnicity and age' (Hodkinson and Sparkes 1995: 195-196). This criterion, then, is concerned with how a student in relation to their social and cultural experiences, i.e. their habitus, perceives the structure of labour market opportunity. What I am looking to measure (and represent) is the (relational) space between the students' habitus and their perception of the availability and appropriateness of labour market opportunities.

To clarify this I will set out an example. Working-class 'Student A' who sets out to become a vet is categorised as a 'Shaker', not a 'High-Flier'. 'Student A' is entering a 'high-flying' career, but because of the distance travelled between their working class origins (experiences - habitus) and their sense of availability and appropriateness (in terms

of the relations of capital necessary to access such opportunities), they are ‘shaking-up’ established labour market trajectories and can therefore be categorised as a ‘Shaker’. ‘Student A’, in his or her labour market identity, regards particular labour market opportunities as available and appropriate outside of what we might otherwise expect¹⁰². By the same token, a service class I student, ‘Student B’, who chooses the same route is categorised as a ‘High-Flier’. This is because ‘Student B’ is not travelling any great distance in terms of the distance between their habitus and their sense of availability and appropriateness. Why ‘Student B’ is categorised as a ‘High-Flier’ and not a ‘Settler’ or ‘Mover’ is set out in the explanation of criterion three.

2. The framework is also concerned with the operationalisation of agency. In this regard, individual dispositions are taken into account. The concern is with the student’s orientation, for where habitus may inform ‘career decisions’ and thus the typological framework, individual choices are also a reflection of alternative courses of action, particularly where ‘turning points’ (Denzin 1989) or ‘biographical discontinuities’ (Ahleit 1994) are prevalent (Rees *et al* 1997). Here, the typological framework attempts to go beyond the constraining (or enabling) effects of habitus and structures of labour market opportunity and attempts to encapsulate ‘the interaction of individual choices and constraining social parameters’. Thus it is, in part, concerned with orientation, where ‘actions (i.e. career decisions) remain the product of choices’ (Rees *et al* 1997: 492). For example, where an individual might have been profoundly influenced by an experience/individual so that they work outside what normally would be construed to be the limitations of their ‘habitus’ – as in a woman pursuing employment within a typically male preserve of employment.

¹⁰² If student ‘A’ was female, her choice to be a doctor would, on one level, be consistent with her habitus. This is because she chooses a ‘caring’ (gendered) profession (Skeggs 1997). However, as a working class woman the relations of capital necessary to access such opportunities are inconsistent with the culturally embedded context of her working class dispositions. In this regard, she is far removed from her habitus. In this instance, class subsumes gender. In the case of some of the other students gender subsumes class, e.g. female middle class students who set out to become engineers.

3. This next criterion is relational. It works with a hierarchy of occupations - analogous to the Goldthorpe scale - where the availability and appropriateness of occupations are considered relative to one another¹⁰³. It is important that the typological framework reflects the occupational class of the student, to make more visible the way in which 'knowledge' of labour market opportunities or 'social experience' informs labour market identities. Again, I believe this is best explained with the aid of an example.

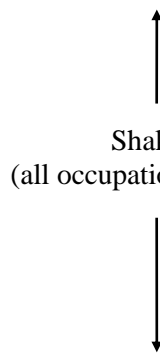
I will refer back to 'Student B' in the previous example who is studying to be a vet. 'Student B' belongs to service class I, as defined by his parents' occupations (see chapter five). Moreover, 'Student B' is studying for a career that is of the same occupational class. In terms of the previous criteria, student 'B' might be considered to be a 'Settler' or 'Mover'. However, in terms of the occupational hierarchy 'Student B' looks to 'reproduce' his 'high-flying' class position. This is what I want the typological framework to reflect, the students' starting points in the occupational hierarchy. To all intents and purposes then, the Movers, Settlers and High-Fliers represent the students' categorisation in the Goldthorpe scale (see Model 1)¹⁰⁴. This is why student 'B' is a High-Flier and not a

¹⁰³ It is acknowledged that Goldthorpe and Hope (1974) argue that their scale of occupational class is not meant to be read as hierarchical.

¹⁰⁴ I start from the premise that 'As soon as people enter the labor (sic) market, they experience mobility' (Beck 1992: 94). Of course all are open to both upward and downward mobility, however, the framework is predicated on the assumption that the students, by their very participation in higher education, will 'reproduce' (see Bourdieu and Passeron 1977), or experience, a greater degree of occupational status. I would not go as far as Hesketh (1999: 395), however, and claim that by virtue of being at university that 'all students irrespective of their social origins are now middle class, or soon will be', especially at a time when graduate employment is becoming ever more diverse and where entry to the upper echelons of the occupational hierarchy, and therefore the middle-classes, is becoming increasingly difficult for some students. However, even the 'settler' students will by virtue of their participation in all probability experience some form of upward mobility. However, the typological framework does need room to incorporate those non-traditional students who, although experiencing a 'middle-class' environment, do not see as 'appropriate' or 'available' entry to 'middle class' occupations and will not therefore experience much in the way of 'upward mobility'. Equally, the framework allows for those students who look to make small 'advances' in terms of their position in the occupational hierarchy. It is therefore possible when all three criteria are considered together that a student may move up (or down) one place, if the typology is looked upon in hierarchical terms (with High-fliers at the top and Settlers at the bottom. See model 1). However, a 'Settler' can never be a 'High-Flier' (and vice-versa). This type of movement in terms of the occupational hierarchy would mark a student out as a Shaker. 'Movers' are the only group of students who can be categorised as any one of the typologies, depending on how far they intend to 'move' in the occupational hierarchy. A

‘Settler’ or ‘Mover’. High-Fliers tend to be service class I, Settlers tend to be working and intermediate classes IV and below and Movers tend to be service class II and intermediate III, although there is some overlap. Some students do envisage ‘moving’ slightly outside their place in the occupational hierarchy and this is reflected in their categorisation within the typological framework. What the ‘Shakers’ represent, are those students who most obviously attempt to make clear a ‘biographical discontinuity’ in ‘occupational hierarchy’ terms. In this respect, all the other typology categories might be considered to be ‘settling’ in some way. However, I wanted the framework to make clear where it was in the occupational hierarchy the students were ‘settling’ from.

Model 8a. Typological Framework Criterion Three

Occupational Hierarchy	Typologies	
Service Class I	High-Fliers	
Service Class II Intermediate III	Movers	
Intermediate IV - V Working Class VI - VII	Settlers	

The application of the criterion is thus three-fold. A more detailed discussion follows of the use of the criteria and the classification procedure for students to a ‘type’. In effect the classification procedure started from the minute I met and began to interview the students. At this time I was already beginning to form opinions about the relationship a student has with the labour market. That is, it was during the data collection process that the typological framework began to take shape and I began to think of the students in terms of the type of

small ‘move’ up or down would mean placement in the next category up or down (see Model 1). However, a ‘Mover’ (most probably a service class II student) who planned to ‘drop out’ altogether would be categorised as a Shaker. In this way I make more visible deviations in the predictability of labour market trajectories and the social construction of a labour market identity that facilitates this broadening of ‘horizons for action’.

relationship they had with the labour market. In the first instance, it struck me that the students overwhelmingly fell into two distinct groups¹⁰⁵.

The first group of students comprise those who structure their relationship with the labour market as a reflection of their resources of background. By resources of background I refer to those classed, gendered and racialised experiences that constitute the 'self'. The second groups of students are those students who seem to go outside the experiences that shape them, and form a relationship with the labour market that goes beyond what we might normally have expected of them. In this sense both groups of students are classified in relation to their habitus. The first group of students are classified because they fall within our expectations of their habitus. That is, they seem to work within habitus and the delimitations of background and experience. However, the second group of students transcends habitus. That is, the students seem to disrupt (shake) our conventional understandings of what a student might understand to be possible/plausible when measured against the resources of background. This classification procedure incorporates the use of criteria one and two.

The third criterion is most effective in its application to the first group of students discussed above – although as part of the classification procedure it applies to all the students. That is, I am talking about those students who do not appear to 'transcend habitus' in their labour market identity, but who seem to work strictly within the resources of background. All of these students could be termed 'Settlers', because they all appear to 'settle' for a relationship with the labour market that we might have expected them to construct – as opposed to those students that 'shake' our expectations. Indeed, the typological framework could have been left at this point, developed no further and the students discussed as falling within one of two 'types'. However, it seemed that this simple classification would mask the complexity of the students that form 'settling' (and 'Shaker') relationships with the labour market.

¹⁰⁵ Indeed, my initial framework comprised just two types of students: Settlers and Go-getters. However, I felt that such a simple classification did not fully convey the complexity of the students'

What I wanted to convey by the third classification procedure, in some small way, was how a student's resources of background (social class) produced a 'settling' effect on labour market dispositions. I wanted to make clear through the typological framework the fact there was a correlation between labour market dispositions and a student's mainly classed experiences. Thus, whilst 'Settlers', 'Movers' and 'High-Fliers' might all be considered to be 'settling' in some way, their relationship (and the way it is socially constructed) with the labour market is really quite different. This, in part, is because the students of each labour market identity type come from different socio-economic backgrounds, and the typology distinguishes between 'types' in this way. The classification procedure is thus sensitive to a student's position in the Hope-Goldthorpe schema. By distinguishing between the 'settling' types in this way it makes the different type of 'settling' relationship the students have with the labour market more visible and easier to discuss. Moreover, in naming the settling 'types' I have tried to convey some of the characteristics of each 'settling' labour market identity.

Of course, the classification procedure must be applied in a rigorous way and this means applying it across the whole of the study sample. Thus, the 'Shaker' labour market identity also reflects sensitivity to a student's social class. Indeed, it could also be possible to distinguish in a similar way between different types of 'Shaker' labour market identity, as I have done with those of a 'settling' disposition. Whilst criteria one and two measure habitus (and its personal and experiential constraints), and therefore the space between expectations of (individual) classed, gendered and racialised experiences, criterion three provides one further measure of a student's disposition to labour market opportunities. For the 'Shakers' in particular, the classification procedure of criterion three enables us to have a better idea of how their labour market dispositions disrupt conventional understandings of classed futures. Where the 'High-Fliers', 'Movers' and 'Settlers' tend to settle within the occupational groups from whence they came, the 'Shakers' move more freely in their relationship with labour

social construction of the labour market.

market opportunities across the occupational hierarchy – see Model 8a. Alongside the application of criteria one and two, the particular aim of criterion three is to make this movement and lack of movement more visible.

The typological framework, then, is an understanding of the information divulged in the interview as a presentation of the self, where ‘career decisions’ and descriptions of ‘choice’ amount to a student’s understanding of labour market opportunities and what is available and appropriate to them. The typology is based on the students’ dispositions towards and constructions of labour market opportunities. That is, labour market identities are measured in terms of both individual orientation and the cultural context (class and wider social background) that shapes their ‘career decisions’.

This typological framework also highlights, in the social construction of labour market identities, that labour market trajectories in all probability remain largely predictable. However, the framework does make more visible where some students *might* deviate from established (predictable) labour market trajectories. Indeed, of most interest are those students whose (social construction of their) labour market identities lead them to possibly deviate. Following one trajectory rather than another reflects the ‘resources’ an individual derives from their background, as well as their understanding of opportunity structures (see Rees *et al* 1997). And herein lies the key difference between the ‘Shakers’ and the other labour market identities. For where the ‘Mover’, ‘Settler’ and ‘High-Fliers’ are largely static in terms of their perceived relationship to the structure of labour market opportunities, the ‘Shakers’ construct a more dynamic relationship.

As Reay (1998a) highlights, habitus produces action, but confines possibilities to those available to the social groups an individual belongs to. Habitus, therefore, tends to be

‘reproductive’ of action rather than ‘transformative’ (Reay 1998a)¹⁰⁶. From this, it might be suggested, that the ‘Shakers’ actions - their ‘career decisions’ as extensions of habitus - are in Reay’s terms ‘transformative’. That is, as a ‘social group’ their habitus is seen to take them beyond characteristic and ‘reproductive’ possibilities¹⁰⁷. What I am suggesting is that ‘habitus’ is transcended. This is in the sense that individuals are doing things, which are at odds with their social experience and the understandings of opportunities conventionally generated¹⁰⁸.

Table 8b ‘Shakers’ labour market identity students’ details

Pseudonym	Course Type	Course Year	Sex	Social Class	Ethnic Group	Mature Student
Danielle	Non-Voc	Second	F	S1	W/E	
Kevin	Int.	Final	M	I3	W/E	
James	Voc.	Second	M	I5	W/E	
Nick	Int.	Final	M	I5	W/E	
Pardeep	Voc.	Final	F	W6	Indian	
Rowena	Non-Voc.	First	F	W7	Pakistani	
Salh	Voc.	Second	F	W6	Indian	

Table 8c ‘Settler’ labour market identity students’ details

Pseudonym	Course Type	Course Year	Sex	Social Class	Ethnic Group	Mature Student
Amanda	Non-Voc.	First	F	I5	W/E	
Bob	Non-Voc.	First	M	W6	W/E	✓
Chris	Voc.	First	M	I3	W/E	
Emma	Int.	Final	F	I4	W/E	
Jody	Non-Voc.	First	F	I5	W/E	
Kerry	Int.	First	F	W6	W/E	
Sarah	Int.	Final	F	I3	W/E	
Siân	Int.	Second	F	W7	W/E	

¹⁰⁶ Where Bourdieu applies this to social class, Reay (1998) applies this to an understanding of racialised and gendered habitus.

¹⁰⁷ For example, a woman of working class origins who on graduation ‘settles’ into a clerical position fulfils ‘reproductive’ possibilities. However, a woman of working class origin who on graduation becomes a General Practitioner ‘shakes’ the ‘possible and plausible’ and is ‘transformative’ in her actions (Hodkinson 1998).

¹⁰⁸ Of course, within this we have to consider how a simple ‘choice’, guided by, for instance, a hobby may shape an individual’s actions, here ‘career decisions’ may also be transformed beyond those predicted through a reading of habitus. (Hence, the application of three criteria.)

Table 8d 'High-Flier' labour market identity students' details

Pseudonym	Course Type	Course Year	Sex	Social Class	Ethnic Group	Mature Student
Dean	Non-Voc	First	M	S2	W/E	
Declan	Int.	Final	M	S1	W/E	
Douglas	Voc.	Final	M	S1	W/E	
Georgina	Int.	Second	F	S1	W/E	
Gordon	Voc.	Second	M	S1	W/E	
Helen	Int.	First	F	S1	W/E	
Kamay	Voc.	First	F	S1	Chinese	
Kate	Voc.	Final	F	S1	W/E	
Kath	Non-Voc.	First	F	S1	W/E	
Kirstyne	Voc.	First	F	S1	W/E	
Mehul	Voc.	First	M	S1	Other Asian	
Melanie	Voc	Second	F	S2	W/E	
Peter	Int.	Second	M	S1	W/E	
Rajeka	Voc.	Second	F	S1	Other Asian	
Rob	Voc.	Second	M	S1	W/E	
Tim	Voc.	Second	M	S1	W/E	
Tom	Voc.	Second	M	S1	W/E	

Table 8e 'Mover' labour market identity students' details

Pseudonym	Course Type	Course Year	Sex	Social Class	Ethnic Group	Mature Student
Alex	Int.	Final	M	S1	W/E	
Ben	Int.	First	M	S2	W/E	
Beth	Non-Voc.	First	F	S2	W/E	
Caroline	Int.	First	F	S2	W/E	
Ian	Int.	First	M	S2	W/E	
Joseph	Int.	First	M	S2	W/E	
Claire	Non-Voc.	Second	F	I3	W/E	
David	Int.	Second	M	S2	W/E	
Delyth	Voc.	Final	F	I3	W/E	
Hannah	Non-Voc	Second	F	S2	W/E	
Hayley	Voc.	Final	F	I3	W/E	
Jeremy	Int.	Second	M	S2	W/E	
Jessica	Voc.	Second	F	S2	W/E	
Jon	Voc.	First	M	S2	W/E	
Katy	Int.	Second	F	S2	W/E	
Kay	Non-Voc.	Final	F	S2	W/E	
Laura	Non-Voc.	Final	F	S2	W/E	
Leo	Int.	First	M	S2	W/E	
Llinos	Int.	Final	F	S2	W/E	
Louise	Non-Voc.	Final	F	S1	W/E	✓
Martin	Int.	Final	M	S2	W/E	
Maurice	Int.	Final	M	S2	W/E	✓
Max	Int.	Second	M	S2	W/E	
Michael	Int.	Final	M	S2	W/E	
Paul	Int.	Final	M	I3	W/E	
Rhian	Int.	Final	F	I3	W/E	
Ross	Non-Voc.	First	M	I3	W/E	
Stuart	Non-Voc.	Final	M	I3	W/E	✓
Richard	Non-Voc.	Second	M	S2	W/E	

Key to Tables

Int: Intermediate

Voc: Vocational

Non-Voc: Vocational

W/E: White European

F: Female

M: Male

S1 – Service Class I

S2 – Service Class II

I3 – Intermediate Class III

I3 – Intermediate Class IV

I3 – Intermediate Class V

W6 – Working Class VI

W7 – Working Class VII

The following section describes the forming of three of the typologies; the 'Movers', the 'Settlers' and the 'High-Fliers'. Here, the utilisation of capital assets in relation to 'social location' leads to predictability in perceptions of labour market availability and appropriateness.

SECTION TWO

The 'Movers', 'High-Fliers' and 'Settlers':

Roots (Routes) of Reproduction

Introduction

Previous chapters have discussed how the students work with competing discourses of labour market 'reality' and graduate employment. Such discourses rest in the students' broad perceptions of the labour market and graduate labour market opportunity. The discourse of graduate employment is where the students' aspirations and expectations are centred. The students aspire to and expect particular sets of rewards for having studied at the level of higher education; this is the students' articulation of the discourse of graduate employment. However, the individual student's aspirations and expectations of graduate employment do not necessarily map onto the (socially constructed) relationship they might have with structures of labour market opportunity.

The students as a group perceived (aspired to and expected) labour market advantage in attending university. However, because a student's individual relationship with the structures of labour market opportunity is rooted in habitus *and* different labour market discourses - i.e. rooted in labour market identity - (Hodkinson and Sparkes 1995), what a student might aspire to and expect is often quite different to what might actually be considered available and appropriate. In this section I look at how the labour market identities of the 'Settlers' 'High-Fliers' and 'Movers' - the individual student's values and beliefs about the labour market and their place in it (see Weil 1986) - are produced (as the products of their social experience (roots)), and lead to reproduced routes of labour market participation.

‘Home Counties’ and Other Jobs: The segmentation of labour market opportunities

At the most basic level, I am arguing that implicit within the students’ socially constructed labour market identities is the forming of socially constructed boundaries. The students construct a particular relationship with the labour market (as a ‘High-Flier’, ‘Settler’ or ‘Mover’) and from this relationship flows a segmentation of labour market opportunities. By segmentation of labour market opportunities I mean that there is a hierarchy of occupations, to which entry is determined by an individual’s perceived relationship with labour market opportunities *per se*¹⁰⁹.

As discussed earlier, the construction of this relationship extends from an individual’s disposition towards the labour market, which in itself extends from the wider social background of the individual, i.e. their habitus. And in habitus being an extension of classed, gendered and racialised experiences students’ constraining parameters become more visible;

DS: Do you think it's still going to be us and them with graduate jobs?

Bob: I think because of my background and if I get a job as a graduate there will be this difference. I already notice it here. You've got some people from public school and middle, upper middle class and you've got others from the Valleys and what I call ordinary people, the people I'm used to, and you can sense it... it's nothing that is actually spoken but you can sense it...

DS: So are the opportunities different for people even within university then?

Bob: Yes I would think so.

DS: Why?

Bob: Well a lot of it depends on the type of job you go for, say managerial in one of the big companies, I'd think they were looking more for your home counties type... somebody who hasn't got a sharp accent because a lot... well even here there's very few accents that I can detect. I've met a few from the north and the valleys, but most of it is neutral.

Bob (Mature Student): First Year Politics and Modern History: Settler

Thus, for Bob the differentiation of labour market opportunities is embedded in a broad cultural context. For instance, in Willis’s (1977) account of working class ‘lads’, the habitus

of working class school boys was structured by their working class experiences. To this end, ‘macho-physical hardness’ was perceived as legitimate cultural capital in making factory and warehouse employment available and appropriate (Skeggs 1997). Similarly, the absence of the ‘personal qualities’ (legitimate capital) that make “*managerial positions in big companies*” appropriate for Bob, mean that these types of graduate employment opportunities are perceived by him to be unavailable¹¹⁰.

It is not so much that “big companies” are constructing Bob’s labour market identity, although his labour market identity will incorporate ‘knowledge’ of external opportunities as mediated by employers. Rather, it is that his socially constructed sense of employability – his sense of availability and appropriateness - is restricted by his (working class) disposition towards labour market opportunities. In this instance, “home counties” opportunities represent one form of labour market boundary for a working class student, especially one of mature years. Hence, later in his interview Bob suggests that he may have to ‘settle’ for a position of equivalent status to his previous factory work, but in the service sector. Bob’s experiences of university do not engender significant change (or a turning-point) in his labour market identity, rather he looks to ‘reproduce’ his place in the occupational hierarchy. His social background and age bar other opportunities... “*Realistically I don’t think it will be very good for me*”.

¹⁰⁹ Labour market opportunities are also segmented by credentials (as in status groups of credentials) and by employers in their recruitment strategies (see, for example, Brown and Scase 1994; Hodgkinson and Sparkes 1995; Brown 1995)

¹¹⁰ By ‘legitimate capital’ I mean the embodiment of those sorts of cultural and social capital that are valued more widely by society or particular types of employers, e.g. accent, speech, dress, and so forth.

Table 8f Typology by occupational class.

Occ. Class	High-Flier	Settler	Mover	Shaker	Total
Service I	15	-	2	1	18
Service II	2	-	20	-	22
Intermediate III	-	2	7	1	10
Intermediate IV	-	1	-	-	1
Intermediate V	-	2	-	2	4
Working VI	-	2	-	2	4
Working VII	-	1	-	1	2
Totals	<i>17</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>29</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>61</i>

A student's socio-economic background, whilst not determining, certainly appears to correlate closely with the forming of a labour market identity and the social construction of labour market boundaries (See Table 8f). Thus, perceptions of availability and appropriateness fit within an embedded cultural context. That is, the working class students structured their ('Settler') labour market identity from their working class experiences;

Emma: Well I was only about 13 and I moved from a school of 1200 to a school of 500. The first school was very, very rough in a rough area and had a bad reputation.

DS: Did your education suffer?

Emma: I was moved down classes yeah. I was moved down sets in the other school, I only found out how poor I was when I went to the new school. My classes were very disruptive and a lot of the time the teachers couldn't teach, they would run out crying.

DS: And compared to your new school?

Emma: It was the total opposite.

Emma: Final Year Education: 'Settler'

Emma's direct experiences of her "rough" first school in a "rough area" are telling of working class cultures that are bound up with the futility of education (see Willis 1977), and how individual behaviours are mediated through intermediate organisations (such as schools) (Reay 1998b)¹¹¹. It is only when Emma was moved to a better (middle class) school ("the total opposite") that education seemed to have possibilities: "One teacher she was really strict and I hated her, but she pushed me to do more and I told her I wanted to do Nursery Nursing and she told me I was too good to do Nursey Nursing". Indeed, it was Emma's

aspirant (working class) family that pushed her most and, in this regard, organised the change of school (see Jackson and Marsden 1968);

“I think they wanted me to have the opportunities that they feel they missed out on, 'cause they've been restricted in the jobs they've had and I know my dad feels very unhappy in his job and feels that I should have more opportunities.”

Emma: Final Year Education: 'Settler'

Despite the move of school Emma's 'horizons for action' never appeared to be broadened, her culturally embedded disposition towards future labour market possibilities – whether in terms of class or gender – proved too strong. She was never 'at home' with the objective possibilities that stemmed from her 'classed' participation in compulsory schooling, higher education and the labour market (see Jenkins 1992). As Emma's interview extracts quite clearly illustrates; *I didn't want to do A levels, but my parents wanted me to..... I've always just wanted to be a Nursery Nurse”* (Emma: Final Year Education: 'Settler').

Equally, the labour market identities of the middle class students (the 'Movers' and 'High-Fliers'), in being structured by their 'middle class' experiences, meant that they nearly always felt 'at home' with higher education and employment opportunities of graduate status. Here, going to university and achieving “managerial positions in big companies” was part and parcel of their social world and lived experiences;

DS: Would you feel quite comfortable going for a graduate post?

Helen: I think I would, but I think that's also do to with my background. 'Cause I'm sort of used to it. The pressure. People expecting you to achieve the most you can.

DS: What do you mean?

Helen: The pressure of people expecting you to do well and to achieve the best you can. Then if I was in a job that didn't have many rules or things I think I'd sort of collapse, I think I need rules and routine to do the best that I can.

DS: Why do you think that?

¹¹¹ A discussion of institutional habitus and schooling is conducted later in this chapter.

Helen: Well through my school and everything that's how it all operated and I was used to that because people at university were laughing at me when I said that I was a head girl and that we had to tell the little ones to stand up in assembly and things like that, but other kids aren't used to that. But because we had that fear of standing up in assembly if we were talking or something everybody was in silence, but it kept the school in order and under control.

DS: Very disciplined then?

Helen: Also I think people are quite impressed when you say you go to a private school when you go for a job.

DS: Why?

Helen: In terms of in connections and things/

DS: You made 'connections'?

Helen: At our school we had the Merchant Adventurers and they funded the school and they used to arrange jobs for the girls and things in like quite successful businesses and stuff and so without them you wouldn't have heard of these businesses and also they put you in at the top whereas if not you start as a secretary, but they put you in as the head of departments and things. So it does matter who you know.

Helen: First Year Education: 'High-Flier'

Explicit within this particular quotation is the development of valued relationships with others (social capital), where 'unequal selection and unequal selectedness' in the distribution of economic and cultural capital is identifiable in the 'reproduction' of opportunities for the middle classes (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977: 72). More significantly, the extract highlights how habitus develops and acts to facilitate (or bar) the structure of opportunity, where measures of availability and appropriateness tend to correspond directly with social class and classed opportunities (and experiences); "My dad went to Cambridge so it's (university) very much kind of in the family" (Kay: Final Year English: 'Mover').

As can be seen from Table 8f there is a general trend for 'Settlers' to be working class students and 'Movers' and 'High-Fliers' to be service class II and service class I students respectively. However, whilst this is most often the case, it is not necessarily so that class determines categorisation. Indeed, notwithstanding the demands of the typology criteria outlined earlier; 'Settlers' do not have to be working class students nor 'Movers' service class II and 'High-Fliers' service class I. For example, a significant majority (seven from ten) of intermediate III's are 'Movers' whilst there are also two intermediate III's categorised as

‘Settlers’. There is, then, some blurring of boundaries. Chris is a typical example of this. He is an intermediate class III student reading City and Regional Planning and has been categorised as a ‘Settler’¹¹².

If Chris was to follow the general trend in the correlation between class and labour market identity (and indeed choice of degree and gender) we should expect him to be a ‘Mover’. However, in the interview Chris’s sense of availability and appropriateness clearly defined him as an individual who did not wish to ‘move’-on, nor for that matter ‘shake’ things up or ‘fly-high’. He viewed labour market opportunities as limited and appeared most guided by a desire to have “*an easy life*”. Here, ‘settling’ for something similar to or even less than his parents was the most available and appropriate option. He wanted to combine the “easy” nature of his father’s sales job in a local hardware store with the more attractive office environment (and more graduate like pay and conditions) of his mother’s post in an estate agents. Certainly, Chris did not want to create too much space between his parents’ career paths and his own. Thus far, Chris’s ‘actions are the product of choices’ and this is how he intends to operationalise his agency.

However, when considering how best to categorise Chris (and other students like him) I was concerned to incorporate the *limited* way in which he appeared to transcend the enabling (or constraining) influences of background (*habitus*) and (appeared to) deviate from the labour market trajectory we might otherwise expect¹¹³. Chris, for instance, was a first generation student (as many of the students were) who attended a good school, he taught English in Russia for a year and his parents are relatively well off. Certainly, whilst university was not an established part of his background it was always an objective possibility: “*Everyone I*

¹¹² Indeed, the anomaly of Chris’s position is highlighted further if we contrast him with Kevin who is also intermediate III, but categorised as a ‘Shaker’. Kevin is discussed in detail in the following chapter.

¹¹³ This ‘limited’ aspect is crucial, otherwise a ‘Shaker’ labour market identity would be more appropriate. Equally, the blurring of boundaries works the opposite way, with other students possessing a limited sense of upward mobility.

knew there was going off to university". However, fulfilling this expectation (of himself and his parents) did not appear to translate into a broadened sense of availability and appropriateness - at least not in the same way as it did for students with similar amounts of capital (cultural, social and economic) at their disposal.

What I am concerned with here is highlighting the space between a student's (raised) aspirations and expectations and more (or less) bounded notions of appropriateness and availability. Certainly Chris, as with all of the students, recognised the value of a degree in enhancing the possible pay and conditions of employment;

It's a huge extra certificate on your education, if you get decent one it just proves that you can get on with some work, that you can support yourself as well, so I guess I'll earn more, have more responsibility.....

Chris: First Year City and Regional Planning: 'Settler'

Indeed, in all likelihood Chris will have a better salary and more responsibility as a graduate. However, his 'horizons for action' meant "*an office job of some description, probably with the council*" was regarded as more appropriate and available than "*that kind of high status job*". Hence, it would appear that Chris's 'resources of background' fail in some way to close the space between the possible and the plausible and there is a 'settling' for perhaps something less than might otherwise be considered available and appropriate¹¹⁴.

However, it was most often the case that in terms of occupational class, the space between the students' aspirations and expectations and their reading of what was available and appropriate was what we might expect. Accordingly, there were clear general trends in the composition of the labour market identities (See Tables 8f). There was, moreover, also evidence of discernible patterns resulting from the students' different gendered and racialised experiences,

¹¹⁴ It could be, for instance, that Chris's 'choice' to find an "easy" job, means he is happy to 'settle' for something that does not cause him too much inconvenience. In this respect, his 'career decision' is perhaps more to do with a lack of vision, laziness or being content to locate in a job with the highest return for the least investment of time and effort.

not just their classed experiences. For instance, ‘Settlers’ are predominantly white, female and from the lower socio-economic groups. In this regard, the ‘Settler’ labour market identity represents, in particular, the gendered (female) experiences of white non-traditional (working-class) higher education students.

We have already seen how Emma and Bob’s working class disposition (and experiences) appeared, for them, to preclude particular labour market opportunities and engender a ‘Settler’ labour market identity. Equally, Emma, Jody, Kerry, Amanda and Siân’s working class experiences suggest similarly bounded ‘horizons for action’¹¹⁵. However, where Bob’s working class dispositions - and mature years - were perhaps instrumental in the forming of his labour market identity, it seemed to me that the female ‘Settlers’ gender was an implicit determinant in the construction of their labour market identity.

Of course, it is not that the ‘Settlers’ aspirations and expectations were different to any of the other students. Indeed, in the previous chapter we can note how Kerry, like all the other students, expected and aspired to be “*working my way up, maybe getting somewhere, reasonable wage, quite a few responsibilities, doing something worthwhile*”. However, when we look more closely at Kerry’s and the others’ negotiation of ‘choice’, there is a clear segmentation of labour market opportunities and evidence of more limited ‘horizons for action’;

DS: So, are your opportunities unlimited once you've got a degree?

Jody: Not really... I probably won't get to be a journalist for example.

DS: Why?

Jody: Well... not on an important paper anyway, not like the Times or something like that. I think you have to go to somewhere like Oxford to work on one of those, it's the same for all the best jobs really...

Jody: First Year English: ‘Settler’

¹¹⁵ The remaining female ‘Settler’ Sarah is intermediate III. She is not a ‘working class’ student but presents a similar narrative to Chris.

Clearly, Jody's reading of opportunities or 'horizons for action' are limited by her interpretation of 'legitimate' forms of capital (in this instance an Oxbridge education). Thus, it might be surmised that her 'social location' - as a white, working class woman - informed her that a career in journalism was inappropriate and unavailable (see Skeggs 1997)¹¹⁶.

As might be expected the types of opportunities that Jody viewed as beyond her were talked about by the 'Movers' and 'High-Fliers' as available and appropriate. Peter's (middle class) confidence in himself (and in his ability to utilise and construct social capital, "*contacts*") - as illustrated below - contrasts with (and re-affirms) what Jody understands of her own classed (and gendered) experiences;

DS: Why the media?

Peter: Well it's something that I've taken an interest in through watching film and TV and appreciating it, and a wide variety of media and I think it's something that I would like to be involved in at the production level... I think it's creativity thing... I would like to be involved in something, a team that produces, creates things in TV and film.

DS: Do you have a route identified?

Peter: Well at the moment I'm trying to go through the smaller production companies which make things for the major companies like the BBC... they make documentaries and things and I'm applying to a wide range of these and trying to get in with a group of people... it's all about contacts, making contacts with different people and finding out if they can get me in.

Peter: Second Year Journalism: High-Flier

The social locations of 'Movers' and 'High-Fliers' as we have already learned - in socio-economic terms at least - are quite different to 'Settlers' and this results in different 'horizons for action'. Moreover, it might be that the greater propensity for 'Settlers' to be women and work within highly bounded notions of appropriateness and availability also rests in their gendered experiences making more relevant certain career paths. It is my contention that this is equally applicable to readings of racialised experiences. In the following sections, I make

clearer how racialised and gendered (and mature students') experiences influence labour market identity.

The impact of gender and ethnicity (and age) on labour market identity

In the previous section I have argued that social class mediates an individual's sense of what is available and appropriate in the social construction of a labour market identity - albeit with some variations (e.g. Chris). In this section I look at the different ways in which an individual's gender and/or ethnic background also impacts on their relationship with wider structures of opportunity. To a large extent, as for class, there are general trends in the way male and female students and students of different ethnic backgrounds construct their relationship with the labour market. In the reading of gender and ethnicity across the labour market identities there are some variations in how gendered and racialised experiences impact on an individual's 'horizons for action'. The experiences of mature students provide another dimension worthy of discussion.

Gender

The 'High-Fliers' are almost evenly split in terms of gender: nine male to eight female. The 'Movers' comprise slightly more male than female students (16:13) and the Settlers are predominantly female (6:2). Most obviously, the male and female students held quite traditional views about their 'gendered' roles in the labour market and at home. In this regard, the men and women of all labour market identities (including 'Shakers') talked about gender divisions as both natural and as part of social structures (see Reay 1998a);

¹¹⁶ Of course, students further up the occupational hierarchy also recognised the labour market advantage in going to Oxford. However, to different extents the 'Movers' and the 'High-Fliers' did not express that the "*best jobs*" were *beyond* their 'horizons for action'.

DS: If you do start a family, would you see it as something you'd have to interrupt your career for?

Alex: No, I think most people, it sounds a bit sexist, but in general it's the wife who has to interrupt her career.

Alex: Final Year Marine Geography: Mover

DS: Do you think employers will discriminate against you because you're a woman?

Beth: I think perhaps. I don't think it'll be too much of a problem. I'm sure it's still there but I don't think I'm going... I think in the stock-market and very competitive work you get a lot of that, you read about it in the paper and things, but not so much in the work I'm looking for.

DS: So it's in certain fields?

Beth: I think it's everywhere, but some places more than others. It's more in the competitive markets that are more male dominated.

Beth: First Year History: Mover

Of course, this is not to argue that male hegemony (patriarchy) went totally uncontested. Indeed, for both male and female students there was nearly always a tension, often within the same interview, between acknowledging the division of labour (as both natural and structural) and contesting its validity; *"I think basically whoever, it shouldn't make any difference who should do most of the taking care of the children, it should be who is in a better position at the time"* (Alex: First Year Marine Geography: Mover).

However, despite the students as a group acknowledging these tensions, there was a clear divide in how men and women negotiated employment opportunities. What became clear is that the female perceptions of labour market opportunity owed much to 'traditional' perceptions of the division of labour (as did the men's). This is both in terms of men's perception of a woman's role and women's perceptions of their own - particularly in regard to family obligations;

DS: So why did your mum leave (work)?

Delyth: She got pregnant with my sister.

DS: And she didn't want to go back to work?

Delyth: No.

DS: So has your mother only just gone back to work?

Delyth: She started off as a nursery school teacher when I was 3 so she could still be close to us and then once we went to school she became an admin. asst. and then she became full-time when we went to primary school.

DS: Do you want a family yourself?

Delyth: Yes eventually.

DS: Do you see yourself having to give up your career? Does your mum regret it?

Delyth: I don't think she does but she reminisces a lot about it so I think she really enjoyed it. But she's happy where she is now a bit... I'm crossing that now with my sister because she's working full-time and she'll have to give it up soon. It's the case that she wants to carry on working but there's no way she can afford it because the child minder would take two-thirds of her wages.

DS: So will you be giving up your career?

Delyth: I don't know I don't want to miss out on the child's upbringing but it would depend very much on the situation.

DS: Can you combine career and a family?

Delyth: Yes but I wouldn't want to be working too much. I guess the perfect thing would be to carry on your work part-time, but I doubt if many companies would allow that.

Delyth: Final Year Statistics with Management Science: Mover

We might infer from Delyth's account that her partner will continue to work, whilst she takes time off from work to care for the children. Indeed, in more general terms, the focus - and gendered experience - for the female students was certainly towards family, child-care and personal development, whereas for the men it was more on gaining employment and supporting the family (see Tett 2000);

"I think if I did have children then I would give up my career while they were young. Because I always had my mother there and I think it's really important."

Amanda: First Year English: Settler

DS: Do you intend to have a family yourself?

Jon: Yeah.

DS: Would a family hinder your career?

Jon: It would if I was self employed I think because I'd probably bring a lot of work home. This is what I've seen from other people. I think self employed does have an impact on your family. Because you're probably travelling to meet people, perhaps going abroad and just the number of hours you have to put in to start off.

DS: Would you expect starting a family to interrupt your career?

Jon: No. I think as long as one parent is there/

DS: Could you be that parent?

Jon: I don't know. My mum gave up her career to have my brother and sister and she looked after us until we went to school and then she went to work, which I sort of respect because I think that's the right thing to do.

DS: But your dad didn't take time out?

Jon: No but he's always been very supportive.

DS: Would you see yourself more in that role then?

Jon: Yeah I would say so.

Jon: First Year Mechanical Engineering: Mover

As Jon's account suggests, gendered experiences (of male and female roles) directly reinforced gendered divisions of labour as both natural and structural. Indeed, the female students were most often 'complicit in *maintaining* (and reproducing) male power by viewing gender divisions as natural and universal' (Reay 1998a: 61. My emphasis) – see Amanda's account. However, there were distinct variations in the level of the female students' 'complicity' across the typologies.

There were variations in how female 'Settlers', 'Movers' and 'High-Fliers' related to structures of labour market opportunity as women. Essentially, female 'Settlers' were much more likely to be concerned about family and personal development than their 'Mover' or 'High-Flier' counterparts. Equally, 'Movers' tended to be more concerned with family and personal development than perhaps did the 'High-Fliers';

DS: So you see yourself as a bit of a high-flier then?

Kate: I like to think so. I definitely want a career.

DS: Would a career interrupt you starting a family?

Kate: No. As soon as I have a child... well I suppose I can't say until I have a family.

DS: Would you take a career break?

Kate: The trouble with law is that you can't afford to take too much time out, you miss too much.... I guess I'd be the one looking after the child, personally I think the mother should look after the child, but... but I'll want to go back to work and if it's ten years like my mum did then I can forget it, because law changes so much. You have to be ahead of everything to get on and there's a lot of good people out there.

Kate: Final Year Law: 'High-Flier'

"Yeah, I'd like to become a professional, get chartered status, work for a good few years to get financial security and support a family."

Kirstyne: First Year Mechanical Engineering: 'High-Flier'

DS: So you don't want a high flying career in retail management?

Emma: My family is more important to me. I feel that a high flying career means sacrifices.

Emma: Final Year Education: 'Settler'

I think family life is very demanding and it's difficult to combine them. I think some women can do it, but I think one or the other has to suffer. My family would come first.

Amanda: First Year English: 'Settler'

What these excerpts quite clearly illustrate is the different attitudes toward structures of opportunity held by the female students of different labour market identities. Most obviously, there are differences in the negotiation of career and family. For example, Kirstyne views it as possible to combine the opportunity to become a "professional" and to later take on the traditionally 'male' role and "support" a family. Equally, Kate is aware of the impact of family on career and keeping ahead of the game. Emma's priority, however, is family (as is Amanda's). The opportunity for a career entails "sacrifices" she is not willing to make. Indeed, these attitudes were indicative of general patterns, with 'Settlers' more concerned about family and 'High-Fliers' with career development. 'Movers' tended to sit somewhere between these two positions. As Delyth's account illustrates, 'Movers' *hoped* to combine a career and motherhood. However, they were not particularly convinced that employers allowed for this option and in this regard child rearing took precedence.

Essentially, the relationship the female students have with the wider structures of employment opportunity is polarised and the ways in which they are polarised maps on to the typological framework. To follow Hakim's (1996) argument, despite its highly controversial nature, the female student's attitudes to work can be viewed in two ways. Hakim distinguishes between 'uncommitted' women workers who give priority to home-making and 'committed' workers where such concerns are secondary. As far as the labour market identities are concerned, there was a clear polarisation between the 'Settlers' and 'High-Fliers' relationship to structures of opportunity. 'Settlers' are 'uncommitted' workers and 'High-Fliers' 'committed' workers. The position with regard to the 'Movers' was a bit more ambiguous. It seemed to me, however, that they were closer to the 'Settler' (uncommitted) position than the 'High-Fliers' (committed). Certainly readings of gendered experiences across the labour market identities appeared to highlight variations in the forming of a labour market identity.

This latter point is perhaps emphasised where type of degree scheme is consistent with segmented labour market opportunities. The students' choice of degree - particularly its vocational orientation - when viewed through the typological framework is perhaps an indicator of variations in the female student's relationship with the labour market across labour market identity. The majority of the 'Settlers' and 'Movers' women are reading either non-vocational or intermediate subjects. The majority of the 'High-Fliers' are, however, reading vocational subjects. It is my contention that the 'Movers' and 'Settlers' reflect in their subject orientation, with the odd exception, an 'uncommitted' orientation¹⁷. However, the 'High-Fliers' position suggests a more 'committed' orientation and, in this regard, perhaps a less 'traditionally' gendered labour market identity.

If we look at the study sample, we find that the female students are more likely to be taking non-vocational subjects and only half as likely to be taking an intermediate subject. They are,

however, slightly more likely to be enrolled on vocational subjects than men¹¹⁸. Nevertheless, across degree schemes traditional subject gender divisions remain true. In this respect, where a female student is reading biology her male counterpart will be reading physics. This is true across all labour market identities. Hence perceptions of employability are gendered, where subject choice reinforces ‘natural’ and ‘structural’ divisions of labour. That is, where a woman’s (natural) ‘choice’ to follow a nursing or education degree is gendered, the path into a gendered labour market is (‘naturally’ and ‘structurally’) strengthened also. However, ‘High-Flier’ women are many times more likely to be doing a vocational degree than ‘Settler’ or ‘Mover’ women¹¹⁹. Indeed, no female ‘Settlers’ are enrolled on a vocational course, but of eight female ‘High-Fliers’ seven are enrolled on vocational courses. Thus, it might appear that ‘High-Flier’ women remain more ‘committed’ to employment than ‘Settlers’ or ‘Movers’ (see Hakim 1996), at least where evidence suggests that those on vocational degree schemes find employment more readily than those on less vocational courses (see Brennan *et al* 1993).

It is clear, however, that ‘traditional’ divisions of labour inform more widely the students’ social construction of labour market opportunity. Certainly, the female students (and male students) continued to regard women as the primary carers of children and therefore expected a woman’s career to be more disturbed by having a family than a man’s. More particularly, traditional divides in terms of the shaping of employment possibilities persist. This is inasmuch as the degree schemes that male and female students were enrolled on still follow and reproduce predictable and gendered patterns (routes) of participation. Indeed, ‘the fact that there are jobs for girls in engineering is irrelevant if a young woman does not perceive engineering as an appropriate career’ and follow (and regard as available and appropriate) the required programme of training (Hodkinson 1998: 97).

¹¹⁷ The main exception here is Hayley, a female student reading Civil Engineering.

¹¹⁸ However, the majority of the vocationally orientated female students are ‘High-Fliers’ and ‘Shakers’, which I suggest later is more to do with classed and racialised experiences than gendered.

It might, then, be suggested that the reading of gender in the social construction of labour markets is best understood through readings of ‘gendered habitus’ (Reay 1998a: 60). Certainly, whether students (male and female) shared similar backgrounds or not, gender appeared to be a principal determinant in perceptions of availability and appropriateness;

DS: Do you think employers will discriminate against you because you're a woman?

Beth: I think perhaps. I don't think it'll be too much of a problem. I'm sure it's still there but I don't think I'm going... I think in the stockmarket and very competitive work you get a lot of that, you read about it in the paper and things, but not so much in the work I'm looking for.

DS: So it's in certain fields?

Beth: I think it's everywhere, but some places more than others. It's more in the competitive markets that are more male dominated.

DS: So you think you can circumvent the discrimination and competition by putting yourself into work that isn't male dominated?

Beth: Yes, but I don't think there is particularly female work at the moment, the social sector I think is pretty much both.

Beth: First Year History: Mover

Indeed, career paths are still highly gendered and this comes out in the students’ choice of degree schemes and, subsequently, in their career choices. Certainly gender is a factor in how child-rearing responsibilities are divided between (and regarded by the students as prospective) mothers and fathers, and this obviously has implications for the perceived availability and appropriateness of ‘career’ for (some) women (see also Tett 2000). With some notable exceptions (Engineering students Hayley and Kirstyne – see section four, chapter nine), women’s gendered experiences in the family as primary carer and teacher are mirrored in the female students’ relationship with structures of labour market opportunity. However, an individual’s gender does not stand in isolation from the wider effects of other experiences, such as those of classed and racialised experiences for example. Rather, it is that the conjunction and intersection of classed, gendered and racialised processes (habitus)

¹¹⁹ Of course, the female ‘High-Fliers’ choice of vocational courses is gendered. However, they are none the less more work orientated courses.

provide a way of understanding more fully how students' perceptions of labour market opportunities are shaped.

Indeed, it is not simply coincidence that white working class women tended to be 'Settlers' on non-vocational or intermediate degrees and service class I women tended to be 'High-Fliers' taking vocational degrees. Rather, for female 'Settlers' (and 'High-Fliers') it is the conjunction of classed, racialised and gendered experiences that structure their sense of availability and appropriateness. For instance, the labour market identity of the female 'High-Fliers' (and 'Settlers') was as much to do with classed experiences as gendered, if not more so. Indeed, it might be suggested that although labour market identity is subject to multiple influences, gendered experiences (dispositions) are largely subsumed by classed experiences (dispositions). Equally, we might also ask why 'Settlers' tend to be *white* working class women? Particularly as the working class ethnic minority women in the research sample all formed 'Shaker' labour market identities. Indeed, in the particular case of ethnic minority working class women, it might be suggested that in the relative influence of class, gender and ethnicity 'racialised experiences' subsume 'classed experiences' - this will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter. What I now turn to is a discussion of the impact of 'racialised' experiences and dispositions.

Ethnicity

The concentration of ethnic minority students between the two most dynamic labour market identities is perhaps indicative of the wider effect racialised processes have on shaping an individual's relationship with employment opportunities. The study sample comprised six students with ethnic minority backgrounds, all of Asian descent (see chapter five). They were split between the 'High-Fliers' and the 'Shakers'. There were three female working class 'Shakers' and two female and one male service class I 'High-Fliers' (see Table 8h). It is my contention that an understanding of 'racialised habitus' (Reay 1998a) accounts, in part, for the way the ethnic minority students construct their labour market identities. More particularly, I

suggest the ‘racialised habitus’ of the ethnic minority ‘High-Fliers’ (and in a different way the ethnic minority ‘Shakers’), when read in conjunction with classed and gendered cultural contexts, shapes labour market identity.

It has already been suggested that cultural values inform more widely perceptions of labour market opportunity. For instance, the choosing of vocational courses appears to be consistent with cultural dispositions of some ethnic minority students (groups). Asian students are, for example, more likely to use credentials to improve their prospects than other ethnic minority groups (Metcalf 1997) and more likely to choose vocational courses (Bird 1996) - five out of the six ethnic minority students did so in this study. Indeed, it might be suggested that - to some extent - the Asian students’ preference for vocational courses was in some ways shaped by culturally embedded instrumentalist sensibilities and this shaped their more ‘careerist’ labour market identities (see Metcalf 1997). This said, we must be aware of differences in Asian (e.g. Pakistani and Indian) cultures as much as we are aware of differences between, white and Asian or Asian and Afro-Caribbean cultures.

However, as will be discussed in the following chapter, these ‘instrumentalist sensibilities’ were far more in evidence for the ethnic minority ‘Shakers’ than for the ethnic minority ‘High-Fliers’. Indeed, the ethnic minority ‘High-Fliers’ labour market identity (and choice of degree) appeared more influenced by classed - than racialised - experiences¹²⁰. For instance, Rajeka’s more general (middle class) experiences and Mehul’s more direct experiences at Millhill - an independent school - appeared to be conclusive determinants of labour market identity (Reay 1998b);

Mehul: The thing is with a school like Millhill, is it does benefit people more than others, because there's a lot of potential and it depends how you use it... for example there's a lot of support and if you use that extra support that they give you then you're advantaged.

¹²⁰ Although it might be suggested that there is as much of a relationship between class and instrumentalist sensibilities as there is between ethnic background and such attitudes.

DS: You said about the extra support?

Mehul: For example if you had trouble in school, you could see your teacher after class and in state schools, a friend of mine said he had some trouble and the teacher said look in a book. And at our school they would explain things out of class time.

DS: The teachers were particularly encouraging?

Mehul: Especially if you go to Boarding school, where you're there all of the time and can study in silence

DS: Did you enjoy school?

Mehul: Very much

DS: And boarding?

Mehul: Boarding was quite good. I'm an only child, my dad works from home and it's very noisy. Boarding... even though I lived in London, a lot of the people at the school were also from London and we used to go home every weekend. It was really good, very, very good

DS: Did you make contacts in the school?

Mehul: Possibly but I think there's a lot of complacency at public schools, because it means that if your parents are rich, you think there's less desire to do well sometimes. But I think there will be a quite a few people from the school who will be very successful, but I don't think so much at that time it's about who you know.

Mehul: First Year Business Administration: 'High-Flier'

Rajeka: It was kind of expected from my family... nearly everyone in my family goes to university and that....

Rajeka: ...it was quite a middle class area that I live and it was quite a good school in the area.

Rajeka: Yeah. I had a lot of pressure from my family and stuff to do medicine so at first I decided that that wasn't what I wanted to do.

DS: Who was the pressure from?

Rajeka: Well I mean my dad mostly... not like a kind of obvious... it was all the time when I was growing up "Oh you want to be a doctor do you"....

Rajeka: Second Year Medicine: High-Flier

Nevertheless, the ethnic minority 'High-Fliers' racialised experiences are still powerful determinants in the forming of a labour market identity. This is particularly where 'education and attentiveness to information open up new possibilities of dealing with and avoiding risks' (Beck 1992: 35). In this regard, choosing a vocational course was plainly a strategy to circumvent discrimination and increase labour market advantage.

Table 8h Typology by Ethnicity.

Ethnicity	High-Flier	Settler	Mover	Shaker	Total
Ethnic Minority	3	-	-	3	6
White European	14	8	29	4	55

Certainly, the ethnic minority students are plainly aware and sensitive to racial discrimination in the labour market, and this often extended from direct experiences of ‘difference’;

DS: And have you been a victim of prejudice?

Kamay: Well when I was little I did. I lived in Birmingham first and it's very multi-racial so I didn't have a problem, there were lots of Indian and Chinese children, but I came to Swindon and me and my brother were the only Chinese people and it was just and we were really alien to everyone else so we did get a lot of stick, but I think when I went to secondary school that's when people started growing up and I think that's one reason I was happy when I was 15. But I'm OK now, university is very multicultural so... I did stick out.

DS: You're conscious of that?

Kamay: Not now, but when I was a kid I did and it took me a while to get out of it but I think other people around me are mature enough to make the difference.

DS: But it may affect your job prospects?

Kamay: Yeah. People who know me just expect me, but when you're with people you don't know and you're in that situation

Kamay: First Year Accountancy: ‘High-Flier’

As a whole, ethnic minority students experience greater difficulty in gaining employment (see, for example, Brennan and McGeevor 1988). Hence, students with ethnic minority backgrounds tended to choose vocational subjects, largely it would seem in the hope of in some way overcoming discrimination;

DS: The discrimination you talk about is it just race or is it gender as well?

Mehul: What I think it boils down to, is these things they are all factors, with anything, with differences... even if anyone has a scarred face for example, they'd be less likely to be employed. It's not to do with racism or sexism, anyone who is slightly different, or someone who is excessively fat is going to find it hard to get a job.

DS: So you have to be physically appropriate as well as have the qualifications?

Mehul: Exactly. It's the employers thinking how is he going to get on in my work force.

DS: Do you think your choices are in any way limited?

Mehul: I think what is more important than discrimination, is that as an Asian I arm myself with more skills than the average person and that will see me above the discrimination.

Mehul: First Year Business Administration: High-Flier

Here, where an ascribed characteristic, such as ethnicity (and indeed gender and age) leads to differentiation and the de-legitimising of cultural capital (Reay 1998a), the acquisition and accumulation of credentials and legitimate forms of capital is seen to ameliorate such ‘permanent conflicts’ (Beck 1992)¹²¹. Indeed, the Asian students’ concentration on matters vocational, of which their disposition towards labour market opportunities is part, lends itself to discernible patterns in labour market identities.

However, the Asian ‘High-Fliers’ appeared far more influenced by their classed experiences in the forming of a labour market identity than their racialised experiences. Racialised experiences were directly acknowledged, as in Kamay’s interview extract above, and do form part of ethnic minority students’ labour market dispositions, ‘difference’ is part of their labour market narrative. What becomes clear, however, is that these narratives form a small part of their overall relationship with the labour market. Despite it appearing to influence their choice of degree (i.e. “arming” oneself as an Asian) - they do not acknowledge racial discrimination as an overwhelming concern. Indeed, the Asian ‘High-Fliers’ talked mostly about the advantage that they derived from background, i.e. how higher education is part of their lived experience (“*It was always assumed I would go on*” - Kamay) and the advantages they derived from the resources of middle-class backgrounds, i.e. the school in the middle class area, the independent school. This is not to ignore that labour market identity comprises multiple influences, rather it is to suggest that there is a relative influence of class, gender and ethnicity. This type of analysis might equally extend to understandings of mature students’

¹²¹ Some students are female and of an ethnic minority background. As will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter, in the case of the Asian female ‘Shakers’ their gendered and racialised experiences seemed to predominate in the forming of a labour market identity. However, for Rajeka and Kamay, their classed experiences appeared to subsume those of gender and ethnicity.

construction of their labour market identity and the impact of an individual's age and generation on their sense of labour market availability and appropriateness.

Mature Students

Indeed, along with factors such as gender, race and class other factors come to bear on the social construction of labour markets, e.g. age and disability. The research sample has no disabled students, but the four mature students give an insight into the influence of 'mature' readings of labour market opportunities¹²². The four mature students are Bob, Stuart, Maurice and Louise. We referred to Bob earlier, he is intermediate class V and a 'Settler', studying a non-vocational course. Stuart is of intermediate class III and studying a non-vocational course. Maurice is of service class II and studying an intermediate course. Louise is service class I and studying a non-vocational course. All the latter three are 'Movers'.

The mature students' perceptions of the effects of their age on labour market opportunities was consistent across labour market identity. As a group they tended to view entry to "*graduate jobs*" as largely inappropriate and unavailable. Here, higher education was not viewed in particularly 'instrumental' terms, rather it was considered in terms of 'proving a point' where previous studies had either, for one reason or another, not been finished or to counter others' opinions of who they are: "*they've always seen me as very mumsy... they've never seen me in an academic way*" (Louise (Mature Student): Final Year Sociology: Mover). Of course, the 'pleasure' of learning was also never far away from the reasoning for returning to education and formed the basis for their choice of subjects.

However, differences were evident in classed readings of labour market opportunities. Thus, like his younger working class 'Settler' contemporaries Bob viewed opportunities as not only circumscribed by his age, but also by class. In contrast the three 'Movers', whilst viewing

their opportunities as somewhat limited by their age, at the same time appeared more willing to attempt to engage with opportunities or create particular niches for themselves. All three had had previous success in planning their 'life courses' and looked to expand on that success, albeit in less traditional ways. Louise, for example, planned to combine her new qualification with her voluntary work experience to expand her role in the voluntary sector or perhaps embark on a slightly different path;

"Well I think I may return to voluntary work, I don't have the financial question pushing me... so I can perhaps start off with a few hours here and there... I can be really flexible. I think I'd like to work with children, the disabled.... maybe ethnic minorities... I have also thought if I get through the degree of doing a TEFL".

Louise (Mature Student): Final Year Sociology: 'Mover'

Hence, classed (and gendered and racialised) experiences can be seen to be as important to the reading of mature students' labour market identities as they are for younger students. At the most basic level then, there are complex interactions between an individual's social location (as a classed, gendered and racialised individual) within social structures and the social construction of their relationship with structures of labour market opportunity (Skeggs 1997; Rees *et al* 1997).

In the above I have attempted to illustrate, in rather broad terms, the complexity of the social experience within which labour market identities are rooted. I have also attempted to highlight how a student's classed, gendered and racialised experiences often lead to 'reproduced' routes of labour market participation. What I wish to highlight in the following section is an example of the more particular effects of social experience (and the resources derived from background) on labour market identity. I refer here to what seems to me to be an integral element in the shaping of a student's labour market identity; the students' educational experiences thus far. More particularly, I am concerned with the different types of educational

¹²² There are only four mature students, none of which are second year students. Hence, the mature students' representativeness is rather limited, thus the following discussion should be should be treated as indicative of the need for further investigation rather than the establishing of significant trends.

experience institutions aspire to engender and an understanding of the impact of these experiences on the social construction of an individual's labour market identity.

The wider effects of educational institutions on labour market identity

As Rees *et al* (1997: 493) argue 'compulsory schooling is a powerful source of learner identity'. It is suggested that a successful experience of schooling will result in a more positive learner identity. More significantly, Rees *et al* contend;

'learning identity is not simply a matter of success or failure at school; it is also the product of more complex processes. For example, the forms of curriculum, pedagogy and assessment associated with the 1960s grammar schools, served to construct the learner in quite different ways from those made available within the secondary moderns of the same period or the progressive comprehensives of the 1970s'

(Rees et al 1997: 493)

Equally, it might be suggested that there is a correlation between labour market identity and an individual's experiences of compulsory schooling. Indeed, it seemed to me that to varying extents compulsory schooling - and the type of institution particularly - was a powerful source of labour market identity.

The students were asked to describe the type of schooling they had experienced. Firstly, I wanted to ascertain if they had experienced a private or state education. Secondly, if a student said that they had experienced a state education, I wanted to know if the type of institution they attended was a grammar, comprehensive or secondary modern school. From this, I hoped to glean some understanding of the impact of selective schooling. Indeed, when I looked more closely at how the students' educational experience correlated with labour market identity, it became evident that schooling indeed had some bearing on labour market identity (see Table 8i). Certainly, the type of institution attended appeared to be of some influence in the forming of 'horizons for action'.

Table 8i. Type of schooling by labour market identity¹²³

Labour Market Identity	Type of Schooling			
	Private	Grammar	Comprehensive	Secondary Modern
Settler	1	2	5	1
High-Flier	9	3	5	-
Mover	7	5	17	-
Shaker	-	1	5	-

My concern is with the influence of institutional habitus on a student's labour market identity. By institutional habitus I am referring to 'the impact of a cultural group or social class on an individual's behaviour as it is mediated through an intermediate organisation' (Reay 1998b: 63. See McDonough 1996). The concept of institutional habitus reveals how the organisational cultures of different types of educational institutions are linked to wider socio-economic cultures, where both the school and their intake shape and reshape each other (Reay 1998b). For instance it was clear that the pedagogic rigours of a private education reinforced - both inside and outside the institution - the competitive edge that this type of schooling engendered. Hence, as might be expected, in relative terms the majority of those with a private education are 'High-Fliers'.

Indeed, whilst 'middle-class' habitus has been shown to shape perceptions of availability and appropriateness of labour market opportunities for both the 'Movers' and 'High-Fliers', the 'High-Fliers' are at the same time much more assured than the 'Movers' in their 'career decisions'. Thus, it might be suggested that a predominance of private and grammar schooling amongst 'High-Fliers' limits their sense of availability and appropriateness to the more high status graduate labour market opportunities¹²⁴. Indeed, of the seventeen High-Fliers, twelve

¹²³ The type of schooling works on both the tri-partite system and the comprehensive school system this was to mainly take account of the mature students. Technical colleges, such as that attended by Maurice (a mature student) was categorised as Grammar School. Louise and Stuart attended Grammar and Comprehensive respectively, and Bob attended a Secondary Modern school. Because the number of mature students are so small no real problems arise out of this way of categorising the schools, or, indeed, in terms of the final analysis.

¹²⁴ Of course there are exceptions, Alex is the only 'Mover' of Service Class I, and experienced a comprehensive education. In contrast, among others, Tim a Service Class II 'High-Flier' had access to a private education, where the link between social advantage and cultural resources is emphasised

experienced a selective education; nine were privately educated and three attended grammar schools. Predominant among the 'Movers', however, was a comprehensive education, although it might also be noted that twelve of the 'Movers' also experienced a selective education (7 private and 5 grammar). Critical here was the wider impact of classed and gendered experiences, particularly with the selectively educated 'Movers' tending to be women of service class II.

Certainly, the predominance of vocational degrees amongst 'High-Fliers' combined with the further preponderance of selective schooling appears to indicate that the often competitive pedagogy of such forms of education are instrumental in creating a more 'rational' approach to education and training and, thus, labour market opportunities;

DS: Was it a good school?

Melanie: I think they demanded a lot of us, it was good academically and I think they wanted to maintain their place in the league tables... there was quite a pressure to do well and go to university.

DS: They pressured you?

Melanie: Well they wanted you to go to university, everything was geared to that... they didn't ask you what job you wanted to do, just what university you wanted to go to. And if you didn't want to go they'd try to talk you into it and after that if you still didn't want to go they virtually ignored you. If you did want to go though, you couldn't ask for more help.

DS: Was school competitive?

Melanie: Yes.

DS: How do you feel about competition?

Melanie: I do find that in school and work... it's healthy to a point, it drives you but it can also be, well... very destructive really...

DS: Why?

Melanie: Well sometimes it can be parents... some of the people at school were from quite wealthy backgrounds and a lot of pressure was put on them by their parents.

DS: Do you feel similar pressures?

(Lareau 1989). There are also other more personal factors that come to bear, such as Alex's proneness to depression which could also result in his overall feelings of resignation and bounded perceptions of opportunity - "a depressive person like me has a more realistic view of life than normal people who tend to be more optimistic. I'm a depressive, that's how I know about it."

Melanie: Not so much from my parents, but being there when there's a pressure to do well you get caught up in it... people were getting stressed... it could be quite destructive and like sometimes you think well lighten up, if you don't get it quite right it won't kill you.

DS: So it was quite stressful?

Melanie: Yeah I think stress and competition go together, you have to take them on to get anywhere... I suppose the school helps that way.

Melanie: Second Year Medicine: 'High-Flier'

The school appears to engender a particular (competitive) disposition and whilst Melanie's 'career decisions' are perhaps gendered (one reading might be female as 'carer' is equal to Medicine), the school may be considered to be influential in the shaping of her relationship to the structure of (learning and) labour market opportunities¹²⁵.

Laura's experiences as a 'Mover' at a comprehensive are equally as instructive. What is revealed here are rather different school practices, certainly the school standards and teachers' practices appeared to be far less rigorous than those experienced by Melanie;

¹²⁵ In this regard, the schooling of (some) of the 'High-Fliers' appears largely influential in their strong reasoning in terms of future prospects. Certainly, in the forming of this labour market identity, the human capital imperative appeared to be at its strongest. Hence, it is perhaps that the 'High-Fliers' appeared to buy more heavily into labour market 'reality' and 'learning society' discourses, where graduate status employment is no longer assured and preparedness for future 'career decisions' is paramount. It is, perhaps, that this is a response by the 'middle classes' to credential inflation, where elite occupational groups try to fend off the increasing number of highly qualified (at least nominally) entering the labour market (Brown 1995).

DS: Did you enjoy school?

Laura: Some days yes and some days no. I think sometimes I could have learnt so much more, but some of the teachers were so disinterested. The science teachers were crap/

DS: So would you have done science?

Laura: No but I could have done better, we basically had to teach ourselves.

DS: Was it a positive experience?

Laura: Generally yeah. It wasn't that bad a place and I did quite well out of it in the end.

DS: Did you do well because the teachers wanted you to or because you wanted to?

Laura: I wanted to, but some of the teachers were really positive about you getting the best grades and getting on and others couldn't care less, they could have pushed us harder, y'know, ...and sometimes the discipline wasn't that good either... we even had the police up a couple of times. It sounds bad doesn't it, but it wasn't that bad. I did OK.

Laura: Final Year Social Policy: 'Mover'

Laura and Melanie share similar backgrounds, both are of Service Class II. However, the 'field' (selective and non-selective) of compulsory schooling appears to generate different dispositions (experiences) and thus perceptions of labour market opportunity¹²⁶. Certainly Laura's experiences appear less than motivational. In this regard, where socio-economic background is shared and the type of compulsory schooling is not, differences in the shaping of labour market identity become evident¹²⁷. Indeed, in the majority of cases where background is shared, the type of schooling appeared decisive in shaping the students' labour market identity.

More significantly, Bob's experiences of a secondary modern education bring home to us how differences between school contribute to the production of very different types of institutional habitus - which in themselves shape and reshape (institutional, learner and labour

¹²⁶ Here, the reference is to Bourdieu's theory of 'field', where in a social arena (e.g. compulsory education) struggles take place over specific resources, thus a field is defined in terms of particular forms of capital that are present and through the relations developed around them, as people struggle to acquire and/or maintain that capital.

¹²⁷ This is particularly in terms of cultural capital, where formal learning opportunities, e.g. type of work experience, form of curriculum, etc. combine with more informal learning opportunities e.g. Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme.

market) identity (see Reay 1998b). This excerpt illustrates quite clearly how Bob's secondary modern schooling impacted on the social construction of his labour market identity (as "production fodder") and makes evident how experiences at school might impact on labour market identity;

DS: Were they helpful (teachers)?

Bob: They were encouraging but not over encouraging, sort of don't set your sights too high because you may be disappointed. Whether it was the stigma of secondary modern or not I don't know.

DS: So the teachers didn't expect you to do well?

Bob: No. Once you were in the secondary modern that was it, unless you were really outstanding and got into Grammar. We were just production fodder really.

DS: Did you see yourself in that way?

Bob: Yeah. The 11+ split us, boys and girls right down the middle. When you saw your mates from Primary School going on and thinking of becoming lawyers and doctors and you thought to yourself it's not fair. I know that again in retrospect that there was a distinction/

DS: Who was becoming the lawyer, the doctor?

Bob: Well one I remember well, Chris, he lived in the same street, his father worked as a production worker and he done very well, and there were others, Roger, his father was a Personnel Officer and although he ended up in Secondary Modern with me his father could afford extra tuition and so eventually he got transferred to Grammar.

Bob (Mature Student): First Year Politics and Modern History : Settler

Of course, this is not to say that an individual's experience of compulsory schooling is wholly determining. Bob did after all reach a 'turning-point' in his learner identity and reach university, a learner experience once thought of by Bob to be available only to grammar school pupils. Here, transformations in the structure of learning opportunities are key, and for Bob (as for myself) this was in the development of Access courses and government drives to increase and widen participation in HE. Nevertheless, Bob's school experiences did prove (as did mine) to be instrumental in the social construction of his labour market identity (as "production fodder"). In this sense, as for Willis's (1977) 'lads' it proved to be reproductive in terms of the working class experiences of working class schools (see also Connell *et al* 1982; Reay 1998b).

However, the evidence for the impact of compulsory schooling in this study is at times somewhat ambiguous. For example, three of the ‘Settlers’ experienced a selective education and yet as is evident from their labour market identity continued to work with rather bounded notions of employment opportunity. In this instance it might be suggested that as ‘working class’ women their culturally embedded dispositions, perhaps, proved too strong for pedagogic influences to reshape perceptions of labour market opportunities - as in the case of Emma who was quoted previously and her parents’ efforts to move her to a better school. There are also, as has been noted previously, selectively educated ‘Movers’ and non-selectively educated ‘High-Fliers’ – school cannot therefore be considered as determining of labour market identity. Indeed, educational experiences across comprehensives, independent and grammar schools vary widely – for all sorts of reasons a comprehensive in one area might be significantly better than a Grammar school in another part of the country. What must be understood is that whilst compulsory schooling appears to have some impact, its influence must not be over-stated. Rather, what must be considered in the social construction of the ‘Settler’, ‘High-Flier’ and ‘Mover’ labour market identities is how the complex interaction of different (and often very personal) social experiences (including other mediating institutions) inform ‘horizons for action’ - although as measures of ‘social location’ general patterns of social reproduction remain discernible within them.

Conclusion

In previous empirical chapters I have highlighted the space between the students’ perceptions of labour market ‘reality’ and their understandings of what graduate employment means. It has been claimed that although the students recognise shifts in graduate opportunities (e.g. diversification), the narrative of their aspirations and expectations remains constructed around more traditional notions of graduate employment. However, it is suggested in this chapter that this collective narrative becomes disaggregated when we include the students’ narrative of availability and appropriateness - as mediated by the classed, gendered and racialised

experiences of social location, from which classed, gendered and racialised dispositions to the labour market emerge.

To make clear the different ways in which the students relate to different structures of labour market opportunity, i.e. how they have different understandings of what is available and appropriate to them, I have developed a theory of labour market identity. A labour market identity encapsulates how individuals come to socially construct knowledge of labour market opportunities appropriate and available to them. More particularly, it is how labour market dispositions derive from social location, and from this the socially constructed relationship an individual develops with the labour market. Thus an individual's actions (and their labour market trajectory) remain the product of choices bounded by social experience, and part of what Hodkinson and Bloomer (2000) describe as a 'mutually constitutive relationship with context or situation'.

What I am suggesting is that an individual's labour market identity is the part of their habitus, a set of culturally embedded dispositions. A student's labour market identity is the embodiment of their classed, gendered and racialised experiences, which are influenced more widely by interaction with others (individuals and institutions). That is, the labour market identity of a higher education student is also the product of his 'context or situation' as an individual participating in higher education (and with the discourses that surround it). The first half of this chapter was concerned with developing a framework for understanding types of labour market identity. This typological framework was designed to illuminate the processes by which individual's construct a labour market identity.

The framework revolves around three criteria: the (relational) space between the students' habitus and the availability and appropriateness of labour market opportunities; the operationalisation of agency; and the space between an individual's place in the occupational hierarchy and their sense of availability and appropriateness. Four labour market identities

became visible; the ‘Settlers’, ‘High-Fliers’, ‘Movers’ and ‘Shakers’. The first three of which largely reflect an individual’s ‘social location’ as, for instance, a white comprehensive educated working class female or an Asian privately educated middle class man.

What became clear is that the ‘social experience’ of these ‘social locations’ defined and reproduced an individual’s relationship with the labour market much as in the way we might expect. In this regard, transformations in learning opportunities - for example with more individuals participating in higher education - do not appear to lead to transformations in predicted labour market trajectories. Indeed, the evidence presented here suggests that the resources derived from background continue to reproduce bounded ‘horizons for action’. However, whilst this might be the case for the majority, in this next chapter I suggest for a small but significant number of students - the ‘Shakers’ - habitus is transcended to transform ‘horizons for action’ and significantly alter predicted futures.

CHAPTER NINE

The 'Shakers': Roots (Routes) of Transformation

Introduction

In the previous chapter I have discussed how a labour market identity is formed. The focus of the chapter was on the social construction of three labour market identities that largely come into being by means of the delimitations of background. That is, 'social location' influenced wholly the movement and relations of students to other social positions (Skeggs 1997). This chapter (at least the first section - Section Three) is concerned with the remainder of the students (i.e. the 'Shakers'), who manage to negotiate a new and different set of relations with labour market opportunities to those students previously discussed. This is despite their often working within similar social constraints. In this regard they transcend habitus, and set up the possibility of unexpected labour market trajectories.

A second section (Section Four) to this chapter looks more closely at the implications of labour market identity. This part of the chapter is itself split into two sections. In the first part I discuss what it means to be a 'Shaker', 'Mover', 'High-Flier' or 'Settler'. My concern is with how labour market identity shapes labour market participation, and how patterns of opportunity might be reproduced or transformed. With this in mind, I also look more closely at the way learning opportunities are presented and how this might impact on the students' social construction of labour market opportunity. This develops a theme that has run throughout the thesis, whereby educational opportunities are taken to be part of 'normative' Learning Society discourse.

SECTION THREE

The 'Shakers'

Introduction

There are seven 'Shakers': three men and four women. They comprise a small but significant number of the research sample. All the students except for one are from the lower end of the socio-economic scale and three (all women) are from ethnic minority groups. One student is from service class I: a woman. This latter 'Shaker' does not belong to an ethnic minority group and is enrolled on a degree scheme categorised as non-vocational. Of the six other 'Shakers'; two women and one man are taking vocational courses and two men and one woman are enrolled on intermediate courses (see Tables 8a, 8b, 8f, 8g and 8h). It is from these descriptions that inferences may be drawn about this group of students' labour market identity as 'Shakers'.

I have suggested that in relation to the 'Shakers' social, economic and cultural contexts, their 'horizons for action' are broader than (and different to) what we might otherwise expect. Moreover, it is suggested that the 'Shakers' relationship with the labour market is largely a 'transformative' relationship (Reay 1998a). This is in contrast to the 'Settler', 'Mover' and 'High-Flier' labour market identities, where it has been claimed that habitus works to 'reproduce' perceptions of labour market opportunity. The focus of this section, then, is the 'transformative' relationship that each of the 'Shakers' constructs with labour market opportunity and, more particularly, the 'resources' of social location that shape this relationship.

To make this discussion easier to follow and to make clear the differences in how individuals with differing backgrounds construct a 'Shaker' labour market identity, the students are discussed as part of a sub-group or individually. Hence, where the students share a similar background they are discussed together, thus inviting room for contrast and comparison

across sub-groups. Accordingly, James, Nick and Kevin form one sub-group for discussion, as white ‘working class’ men. Pardeep, Salh and Rowena as working class ethnic minority women form another. Danielle as a white, service class I woman is treated as a single case study.

James, Nick and Kevin

James, Nick and Kevin are all first generation ‘non-traditional’ students. James and Nick are white working class men, their fathers are engaged in semi-skilled manual (technical) work and their mothers are homemakers. Kevin is intermediate class III; his father is a retired tool-maker and now fills time as a school caretaker and his mother works for the council as an administrator. *James* is twenty-one and has twin brothers, older by eight years. Both of his brothers have been to university, having read History and Geography, and both now work in the “*export business*”. James also has two older sisters: one is a secretary and the other a homemaker - neither went to university. James’s degree is vocational; he is a second year Business Administration student. James hopes to work in “*business*”. *Nick* is also twenty-one and also has an older sister. His sister studied environmental engineering at university. Nick is in the final year of his degree and studying a subject categorised as intermediate: Bio-chemistry and Chemistry. Nick’s ultimate ambition, which he is still considering pursuing, is to read medicine and become a doctor - giving a more vocational reading to his choice of degree scheme. *Kevin* is twenty-three and has an older brother who according to Kevin did a Quantity Surveying degree at a new university. Kevin is in his final year and studying a subject categorised as intermediate: Medical Physics. His ambition is to work for DERA or GCHQ in a research and development capacity. However, due to its reputation for high levels of pay he is also quite attracted to the private sector and communications.

- **James’s** route to Business Administration was chosen relatively early on: Year 12. Accordingly, James decided to keep his A levels “*business related*”. This decision was

based on two factors: business studies is “*actually relevant to the real world*” and “*I did business because I thought I’d enjoy it*”. Here we see the conjunction of two imperatives. Firstly, James values the intrinsic pleasure of studying the subject. Secondly, in human capital terms his choice represents rational decision-making, a form of market behaviour. Certainly Business Administration’s relevance to the ‘real world’ might be taken as a desire to market oneself.

- **Nick’s** choice to do Bio-chemistry and Chemistry is part of a wider ambition to read Medicine. He hopes to enter as part of a graduate intake, having failed to meet the entry requirements of a previous conditional offer. A mixture of personal interest and the desire to exploit employment opportunities guided Nick’s aspirations. Certainly, Nick’s aspirations can be read as both altruistic (“*I want to help people*”) and subjective (“*because I’ve always been interested in it*”), but they also necessitate a human capital reading. Here, Nick’s choice of degree is born out of a desire to achieve coveted employment status, where Medicine offers status (“*I’ve always seen the two main jobs as having status, the lawyer and the doctor*”) and, as such, enhanced future financial rewards (“*It’s money as well*”).
- **Kevin’s** decisions, however, can be framed almost entirely within human capital terms. The decision to do Physics was based (as a result of career advice) on the premise that it would secure a “*well paid job*”. However, Kevin has come to realise otherwise about the capacity of Physics to find him well paid employment and plans a further period of study to improve his job prospects - a vocationally orientated HND in electrical engineering. Of course, for Kevin, there were influences outside the pecuniary. For instance, the sciences were viewed as an opportunity to “*change things for people*”. However, higher education participation was quite clearly perceived by Kevin as a form of investment behaviour, where a degree “*is one of the better ways of getting money*”.

Of course, James, Nick and Kevin's choice of degree scheme, or indeed their decision to participate in higher education, should not be read in human capital terms alone. For instance, they all appreciated the more "*fun*" aspects of the student experience.... "*I've enjoyed it, the night life and stuff*". Indeed, higher education participation and choice of degree scheme are as much to do with status and pleasure as some intrinsic economic value (Rees *et al* 1997; Fevre 1999). However, James, Nick and Kevin's choices do represent the construction of a labour market identity consistent with forms of individualised maximising behaviour. As discussed in the previous chapter, being male students their focus on employment and career is perhaps to be expected. However, it seems to me that there is a slight departure from what we might otherwise expect of working class men in the more individualised and maximising attitudes of James, Nick and Kevin.

In contrast to the 'middle class' 'Movers' James, Nick and Kevin's relationship with labour market opportunity certainly appears to be far more dynamic. Indeed, they seem to construct a similar relationship with the labour market as do the 'High-Fliers'. In fact, in some respects it might be suggested that James, Nick and Kevin's relationship to the labour market *is* consistent with their 'social location' as working class men. We can, for instance, draw parallels with Willis's (1977) 'lads' and the way they 'learnt to labour'. It could be argued that the same maximising of 'macho-physical hardness' that prepared Willis's 'lads' for work in unskilled manual work, is transformed into a different kind of maximising behaviour when educational (and employment) opportunities are transformed (i.e. widening of access to HE coupled with decline of manufacturing). It might be that for 'macho-physical hardness' we should now read "*earn lots of money*" (Kevin). Equally, we could focus on Brown's (1987) 'ordinary kids' who 'make (more of) an effort' in the face of expanded educational opportunity. This said, the bulk of working class males do *not* behave in the way that James, Nick and Kevin do – in that they tend not to reach higher education.

What is clear, is that the male ‘Shakers’ in their classed and gendered experiences adopt a subject position where working class masculine identity is forged on the ability to work and to provide financial security for themselves and their families¹²⁸;

DS: Ideally in five years where will you be?

James: Sort of thinking of starting a family, I'd like to get married at 27 to 31. I don't know about the job.... but I'd like to be established in a big company earning thirty thousand a year.

James: Second Year Business Administration: ‘Shaker’

This is the polar opposite to the (white) working class women (‘Settlers’), who structure their perceptions of labour market opportunities through (working class/traditional) feminine constructs of identity and focus on personal development and family (see chapter eight)¹²⁹. James, Nick and Kevin look to maximise their material well-being and act rationally to this end. Indeed, it might be that this sub-group of ‘Shakers’ competitive (and human capital-ist) natures are borne out of their working class traditions. However, when we consider the implications of social location more widely, their sense of availability and appropriateness - as embodied in their individualised and maximising behaviour - represents a transcending of habitus and a ‘transformative’ relationship with structures of labour market opportunity.

It has been suggested that the educational experiences that looked to produce ‘macho’ manual workers, might be the same experiences that shape more ‘rationalist’ and maximising behaviour. This indeed might be so. However, it could also be suggested that the wider impacts of (working class) social location is equally as likely to shape more limited ‘horizons for action’. Indeed, it is more likely that perceptions of opportunity would normally be guided

¹²⁸ Of course, the divide between vocational and non-vocational paths is also mirrored in educational policy more widely, with vocational qualifications tending to be the route for the working classes. This might also be an important determinant in the shaping of working class individuals’ perceptions (knowledge) of labour market opportunity.

¹²⁹ This ‘division of labour’ is perhaps no more exemplified in the structure of opportunity evident in James’s family unit, where of five siblings the three brothers went to university and of the two sisters one is a homemaker and the other a secretary. Equally it might be argued that Nick’s sister went on to do Environmental Engineering at university. However, whether she would adopt a ‘Settler’ or ‘Shaker’ labour market identity is open to question.

and limited by working class experiences that reinforce the futility of education and result in bounded opportunities (see Willis 1977; Brown 1987; Hodkinson 1998). Certainly the more deleterious (cultural and structural) effects of social location might also result in more bounded, predictable and characteristic paths of labour market participation. In this regard, James, Nick and Kevin's broadened 'horizons for action' represent a departure from what we might otherwise expect. Here, habitus is transcended and the reading of labour market identity suggests 'transformative' choices and actions (Reay 1998a).

James, Nick and Kevin's ambitions are not particularly unusual, to desire to be a doctor, businessman or scientist is quite 'normal' and perfectly reasonable. However the availability and appropriateness of such careers, for these students might 'normally' be considered outside their 'horizons for action'. For instance, a career in medicine may well be available in terms of labour market opportunities. However, the existence of such an opportunity becomes irrelevant if it is not considered within 'horizons for action' (Hodkinson 1998). As it is, Nick does consider becoming a doctor despite his social location (white working class male). Such a career path appears to him as both 'possible and plausible' (Hodkinson 1998). In this regard, Nick maximises his 'horizons for action' - as do James and Kevin within their own respective ambitions.

It seems to me, therefore, that James, Nick and Kevin's perceptions of labour market opportunity are constructed around the (necessary) disintegration of classed networks and that a process of individualisation results in risk assessment and marketised behaviour so that the reading of labour market opportunities becomes, in this instance, framed very much in human capital terms (Beck 1992)¹³⁰. Of course, it is not suggested that this group of students construct their perceptions of labour market availability and appropriateness outside of their classed experiences. Rather, it is that from their 'social experiences', they betray predictable

patterns of labour market participation by later disengaging from 'working class' futures (dispositions) (see Beck 1992). Certainly, the labour market identity of the 'Shakers', the process by which they as individuals come to envisage structures of opportunity owes much to the infinite complexity of their 'working class' experiences - of which their family and educational experiences are part.

In the previous chapter I discussed the effects of compulsory schooling on labour market identity and more particularly the impact of different types of educational institution (institutional habitus). James, Nick and Kevin all attended comprehensive schools - James's being a Catholic comprehensive - but Nick and Kevin had quite different experiences to James. Indeed, Nick and Kevin's experiences were quite clearly negative;

Kevin: All the advice I remember at school was about jobs going to factories, not going to university. They were more interested in that than going to university.

DS: People came in to tell you about these jobs?

Kevin: Yeah we had people from the factories come in at secondary school. They were all interested in that. I'm the only person I know who has actually come to university.

DS: Did many people go on to A level?

Kevin: People did, a lot of us went to college, but they didn't go to do A levels they went to do HNDs and things like that?

DS: So why did you choose A levels then?

Kevin: Well partly because I want to go on and do something more than working in factory at the end of all this.

DS: So you always planned to go on to university?

Kevin: Yeah, I would have always gone for something bigger at least.

DS: Did a lot of your friends end up in a factory?

Kevin: All of them... they're printers or whatever and are still in the same place as when they were 16.

Kevin: Final Year Medical Physicist: 'Shaker'

DS: School. How did you find it?

¹³⁰ For Danielle, as a 'Shaker', there is a very different reading, where behaviour becomes individualised but in less human capital terms. Indeed, the 'Shaker' labour market identity works to describe perceptions of labour market opportunity in different ways.

Nick: Hated it. Hated the comprehensive school.

DS: Did you do your A levels in the sixth form.

Nick: Nope. I went to college, loved that. That was absolutely brilliant.

DS: What was wrong with school?

Nick: I was out of the catchment area so a mini bus came in, that was a problem from the start. But I never really got on well with the school, really I didn't enjoy it. College I loved, school was always, everyone would have a go at the workers for working too much. I mean I did everything, I did sport and music as well. Very active at school, that was one thing about it, but a lot of people were picked on and stuff, it was a problem. I didn't come out like that. A lot of people belong to a clique at school and you're either in with the in-crowd or not, I was between gangs, I would go between gangs. Then I went to college. That's strange the only people I've kept in contact with are the college people. I think it's because the college people were more mature in a way. That's one way to look at it, everyone's more mature.

Nick: Final Year Chemistry and Bio-chemistry: 'Shaker'

Here, the experience of compulsory schooling appeared to emphasise the futility of education, where - like Willis's (1977) 'lads' - schooling became a training ground for low status manual labour and those who wished to work at their education were penalised by their peers. James, in contrast, had a far more positive experience of schooling;

DS: What was the school like?

James: It's got a really good reputation, it was strict, it made sure you didn't fall out of line and because it's got a good reputation....

DS: Was it enjoyable?

James: Yeah.

DS: What do you think the experience of school has done for you?

James: Shaped my character.

DS: In what way?

James: The way teachers treat you. Sort of... if they are strict you may be more disciplined... you had to be punctual at school. Therefore in the work place I'll be punctual, you had to be smart, therefore I'll be smart.... the teachers mould you and you just follow on in work.

James: Second Year Business Administration: 'Shaker'

James's successful experience of schooling has not only allowed him to construct a 'positive learning identity - and therefore be readier to engage with learning opportunities later in life',

i.e. higher education and beyond - but it has also become a contributory factor in the 'positive' construction of labour market opportunities (Rees *et al* 1997: 493).

James's experience of schooling, at a Catholic Comprehensive, underlines the value of legitimate cultural capital and an aspirant culture. Certainly, access to 'middle class cultural codes' goes some way to ensuring later economic success (Brown and Scase 1994: 24). Here, James's fortune at being placed in a school with "*a really good reputation*" is matched by Nick and Kevin's misfortune at being placed at poor schools. Nick and Kevin's positive experiences of education came a little later than James's, at further education colleges, although their initial (and negative) experiences of schooling were countered by a recognition of their own abilities;

DS: Do you think you've been encouraged?

Kevin: I have been by my family and some teachers.

DS: Was that encouragement there for everyone at school?

Kevin: Not really, I suppose... I suppose I had better grades.

Kevin: Final Year Medical Physics: 'Shaker'

Kevin went on to experience a positive time at a further education college where possibilities became evident through careers advice and were reinforced through the juxtaposition of his own position with that of his working friends.

Nick, in addition to a "*brilliant*" time at college, has developed a clear idea of his abilities through less formal learning opportunities. Political affiliations ("*'Cause I'm a Socialist in a way, I'm very pro-union, workers union and stuff like that*") and an aptitude for sport and music has allowed a more positive conceptualisation of identity and opportunity (See Weil 1986; Furlong 1991; Rees *et al* 1997; Gorard *et al* 1998; Bloomer and Hodgkinson 2000);

DS: So you've not set yourself any boundaries? Why do you think that is?

Nick: I don't know, I've always pushed myself I suppose, I've always been very competitive, always. Everything I've done I've always wanted to get somewhere or do something with it. I've also been a dreamer at times, but I've always been competitive as well. I used to be a musician as well, I played the violin and stuff. Grade eight standard on the violin, I just wanted to be better than everyone else, I mean my parents bought me a violin, but it wasn't brand new and it wasn't the best. But then people turned up because their parents were music teachers and stuff saying they had this new violin and I'm saying yeah but can you play it though. And they can't so and I could they can go away as far as I'm concerned. As far as I'm concerned they can get lost, I'm not bothered with that.

Nick: Final Year Chemistry and Bio-chemistry: 'Shaker'

James, Nick and Kevin's experiences of both formal and informal education are spoken examples of education as a complex set of capital relations, where sense is made of the structural barriers to higher education and labour market opportunities. This group of students' labour market identities - more particularly Nick and Kevin's - extend in part from the 'development of dispositions to learning over time' (learning career - school to college) and the meanings to which individuals apply (and construct relationships with) in/formal learning opportunities (Bloomer and Hodgkinson 2000: 590-1). Hence, decisions are made over time as to the appropriateness and availability of educational and labour market opportunities, which challenge inherited social positions and knowledge (as both working class and male) (see also Skeggs 1997; Tett 2000).

Of course, as mentioned earlier all have older siblings that went onto higher education and in this regard higher education becomes - to an extent - a 'normative' proposition. Staying on in education becomes something taken for granted, part of their social world and lived experience¹³¹. Indeed, being part of an aspirant working class family - as this group of students surely are - is also consistent with the adoption of more instrumental approaches to educational opportunities (see Marris 1964). In this regard, 'background' is to positive effect - at least in terms of providing a setting that makes higher education seem accessible;

DS: What about if you'd have dropped out of education?

¹³¹ Indeed, it might be considered rather unusual for working families to regard higher education as an expectation.

Nick: I think they would've been disappointed inside, they probably would've told me as well, but I would've told them why and that would've been it.

Nick: Final Year Chemistry and Bio-chemistry: 'Shaker'

However, at the same time, all three attempt to extricate themselves from their 'social location'. Accordingly;

'There is a hidden contradiction between the mobility demands of the labour market and social bonds. As Georg Simmel argued in the case of money, this means loosening local and constructing non-local networks. By becoming independent from traditional ties, people's lives take on an independent quality which, for the first time, makes possible the experience of personal destiny'.

(Beck 1992: 94)

The possibilities that extend from participation in further and higher education, provide credentials that lead to individualised career opportunities in the labour market. This, it seems to me, necessitates the dissolution of class relations (Beck 1992). Thus James, Nick and Kevin look to distance themselves from their parents' experiences and, despite family encouragement, look to develop networks of opportunity outside those experienced as part of working class families and communities;

"I want something better than my parents, 'cause I'd like.... I think I'd want to move forward. I'm one of five children and it's really expensive and they've spent all of their money on us and I'd like to have a family but more disposable income to buy a computer, go on holiday."

James: Second Year Business Administration: 'Shaker'

To this extent habitus acts unconsciously to organise and reproduce social experiences and encourage us to act and think in certain ways (Bourdieu 1990). However, James, Nick and Kevin's conscious (and unconscious) efforts to utilise informal and formal educational opportunities act 'transformatively' in the development of habitus and wider perceptions of labour market opportunity (Reay 1998).

Indeed, perceptions of labour market opportunity, framed within the competing discourses of labour market ‘reality’ and graduate employment, become risk perceptions, and as such education and labour market behaviour becomes heavily marketised;

DS: Can you tell me why you decided to go into higher education?

Kevin: Probably mainly to get a decent job and earn lots of money.

DS: Lots of money important?

Kevin: Yeah money is very important, to be fair.

DS: Do you see a degree as the only route to money?

Kevin: That and crime. Yeah I think getting a decent job is one of the better ways of getting money. I mean I think you can get money without a degree, people do.... Richard Branson.

DS: Right, so an entrepreneur sort of/

Kevin: Yeah if you're willing to apply yourself it doesn't matter if you've got a degree or not. I just think it's easier.

DS: Do you not see yourself in the entrepreneur mould?

Kevin: I don't know, I like to think of myself as one sometimes, but....

DS: Do you see yourself as a bit of a Richard Branson?

Kevin: Yeah, I come up with schemes every now and again, to get some money. But I think a degree at the end of the day is a more secure way of making money.

Kevin: Final Year Medical Physics: ‘Shaker’

At once, a knowledge of increased competition and the ‘traditional’ benefits from higher education that have hitherto been available, act to engage students in risk assessment - the risk of not doing a degree against the risk of increased competition and personal investment. This encourages James, Nick and Kevin (as ‘Shakers’) to assess the availability and appropriateness of higher education and labour market opportunities in human capital terms.

Rowena, Pardeep and Salh

Pardeep, Salh and Rowena are all working class ethnic minority women, their parents are engaged in similar types of employment and all three are first generation students. Pardeep and Salh’s fathers are semi-skilled manual workers. Rowena’s is a retired and unskilled

manual worker. Rowena's mother is a homemaker, and Pardeep and Salh's are process workers.

Pardeep is of Indian origin, she is twenty-one and has one younger sister, who is doing her GCSEs and a younger brother in Year 9. Her subject of study is vocational; she is a final year Optometry student. Pardeep has already secured a position with a large group of opticians. *Salh* is Indian, and aged twenty with an older brother who is studying Mathematics. Salh's degree course is vocational; she is a second year Management and Accounting student. Salh hopes to work in accounting. *Rowena* is of Pakistani origin. She is twenty-two and has two older sisters who did not participate in higher education and work in a manufacturing plant local to their home. Rowena is a first year Religious and Theological Studies student; a subject categorised as non-vocational. However, Rowena plans to be a Religious Education teacher, giving her choice of degree scheme a more vocational reading.

- **Pardeep's** choice of Optometry is largely instrumental; the decision represents rational choice in career decision making *"I want to be an optician, I have to do a degree in Optometry"*. Of course the decision was not restricted to this imperative alone, the sciences are an interest of Pardeep's and on an altruistic (and gendered) level it is an occupation where *"you're helping people"*. However, the vocational aspect appeared of far more influence. More particularly, Pardeep's 'career decision' is wrapped up in issues of culture and gender, where the availability and appropriateness of labour market opportunities are limited and guided by culturally embedded dispositions... *"my father didn't want me to do engineering because it's male dominated"*.
- **Salh** decided she wanted to be an Accountant during her A levels; *"During my A levels I actually decided on accounting, and I decided on the degree, a joint honours with management and not just straight accounting, so I did a bit of management... I decided on that about the second year of my A levels"*. This said, Salh says that her A-levels of

Mathematics, Economics and Design and Technology were not taken with this career path in mind, but were taken out of interest and pleasure. Accordingly, an element of intrinsic pleasure must be seen to be explanatory of her degree and career choices *“I’ve always been interested in the business side of things and maths is something I’m good at and I enjoy the management side of accounting and making investment decisions”*. However, maximising (economic) behaviour was also clear in her decision to come to university and do accounting... *“money was a big factor in that I should come to uni and make a good living”*. Moreover, as with Pardeep, cultural and gendered experiences also play a large part in the availability and appropriateness of labour market opportunities.... *“I want a job with good maternity leave”*.

- **Rowena** has changed her mind a few times over the last few years about the career path she wishes to take. Nevertheless, the basis upon which she made her degree and career choices are much the same as for Pardeep and Salh. Higher education was always an intention and her initial ambition was to go into the police service. Rowena also considered a career in Law. However, for reasons of culture and gender both paths were considered inappropriate and unavailable. Indeed, it is precisely because of cultural and gendered experiences, that the decision to teach Religious and Theological Studies became most appropriate. Here, for Rowena as a Muslim the teaching of religious education is viewed as *“benefiting children and other people of ethnic origins”*. More significantly, it is also viewed in vocational terms, where ‘status’ and ‘benefits’ are derived from graduate (status) employment.

The ambitions of Pardeep, Salh and Rowena are all quite clear. However, what is of particular interest about their ambitions, is how they fall outside what we might normally understand as working class women’s ‘horizons for action’. Indeed, whilst their choices reflect the kinds of knowledge most individuals (students) possess of the (graduate) labour market opportunities available, their actions reflect a labour market identity (Shaker) that does not fit exactly with

what we might expect of their 'social location'. Certainly Pardeep, Salh and Rowena's 'Shaker' labour market identity is quite different to those with similar 'roots' - i.e. white working class women - who are mainly 'Settlers'. They do, however, share similar perspectives on the labour market to ethnic minority 'High-Fliers' and working class men ('Shakers'). Nevertheless, Pardeep, Salh and Rowena are a quite distinct 'social group' and the influences that shape their identity are quite different to those that shaped Nick, James and Kevin's, the 'Settlers' and the 'High-Fliers' labour market identities.

It is clear that in terms of social class Pardeep, Salh and Rowena share 'working class' origins with the male 'Shakers' and the majority of the 'Settlers'. However, as mentioned above, in terms of their labour market identity, they are clearly at odds with the female 'working class' students who are in their entirety 'Settlers'. The female 'Settler' subject position appeared to be the result of classed and gendered dispositions, where the conjunction of 'working class' and 'female' experiences constrained perceptions of availability and appropriateness. However, Pardeep, Salh and Rowena despite working class and female experiences adopt a less passive relationship to structures of labour market opportunity than the 'Settlers'. More interestingly, whilst they might share classed experiences, they also appear to share just as little with 'Shakers' white and male experiences. However, they do construct a similar relationship to the structures of opportunity as do this group. In this regard, it might be suggested that 'racialised' experiences modify classed and gendered experiences. Indeed, where the disposition of an ethnic group (e.g. Asians) stresses the importance of economic activity, perceptions of availability and appropriateness might be shaped accordingly (see Metcalf et al 1997; Reay 1998a).

The most convincing parallel, as way of an explanation for Pardeep, Salh and Rowena's 'Shaker' labour market identity, is in the juxtaposition of their labour market identity with that of the ethnic minority 'High-Fliers'. Here, whilst classed and gendered experiences may be seen to impact in different ways on measures of availability and appropriateness, the ethnic

minority (racialised) ‘High-Fliers’ and ‘Shakers’ readings of the structure of opportunity reflects ‘cultural’ consistencies. Of course, classed and gendered experiences are not subsumed entirely by ‘racialised’ experiences.

Indeed, Pardeep, Salh and Rowena share similar ‘classed’ experiences with some of the other ‘Shakers’, i.e. James, Nick and Kevin. Here, ‘social location’ could be read to constrain opportunity for Pardeep, Salh and Rowena as a social group as much as it might have for James Nick and Kevin as a social group of the same social class. Classed experiences – in terms of parents’ educational experiences and access to further opportunities – are identified as barriers to future successes;

DS: What do you make of your parents’ jobs?

Pardeep: I'm glad they've got them and with my mum I know she's capable of a lot better and that she has intelligence and I wish she'd do something better, so yeah. I think if she could have got the education she could have got something better than what she does do, because she's slogging doing night shifts and she's doing it for us and again because they're working so hard for us that's why I felt so obliged. And you know when you get to university, people ask you what they do and I don't ask people that because I don't see why people should be asking you that... maybe because my father and mother aren't a lawyer, aren't a doctor, but you do find that at university... my dad's a lawyer, whatever and... yeah.

Pardeep: Final Year Optometry: ‘Shaker’

Kevin: I think because they (parents) didn't get the chance, they want me to aspire to be as good as I can be, and in their eyes that's doing a degree and going to work and earning lots of money.

Kevin: Final Year Medical Physics: ‘Shaker’

Here, despite no tangible experience Pardeep and Kevin’s parents recognise the value of education (and adopt the discourse of graduate employment), “in their eyes” higher education fosters aspiration. Both sets of students look then to transcend experiences of (family) background – and therefore of classed experiences – to forge new and different futures¹³².

¹³² Of course, it must be remembered that more generally it is still less likely for working class individual to access higher education – in this respect the attitudes of the working class ‘Shakers’ might be considered unusual.

Similarly, for Salh and her parents, education is perceived to ameliorate the conditions of 'social location' in its potential to widen opportunities. As such, local networks - at least in terms of classed experiences - are looked to be dissolved;

DS: Was that a reason for choosing the school?

Salh: It had a good academic record, but there's only two secondary schools in our town anyway. And OK the one I went to had a better academic record and better choice of GCSEs.

DS: Who picked the school?

Salh: Both of us really, me, mum and dad because it's got a good reputation and the other reason was that more people from my school would have been going there.

DS: What about your parents education?

Salh: They haven't got degrees. My dad's got a HNC, but I think he could have got a degree but he didn't have the chance or the opportunities, so they want to make sure that we do have the opportunities that they didn't have... and my mum she was educated in India... she came here when she got married. My dad though didn't have the opportunities and couldn't afford it¹³³.

DS: So you've had and have more opportunities?

Salh: Definitely.

Salh: Second Year Management and Accounting: 'Shaker'

Indeed, such values were equally part of 'Settlers' (and other labour market identities) sensibilities¹³⁴. However, as discussed previously, the 'Settlers' maintained a more circumspect relationship with the structures of labour market opportunity even when shifts in capital relations (e.g. a Grammar school education) could possibly have dictated otherwise. Thus, whilst 'classed experiences' may inform and mediate an understanding of opportunity - particularly in terms of understandings of 'aspirational' working class families (Jackson and Marsden 1968), they fail to provide a full and adequate explanation for Pardeep, Salh and Rowena's (or any individual's) relationship to wider structures of opportunity.

¹³³ It is unclear why Salh's father has a HNC and yet continues to work in low level semi-skilled employment. There may be some confusion over just what qualifications Salh's father has actually got or perhaps, this might have been the only employment he could find in his area. Certainly, looking back through the interview transcript the description of her father's educational history did not appear to fit with him taking a HNC. It is more likely that his qualification level was far lower.

¹³⁴ Students, parents and others stressed the importance of education.... "Basically because it's always been instilled from the school I've been to that better job prospects come from having a degree" (Jody: First Year English: 'Settler').

We might, then, also consider gendered experiences and the impact they could have on Pardeep, Salh and Rowena's social construction of the labour market¹³⁵. Certainly the gendered dispositions of the other female students are paralleled in Pardeep, Salh and Rowena's readings of labour market opportunities. Indeed, like the majority of the female students, Pardeep, Salh and Rowena construct perceptions of availability and appropriateness within the confines of gendered dispositions. In particular, Pardeep and Rowena in choosing 'caring' and 'nurturing' career paths make relevant gendered (and classed) readings of habitus (see Tett 2000);

DS: Why optometry?

Pardeep: Because again it suited me... I wanted a nine-to-five job, it's good for women, there's jobs out there for people and I wanted something where you're helping people, but I didn't want to be a doctor or whatever because I'm not brainy enough to do that, it's like the idea that you can be in one place but the job varies because everybody is different.

DS: What do you mean good for women?

Pardeep: Because it has maternity leave and you can take time out and still come back to the job. There's different jobs available, locum work. The pay's good. And I'd say that because of security that's why I decided not to take the channel of working from top to bottom because this is secure, I know I've got a job out of it. If I'd started in a shop, then goodness knows how long it would have taken to get to the top, that's not as sure an option as this, necessarily. The degree will be something I've got and no one can take it away from me. I may not have to work for the next ten years but I'll always have something to come back to. If I'm in a shop or something and I get to become a manager, I don't know I suppose I could go back if I took time out but.....

DS: Will you interrupt your career for a family?

Pardeep: Yes. I'd want to interrupt my career I'd want to... ideally a bit of both part-time work and a family. Again because it's been done, my parents interrupted her (sic) career/

DS: Why not your father?

Pardeep: Culture. I suppose you know even in British culture you don't have the dad at home looking after the kids. It tends to be the mum.

DS: Would you expect your husband?

Pardeep: No but that's because of my upbringing.

Pardeep: Final Year Optometry: 'Shaker'

Pardeep clearly reveals gendered (and racialised) readings of availability and appropriateness and, moreover, it seems to me, a classed reading. Certainly Pardeep's evaluation of herself as "not brainy enough" might well be brought about by gendered dispositions, where 'cleverness' and 'femininity' are often thought to be incompatible (Walkerdine 1989a, 1989b)¹³⁶.

Where the conjunction of classed and gendered experiences can be seen to structure perceptions of opportunity, we might also consider how 'racialised' experiences modify 'career decisions' beyond 'normative' readings of classed and gendered dispositions. This is particularly so where the ethnic minority working class women's labour market identities ('Shakers') are so radically different to white working class women's ('Settlers') labour market identities. In this regard, the working class Asian women offer explanations for 'career decisions' founded on racialised dispositions. It is suggested, then, that where the classed, gendered and racialised experiences of white working class women structure a 'Settler' labour market identity, the 'racialised' experiences of working class ethnic minority women could be seen to be the prime determinant in the shaping of their 'Shaker' dispositions.

On the one hand, the racialised (and gendered) experiences of Asian women mean that their 'horizons for action' are quite limited. Certainly, evidence suggests that for cultural reasons Asian women's involvement in higher education and other activities that take them away from home is a point of concern for Asian parents (Bird 1996). Indeed, access to these types of opportunities is often restricted (Bird 1996). Certainly Pardeep, Salh and Rowena all feel

¹³⁵ Indeed, it seems to me that the conjunction of classed and gendered experiences offers us the most likely explanation for the female working class (Settlers) and male working class (Shakers) very different readings of labour market opportunities (see Tett 2000).

¹³⁶ However, we might also juxtapose Pardeep's 'horizons for action' with, for example, Rajeka's - an Asian 'High-Flier' of Service Class I. Certainly we might wonder why Pardeep as a working class woman places a career as a doctor outside the realms of the 'plausible' and the 'possible'. Rajeka, on the other hand, as the daughter of a General Practitioner and Practice Manager (middle class) perceives this career path as available and appropriate labour market choices (Hodkinson 1998).

that they are prevented from following particular career paths by parental (cultural) concern - in this regard such opportunities become unavailable and inappropriate;

“Well I know they want people (the police service) of ethnic origins and if something happens down the docks or whatever, they will want you as an Asian going in the middle of the night and I wasn’t prepared for that and it was also the hour , due to my family background they’re not open to me going out at night. Women in general.”

Rowena: First Year Religious and Theological Studies: Shaker

Pardeep: I wouldn't choose to do engineering, because of my father's situation. He said it's not suited for women, but women do it, but it's a very male orientated environment. I didn't do languages because my parents didn't approve of me going to another country on my own, but it would be something I would have done myself.

DS: So/

Pardeep: My father didn't want me to do engineering because it's male orientated and he saw how women were treated and the kind of women that did engineering, but then again my dad has worked with trains, he hasn't done civil or electrical engineering, maybe it's different. But that's what my father thinks and the boundary there is because my parents are paying for my education, I felt obliged to do something they wanted me to do instead of languages where I'd be going different places.

DS: Why would they not want you to travel?

Pardeep: Because I'm their little girl, even now I'm 21 years old and they only just let me go somewhere with an escort, on my own I'm not allowed to go, they're scared...

DS: So how did you make university?

Pardeep: Trust and a certain amount of they know where I am. If I need anything I can call them and they're there for me, whereas if I'm in Germany how, who am I going to rely on.

Pardeep: Final Year Optometry: ‘Shaker’

In contrast, the only ethnic minority male included in the research sample - Mehul a ‘High-Flier’ and African-Asian male who self classifies as Indian – had no such concerns¹³⁷. Of course as a middle class student Mehul’s classed experiences are different to Pardeep, Salh and Rowena’s, as are those of the two other ‘High-Flier’ ethnic minority students Kamay and Rajeka. Indeed, both Kamay (Chinese) and Rajeka (Sri-Lankan) whilst in their gendered (and

¹³⁷ Here the study suffers from a lack of ethnic minority men, it would have proved particularly interesting to compare and contrast the views of working class Indian and Pakistani men with those women of similar origin involved in the research. An associated point is the lack of ethnic minority men and women of non-Asian origin, none of whom were forthcoming. There is marked difference in HE attendance rates between ethnic groups and in access to labour market opportunities, not to mention cultural differences (see Bird 1996).

cultural) dispositions perhaps expected (and viewed as appropriate) the foregoing of career for family, university and 'high-flying' careers were taken-for-granted as part of their middle class habitus; *"It was kind of expected from my family... nearly everyone in my family goes to university"* (Rajeka: Second Year Medicine: 'High-Flier').

Racialised experiences do then impact on perceptions of availability and appropriateness - particularly where the cultural values of particular ethnic groups influence 'career decisions' (see Modood, Beishon and Virdee 1994; Metcalf 1997 *et al*; Modood *et al* 1997). In this respect racialised (and gendered) experiences can be shown to narrow 'choice' for some ethnic minority groups. Indeed, the impact of racial discrimination might also be seen to further constrain perceptions of labour market opportunity;

DS: Why do you not wear it (a veil) for interviews?

Rowena: It's fitting in really you find that if you walk in you just automatically see people looking at you in a completely different manner, you're pinpointed out. I mean if I went for the interviews that I did, I would feel... unless I can talk my way through it their basically first impression will be coloured and imaged by what I'm wearing on my head. It seem really biased to say but I do feel it. And see it as well, a lot of people I know who have worked in places and when they've gone through they've just had no after no after no.

Rowena: First Year Religious and Theological Studies: Shaker

Equally, however, it might also be that racialised experiences broaden 'horizons for action'. Certainly, like the ethnic minority 'High-Fliers' a knowledge of discrimination in the labour market (both gendered and racial) acts to generate a risk assessment, which might involve a more 'instrumental' and 'maximising' approach to educational and career decisions; *"I think because of the knowledge I have of the market, that I know there are places available... I know it's a growing industry"* (Salh). Readings of racialised habitus combine economic imperatives with ethnicity perspectives (see Waldinger *et al* 1990).

More particularly, it might be suggested that Pardeep, Salh and Rowena's 'horizons for action' are part of a more culturally embedded disposition towards labour market opportunity.

Here, both oblique and direct references to ‘racialised experiences’ or “*cultural things*”, such as culturally specific attitudes towards educational (and labour market) opportunities, can be seen to shape labour market perceptions;

DS: Who encouraged education?

Pardeep: I'd say my parents because... I think it's a cultural thing... because they've come from another country and they didn't have anything and they want our life to be easier than their life has been and in order to have that they want us to go to school and have an education and stuff... because basically we'll go straight into a job and it'll be easier than the route they had to take... which is starting from nothing and working your way up...

Pardeep: Final Year Optometry: 'Shaker'

In part, the focus on education perhaps attests to the poor employment prospects and racial discrimination faced by ethnic minorities, and the associated problem of ‘blocked upward mobility’ (see Metcalf *et al* 1997). However, where previously routes such as self-employment had proved a popular route for ethnic groups of Asian origin to circumvent poor prospects, an increasing emphasis on credentials – a “cultural thing” – (of vocational orientation especially) as ‘a spring-board to the professions’ and upward mobility (Metcalf *et al* 1997: 141), informs broadened ‘horizons for action’.

Thus, it is my contention that where racialised experiences inform culturally embedded dispositions, they also shape labour market identity. Certainly, the evidence here suggests that as Asian students Pardeep, Salh and Rowena do intend to use education as ‘a spring-board to the professions’. However, whether this is a ‘cultural’ phenomenon is not always clear. Indeed, many Asians fail to use this ‘springboard’ - as the low number of Pakistani and Bangladeshi students in higher education suggests (NCIHE 1997a). Nevertheless a proportionately high number of Indian students might again suggest otherwise (NCIHE 1997a)¹³⁸.

¹³⁸ Of course, not all cultures - ethnic or otherwise - are the same. Indeed, for the purpose of this study (and this sub-group), we might distinguish between Indian and Pakistani cultures in attitudes to employment. Metcalf *et al* (1997) suggest that people of Indian origin (Pardeep and Salh) tend to focus

Nevertheless, the “*cultural thing*” that Pardeep highlights is some evidence of how ‘racialised experiences’ inform labour market identity. It is perhaps more evident how racialised experiences shape labour market identity when we juxtapose the identities of the white working class women and the ethnic minority working class women. The radical difference in labour market dispositions of the two groups certainly suggests that ‘racialised’ experiences impact in some way on labour market identity. Of course, it might also be suggested that Pardeep, Salh and Rowena’s labour market identity reflects their ‘decision making’ as individuals. However, it seems to me that understandings of ‘racialised experiences’ go some way to helping explain the more ‘instrumental’ relationship Pardeep, Salh and Rowena construct with structures of labour market opportunity.

Danielle

The remaining ‘Shaker’, Danielle, is a white ‘middle class’ female student. Her father is, as Danielle describes him, an “*office administrator*”. When Danielle was asked to elaborate on this it became clear that her father worked at a very high executive level (service class I) in a multi-national corporation. Her mother is a homemaker. Danielle is an only child and not a first generation higher education participant. Indeed, higher education appeared to be very much part of Danielle’s social world. All of her close family had participated, her father having read Law and her mother Ancient History. Danielle’s extended family (her cousins) have also been to or are at university. However, unlike Danielle they have concentrated on the more vocational subjects, e.g. Business Administration. Danielle chose to read Archaeology and any ambitions she does possess are built around the subject. These range from a career in academia to a life-time literally “*scraping-by*” doing archaeological digs.

more on ‘risk aversion’ and place a greater emphasis on ‘individualism and income’ when it comes to employment choices. Pakistanis (Rowena), it is suggested, stress ‘status recognition’ and are perhaps more guided by the possibility of racial discrimination (Metcalf *et al* 1997).

- **Danielle's** interest in archaeology appeared to develop from her mother's interest in ancient history... *"My mother is into ancient history and she used to take me to museums and things and I used to think everything was really cool, so that's how I got into it"*. However, a career in archaeology was not Danielle's first choice of career. Initially, Danielle had decided for altruistic reasons on a career in Medicine. However, this was dismissed as an option because Danielle was *"never convinced I would be good enough"*. Consequently, an abiding interest became a vocation and Archaeology the choice of degree; *"Part of me just always wanted to do archaeology and I went for that"*. More significantly, Danielle appears to reject any notion of investment in human capital terms, where the higher education experience is read as an individuals attempt to 'maximise their material well-being' (Rees *et al* 1997: 487)... *"I'd rather have less money and a job I like"*. It is, then, necessary to go beyond the rationale that individuals are governed by exclusively material motivations and consider the 'potential for a diversity of preferences... (that)... reflect (the social construction of) different value positions' (Rees *et al* 1997: 487).

As a Service Class I student we might expect Danielle to be a 'High-Flier'. Certainly her lived experiences and social world are shared more closely with Georgina, Helen, Kath, Kate, Kirstyne and Melanie of the 'High-Flier' labour market identity. However, Danielle constructs an altogether quite different relationship to the structures of labour market opportunity than do those with whom she shares a similar background. The 'High-Fliers' construct a dynamic and largely 'maximising' relationship with the labour market, which - it seems to me - is most guided by the classed experiences of their 'social location'. However, Danielle's relationship is more understated, and - I suggest - in this respect it is less guided by classed experiences than it is by gendered experiences. To this end, Danielle's understanding of her choices (and her subsequent actions) are at odds with those with whom she most closely shares her origins. In this respect, Danielle 'shakes-up' our expectations of her - albeit in a quite different way to the other 'Shakers'.

Danielle provides us with an alternative reading of the 'Shaker' labour market identity. Certainly, her background is quite different to the other 'Shakers' and in this respect the influences that have shaped her labour market identity might be seen to be quite different to those of the two other 'Shaker' sub-groups. More particularly, her reading of labour market opportunity is quite different to the other 'Shakers'. Of course, all the 'Shakers' work in some sense with broadened 'horizons for action'. However, whilst the other 'Shakers' 'horizons for action' appear guided by the material benefits of higher education participation, for Danielle they appear more guided by its intrinsic pleasures.

Indeed, Danielle's preferences cause problems for her immediate and wider family. The middle classes have traditionally 'capitalised on their cultural assets via the education system' in order that position and status be maintained (Brown 1995: 32. See also Bourdieu and Passeron 1977; Beck 1992). This is a situation perhaps given an increased urgency as a result of the 'risks' articulated within discourses of labour market 'reality'. Hence, Danielle's rejection of vocational degrees is viewed as a form of risk behaviour by her family - as opposed to the risk averting behaviour of the other 'Shakers' and the 'High-Fliers'. It is, then, that Danielle's ability to reproduce status - at least financial - (i.e. social class) is deemed to be much circumscribed by her choices;

Danielle: Well my mother is actually Italian and she was actually quite happy that I'm going to college, but they are a bit disappointed because they don't think I'm going to make any money. And the rest of the family.

DS: What do you mean?

Danielle: Well some of my Italian aunts think I'm a bit of a freak, but they don't speak much English... I don't think they understand. They sort of frown on me and say I could have done anything, been a lawyer or something, why didn't I do this or that and my cousins are doing business and maths.

DS: That sort of thing holds no interest?

Danielle: No. I mean you get proper lawyers but all you really do is defend rich people.

DS: How important is money to you?

Danielle: Not that important, in a way yes as long as I've got enough to live on, but no, I'm not that interested in wealth and status.

Danielle: Second Year Archaeology: 'Shaker'

Clearly Danielle appears to be less guided by pecuniary matters than her family would like. In this regard, according to her family, Danielle fails to 'correctly' exploit the opportunities available (and appropriate) to her and, more particularly, endangers the 'inevitability' of middle class reproduction (see Brown 1995). Indeed, as Brown (1995) suggests, whilst the 'odds... favour.. the children from professional and managerial backgrounds gaining entry to higher education (and middle class labour market opportunities) - although it is not a foregone conclusion - the 'perceived 'risks' associated with economic restructuring, unemployment and educational change since the mid-1970s have made (middle class) parents (in particular) more aware of the uncertainties of success and the consequences of failure' (Brown 1995: 738).

Hence, to an extent Danielle rejects the expectations that derive from her social location. Of course, Danielle's participation in higher education means she quite clearly capitalises on her cultural assets. As such, she adheres to 'collectivist' rules of exclusion which involve the direct transmission of advantage (Parkin 1974; 1979. See also Brown 2000). However, it might also be suggested that Danielle rejects the more conventional (middle class) understandings of career routes and disregards 'the uncertainties of success and the consequences of failure': "*Well it depends on what you see as (a) decent (career), if you see it as personally fulfilling then I'm doing OK...*". (Danielle: Second Year Archaeology: 'Shaker'). Indeed, Danielle's emphasis on personal fulfilment - over economic and human capital imperatives - is a type of 'risk behaviour' that signals a rejection of 'normative' routes (roots).

Of course, in many ways Danielle's 'horizons for action' still derive from the (classed) resources of background. Indeed, how could they not, they are part of her being, the cultural

context in which she is embedded, her reference point for values and norms of action, an integral (and unavoidable) part of her habitus. For instance, Danielle's interest in Archaeology could be viewed to be part of a classed experience, where cultural capital, in the embodied state, is converted into an integral part of the person, into habitus. Here, Danielle's visits to the museum with her mother is constitutive of the unconscious transmission of position and status, i.e. cultural capital (see Bourdieu 1986). Indeed, her mother's interest and degree in Ancient History could be seen to be indicative of family influences on learning trajectories, where (classed) informal and formal learning opportunities inform patterns of participation (Gorard *et al* 1998b). Indeed, in this regard parental influence on educational (and labour market) choices appears to be direct.

However, where Danielle's mother did not have a career, other influences come to bear. More particularly, in Danielle's father having a 'traditional' career ("*Yeah, that's the thing, he has the traditional career*") and more women becoming visible in 'middle class careers', her reference points for patterns of labour market participation are established. Hence, we have the initial decision to become a doctor, a pattern of participation also reinforced by her educational (grammar school) experiences (institutional habitus);

DS: So did your school inform and advice you on archaeology?

Danielle: No because when you have careers advice it's professional things like business, architecture.... a career. My school was trying to get me to do something more responsible, so they didn't really know what to do with me. And with medicine which they did like I was never convinced I would be good enough... academically.

Danielle: Second Year Archaeology: 'Shaker'

Danielle, of course, maintains middle-class respectability in the 'status honour' conferred on degree-holders. Indeed, she acknowledges her parents to be "*quite happy*" she is going to university - despite her choice of subject (see Skeggs 1997). However, at the (turning-) point where a career in medicine is deemed inappropriate and unavailable, and indeed where the notion of 'career' is itself dismissed;

DS: *Is it important to you to have a career?*

Danielle: *"No as long as I have a job in archaeology, even if I'm not earning much",*

Danielle: Second Year Archaeology: 'Shaker'

It is my contention that feminine and feminist discourses and subject positions are subscribed to. Thus, gendered (female) experiences subsume (middle) classed experiences and predictable patterns of labour market participation are transformed.

Initially, Danielle in her classed and gendered experiences makes what might be considered a predictable 'career decision' - to practice medicine¹³⁹. Indeed, for Danielle to follow a career in medicine would be to follow an almost prescribed pattern of labour market participation. However, its dismissal is a 'turning-point' at which she has 'to take stock, to re-evaluate, revise, resee, and rejudge' (Strauss 1962: 71). The career path is dismissed... *"but I think I'd be more help to society not being a doctor.... I was never convinced I would be good enough academically"* (Danielle: Second Year Archaeology: 'Shaker'). Here, according to Danielle her rejection of medicine is because she does not have the talent and thus the confidence to embark on the route to becoming a doctor. Indeed the 'turning point' where medicine becomes inappropriate and unavailable seems to be a self-imposed boundary; *"Yeah I suppose, medicine's not really for me"*.

¹³⁹ Danielle's subject position may be juxtaposed with that of the female 'High-Flier' students (particularly Melanie and Rajeka who also wish to become doctors). Here, classed and gendered backgrounds 'reproduce' 'horizons for action' (Hodkinson 1998). Thus, in the conjunction of habitus and labour market opportunities the decision to become a doctor is considered both available and appropriate; *"I was thinking of medicine, I wanted a job where I could help society"* (Danielle: Second Year Archaeology: 'Shaker'). Similarly... *"I like the idea of helping people, I like the idea of making people better... physically. I've thought about what I can do and I need to work in something where people are involved and have that interaction...."* (Melanie: Second Year Medicine: 'High-Flier') Indeed, for Danielle, as much for Melanie and Rajeka, a career in medicine would be consistent with her (middle) classed and gendered (female) experiences. The occupation is both imbued with status and is 'caring' in nature. However, in many ways Danielle's subject position is the reverse of the female 'High-Fliers'. Here, classed experiences give way to gendered, thus contradicting Beck's (1992) assertion that where classed constraints are broken, so are gendered constraints. Although, where the reading of Danielle's gendered experiences are framed with the 'dynamics of individualisation', her

Of course, the decision to embark on an archaeology degree could simply be no more than an acknowledgement of one's limitations and part of a biographical choice. However, it seems to me that Danielle's re-evaluation of her 'career decisions' is mediated by discourses of femininity and feminism, in which 'career' is marginalised and becomes both unavailable and inappropriate¹⁴⁰. Hence, in the re-evaluation of her options Danielle largely rejects the notion of a career. At one point the possibility of a post-graduate course and future career in academia is alluded to, it is, however, dismissed as an almost impossible dream;

"It's really hard to get a career in archaeology, I wouldn't be hopeful at all"

Danielle: Second Year Archaeology: 'Shaker'

It is that middle class of notions of 'career' are dismissed, and gendered (stereotyped) discourses of 'low expectations' take precedence (see Walkerdine 1989a). That is, feminist discourses are operationalised in the dismissal of 'competitive' and thus 'masculine' notions of work.

Danielle's way of knowing and being, her own epistemological and ontological frameworks, are constitutive of her social location as middle class, white and female. However, her 'horizons for action' are most clearly shaped by gender (being female). Indeed, it might be suggested that far from Danielle's boundaries being self-imposed, her decision to in a sense 'drop-out' is consistent with constructions of femininity that place 'clever' and 'feminine' as opposites (see Walkerdine 1989a). As such, I suggest it is 'appropriate' for Danielle to reject

career decisions can be seen as an attempt to free herself from the constraints of male models of achievement.

¹⁴⁰ As Tett (2000: 190) found, in reference to working class and gendered experiences of higher education, where working class men identify primarily in terms of their social class, working class women constructed an understanding of their identity, first and foremost, 'premised on their past and present experiences as mediated through the lens of gender'. Here, the focus is on family and personal development, whereas for men it is career and employment. Thus, I suggest, that it is perhaps also 'appropriate' for Danielle, in her labour market identity, to reject 'career' where career is read in 'masculine' terms and a commitment to paid work (see, for example, Crompton with Le Feuvre 1996; Hakim 1996).

a career in medicine, where the relationship between ‘cleverness’ and ‘femininity’ is paradoxical. In this regard, Danielle’s academic shortcomings are accepted as ‘appropriate’;

DS: Do you feel you could have done anything?

Danielle: From the education background yeah, but personally no.

Danielle: Second Year Archaeology: ‘Shaker’

Thus, Danielle’s labour market identity appears mediated by discourses of femininity. It might also be suggested that Danielle’s ‘re-evaluation’ is consistent with the construction of a labour market identity where discourses of femininity are mediated by individualistic and ‘post-materialist life values’ (Du-Bois Reymond 1998: 65). Here, I suggest that Danielle provides an alternative reading of a ‘Shaker’ labour market identity, where the discourses of femininity that mediate her labour market identity are combined with individualistic, though non-economistic, life-values. Thus, where the other ‘Shakers’ construct their labour market identities in predominantly human capital terms, largely reducing the higher education experience to a form of legitimate and individualised risk reduction, Danielle’s quest for “*personal fulfilment*” represents a rejection of pecuniary influences and is consistent with a form of feminised and individualised (more personal) risk behaviour.

Undoubtedly, Danielle’s re-evaluation of her future is part of a ‘choice biography’ (see Beck 1992; Du Bois Reymond 1998). However, unlike the other ‘Shakers’ her choices do not appear to be motivated predominantly by pecuniary matters. Indeed, such influences are dismissed outright and as such there is a rejection of the coercive forces of ‘graduate employment’ and ‘learning society’ rhetoric;

DS: Do you think education is changing to push people towards more vocational courses?

Danielle: No I think it's society itself, education itself is quite open, but you have to succeed now and the acceptable way to succeed today is to make money. I'm not interested in the competition to make money, it shouldn't be like that.

Danielle: Second Year Archaeology: 'Shaker'

Indeed, whilst it may well be that upward mobility, or at least stability, is assured through her participation in higher education, those around Danielle view her choices as 'risky' and irresponsible. Here, alternatively, where Danielle is resolute in her decision making, an interpretation of her choices might be that they are mediated by feminist discourses. For instance, Danielle's very conscious rejection of human capital values (e.g. "*the competition to make money*") may be viewed as the taking of a feminist stance, where 'competition' is viewed as identifiably male. Thus Danielle does not view her choices as 'risky' but merely - through personal choices - acts to avoid being dragged into masculine discourses of work (as she says "*It shouldn't be like that*"). Danielle, then, as much as the other 'Shakers' and as far as she can, 'forges her own fate'. However, the question 'What can I do, what must I do, in order to be able to study medicine even with mediocre grades?' (Beck 1992: 135-136) is never asked. Rather, the question is asked what can I do, what must I do, in order to be able to "*be in archaeology in some capacity, even if I'm only doing digs*". Ultimately, Danielle's individual preferences are part of her middle class habitus. However, in her choices she plans her 'individual labor (sic) market biography', constructing it through discourses of femininity and/or feminism and thus removing herself from (middle) 'class commitments' (Beck 1992).

Summary

Danielle provides us with an interesting and alternative reading of the 'Shaker' labour market identity. In many ways it is the complete opposite to the other 'Shakers'. What I have attempted to show with the 'Shakers' is that the resources of background – in their broadest sense – are not determining. It is, for instance, clear that Danielle rejects the future planned

for her by her family – whether those plans might be explicit or implicit. Of course, Danielle accesses higher education as might be expected of someone with her background. However, in many ways she explicitly rejects a middle class future (as a doctor), and risks everything on satisfying more personal goals (scraping-by). Equally, the working class ‘Shakers’ represent the other end of this spectrum and reject working class futures in favour of more middle class ones. These students’ ‘Shaker’ labour market identities are all about clinging on to cultural identities, and reshaping them within more prosperous futures – personal or otherwise. Of course, it might be that Danielle later embraces fully a middle class future, and it is perhaps likely that some of the working class ‘Shakers’ will be screened out of ‘middle class’ futures (employment). However, these are developments that take place over time, what the ‘Shakers’ represented at the time they were interviewed was a transcending of habitus and less predictable patterns of labour market participation.

In describing and conceptualising the forming of the students’ labour market identities I have gone some way to illustrating the complexity of the social experiences in which they are rooted. What follows is a summary to the discussions of the forming of a labour market identity. It is discussed what it might mean to be a ‘Shaker’, ‘Settler’, ‘Mover’ or ‘High-Flier’. Central to this closing analysis is how labour market identity informs - and thus renders in many ways predictable - patterns of labour market participation (notwithstanding employers’ recruitment strategies). A second part to the following section hypothesises about the role played by discourses of opportunity - or what might be regarded as learning society rhetoric - in shaping labour market identity. This part of the section concentrates on opening up a number of new and interesting ideas, rather than drawing any lasting conclusions from the data.

SECTION FOUR

Labour Market Identity: Further Discussions

Introduction

In the previous chapter and last section, I have drawn directly from the interview data and suggested how each student has constructed their labour market identity. This involved the use of a typological framework. Each of the four labour market identity ‘types’ is a conceptualisation (and description) of the students’ orientations and relationships to structures of labour market opportunity. In this section I wish to take my discussion of the labour market identities a step forward, and make clearer what the implications are of labour market identity. I will argue that labour market identity shapes labour market participation, and highlight further how patterns of opportunity might be reproduced or transformed. A second part of this section will suggest that transformations in educational opportunities and the (policy) discourses that surround the transformation of educational opportunities (e.g. increased and widened access to higher education) impact on (and shape) students’ negotiation (knowledge) of opportunity (and therefore labour market identity).

Labour market identity: the forming of labour market futures

It has been mentioned previously that the students associate ‘graduate employment’ with a particular structure of benefits and rewards, i.e. ‘graduate status employment’. However, such perceptions do not sit entirely comfortably with their perceptions of labour market ‘reality’. Nevertheless, in the students’ minds the former discourse appears to take precedence over the latter and as a ‘group’ they anticipated something not too dissimilar from the pay and conditions that have hitherto been long associated with graduate employment. Indeed, much of the research indicates that for the majority of students such expectations will be met -

particularly as graduates of one of the more highly regarded HEIs (see CSU 1999)¹⁴¹. Despite this, not all of the students expected to access occupations or careers of similar ‘status’. Some students expected to embark on ‘high-flying’ careers, whereas others expected to ‘settle’ for something far more modest. The majority, however, expected to ‘move’ smoothly into something middle-management and ‘bourgeois’.

The students’ expectations are the product of (and shape) their labour market identity. On the one hand, the students work with discourses – perceptions and knowledge - of graduate employment and labour market reality, which inform higher education students’ expectations of graduate employment per se. However, on the other hand, the students’ expectations - or their knowledge of (and relationship to) labour market opportunities - are the product of a set of culturally embedded dispositions, i.e. their habitus. Of course, such a knowledge/relationship is informed more widely by individual experience and individual preferences, so that labour market identity ‘is essentially personal, with emotional as well as intellectual dimensions’ (Rees et al 1997: 493. See Sennett and Cobb 1972).

The suggestion is that the students’ knowledge of labour market opportunities is informed by ‘social location’ - as white, working class and female for example and the culturally embedded dispositions that derive from this ‘location’ - from which a knowledge of what is appropriate and what is available in terms of labour market opportunities is derived, i.e. labour market identity. Labour market identity is of course developed within a wider context of labour market discourses (see Hodkinson and Sparkes 1995). That is, labour market identity is the product of both labour market discourses and habitus. It is, however, that whilst some discourses work on a more general (collective/societal) level - as discourses of labour market ‘reality’ and graduate employment do - and in some instances permeate deeper (as

¹⁴¹ Although, such a position is largely dependent on factors such as institution, subject studied, gender, ethnicity, etc.

discourses of transformation do - see paragraph below and the following section), a student's knowledge of and relationship to labour market opportunities derives essentially from habitus.

More interestingly, as will be discussed in more detail in the second half of this section, labour market identity is also the product of transformations in structures of (education and labour market) opportunity and the discourses (of transformation) within which such opportunities are structured. It has already been discussed in previous chapters how the expansion of higher education has transformed educational opportunities and that opportunity discourses (learning society and discourses of traditional graduate employment) might inform students' understandings/perceptions of graduate employment and graduate labour market 'reality'. However, it seems to me that the way in which opportunities are presented muddies the waters at a much more personal level for the students in their understanding of what is achievable in the labour market - particularly for those where higher education is not a naturalized form of family experience.

From an understanding of an individual's resources of background or what we might understand as their culturally embedded disposition to labour market opportunities, social researchers should be able to discern with some certainty patterns of labour market participation and, therefore, an individual's life course (see Hodkinson 1998). For instance, we might once have reliably predicted that the son of working class parents in the Welsh valleys would find employment in steel or coal. What has been shown in this study, is that in the vast majority of cases (54 from 61 students) an individual's background is still a good indicator of how an individual might perceive labour market opportunities and therefore might structure their labour market participation. However, it has also been shown that this is not *always* the case, and that an individual's understanding of what is appropriate and what is available - from background - is not wholly predictable. In the latter, I refer, of course, to those of a 'Shaker' labour market identity. For the 'Shakers', 'habitus' produces a set of

choices and actions outside those that we might normally expect of ‘social location’ - or classed, gendered and racialised experiences (Skeggs 1997; Reay 1998a).

Of course, as numerous others have suggested it is always possible that an individual might at some point in the future reach a ‘turning-point’ (Strauss 1962), ‘epiphany’ (Denzin 1989) or ‘biographical discontinuity’ (Alheit 1994). A labour market trajectory (predicted) might change – this is the same for any of the labour market identities (Rees *et al* 1997). For instance, a working class man with no credentials and employed in unskilled manual work for some years, might, because of redundancy say (labour market restructuring), return to education through an Access course (transformed educational opportunities) and attempt to develop a career as an academic. This individual reaches a ‘turning-point’ (redundancy) and because he finds his ‘predictable’ set of labour market opportunities transformed (unavailable), takes recourse to a set of transformed educational opportunities and changes his (predicted) labour market trajectory. Of course, this same individual might have chosen to wait until (or move to where) his usual type of employment became available. However, in this instance, a transformation of ‘choices’ led to unexpected ‘actions’.

Similarly, the ‘Shaker’ labour market identity represents a re-working of social experience and, moreover, a re-shaping of predicted futures (Hodkinson *et al* 1996). Here, as learning opportunities have expanded and people’s futures have become more individualised, the ‘Shakers’ have re-worked their personal histories to broaden their ‘horizons for action’ (see Du Bois Reymond 1998; Hodkinson and Sparkes 1995; Beck 1992). In this regard, the ‘Shakers’ represent a ‘disidentification’ from classed, gendered or racialised futures¹⁴². However, it is not so much that the ‘Shakers’ reach a ‘turning-point’ and literally re-work their personal histories to alter their labour market trajectory, as did the example of the

¹⁴² Indeed, Beck (1992: 87-88) argues, ‘class biographies’ – which are somehow ascribed (as I might add are gendered and racialised biographies) - become transformed into ‘reflexive biographies’ and force individuals to ‘disidentify’ from cultural networks in order to satisfy the demands of labour market entry.

redundant unskilled manual worker. Rather, it is that the ‘Shakers’ negotiate educational and labour market choices and actions beyond those that we might have otherwise predicted despite the (conventionally understood) constraints of background and location.

For example, formal learning opportunities such as higher education, and the labour market opportunities that extend from participation, might not be considered part of working class habitus - whereas for a middle class man university is part of his social world. However, Nick, James and Kevin did find their way into higher education and always expected to;

“It seemed the obvious choice (university), I’ve been brought up to think that education is the foremost thing”

Nick: Final Year Chemistry and Bio-chemistry: ‘Shaker’

DS: So why did you choose A levels then?

Kevin: Well partly because I want to go on and do something more than working in factory at the end of all this.

DS: So you always planned to go on to university?

Kevin: Yeah, I would have always gone for something bigger at least.

Kevin: Final Year Medical Physicist: ‘Shaker’

From their working class backgrounds and, hence, from what we might have expected their culturally embedded dispositions to dictate, their ‘Shaker’ labour market identity represents a transcending of habitus and, moreover, transformed ‘horizons for action’ - choices and actions - beyond those that we might have otherwise predicted. Thus, Nick - for instance - ‘disidentifies’ with the ‘working-class’ futures of ‘lads’ (Willis 1977) and ‘ordinary kids’ (Brown 1987) and avails himself of ‘middle-class’ patterns of educational and labour market participation, e.g. a higher education degree and career in medicine.

In this regard, it might be suggested that ‘social groups’ are becoming fragmented. What the ‘Shakers’ represent is ‘social transformation within modernity... set(ting people) free from the

social forms of industrial society - class, stratification, family, gender status of men and women' (Beck 1992: 87). This is *not* to say that Nick disavows himself of his 'working class' culture and identity, this he continues to identify with... "I'm very pro-union, workers union and stuff like that". However transformations in the range of opportunities available are 'transformative' of choices and actions, and thus (labour market) 'identity' (habitus) and trajectory (Reay 1998a);

'As schooling increases in duration, traditional orientations, ways of thinking, and lifestyles are recast and displaced by universalistic forms of learning and teaching, as well as by universalistic forms of knowledge and language'

(Beck 1992: 93)

Nick's white, working class and male experiences are transformed - in part by an aspirant family and 'macho' working class identity- into a form of individualised maximising behaviour by exposure to previously unavailable learning opportunities (see Marris 1964; Jackson and Marsden 1968; Willis 1977)¹⁴³. Here, individualised and human capital imperatives mediate choices and actions and problematise (transform) predicted patterns of labour market participation¹⁴⁴.

However, a measure of an individual's 'resources of background' (or 'social location') is still the best predictor of future labour market trajectory, despite a blurring of classed and gendered boundaries and more individualised (transformed) opportunities and lifestyles: 'the *living conditions of the population have changed dramatically*. Changes in income and

¹⁴³ The students in this thesis whose social location is as a white working class women do not appear to benefit in the same way (i.e. broadened 'horizons for action') as the white working class men from the influence of an aspirant family.

¹⁴⁴ Of course, it may be that such patterns retain a sense of predictability; for example, the 'working class' female students of this study continue to construct their labour market identities within discourses of 'working class' femininity. Equally the working class men who experience higher education continue to form their labour market identities within frameworks of working class 'masculinity', i.e. where the role of provider is accentuated. Here, where discourses of femininity remain trapped around 'family and personal development', discourses of 'masculinity', centred around 'work and employment' (see Tett 2000), allow working class men who access learning opportunities to incorporate their existing 'identity' into transformed opportunities. Thus it is perhaps 'predictable' that working class men use transformed opportunities instrumentally.

education, in addition to other social changes, have continued to do this' and yet 'patterns of social inequality have remained relatively *stable*' (Beck 1992: 91, original emphasis). Certainly, it is always easier to secure and exploit labour market advantage from an already advantageous position (Roberts 1995). Hence, those of a 'Settler' disposition - who tend to construct their relationship to the structure of labour market opportunities through the filter of culturally permissible (working) classed and (female) gendered experiences - continue to work with bounded notions of labour market availability and appropriateness¹⁴⁵. We might, then, reliably predict from the background of the 'Settlers', patterns of labour market participation. Indeed, the 'Mover', 'Settler' and 'High-Flier' labour market identities can be understood more widely as reproducing predicted patterns of participation.

More often than not a student's labour market identity (and possible labour market trajectory) reflects the delimitations of background. The 'Settler', 'Mover' and 'High-Flier' labour market identities represent how classed, gendered and racialised experiences are predictors of classed, gendered and racialised futures;

DS: So, what types of job are you thinking of?

Douglas: I mean in the long run Director, top Executive, Senior Manager.

DS: And what informs you that a degree gives you access to this?

Douglas: That's what my father did before he went into his current career/

Douglas: Final Year Business Administration: High-Flier

Thus - for instance - a young white middle class man's social location (e.g. Douglas's) is the embodiment of a distinctive disposition towards educational and labour market opportunity, that reflect his current socio-economic circumstances and also the residue of his past (Rees et al 1997). For the 'Settlers', 'Movers' and 'High-Fliers' their distinctive set of dispositions

¹⁴⁵ It is not that being a 'working class' women determines a 'Settler' labour market identity, it is rather that 'working class' (white) women within this study overwhelmingly form such a labour market identity.

continue to act as predictors of future labour market choices and actions (or labour market participation)¹⁴⁶.

Indeed, even what we might consider at first glance to be an ‘anomalous’ (individualised) future, may in fact sit squarely with the culturally embedded dispositions of background. In this regard, we might consider how the more individual aspects of habitus (individual biographies) influences choices and actions (or the ‘individualisation of lifestyles’ (Beck 1992)). For example, Hayley (‘Mover’) and Kirstyne (‘High-Flier’) as middle class women choose to follow careers in engineering. A career in engineering for a woman is still considered a departure from the ‘norm’. Certainly very few women choose to do an engineering degree. However, Hayley and Kirstyne’s fathers are both engineers. Thus, whilst Hayley and Kirstyne’s individual decisions to pursue careers in engineering may not fit with various discourses of femininity, they are consistent with actions as the product of choices made available and appropriate through habitus - in that their fathers are engineers.

Clearly parental influence becomes part of individual life histories (reflexive biographies (Beck 1992)) and shapes - and makes predictable - ‘horizons for action’ (see Hodkinson 1998). Thus it might be that an individual’s choices and actions do not so much reflect a disintegration of cultural networks (or go beyond class society), but that the transformation of learning opportunities makes more possible the planning of individual – but predictable - life courses;

“Yeah I suppose we sort of got into it with like dad's work. Like with dad's work, sheet metal work is mechanical and engineering orientated like you're using machinery and things like that so I guess that's where my interest in sort of engineering is and you also associate it with like working with cars and things like that and my own car. I've worked on it over the years, but I didn't want to go into that at all and I worked in an electrical engineering factory as well working with motors and things like that. So I wanted to do engineering, but something a bit different... so I decided on doing Civil.”

Hayley: Final Year Civil Engineering Design and Management: ‘Mover’

¹⁴⁶ Of course, patterns of labour market participation will always retain a certain predictability where

Hence, whilst for Kirstyne and Hayley engineering is a somewhat anomalous career choice (in terms of gender/social group) it might not necessarily be considered inappropriate nor an unpredictable labour market trajectory¹⁴⁷. The ‘Settler’, ‘Mover’ and ‘High-Flier’ labour market identities reflect - in the broadest sense - the ‘resources an individual derives from their background’ (Rees et al 1997: 490). Moreover, as ‘social groups’ they represent ‘reproductive’ and bounded possibilities, or locuses of shared knowledge and being that inform us of each individuals most likely pattern of labour market participation (see Rees *et al* 1997; Reay 1998a; Hodkinson 1998; Gorard et al 1998a).

The labour market identities inform us of how an individual’s culturally embedded dispositions are party to their relationship with wider structures of labour market opportunity. More significantly, the labour market identities give us some indication of how cultural, social and economic contexts impact on how an individual’s life course might be played out. Indeed, it has become evident that we might reliably predict (labour market) outcomes for the majority of individuals. However, for a small number of others (the ‘Shakers’) the outcomes are more uncertain. The broader suggestion is that for any one of a multitude of reasons the ‘Shakers’ – in their labour market identity - disidentify from the predicted futures of ‘social location’.

My further contention is that the transformations in opportunities and the way in which these opportunities are presented have much to do with how some students successfully engage with structures of labour market opportunity (e.g. ‘Shakers’) and others do not (e.g.

discourses of labour market ‘reality’ (e.g. employer screening) impact on an individual’s employability.¹⁴⁷ Here, indeed, both Hayley and Kirstyne could be regarded as ‘Shakers’ in that they embark on traditionally male career paths, however, to categorise them as so, I contend, would be wrong. Such a decision would be made on a gendered reading of habitus alone. However, if we firstly consider that engineering is part of their ‘cultural context’, within their frame of knowing and being, gendered readings alone are compromised. We must include in this the ‘operationalisation of agency’, where individual orientations are part of ‘career decisions’, that engineering was a part of lifelong interest. Secondly, I contend that in contemporary society it has become more commonplace for women to enter the labour market (transformed opportunities). However, because women did not enter the labour market in as great numbers twenty years ago the dominant role model for ‘work’ is often the ‘father’, a

‘Settlers’). In a development of the first part of this section, it is argued that transformations in educational opportunities and the discourses within which they are framed enables some students to disidentify from predicted futures, whilst trapping others within them. Opportunities, it seems to me, are very much framed in human capital terms, which work to include some students and exclude others from opportunities more widely. In what follows I look at the way in which educational (and labour market) opportunities have been transformed, the way they are presented and their part in the students’ social construction of labour market opportunity.

Discourses of Opportunity and their Impact on Young Peoples’ Futures

We have already considered how discourses of graduate employment and labour market ‘reality’ result from students’ perceptions of the graduate labour market and graduate labour market opportunity - which are themselves discursive constructs. For instance, we have discussed how the students’ understanding of the graduate career might emanate - in part – from historical discourses (of traditional graduate employment) constructed, perpetuated and reinforced by students themselves, parents, teachers, careers advisors, and so forth. Previous chapters have also discussed how the students’ understandings (expectations) of graduate employment (and labour market ‘reality’) are shaped in part by the ‘normative’ (human capital and individualised) discourses of more recent higher education policy initiatives. Such discourses, it might be suggested, are an implicit part of huge transformations in the structures of learning opportunities (higher education expansion) (see Beck 1992; Furlong and Cartmel 1997).

Certainly, where formal and informal learning opportunities are transformed an individual’s knowledge of (and relationship to) the structure of (educational and) labour market opportunities might also be transformed (see Beck 1992; Rees *et al* 1997; Hodkinson 1998).

male role model. Thus where fathers are the only ‘working’ role models, as for Hayley, ‘career decisions’ must be understood in this context.

Indeed, transformed learning opportunities impact on (learner and) labour market identities and thus have the potential to significantly restructure predicted (learning and) labour market trajectories (participation)¹⁴⁸;

‘...it is possible to mark out historical periods in terms of patterns of typical trajectories... Transformations in the structure of available opportunities for education and training are key influences here. Changes in state education policies, in employers’ strategies with respect to training provision, or in community-based programmes of informal learning are all examples of ways in which characteristic trajectories may be restructured over time...’

(Rees *et al* 1997: 490)

Of course, it might not be that such transformations in learning opportunities would be positive or generate positive outcomes. As Rees *et al* (1997: 491) argue ‘substantial sections of the population now have learning opportunities which are significantly worse than their parents (fathers) enjoyed’ (see Rees 1997). Moreover, even where ‘post-war expansion of secondary and higher education in Britain, along with marked changes in employment structures have contributed to changing the educational profile of women relative to men’ (see Rees 1992), ‘social location’ always impacts on an individual’s ability to negotiate new patterns of participation.

For instance, the expansion of higher education over the past few decades - and with it the increasing numbers of women, mature people and working class people participating - represents a transformation of learning opportunities. Thus, the ‘Settler’ students’ participation in higher education - as a social group of mainly ‘working class’ men and women – signifies an embracing of ‘new’ learning opportunities¹⁴⁹. Of course, working class

¹⁴⁸ Of course, it must not be assumed that such ‘predictors’ produce rigid and unchanging labour market futures. It is always possible that a ‘turning-point’ might be reached and a future trajectory altered. However, as Bob - a Settler - shows us, even where one type of turning-point is reached (returning to education) this might not be enough to significantly alter the relationship an individual has with opportunity more widely. In Bob’s instance, the ‘futility of education’ was perhaps even reinforced - at least when he considered how the advantages of middle class cultural capital structured access to opportunities more widely, i.e. “home counties types” and “managerial” jobs.

¹⁴⁹ Bob’s (‘Settler’) use of an Access course also represents another type of transformation in learning opportunities.

people more generally – if not women and mature students – still fail to exploit learning opportunities to the same degree as the middle classes (in particular higher education). More particularly, it has become evident from our earlier discussions that the ‘Settler’ students - who embraced the ‘new’ learning opportunities - have not developed a more open relationship with the labour market. Indeed, in their labour market identity the ‘Settlers’ worked with a rather bounded and limited knowledge of the labour market opportunities available and appropriate to them.

Of course - almost by default - as graduates the ‘Settlers’ will access a wider range of labour market opportunities than they would without a degree. However, they have not developed a more positive relationship with the labour market than that we might have otherwise expected of ‘working class’ dispositions;

“I do want to be here I'm glad that I've done it now, but if I'd known what it was going to be like and the job prospects after my degree then I wouldn't have been here..... if I'd had more knowledge of my job prospects.”

Emma: Final Year Education: ‘Settler’

Certainly, it might also be suggested that the ‘High-Fliers’ and ‘Movers’ relationship with the labour market has not developed beyond what we might have already expected. However, these students might already be considered to have a relatively positive relationship with the labour market. From this, we might agree with Rees *et al* (1997) that simple transformations in learning opportunities do not necessarily generate positive outcomes for some students (the ‘Settlers’). Certainly all the evidence suggests that the ‘Settler’ labour market trajectories will not be significantly restructured - despite their exploiting transformations in learning opportunities.

The labour market identities, then, tend to reflect the ‘reproductive’ (and thus predictable) capacities of ‘social groups’ (see Bourdieu and Passeron 1977). However, evidence also

suggests that for some the boundaries of ‘social location’ are becoming more permeable, thus reducing the predictability of actions and developments (see Giddens 1990; Beck 1992). We start again with transformations in learning opportunities, but this time reflect on how the expansion of higher education opens up the potential for people to disidentify from classed, gendered and racialised futures. It has been discussed previously how the students of a ‘Shaker’ labour market identity – who like the ‘Settlers’ are mainly working class students – construct a potentially much more rewarding (personally and/or financially) relationship with the labour market than the ‘Settlers’. The ‘Shakers’ disposition toward labour market opportunity defies the constraints of background, and sets up the potential for patterns of labour market participation beyond what we might have otherwise expected.

What might be suggested is that transformations in learning opportunities open up new avenues of labour market participation - for the ‘Shakers’ at least. For them the opportunity to get a degree releases the potential for a whole range of new (labour market) opportunities to be exploited;

DS: Why (go to university)?

Salh: For like future prospects and jobs.... just to be a success.

DS: Do you think a degree leads to success?

Salh: I think it can do yeah.

DS: More so than not having one?

Salh: Yeah I think with a degree you have more of a chance?

DS: Why?

Salh: You have better job prospects, better paid jobs, more jobs and you can do something that you actually enjoy doing.

Salh: Second Year Management and Accounting: ‘Shaker’

We might ask the question, then, why do some students construct a more positive relationship with the labour market than others? Both Emma and Salh are working class women, although

of different ethnic backgrounds, but appear to have constructed completely different relationships to structures of opportunity. In many ways this question has already been answered in earlier discussions of the forming of the labour market identities and the inferences that have been drawn from individuals' accounts of their classed, gendered and racialised experiences. However, we might also consider the impact of the way in which (transformed) learning and labour market opportunities are presented (and structured). Indeed, it seems to me that the way in which opportunities are presented/structured impacts on the individual's knowledge and understanding of (learning and labour market) opportunity. This has implications for the forming of a (learner and) labour market identity and the way in which an individual might engage with opportunity.

The students as a whole have adopted the language of 'traditional' graduate employment and graduate labour market 'reality', even our working class 'Settler' Emma understood what a degree should mean "*I thought I'd have lots of opportunities with a degree*". In chapters six and seven I have argued that such discourses were very much part of the students' understandings of career and employment and aspirations and expectations more generally. I have also touched upon the way in which opportunities have increasingly become framed in human capital terms and how such discourses inform the students' aspirations and expectations; it is this point I will now build upon.

As Rees *et al* (1997: 485) argue 'the official discourse of the Learning Society is dominated by a particular social theory of lifetime learning: human capital theory'. Rees *et al* (1997) put forward that 'learning' (education and training) is increasingly framed within a discourse/social theory of lifetime learning that emphasises the role of the individual in facilitating economic growth (see also Coffield 1996). Indeed, we are increasingly expected to negotiate opportunity as individuals rather than as members of a collective' (Furlong and Cartmel 1997: 11; Beck 1992). Such arguments are realised in the direction educational policy in Britain has taken over the last twenty years. For instance; the development of higher

education policy, in terms of expansion and student funding for example, as well as the basis upon which universities conduct their business, has shifted paradigmatically from state responsibility (citizenship) to individual responsibility (student and institution). This is the language within which learning opportunities are now framed; that is, (individualist) human capital theory is the discourse of transformation¹⁵⁰.

More particularly, when learning is presented in this way it shapes how individuals engage with learning (and labour market) opportunities¹⁵¹. To some extent this is exemplified in the way the students involved in this study form a labour market identity, inasmuch as transformations in learning opportunities mediate transformations in habitus¹⁵². Thus, the language of opportunity has the potential - in part - to shape an individual's relationship to the labour market. A case in point might be the (working class) 'Shakers' whose negotiation of opportunity is framed in instrumentalist, sometimes individualistic and human capital terms;

DS: Can you tell me why you decided to go into higher education?

¹⁵⁰ The individual's participation in learning is considered to add directly to the skills profile (human capital) of the state, which constitutes a prime source of economic growth (for employers and the state). Equally, individuals might choose to invest time and money (foregone earnings, tuition fees and student loans) in 'learning' and enhance opportunities of future rewards (Rees et al 1997. See Schultz 1961; Becker 1975). However, as Rees et al (1997) argue the idea that 'learning' involves for individuals the rational calculation of the total benefits to be derived from it does not include an understanding of the social relations that informs 'learning behaviour' more widely. It might be suggested that by their very participation in higher education the students engaged with the way learning opportunities are presented. Moreover, all of the students mentioned the 'economic' advantages of participation in higher education. However, this does not necessarily mean a student's decisions will be guided by human capital imperatives. An individual might decide to participate in higher education for any number of reasons beyond the economic and pecuniary (e.g. Danielle) (see Fevre et al 1999).

¹⁵¹ There is little doubt that learning opportunities are framed in human capital terms (see Coffield 1996; Rees *et al* 1997); encouraging individuals to be more investment minded and instrumentalist in their aspirations and expectations. Indeed, the way in which higher education expansion has been funded in more recent years - predicted on the assumption that individual's are the primary beneficiaries of participation and, therefore, funded in part by the students themselves - introduces a real investment/reward dynamic into opportunity structures. It is, then, no wonder that individual's might look to recover their initial outlay more quickly by adopting more instrumentalist attitudes (see Ainley 1994). Moreover, where credential inflation obscures the 'traditional' path to graduate employment for middle class students (the 'High-Fliers' and to a lesser extent the 'Movers'), a preparedness - i.e. instrumentalist behaviour - for future 'career decisions' becomes paramount (See Brown 1995).

¹⁵² Of course, habitus always has the potential to develop in one way or another and it might do so when exposed to different cultural contexts, e.g. new and different learning opportunities (see Brown 1987; Jenkins 1992; Hodkinson and Sparkes 1995).

Kevin: Probably mainly to get a decent job and earn lots of money.

Kevin: Final Year Medical Physics: 'Shaker'

DS: Why Accounting?

Salh: Really money was a big factor, that I should come into uni and make a good living.

DS: So do you think you'll have better standard of living than your parents?

Salh: Yeah.

DS: Are you aiming for that?

Salh: Yeah, definitely (.....) being able to become a Chartered Accountant myself and having a better standard of living myself, hopefully I'll be able to give my children a better standard of living than I had.

Salh: Second Year Management and Accounting: 'Shaker'

Of course, evidence suggests that working class students (and families) will adopt a more instrumentalist approach to higher education than the more 'traditional' higher education intake (see Marris 1964; Jackson and Marsden 1968). However, where human capital imperatives (discourses) structure transformations of opportunity they might also help structure the students' knowledge of learning and labour market opportunities and thus, by implication, the way individuals perceive and relate to structures of opportunity more widely – of course more entrenched concepts of traditional graduate employment also have a part to play here. Moreover, it is only where individuals feel comfortable operating within such discourses that positive outcomes might be generated.

Whilst the impact of learning opportunity discourses on labour market identity cannot be categorically evidenced - at least by this thesis - inferences might be drawn by looking more closely at how the non-traditional students engage with learning and labour market opportunity. It is clear from the earlier discussions of the forming of a labour market identity that the 'Settlers' and 'Shakers' construct quite different relationships with the labour market. We have already discussed how the constraints of 'social location' might broaden or limit horizons for action. More particularly, it might be suggested that the language of choice and

opportunity when framed in human capital terms fits less comfortably with some students than others, and thus reinforces the delimitations of background.

Quite evidently, the ‘Settlers’ paths of opportunity appear to them to be blocked. These students engage with learning opportunities and thus the potential to widen their labour market opportunities. However, Emma’s view of future possibilities is typical of a ‘Settlers’ outlook;

Emma: Most of the labour market now is big companies and I just think that they want people who they can control and that you're not given the control anymore and that you're not given any freedom and I feel like it's too competitive (.....)

DS: So what work do you want to do then?

Emma: I just like caring and looking after people, advising people. Probation work covers counselling and psychology and that's two modules that I'm interested in on my degree.

Emma: Final Year Education: Settler

Of course, we can look to a whole range of reasons why the ‘Settlers’ might view their opportunities to be much circumscribed (and reproduced) - see chapter eight. However, it seems to me that it is in part because the language of choice and opportunity - when framed within human capital (competition) terms - devalues or at least does not marry with the types of futures that Emma and those like her envisage for themselves. Certainly, as suggested, earlier human capital values might be viewed as identifiably male. The ‘Settlers’, then, in being predominantly working class women, might struggle to engage with opportunities when presented in this way - or at least the opportunities they value might not as easily be presented in this way: “*caring and looking after people*”.

On the other hand, the (working class) ‘Shakers’ futures when framed in this way fit comfortably with their individual aspirations and expectations, and this reinforces their sense of availability and appropriateness towards (or their relationship with) labour market opportunity;

DS: What do you think it'll be like when you come to look for work?

James: Very competitive, a challenge, exciting.

DS: What tells you it'll be like that?

James: Competitive because there's so many people with degrees, it'll be challenging preparing for the interview... researching the company so you can have an understanding in the interview. Exciting because it'll be a new experience. Sort of going into the unknown, that'll be challenging. Exciting.

James: Second Year Business Administration: 'Shaker'

We might surmise that James's 'excitement' at the 'competition' for jobs is part of a more masculine (macho) working class discourse, that fits with more individualised (understandings of) discourses of opportunity. This is the individualised competition to get the best job and make the most money. Equally, Pardeep, Salh, and Rowena might be seen to engage with such discourses to circumvent discrimination, by adopting a form of 'market behaviour' that enhances 'opportunities of future rewards'¹⁵³.

Indeed, it seems to me that discourses of opportunity impact on young people's futures, and it might be that this has implications for individuals' relationship with structures of opportunity. In this regard, discourses of transformation work to simultaneously include some students whilst excluding others. It is all too evident that human capital theory's part in opportunity discourses involves the (unwarranted) abstraction of economic behaviour from social relations on more than one level. Where it fails to understand learning behaviour as more than economic behaviour (Rees *et al* 1997), it also places narrow individualistic ideals over more socially responsible ideals - as is perhaps exemplified in the struggle of recent times to fill nursing and teaching places. Of course the more recent introduction of financial incentives to take up teaching (and better pay for nurses) might be viewed as a manipulation of market mechanisms and an adjustment to the official discourse of the Learning Society, by encouraging the individual actor to invest in particular learning opportunities. However, it

might also signal the failure of market mechanisms (and learning opportunity discourses) to adequately provide for society's (collective) needs: health, education and, perhaps, in Robbins's (1963) terms a civil and cultured society.

Conclusions

This and the previous chapter have worked towards an understanding of higher education students' labour market choices and actions as the product of personal choices mediated by social experience. An individual's knowledge of the 'choices' and 'actions' available and appropriate to them derives from their socially constructed relationship (dispositions) to the labour market. Labour market disposition (labour market identity) is the product of background. From background we derive a set of cultural dispositions (*habitus*), a way of knowing and being that shapes the way we interact and relate with social structures more widely. Transformations in learning opportunities, e.g. higher education expansion, have the potential to transform an individual's relationship to structures of labour market opportunity: of what is available and what is appropriate to them. Hence, a student might well deviate from a predicted labour market trajectory. More particularly, an individual's labour market identity might change over time.

However, despite transformations in learning opportunities, the nominal possession of a credential (a university degree), does not necessarily facilitate entry to the full range of (graduate) labour market opportunities. As discussed previously, employers may differentiate between candidates on the basis of social origins and cultural capital amassed. Moreover, it is not necessarily so that an individual will regard as available and appropriate the full range of labour market opportunities that extend from higher education participation. While an individual might work with a full understanding (knowledge) of graduate labour market

¹⁵³ We have already discussed how Danielle dismisses and thus rejects such discourses to construct a different reading of the 'Shaker' labour market identity.

opportunities, their perceptions of what is available and what is appropriate might well be more limited. A labour market identity might well then be constrained by background.

To make clear the process, by which a labour market identity is formed, I have devised a typological framework. The typological framework categorises and conceptualises higher education students' dispositions towards labour market labour market opportunities. This is an attempt to explore a range of different subject positions (labour market identities) - through the application of three-fold criteria - that best reflect higher education students' relationships to the labour market. The 'Mover', 'Settler' and 'High-Flier' labour market identities can be seen to represent similar subject positions. Here, the resources an individual derives from background are largely determining of labour market identity and central to predictable patterns of labour market participation.

The 'Shakers' also derive their labour market identity from their background. However, this labour market identity derives from a process of development and modification of habitus, and results in broadened 'horizons for action'. Here, exposure to new experiences and information shapes a labour market identity (trajectory) beyond what might otherwise be expected. The 'Shakers', then, transcend the constraining parameters of background. The labour market identities highlight how the advantages or disadvantages of social background determine the (in)ability to create new or successful futures. Moreover, they also tell us something about how the broad cultural context within which an individual is embedded (classed, gendered and racialised habitus(es) (Reay 1998a)), might engender a more or less rewarding relationship with the labour market. Certainly the thesis points towards a more complex negotiation of labour market entry (by HE students) than perhaps has been previously understood.

This chapter has also focused on why it might be more difficult for some students than others to engage with and make sense of the labour market opportunities available. What must be

understood is that habitus and thus students' social constructions are not fixed, they evolve as circumstances change. Thus, I suggest that where learning opportunities are transformed, habitus is subject to transformative pressures. Hence an individual's response to such pressures, as a member of a social group, is best understood in terms of social group dynamics and the classed, gendered and racialised pressures each individual's habitus is subject to. What I am arguing is that transformation in higher education - and the changes in graduate labour market opportunities that flow from such transformations - are also potentially transformative of habitus. Transformations in learning and labour market opportunities impact upon individuals and, indeed, social groups in different ways thus realising the potential for both new inequalities and new possibilities.

The discourse of transformation (opportunity) is instrumental in the individual's receptiveness to the dynamics of change. I have argued in earlier chapters that the discourses of transformation have been couched in the individualistic and human capital terms of 'market-individual-consumer', rather than the 'collective' discourse of 'citizenship-rights-common identity' (Plant and Barry 1990). Programmes of higher education expansion funded in part by student contributions exemplify this. Thus it might be suggested that this (individualist and human capital) discourse of transformation filters through to individuals, permeating their social worlds and forcing them to re-evaluate their life-worlds. However, individuals engage differently with such discourses and the 're-evaluating' effects on their life-worlds is different.

What is being argued is that such discourses perpetuate inequalities, but also facilitate the means/discourses by which individuals negotiate an exit out of such inequalities. A student's success at engaging with learning and labour market opportunities is shaped by the student's ability to engage with the (individualised) discourses of transformation. It is that where 'culture' (e.g. white working-class men's) fits discourses of individualisation, habitus is transformed so as to enable the manipulation of individualised opportunities. However, where

habitus is at odds with the discourses of transformation (e.g. white working-class women), individuals might have difficulty in negotiating (new) structures of opportunity.

For some students, then, their success at engaging with and negotiating new labour market opportunities (and opportunity discourses) rests upon them distancing themselves from the constraints of background and ‘disidentifying’ from classed, gendered and racialised experiences (e.g. the futility of education) which might limit their potential to exploit the benefits of transformed learning opportunities. Equally, however, ‘success’ is not predicated upon the dissipation of class identities and cultural networks, but rather it constitutes the maintaining, investment and renegotiation of particular elements of classed, gendered and racialised habitus(es). Thus, individuals might generate dispositions, which may or may not fit with the wider narrative of opportunity. Indeed, some individuals are more receptive and adaptive to opportunity discourses and where they are not, new patterns of inequality become evident.

CHAPTER TEN

CONCLUSION

Introduction

This thesis is concerned with the social construction of the labour market by (undergraduate) students in higher education. It is an attempt to understand how the students of a mass ('marketised') higher education system construct and manage their employability. Where labour market restructuring and higher education developments have changed the face of graduate employment, early chapters have concentrated on providing a context for later empirical chapters. The subsequent empirical chapters have focused on the shaping of the students' labour market perceptions. To this end, the concern has been with both the students' reading and internalisation of separate labour market discourses and, more significantly, how social experience impacts on the students' internalised perceptions of their employability, i.e. their labour market identity.

In this regard, I find 'Habitus and the (graduate) labour market (to be) interrelated' (Hodkinson and Sparkes 1995: 195). Perceptions of what might be available and what might be appropriate are the product of (an individual's knowledge of) externally located labour market opportunities and individual choices mediated by social experience. In making my arguments I hope to have added to what little literature exists on how higher education students conceptualise their relationship with labour market opportunities. Moreover, I hope to have broadened the debate on students' transitions from education to work. In this final chapter I reflect on my findings, abstracting from previous discussions the complexity of the social relations of individual students' perceptions of their employability. Specifically, I locate such perceptions within the wider context of labour market and higher education (and learning society) policy discourse.

From Higher Education to Work: Researching the Student Experience

From the outset, I have been concerned that the students' hopes and desires. More particularly, I have been concerned with the way they are shaped. This, in part, involved a reflexive awareness of my own expectations and aspirations. I have looked back on myself as someone of working-class origins who failed the eleven-plus exam and left a secondary modern school at sixteen with a handful of C.S.E.s to embark on a Youth Training Scheme, and the expectations for the future I had then. Later I became a mature - though relatively young - first generation student whose exposure to higher education transformed, fundamentally, my future expectations¹⁵⁴.

All this considered, I was able to some extent to identify (for essentially all experiences are individual) with the experiences (and expectations) of those students of similar origins. I also found myself juxtaposing my life-history with those students whose background and educational experiences could not be more different to mine. Indeed, it became possible to identify those 'experiences' that were at odds with my own, making them leap from the (transcript) page and so instantly recognisable as relevant in the shaping of their expectations and aspirations. Approaching the study from this standpoint I hope to have given the students voices and different experiences significant textual space in the thesis, and added to the limited number of educational/sociological studies that view the students', rather than employers', perceptions (experiences) as defining.

The literature that exists on the student experience is, at present, fairly limited and tends to overlook the 'complexity of individual agendas and priorities which are located in the individual student' (Hesketh 1999: 391). For instance, Purcell and Pitcher's (1996) use of largely positivist approaches - in being 'descriptive' - fails to confront and examine the

structure-agency dualism that shapes and contextualises the student experience (see Hesketh 1999). Equally, studies such as Brown and Scase's (1994), though successfully problematising the interdependence of mass higher education and labour market restructuring, in terms of the student's experience, stops short of placing at its centre an analysis of the students' 'voices' and 'life-worlds' (Weil 1989). By placing at the centre of this project the students' 'voices' and placing them within the context of wider educational and labour market transformations, I draw and extend on not only the literature hitherto discussed, but build on the theoretical examination of individual choices and learning/career decisions (see Hodkinson and Sparkes 1995; Hodkinson *et al* 1996; Rees *et al* 1997; Hodkinson 1998). In this regard, I have moved beyond the descriptive to conceptualise the students' perceptions within the framework of learner and labour market identities.

Higher Education and Labour Market Change

The early chapters of this thesis are concerned with developments in higher education policy and the restructuring of the (graduate) labour market. It has become quite evident, for instance, that the Robbins Report's (1963) emphasis on the transmission of a common culture and common standards of citizenship has been displaced by policies that place economic growth as paramount. Of course, Robbins was also concerned that higher education expanded to meet the needs of the economy. However, more recently 'the needs of an adaptable, sustainable, knowledge-based economy at local, regional and national levels' (NCIHE 1997a: 21) have been placed above education's other more civilising aspects. The implementation of policies that encourage higher education expansion to meet national needs certainly comprise a greater part of policy thinking than was previously the case - as does a mixed economy of higher education. The latter clearly reflecting a shift away from Robbins's 'citizenship-rights-common identity' model to one of 'market-individual-consumer' (Plant and Barry 1990).

¹⁵⁴ I was twenty-five when I embarked on my first degree.

As higher education has expanded and the conditions of entry have changed; the nature of the graduate labour market has developed also. For instance, higher education expansion has invariably created more graduates. As a consequence of this, the type of jobs graduates are locating in has become more diverse. Of course, the elite and 'traditional' graduate occupations still absorb the majority of graduates. However, it is has become increasingly necessary for (some) graduates to locate in positions for which a degree was not previously required. Thus, the benefits that have hitherto been available to graduates have not been extended to all those who now participate, rather the nature of such benefits has changed - particularly when weighed against increased (real) financial investment, e.g. loans, tuition fees, overdrafts (see Stroud 2001). In addition to which, restructuring within the labour market itself can be seen to have impacted on graduate employment structures (Brown and Scase 1994)¹⁵⁵.

This is the context within which higher education students must forge a future, whether it be to graduate and develop a career or 'drop-out'. The transition from an elite to a mass (and proposed universal) higher education system is a huge transformation both educationally and socially;

'the expansion of university places constitutes a fundamental restructuring of the education system and a reconstitution of higher education's relationships with the economy and with the social structure more widely. The state has significantly extended the access of citizens to educational opportunities and, thereby, to employment and the potential of social mobility.'

(Rees and Stroud 2001: 83)

However, despite the (limited) widening of access to higher education, it remains clear that access to the full range of labour market opportunities available and thus the potential for social mobility remains blocked for many. As graduate numbers rise employers increasingly

¹⁵⁵ Organisational restructuring has meant that careers traditional in structure are now a route for a smaller number of graduates (Goodman 1993). Competitive pressures have increased the insecurity of employment; organisations have adopted 'flatter' hierarchies and been forced to become more

screen applicants for the most desirable jobs, with cultural capital implicit in the recruitment process. Certainly the interrelated factors of social background, university attended, degree course, requisite skills and aptitude, etc. or measures of ‘suitability’, ‘capability’ and ‘acceptability’ are crucial in the determination of a student’s employability (Brown and Scase 1994; Brown 1995). More significantly, it might be that an individual’s ‘career decisions’ reflects the delimitations of background, in effect a self screening which frustrates the potential for social mobility.

Higher Education Students’ Labour Market Perceptions

This thesis is concerned with exploring the social construction of higher education students’ perceptions of the labour market. Most obviously, how a student comes to view the labour market is the product of their social experience. However, we might also consider how developments in social and economic structures, impact on an individual’s perceptions of (and therefore relationship to) labour market opportunities. For instance, the ‘massification’ of higher education, changes in funding arrangements and shifts in the nature of graduate employment clearly have the potential to transform the way students come to view - and therefore relate to - structures of (learning) and labour market opportunities. Indeed, the evidence presented in this thesis suggests that - on the surface at least - higher education students are in many ways confused about the type, structure and form of employment opportunities that extend from participation.

On the one hand, the structure and benefits of ‘traditional graduate employment’ remain an entrenched concept for students. This type of employment exists as a dominant discourse, taking on an almost mythical status, perpetuated by the students themselves and others (in government rhetoric and by parents, employers, teachers, etc.). Indeed, the students invest in an ‘historical’ discourse that, in every essence of the word, promises ‘status’ (see chapter

‘flexible’ in structure, phenomena exemplified in less security of tenure for managers and professionals

seven). However, on the other hand, the students also hold in their heads a parallel and competing - but subsumed - discourse of labour market 'reality' (see chapter six). This is constructed around perceptions of insecure tenures, graduate unemployment, increasing competition, and so forth. All of the students understood the labour market to be in a state of flux, regarding it with far less certainty than students did previously. Equally, however, the students expected something for their investment of time and money, and these expectations were most often constructed around quite anachronistic concepts of graduate employment and graduate labour market opportunities.

Indeed, whilst not completely sure about what the future might hold, the students as a group still envisaged (perceived) particular (traditional) patterns of opportunity for higher education students per se. This informed directly their understandings of what *should* be aspired to and expected as a graduate. However, it was often the case that what should be aspired to and expected did not marry with what was imagined to be achievable by the individual. At the most basic level, then, a student's choices might reflect the kinds of knowledge they possess of the labour market opportunities that *should* be available – this is the premise upon which current higher education policy is based (see Rees *et al* 1997). However, people (individuals) make career decisions and choices 'in respect of preferences which are defined within... socially constituted rationalities' (Rees *et al* 1997: 493) and this incorporates habitus (and therefore culture) as well as (perceptions of) externally located opportunities (i.e. '*horizons for action*') (Hodkinson and Sparkes 1995: 195. Original emphasis).

Higher Education Students' Labour Market Identities: A Typology

Higher education students' 'career decisions' are the product of habitus in relation to the labour market opportunities that extend to degree holders. This, in Hodkinson and Sparkes's (1995) terms, would be a higher education student's 'horizons for action'. However, from the

(Brown and Scase 1994).

employers' perspective, transformed learning opportunities and an increased number of graduates means that they can afford to be more discerning about whom they might employ. Indeed, many employers are adjusting to the intensification of competition for the more desirable graduate labour market opportunities by differentiating between graduates on the grounds of cultural capital amassed by an individual through his or her background (Rees and Stroud 2000).

Thus, it might be suggested that there is a segmentation of labour market opportunities beyond that by measure of an individual's credentials, to the measure of an individual's labour market acceptability at a much more personal level (see Brown and Scase 1994; Brown 1995). Equally, it might also be suggested that individuals segment labour market opportunities themselves (as they might do in their personal preferences), by limiting their 'horizons for action' to what is determined by the culturally embedded dispositions (towards the labour market) of social location (*habitus*): i.e. labour market identity. Thus, where 'career decisions' are shaped by the resources an individual derives from their background, the emphasis is on the constraining (or enabling) parameters within which an individual acts.

To illustrate how the students' 'parameters', or more accurately their *habitus(es)*, might shape labour market futures, I have devised a *labour market identity* typological framework. (See chapter eight for a full explanation of how the students were assigned a labour market identity.) The labour market identity types, of which there are four, are: the 'Shakers', the 'Movers', the 'High-Fliers' and the 'Settlers'. They inform us that for the majority (54 students) labour market identity is shaped strictly by the delimitations of background. For the 'Movers', 'Settlers' and 'High-Fliers' an individual's social origins remain determining (see Bourdieu 1979). For the seven others, however, the availability and appropriateness of alternatives (choices) appear broadened. Those of a 'Shaker' labour market identity became themselves 'in a new guise' (Barnett 1996: 82), transcending *habitus* and the constraints of background.

The 'Mover', 'Settler' and 'High-Flier' labour market identities, in essence, represent the same subject position. Their labour market identity can be seen to be clearly determined by social background: from habitus. Of course, in many respects the same can be said of the 'Shakers'. However, the 'Shakers' habitus appears to develop and modify with exposure to new experiences and information - ultimately to broaden perspectives. Thus, they transcend habitus. Those categorised otherwise appeared to modify (career) decisions *within* the constraining parameters of background. For these students habitus - when viewed through the lens of classed, gendered and racialised habitus (Reay 1998a) - dictated the range of labour market opportunities available and appropriate. More particularly, for the 'Settlers', Movers' and High-Fliers' their habitus makes the processes of social reproduction (patterns of participation) natural and inevitable.

Certainly, the 'Settler' labour market identity suggests that gendered (female) and classed (working) experiences continue to shape (limit) perceptions of labour market opportunity. Indeed, it might be suggested that they are the embodiment of existing 'reproductive' (but new) inequalities, transposed into a new and different context, i.e. transformed learning opportunities or access to higher education¹⁵⁶. The 'Movers', whose (middle) classed experiences made university part of their social world and lived experience, reflected the axiom that it is always easier to secure and exploit labour market advantage from an already advantageous position (see Roberts 1995)¹⁵⁷. 'High-Fliers' are quite similar, though the pedagogic rigours of selective schooling (that dominated in this identity's experience of compulsory education) appeared instrumental in inculcating a more vocational orientation and

¹⁵⁶ Of course, participation in itself raised expectations and aspirations. However, once this was accounted for, self evaluated measures of availability and appropriateness remained far lower than for the other students.

¹⁵⁷ Transformations in learning and labour market opportunities raised the profile of discourses of labour market 'reality' for 'Mover' (and others), but did little to dampen the students' expectations - particularly for 'traditional graduate employment'.

competitive approach to the higher education experience and future employment¹⁵⁸. In short, the ‘Settler’, ‘Mover’ and ‘High-Flier’ labour market identities reflect how the advantages or disadvantages of background that one inherits from birth determine the (in)ability to create new or successful futures.

The ‘Shaker’ labour market identity, however, lends itself to a more complex reading of the career decision making process. Those of a ‘Shaker’ labour market identity are of diverse backgrounds. They comprise mainly ‘working-class’ individuals; either white and male or Asian and female. A ‘middle-class’ white woman is also categorised as a ‘Shaker’ type. Of course, these students’ labour market dispositions are undoubtedly shaped by the cultural context of their backgrounds. For instance, through aspirant parents or working class ‘machismo’ (Marris 1964; Jackson and Marsden 1968; Willis 1977). More significantly however, the ‘Shakers’ habitus is shown to develop and modify radically with exposure to new information and circumstances, with subsequent impacts on ‘career decisions’ and possible patterns of labour market participation. Indeed, it seems to me that transformations in learning opportunities (HE expansion), whilst (re)producing ‘new (collective) inequalities’ also produce new (individualised) possibilities - to which, I argue, the evidence presented in this thesis suggests particular social groups (and individuals) are receptive.

Labour Market Identity: The Forging of Fates

Beck (1992) argues that a consequence of ‘new modernity’ or ‘risk society’ is that increasingly individuals must forge their own fates. The direction of a person’s ‘life-course’ is a ‘reflexive project’, where people plan futures on an individual rather than collective basis. It is further suggested that class networks weaken and ‘people within the same “class”, can or even must choose between different life-styles, subcultures, social ties and identities’ (Beck

¹⁵⁸ The ‘High-Flier’ labour market identity reflects a subtle shift away from a reliance on the ‘reproductive’ capacity of social position, where labour market behaviour is modified (‘individualised’)

1992: 131). This is not to suggest, however, that background does not impact on individuals' life-chances;

'Beck acknowledges that risks are unequally distributed within society and may be arranged in a manner which follow the inequalities characteristic of class society'

(Furlong and Cartmel 1997: 3)

Certainly, the patterns of labour market participation envisaged by those of the 'Settler', 'Mover' and 'High-Flier' labour market identities reflect 'inequalities characteristic of class society'. This said, higher education participation itself might be framed in terms of 'loosening local and constructing non-local networks', particularly for those of working-class and mature student origins (Beck 1992: 94).

Nevertheless, access to higher education is limited for both men and women of 'working-class' backgrounds (NCIHE 1997b). Moreover, the transformation of learning opportunities, as Bourdieu (1977) predicted, appears to benefit more those of middle-class origins. Indeed, it might be suggested that even where new learning opportunities are exploited Beck's process of 'individualisation' is subsumed beneath existing (but contextually new) inequalities. For instance, as in the case of the 'Settlers'. Opportunity, then, remains stratified in terms of class gender and ethnicity - such factors still shape success (and fates). In this regard, we might accurately predict labour market futures and the forging of fates. Certainly, the 'Mover', 'Settler' and 'High-Flier' labour market identities belie the individualised forging of fates and suggest that we might reliably predict future patterns of labour market participation.

However, on the surface of things others seem to fit with more individualised futures, and in this regard they carry the potential to betray characteristic labour market trajectories. It might be suggested that the Shakers are responsive to new learning opportunities, and grapple with

to incorporate discourses of labour market 'reality' (see Beck 1992; Brown 1995). In this regard, they

their sense of 'identity', their 'biography', and negotiate individual solutions to highly structured (collective) life-chances (see Beck 1992; Furlong and Cartmel 1997; Du Bois Reymond 1998; Beck 2000). Certainly the Shaker labour market identity, in its very name, suggests that the natural order of things is shaken up, which might correspond with the forging of new fates and the dissolution of classed, gendered and racialised futures.

It seems to me, however, that such an understanding fails to take account of how individuals might invest in collective identities to restructure (individualised) future potentialities. This, then, points not so much to the dissolution of class ties in the exploitation of learning and labour market opportunities, but a renegotiation of the very classed, gendered and racialised experiences (and dispositions) that would otherwise be considered the roots of inequality. In this regard, the process of 'individualisation' works precisely *because* of existing 'life-styles, subcultures, social ties and identities', *not* because of their dissolution. Individuals are only able to free themselves from the inequalities characteristic of class (and, indeed, gender and ethnicity) to forge their own individual fates because of their social origins.

For instance, I suggest working-class men (as a social group), when participating in higher education, reconstruct their working-class masculinity in terms of individualistic, human capital imperatives, i.e. earning the most money. The students attempt to reconcile their 'social origins' with the options available. More particularly, it might be suggested that the forging of new fates is only possible where social groups (or individuals) successfully engage with the way learning and labour market opportunities are presented. Individualism is increasingly presented as being at the centre of the life-course - of which particular theories of human capital are part; whereby casting off the shackles of biography makes possible 'the experience of a personal destiny' (Beck 1992: 94). However, where one's biography fails to marry with the way opportunities are presented - in the social construction of labour markets - it is likely that new inequalities will be forged.

relied less on the reproductive capacities of social position than the 'Movers'.

The Social Construction of Labour Markets

The data presented in this thesis clearly points towards a more complex negotiation of labour market entry (by HE students) than perhaps has been previously understood. What I have attempted to show is that the students view the labour market on different levels. For instance, the graduate labour market is understood to stand separate from a non-graduate labour market; the graduate labour market being understood to be associated with particular (traditional graduate) employment benefits (the discourse of graduate employment).

Of course, the expansion of higher education and the restructuring of the labour market are also understood to have made the 'graduate' labour market more competitive and less secure (discourse of labour market 'reality'). However, whilst on this level the students had a fairly uniform understanding of higher education and labour market dynamics, at another level each individual's relationship to the structure of labour market opportunity was quite different. Here, perceptions of those labour market opportunities that exist externally for graduates, appear shaped by social background (classed, gendered and racialised experiences). Each individual's social background provides a cultural context from which they derive their values and norms for action (*habitus*): a labour market identity. At this level, 'habitus and the labour market are interrelated', values and norms for action are constitutive of perceptions of what might be available and appropriate and thus 'influence (career) decisions' (Hodkinson and Sparkes 1995: 195).

Thus, labour market 'choices' (career decisions), whilst being subject to personal preference (themselves subject to capital relations), derive essentially from social background. And where social background is equal to the broad cultural context within which an individual is embedded, labour market identities are the product of classed, gendered and racialised *habitus(es)* (Reay 1998a). Here, I suggest, it is more difficult for some than others to negotiate

and make sense of the opportunities available; particularly for those students where higher education participation is not normally part of their lived world and social experience (their *habitus*). I also suggest that where learning opportunities are transformed and non-traditional students can successfully negotiate higher education participation, some more than others are in a better position to renegotiate or restructure their sense of ‘employability’.

What Bourdieu (1984. See also Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992) refers to as *habitus* is useful as a tool to describe and conceptualise the relationship an individual has with the labour market. *Habitus* is a conceptualisation of the individual in terms of the cultural context within which they are embedded. Here, an individual’s actions are understood in terms of their social inheritance and the inculcating of a set of dispositions, an epistemological and ontological framework for action, ‘actualised through individuals, and individual instances’ (Grenfell and James 1998: 15). I place *habitus* at the centre of my typological framework, its incorporation of structure and agency provides a useful tool to understand the students’ conceptualisation of labour market opportunity.

The concept itself is primarily linked to social class, however, like Reay (1998a), I believe it is useful also to understand *habitus* as gendered and racialised;

‘*Habitus* is primarily a method for analysing the dominance of dominant groups in society and the domination of subordinate groups... (it) can be used to focus on the ways in which the socially advantaged and disadvantaged play out attitudes of cultural superiority and inferiority ingrained in their *habitus* in daily interactions. As Mc Clelland (1990) highlights, such dispositions are powerfully influenced by both gender and ‘race’.’

(Reay 1998a: 139)

I attempt to understand each individual’s relationship to the structures of labour market opportunity as derived from the resources of background. When I speak of background the reference is to the full range of classed, gendered and racialised experiences from which an individual constructs and extrapolates a personal (or labour market) identity. The individual’s

relationship to the labour market must be understood in terms of what it means to be a man or women, black or white, as well as ‘middle’ or ‘working’ class and how each of these subject positions interrelate.

Bourdieu’s concept of habitus is criticised on many fronts. He is most often accused of being deterministic, prioritising class cultures as the basis of habitus and moreover, actions as ‘mechanistic’ and always generative of schemes of habitus (see Brown 1987; Jenkins 1992). Here too gender (and ‘race’) may be read deterministically. As Reay (1998a: 141) argues, Bourdieu’s own reading of gendered habitus ‘depicts women as complicit in viewing gender divisions as natural and universal’. Whilst it is possible to read the inevitability of traditional gendered (feminised) dispositions and identity in the majority of female students’ labour market identities, some of the female students did adopt ‘other’ (e.g. feminist) discourses in constructing their relationship to the structures of labour market opportunity. Consequently, it is imperative to understand readings of gendered (classed and racialised) habitus as multi-faceted¹⁵⁹. Indeed, the students’ social construction of labour markets must be understood as deriving from *coexisting* and *evolving* discourses of classed, gendered and racialised experiences, *interpreted at the level of the individual*.

In theorising my data I work from the premise that ‘habitus produces action, but because it confines possibilities to those possible for social groups an individual belongs to, much of the time those actions tend to be reproductive rather than transformative’ (Reay 1998a: 139). Habitus is not fixed, it evolves; as circumstances change, habitus changes and thus the possibilities of action may also be transformed. I suggest that where circumstances do change, such as in transformations in learning opportunities, habitus is subject to transformative pressures. I suggest further that the individual’s response to such pressures, as a member of a

¹⁵⁹ Indeed, an understanding of gendered habitus should include dominant and sub-dominant readings of masculinity as much as femininity.

social group, is best understood in terms of social group dynamics and the classed, gendered and racialised pressures each individual's habitus is subject to.

Indeed, transformations in higher education and the subsequent shifts in graduate labour market opportunities transform habitus. Moreover, such transformations impact upon individuals (social groups) in different ways, thus releasing the potential for the existence of new inequalities and new possibilities. That is, transformations in learning opportunities mediate transformations in habitus (and learning and labour market identities). More particularly, the discourses that surround (including Learning Society discourses and traditional discourses of graduate employment) such transformations are instrumental in the individual's receptiveness to the dynamics of change, (i.e. to the development and transformation of habitus).

For instance, a marketised higher education system that places the student in the role of customer, invariably has effects on the students' approach to education (see Ainley 1994). Such developments, as described in chapters three and four, can be read as part of wider 'Learning Society' discourse that places the human capital imperative as central to learning. Indeed the discourse surrounding participation in education and training involves 'an unwarranted abstraction of economic behaviour from social relations' (Rees *et al* 1997: 486), and is indicative of a process of modernisation that pervades society more widely. Here, individuals face new sets of (uneven) risks and opportunities, exemplified in the development of educational policy that facilitates individualised (risk investment in) consumer choices.

Indeed, it is suggested by Beck (1992) and others (Giddens 1990; Furlong and Cartmel 1997), that Western society is moving beyond (modernised) industrial society to encapsulate a 'new (or 'late') modernity' based on the distribution of individualised 'risks'¹⁶⁰. It is 'Precisely in

¹⁶⁰ Industrial society was predicated upon the distribution of goods, whereas the axial principle of 'late modernity' is the distribution of 'risks'. Moreover, where industrial society is structured through social

dealing with risks, (that) a variety of new social differentiations and conflicts emerge. These no longer adhere to the plan of class society' (Beck 1992: 46). Transformations in the structure of opportunity, the expansion of educational opportunities for instance, increasingly allow individual's to plan their life courses. Thus, 'class biographies' (and gendered and racialised biographies) are transformed into individualised and 'reflexive biographies which depend on the decisions of the actor' (Beck 1992: 88). Indeed 'for the sake of economic survival' individuals must loosen the influence of local networks and place themselves at the centre of their 'life plans and conduct' (Beck 1992: 92-94).

Individuals are both invited and coerced to manipulate and exploit (expanded educational) opportunities (Du Bois Reymond 1998). For instance, in Learning Society discourse, individuals are invited to invest in education so that they may benefit in terms of improved employment prospects (human capital theory). However, they are also coerced to invest in (vocational) learning, facing self-imposed failure (risks) should they choose not to (see Furlong and Cartmel 1997; Tight 1998). More particularly, individuals are placed differentially in relation to the range of opportunities. That is, a 'middle-class' person is still more likely to enter university than a 'working-class' person. Certainly, as Beck (1992: 92) argues, the relations of inequality remain stable, here 'Empirical stratification research or Marxist class analysis probably detect no significant changes; income inequalities, the structure of the division of labor (sic) and the basic determinants of wage labor (sic) have, after all, remained relatively unchanged'. It is that social inequality becomes individualised, although patterns of social inequality remain relatively stable.

My contention, is that whilst discourses of 'individualisation' (Learning Society) continue to perpetuate inequalities, they might also provide the means/discourses by which some individuals negotiate an exit out of such inequalities. That is, a student's success at

class, risk society is an 'individualised' society. For example, failure here (e.g. unemployment) is the responsibility of the individual (e.g a failure to invest in education), rather than the product of systemic

manipulating access to the full range of educational opportunities and moreover, the opportunities that extend from participation is, I suggest, shaped largely by the student's relationship to (individualised) wider Learning Society discourses. Essentially where 'culture' (be it working-class ethnic (Asian) women's or white working-class men's) fits discourses of individualisation, habitus is transformed so as to enable the manipulation of individualised opportunities. Conversely, where habitus is at odds with such discourses (e.g. white working-class women), individuals are also at odds with structures of opportunity (and new inequalities are produced).

Indeed, higher education students' social construction of labour market opportunity, has *not* so much been based upon the dissipation of class identities and cultural networks, but rather constitutes the maintaining, investment and renegotiation of particular elements of classed, gendered and ethnic dispositions (particular forms of habitus). That is, an individual's classed, gendered and racialised experiences/dispositions, generates individual labour market dispositions that happen to be appropriate or inappropriate to the narrative of 'late modernity' and risk society.

It is not that some kind of value judgement is placed upon those whose classed, gendered and racialised experiences/dispositions lend themselves to readings that do not fit with the demands of 'individualisation'. Rather, I suggest that the predispositions of some are more receptive and adaptive to such demands and where they are not, new patterns of inequality become evident. In sum, the appropriateness and availability of particular (graduate labour market) opportunities (the social construction of the labour market), and thus increased living standards, remain governed by classed, gendered and racialised experiences.

failures (recession) (Beck 1992; Furlong and Cartmel 1997).

The Social Construction of Labour Markets: Some Social Policy Implications

This thesis is concerned with students of higher education's social construction of labour markets. The data presented clearly demonstrates that students' perceptions of the labour market are shaped by such factors as class, gender and ethnicity, even where the students' accumulation of credentials has objective parity. It is suggested that a higher education student's habitus, as derived from background, defines their conceptualisation of and relationship to the structures of labour market opportunity that exist externally. I have argued further, that transformations in the structure of opportunity (education policy) emphasise the role of the individual (student) as crucial to economic competitiveness and, moreover, frame engagement with opportunity (HE expansion and graduate labour market) as individual investment. Learning Society discourses, I suggest, are indicative of a process of modernisation, where the negotiation of opportunity is reduced to individualised (marketised) risk avoidance strategies. It is my contention that such discourses are more easily negotiated by the students of particular social groups than others, reducing the potential for both new inequalities and new possibilities to a student's subject position - as an individual belonging to a social group.

Increasingly, as Furlong and Cartmel (1997: 11) highlight, 'the key characteristics of late modernity identified by Beck (1992)... are reflected in changes within the British educational system. (Students) face new risks at school (and university) which they are increasingly expected to negotiate as individuals rather than as members of a collective'. Such arguments are realised in the direction educational policy in Britain has taken over the last twenty years. For instance; the development of higher education policy, in terms of expansion and student funding for example, as well as the basis upon which universities conduct their business, has shifted paradigmatically from state responsibility to individual responsibility (student and institution). This has involved, in many respects, the commodification of educational provision and the reduction of students to customers (rather than citizens). The consequences

of education policy per se being formulated upon market principles are well documented (see Ball *et al* 1996; Gewirtz 1996) and for higher education, in particular, the ramifications are equally well understood e.g. the marginalisation of poorer individuals (see Walford 1991; Ainley 1994).

The introduction of market principles into educational provision, has been justified on the basis that individualised consumer choice will improve standards. The logic is that standards will be driven up as schools and universities compete with each other for students (and the funds that follow) by offering the best service. However, individualised consumer choice does not necessarily take account of the individual's capacity to trade in the market place or their reasons for learning. Consequently the rewards of the educational system remain unequally distributed (Furlong and Cartmel 1997; Rees *et al* 1997). Individuals stand in differential positions in the education market place, the accumulation of (legitimate forms of) cultural and economic capital defining the opportunities available (Bourdieu 1977). Certainly patterns of inequality remain intact, for instance; despite its expansion social class still determines access to higher education (Halsey 1995; NCIHE 1997a). What I wish to argue is that not only do such policies maintain and exacerbate inequality, but that the individualised market behaviour encapsulated within Learning Society discourses also serves to circumscribe (some) individuals' capacity to engage with the (labour market) opportunities that extend from 'learning'. The concern here is with policy narrative, which places at its centre the individual actor and 'the unwarranted abstraction of economic behaviour from social relations' (Rees *et al* 1997: 486).

Rees *et al* (1997: 485) argue that 'the official discourse of the Learning Society is dominated by a particular theory of lifetime learning: human capital theory'. Certainly, in terms of the economic growth and competitiveness, human capital theory is part of policy discourse. A highly skilled labourforce as a prime determinant of economic growth, necessitates the development of human capital through the expansion of education and training (see Schultz

1962). (Hence, for example, the expansion of higher education.) It also follows that if investment in education and training is of benefit to the economy, it is also of benefit to the individual. Thus, according to Becker (1975), an individual's participation in education may also be framed in human capital terms, reduced to a form of market behaviour where time (and money) is invested in qualifications in order that employment opportunities be enhanced. (Hence, the funding of expansion (tuition fees and loans) predicated on the assumption that investment in higher education benefits most the individual.) Rees *et al* (1997) argue, however, that where the policy makers' desired effect of increased participation in learning opportunities and thus economic growth is conceived upon human capital theory alone, the impact of social relations on participation in the Learning Society is neglected. And where participation of learning opportunities is successfully negotiated, it might be that the impact of social relations on the individual's relationship to the structure of labour market opportunities is neglected also.

What I wish to argue is that such discourses, upon which the expansion of higher education (and Learning Society) is predicated, has implications for particular social groups' relationship to the structure of labour market opportunity. I suggest that where higher education is part of an individual's social world and lived experience, the ability to engage with the labour market opportunities that extend from participation remains largely intact and to an extent enhanced (see Bourdieu 1977; Zinneker 1990). It is contended, however, that the conflation of various (Learning Society/late modernity) discourses of human capital theory, vocationalism, individualism and marketisation fails to engage and positively excludes particular social groups.

For example, it was clear from the interviews that working-class women, in particular, in their labour market identities, could not visualise themselves within the discourse of labour market opportunity. (As one middle-class woman did not also.) Of course, it would be wrong to argue that working-class women (students) are not alert to and somehow do not invest in the

(graduate) labour market opportunities available. However, it is clear that such discourses reduce education and labour market opportunities to individualistic and human capital imperatives. As such they fail to adequately map onto working-class women's sense of availability and appropriateness. An identity that stresses the importance of family and caring (see Skeggs 1997; Tett 2000), will struggle to engage with labour market opportunities premised upon more masculine discourses of competition and status.

Certainly, the greater participation by under-represented groups in higher education, such as working-class women for example, clearly indicates that the norms and dispositions of social groups are open to modifying influences. However, whilst such discourses might engage some women with learning opportunities, albeit learning opportunities that are still gendered and identified with at various levels, it fails to do so with labour market opportunities. This said, other under-represented social groups, such as Asian working class women and working class men (the 'Shakers'), for quite different reasons appear able to engage with such discourses.

However, it is clear that the 'Settler' labour market identity reflects a pattern of non-participation consistent with a rejection of market sensitive policy initiatives that rely on ego-centred rationalism to engender economic growth. Quite clearly, the infiltration of market-individual principles into education policy neglects the dynamics of social relations upon which individuals' decision-making rests. The differentiation of 'experience' between social groups demands the development of a policy discourse that is sensitive to the real world complexity of social relations in the construction of future (labour market) opportunities.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX ONE

Dean Stroud
Address

23 March, 1999

Prof. Gareth Rees
Address

Dear Gareth

Re. Payment for interviews

I am writing to request authorisation for the payment of £5 cash from my ESRC funds to students who take part in an interview on 'The Social Construction of Labour Markets'.

Following discussion with Carolyn Bowen; the students on completion of the interview will be asked to sign a receipt form, this will be countersigned by yourself as Head of School.

I hope this arrangement is agreeable to you, interviews, and therefore payment, commence on Wednesday 24 March.

Yours sincerely

Dean Stroud

APPENDIX TWO

Dean Stroud
Address

23 March, 1999

Prof. Gareth Rees
Address

Dear Gareth

Re. Payment for interviews

I am writing to request authorisation for the payment of £10 cash from my ESRC research expenses to students who take part in an interview, for my Ph.D. on 'The Social Construction of Labour Markets'. The lower rate of £5 per interview is no longer attracting students.

Following discussion with Carolyn Bowen; the students on completion of the interview will be asked to sign a receipt form, this will be countersigned by yourself as Head of School.

I hope this arrangement is agreeable to you, interviews, and therefore payment, commence at this rate from Tuesday 11th May.

Yours sincerely

Dean Stroud

APPENDIX THREE

£10

£10 for 'St Davids' University undergraduates who agree to take part in an hour long interview on jobs and work. If you wish to take part call Dean Stroud on ***** or *****, e-mail me at ***** or sign-up at the School of Education - Office E2.14.

am îs - raddedigion sy'n cytuno i gymryd rhan
mewn cyfweliad hyd awr ar swyddi a gwaith.

Os y'ch chi eisiau cymryd rhan
Ffoniwch Dean Stroud ar *****

neu ***** ,

neu ebost: *****

neu cofrestrwch yn yr Adran Addysg
Swyddfa E2.14

MANY STUDENTS REQUIRED.

WHATEVER YOUR DEGREE SUBJECT, ALL WELCOME.

**LLAWER O FYFYRWYR YN EISIAU, BETH BYNNAG EICH
PWNC GRADD. CROESO I BAWB.**

APPENDIX FOUR

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Opening standardised questions

Age:

Sex:

Under 24 - Parents Occupation:

25 and over - Last Occupation: Partners Occupation:

Parents Occupation:

Ethnic origin:

Disability: Yes/No Type:

Degree Scheme: Year of study:

Type of School Attended:

- **Opening Question:** Why did you come to university?
- **Final Questions:** What position do you expect to find yourself in 5 years after graduation? (Both Ideally and Probably)

The labour market

- When the time comes, what do you think it will be like trying to get a job?
- How did you come to think of the labour market in that way?
- What do you think would be an appropriate job for you when you graduate? Is that available to people? To you?
- What type of job do you want?
- What opportunity do you think the labour market offers people with degrees?
- What experience do you have of work?
- How do you define a career?
- Do you think a career is still possible in today's labour market?
- Would you say any one person/thing has had a major influence on your preference for work?
- Does unemployment worry you?
- Tell me from the earliest you can remember about what you've wanted to do?
- Do you have any hobbies, interests?
- How important is money to you?
- What sort of work do you want? Why?

Family

- How important was it to your parents that you went to university?
- What do your parents do? Would you say they've been successful?
- Do you feel that your parents had any influence on the path you have taken, in terms of university, career plans, etc.
- Have any of your family been to university?
- Was it expected of you by your family to go to university?
- What do you think your family/parents think about your job plans? or Plans after graduation?

- What do your brothers and sisters do?
- Are you close to your family? Do you respect what they do? Listen to them?
- How would you describe your background?

School

- What qualifications did you take to get to university? (A levels, BTEC, Access Course, etc.)
- What made you choose those subjects?
- Did you have a career or degree subject in mind when choosing those subjects?
- Do you think the school you attended gave you any advantages? e.g. Was it the best school in your area?
- Have your friends followed a similar path to yourself?
- What were your teachers like? Did they encourage you?
- What was your school like?
- Did you enjoy school? Was it a positive experience?
- Did you have a Careers Officer?
- What do you feel your experience of school has done for you?

Degree Subject

- How did you come to choose your degree course?
- Did you receive any guidance?

Higher Education Policy

- The higher education system has changed over the last few decades, more people go to university, people now pay more from their own pocket to attend, etc. What do you think of the changes?
- Do you expect to be in debt at the end of your degree? Implications of this.
- Do you feel privileged to be at university?

APPENDIX FIVE

Key to interview extracts:

.... Pause

(....) Material edited out.

/ Moment when interruption began

“ ” Direct quotation

??? Inaudible response

Bibliography

- Ahleit, P.** (1994) *Taking the Knocks: Youth Unemployment and Biography: A Qualitative Analysis*. London, Cassell
- Ainley, P.** (1994) *Degrees of Difference: Higher Education in the 1990s*. London, Lawrence & Wishart
- Anderson** (1960) *Grants to Students: Report of the committee appointed by the Minister for Education and the Secretary of State for Scotland in June 1958*. London, HMSO.
- Andrews, G.** (Ed) (1991) *Citizenship*. London, Lawrence & Wishart
- Arber, S.** (1993) 'Designing Samples' in N. Gilbert (1993) *Researching Social Life*. London Sage Publications
- Ashworth, J.** (1997) A Waste Of Time? *Higher Education Quarterly* Vol. 51 No.2. pp.164-188
- Ball, S.J.** (1993) Education Markets, Choice and Social Class: the markets as a class strategy in the UK and the USA, *British Journal of Sociology of Education* Vol.14 No.1 pp.3-19
- Ball, S.J.** (1994) *Education Reform: a Critical and Post Structuralist Approach*. Buckingham Open University Press
- Ball, S.J., Radnor, H., with Vincent, C. and Henshaw, L.** (1996) *Local Education Authorities: accountability and control*. Stoke-on-Trent, Trentham Books.
- Banks, J.A.** (1957) 'The Group Discussion as an Interview Technique'; *Sociological Review* 5 (1) in T. May (1993); *Social Research: Issues, Methods and Process*. Buckingham, Open University Press
- Banks, M., Bates, I., Breakwell, G., Bynner, J., Emler, N., Jamieson, L., Roberts, K.** (1992) *Careers and Identities* Milton Keynes, Open University Press
- Bargh, C; Scott, P.; Smith, D.** (1996) *Governing Universities: Changing the Culture?* Open University Press, Buckingham.
- Barnett, R.** (1996) 'Being and becoming: a student trajectory' *International Journal of Lifelong Learning*, Vol. 15 No. 2 pp.72-84
- Becher, T. and Kogan, M.** (1992) *Process and Structure in Higher Education*. London, Routledge
- Beck, U.** (1992) *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*. London Sage
- Beck, U.** (2000) 'Risk Society Revisited: Theory, Politics and Research Programmes' in B. Adam, U. Beck, J. Van Loon (Ed.) (2000) *The Risk Society and Beyond: Critical Issues for Social Theory*. London, Sage

- Becker, G.** (1975) *Human Capital: A Theoretical and Empirical Analysis, with Special Reference to Education* Chicago University of Chicago Press
- Bell, D.** (1974) *The Coming Of A Post-Industrial Society* London Heinemann
- Benney, M. and Hughes, J.** (1956) 'Of Sociology and the Interview: Editorial Preface'; *American Journal of Sociology*, 62,137-142; in Fontana, A. and Frey, J. (1998) 'Interviewing: The art of science.' in N. Denzin and Y. Lincoln (1998) *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials*. London, Sage Publications
- Berger, P. and Luckmann, T.** (1991) *Social Construction of Reality: a treatise in the sociology of knowledge*. Harmondsworth, Penguin.
- Bhaskar, R.** (1988) *Critical Realism: essential readings*. London, Routledge.
- Bird, J.** (1996) *Black Students and Higher Education* The Society for Research into Higher Education. Buckingham, Open University Press
- Bird, J. with Yee, W.C.** (1996) Working with Schools (1996) in *Black Students and Higher Education* The Society for Research into Higher Education. Buckingham, Open University Press
- Blackburn, R. and Jarman, J.** (1993) Changing Inequalities in Access to British Universities *Oxford Review of Education* Vol. 19 No. 2 pp.197-216
- Blau, P and Duncan, O.** (1967) *The American Occupational Structure*. New York, Wiley
- Blunkett, D.** (1997) *Foreward to Higher Education in the 21st Century*. London, DfEE
- Bock, G. and James, J.** (1992) *Beyond Equality and Difference: Citizenship, Feminist Politics and Female Subjectivity*. London, Routledge
- Booth, C.** (1987) Central Government and Higher Education Planning 1965-1986 *Higher Education Quarterly* Vol: 41; No.1. pp. 57-72
- Bourdieu, P.** (1977) *Outline of Theory of Practice*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press
- Bourdieu, P.** (1979) *Distinction*. London, Routledge and Kegan Paul
- Bourdieu, P.** (1983) 'The field of cultural production, or: the economic world reversed' *Poetics* No.12, pp.311-56
- Bourdieu, P.** (1986) 'The three forms of capital' in J. Richardson (ed.) (1986) *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*. New York, Greenwood Press
- Bourdieu, P.** (1988) *Homo Academicus* (P. Collier trans.). Oxford, Polity Press
- Bourdieu, P.** (1989) 'Towards a Reflexive Sociology: A Workshop with Pierre Bourdieu'. *Sociological Theory*, No. 7, pp. 26-33.
- Bourdieu, P.** (1990) *In other words: essays towards a reflexive sociology*. Cambridge, Polity Press
- Bourdieu, P. and Passeron, J.C.** (1977) *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture*. London, Sage

- Bourdieu, P. and Wacquant, L.** (1992) *An invitation to reflexive sociology*. Oxford, Polity Press
- Bourner, T. with Reynolds, A. Hamed, M. Barnett, R.** (1991) *Part-time students and their realities of higher education* The Society for Research into Higher Education. Buckingham, Open University Press
- Boys, C.; Brennan, J.; Henkel, M.; Kirkland, J.; Kogan, M.; Youll, P.** (1988) *Higher Education and the Preparation for Work*. London, Jessica Kingsley Publishers
- Boys, C and Kirkland, J** (1988a) *Degrees of Success; Career Aspirations and Destinations of College, University and Polytechnic Graduates*. London, Jessica Kingsley Publishers
- Boys, C and Kirkland, J** (1988b) 'Student Perceptions' in C. Boys *et al* (1988) *Higher Education and the Preparation for Work*. London, Jessica Kingsley Publishers,
- Braverman, H.** (1974) *Labour and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century* New York Monthly Review Press
- Brown, P.** (1987) *Schooling Ordinary Kids* London Tavistock
- Brown, P.** (1995) Cultural Capital and Social Exclusion: Some observations on recent trends in education, employment and the labour market. *Work, Employment and Society*, Vol.9, No.1: pp.29-51
- Brown, P.** (2000) The Globalisation of Positional Competition? *Sociology* Vol. 34, No. 4 pp. 633-653
- Brown, P. and Scace, R.** (1994) *Higher Education and Corporate Realities: Class, culture and the decline of graduate careers*. London, UCL Press
- Brennan, J.L., Lyon, S., McGeevor, P., and Murray, K.** (1993) *Students, Courses, and Jobs*. London, Jessica Kingsley Publishers Ltd.
- Brennan, J.L. and Mc Geevor, P.** (1988) *Graduates at Work*. London, Jessica Kingsley Publishers Ltd.
- Bulmer, M. and Rees, A.** (1996) *Citizenship Today*. London, UCL Press
- Burgess, T. and Pratt, J.** (1974) *Polytechnics: A Report*. London, Pitman
- Byrne, E.** (1975) The place of women in the changing pattern of further education; in Staff Development in Universities Programme (1975) *Women in Higher Education: A Collection of Conference Papers*. London, London University Teaching Methods Unit
- Callender, C. and Kemp, M.** (2000) *Student Finance: Income and Expenditure Survey*. London, PSI.
- Carvel, J.** (1997) Universities' high-risk gamble *Guardian: Higher Education Supplement 2* December p.ii Col.2.
- Carvel, J.** (1998) Students turn away from 'caring' degree courses *Guardian*, 12 June p.3 Col.1.

- Casey, B., Metcalf, H., Millward, N.** (1997) *Employers use of flexible labour*. London, Policy Studies Institute.
- Clifford, J. and Marcus, J.** (1986) *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*. London, University of California Press Ltd.
- Cockburn, C.** (1983) *Brothers: Male Dominance and Technological Change*. London, Pluto
- Coffey, A. and Atkinson, P.** (1996) *Making Sense of Qualitative Data: Complementary Research Strategies*. London, Sage Publications.
- Coffield, F.** (1996) *Higher Education and Lifelong Learning*, University of Newcastle, Department of Education with DfEE, ESRC and HEFCE
- Connell, R., Ashenden, D., Kessler, S. and Dowsett, G.** (1982) *Making the Difference: Schools, families and social division*. Sydney, George Allen and Unwin.
- Collins, R.** (1979) *The Credential Society*. New York, Academic Press
- Connolly, C.** (1994) Shades of Discrimination: University Entry Data 1990-2; in Hazelgrove, S. (Ed.) (1994) *The Student Experience*. Milton Keynes, Open University Press.
- Connor, H.** (1997) 'Graduate Employment Trends: Key Issues in the Labour Market of the Late 1990s and Beyond' in R.G. Burgess (Ed.) (1997) *Beyond the First Degree: Graduate Education, Lifelong Learning and Careers*. Buckingham, Open University Press
- Crequer, N.** (1989) The Passing of the Education Reform Act *Higher Education Quarterly* Vol: 43; No.1. pp. 3-19
- Croham, Lord** (1987) *Review of the University Grants Committee: Report of a committee under the chairmanship of Lord Croham*. London, HMSO.
- Crompton, R.** (1993) *Class and Stratification*. Cambridge, Polity Press
- Crompton, R. with Le Feuvre, N.** (1996) Paid employment and the changing system of gender relations: A cross-national comparison. *Sociology* Vol.30 No.3 pp.427-445
- CSU (Careers Services Unit)** (1999) *Moving On; short report: Graduate careers three years after graduation*. Manchester, CSU Limited.
- Denison, E.** (1969) 'Why growth rates differ: Postwar experience in nine western countries', Brookings Institution, Washington cited in Schultz, T. (1971) *Investment in Human Capital*. Free Press, New York.
- Denzin, N.K.** (1989) *Interpretive Biography: Qualitative Research Methods Series 17*. London, Sage.
- Denzin, N.K. and Lincoln, Y.S. (Eds)** (1998) *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks C.A., Sage
- Department for Education** (1993) *Student awards in England and Wales 1991/2*. London, DfE.

- Department for Education and Employment** (1997a) *Investing in the future: Supporting Students in Higher Education. A Summary of the Financial Support arrangements for those starting Higher Education in 1998/9*. London, HMSO
- Department for Education and Employment** (1997b) *Labour Market and Skill Trends 1998/9*. Nottingham, Skills and Enterprise Network
- Department for Education and Employment** (1998) *Financial Support for Students: A guide to grants, loans and fees in higher education 1998/9*. London, HMSO.
- Department for Education and Employment** (2000) *Financial Support for Higher Education Students in 2001/02*. London, DfEE.
- Dey, I.** (1993) *Qualitative Data Analysis: A User Friendly Guide for Social Scientists*. London, Routledge.
- Donaldson, L.** (1971) 'Social Class and the Polytechnics' *Higher Education Review*, Vol. 4 No.1 p.52-62 in Pratt, J. (1997) *The Polytechnics Experiment 1965-1992*. Buckingham, Open University Press.
- Du Bois Reymond, M.** (1998) 'I don't want to commit myself yet': Young People's Life Concepts *Journal of Youth Studies*. Vol. 1 No. 1 pp.63-79
- Dugdale, K.** (1997) 'Mass Higher Education: Mass Graduate Employment in the 1990s' in R.G. Burgess (Ed.) (1997) *Beyond the First Degree: Graduate Education, Lifelong Learning and Careers*. Buckingham, Open University Press.
- Dunleavy, P.** (1991) *Democracy, Bureaucracy and Public Choice: Economic Explanations in Political Science*. Hertfordshire, Harvester Wheatsheaf
- Durkheim, E.** (1987) *Suicide*. London, Routledge and Kegan Paul
- Ebbutt, D** (1987) 'Interviewing groups of students' in J. Powney and M. Watts (1987) *Interviewing in Educational Research*. London, Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd.
- Edwards, R.** (1993) *Mature women students: separating or connecting family and education* London, Taylor and Francis.
- Egerton, M. and Halsey, A.** (1993) Trends by socio-economic group and gender in access to higher education in Britain. *Oxford Review of Education*, Vol.19 No.2 pp.183-196
- Fairclough, N.** (1992) *Discourse and Social Change*. Cambridge, Polity Press
- Fevre, R., Rees, G. and Gorard, S.** (1999) 'Some Sociological Alternatives to Human Capital Theory and their Implications for Research on Post-compulsory Education and Training (1)' *Journal of Education and Work*, Vol.12 No.2 pp.117-140
- Fielding, N.** (1993) 'Qualitative Interviewing' in N. Gilbert, (1993) *Researching Social Life*. London, Sage Publications
- Fielding, N. and Lee, R.** (Ed.) (1995) *Computer Aided Qualitative Analysis: Theory, Methods and Practice*. London, Sage Publications.

- Finegold, D.; McFarland, L.; Richardson, W.** (Ed.) (1992) *Something Borrowed, Something Blue? A Study of the Thatcher Government's Appropriation of American Education and Training Policy*; Oxford Studies in Comparative Education Part 1, Vol 3 No.1.
- Finegold, D.; McFarland, L.; Richardson, W.** (Ed.) (1993) *Something Borrowed, Something Blue? A Study of the Thatcher Government's Appropriation of American Education and Training Policy* *Oxford Studies in Comparative Education* Part 2, Vol 3 No.1.
- Flunder, D.J.** (1970) 'The Management of Human Resources' in D.J. Robertson and L.C. Hunter (Ed.) (1970) *Labour Market Issues of the 1970s*. Edinburgh, Oliver and Boyd
- Foddy, W.** (1994) *Constructing Questions for Interviews and Questionnaires*. Cambridge, University Press.
- Fontana, A. and Frey, J.** (1998) 'Interviewing: The art of science.' in N. Denzin and Y. Lincoln (1998); *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials*. London, Sage Publications
- Fraser, D.**(1992) *The Evolution of the British Welfare State*. London, MacMillan Press
- Friedman, M. assisted by Friedman, R.** (1962) *Capitalism and Freedom*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press.
- Fuller, A. and Unwin, L.** (1999) Credentialism, National Targets, and the Learning Society: Perspectives on Educational Attainment in the UK Steel Industry. *Journal of Education Policy*, Vol. 14, No.6, pp.605-617.
- Fulton, O.** (1981) Principles and Policies in O. Fulton (Ed.) (1981) *Access to Higher Education*. Guildford, Society for Research into Higher Education
- Furlong, J.** (1991) Disaffected pupils: reconstructing the sociological perspective *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, Vol.12 No.3 pp.293-307
- Furlong, A. and Cartmel, F.** (1997) *Young People and Social Change: Individualisation and Risk in Late Modernity*. Buckingham, Open University Press
- Gallie, D.** (1991) Patterns of Skill Change: upskilling, deskilling, or the polarization of skills? *Work, Employment and Society* Vol.5 No.3 pp.315-51
- Gewirtz, S.** (1996) 'Market discipline versus comprehensive education: a case study of a comprehensive school struggling to survive in the education market place' in J. Ahier, B. Corin and M. Hales (Eds) *Diversity and Change, Education Policy and Selection*. London, Routledge.
- Giddens, A.** (1990) *The Consequences of Modernity* Cambridge, Polity Press
- Glennester, H. and Low, W.** (1990) 'Education and the Welfare State: Does it all add up?' in J. Hills (ed.) (1990) *The State of Welfare* Oxford, OUP.
- Goffee, R. and Scase, R.**(1996) *Corporate Realities: The dynamics of large and small organisations*. London, Routledge
- Goldthorpe, J.** (1980) *Social Mobility and Class Structure in Modern Britain*. Oxford, Clarendon Press.

- Goldthorpe, J.** (1983) Women and Class Analysis: In defence of the conventional view *Sociology*, Vol.17, No.4, pp.465-488.
- Goldthorpe, J.** (1987) *Social Mobility and Class Structure in Modern Britain*. Oxford, Clarendon Press
- Goldthorpe, J. and Hope, K.** (1974) *The Social Grading of Occupations: A new approach and Scale*. Oxford, Clarendon Press.
- Goodman, C.** (1993) *Roles for Graduates in the Twenty-First Century*. Cambridge, The Association of Graduate Recruiters.
- Gorard, S.; Rees, G.; Fevre, R; Furlong, J.** (1998a) Learning trajectories: travelling towards a learning society *International Journal Of Lifelong Education* Vol.17, No.6, pp.400-410
- Gorard, S.; Rees, G.; Renold, E.; Fevre, R,** (1998b) *Family influences on participation in lifelong learning* Working Paper 15, School of Education, Cardiff University.
- Gorard, S. and Taylor, C.** (2001) *Student Funding and Hardship in Wales: A Statistical Summary*, Cardiff, IIGSHF
- Green, F.** (2000) *New Technology and Demanding Jobs*. Manchester, Manchester Statistical Society.
- Grenfell, M. and James, D.** with Hodkinson, P., Reay, D., and Robbins, D. (1995) *Acts of Practical Theory: Bourdieu and Education*. Bristol, Falmer Press.
- Hakim, C.** (1996) *Key Issues in Women's Work: Female Heterogeneity and the Polarisation of Women's Employment*. London, NJ Athlone
- Hall, S.** (1983) 'The Great Moving Right Show' in S.Hall and M. Jaques (eds.) *The Politics of Thatcherism*. London, Lawrence and Wishart.
- Hall, S., Hobson, D., Lowe, A. and Willis, P. (eds)** (1980) *Culture, Media and Language: Working Papers in Cultural Studies 1972-1979*. London, Hutchinson.
- Halsey, A.H.** (1995) *Decline of Donnish Dominion: The British Academic Professions in the Twentieth Century*. Oxford, Clarendon Press.
- Halsey, A., Heath. A and Ridge, J.** (1980) *Origins and Destinations: Family, Class and Education in Modern Britain*. London, Clarendon.
- Halsey, A.H. and Trow, M.A.** (1971) *The British Academics*. London, Faber and Faber.
- Harris, L.** (1992) 'The UK economy at a Crossroads' in J. Allen and D.Massey *The Economy in Question* (1992). London, Sage Publications.
- Harvey, L., Moon, S. and Geall, V.** with Bower, R. (1997) *Graduates' Work: Organisational change and students' attributes*. Birmingham, University of Central England in Birmingham Centre for Research into Quality.
- Hayek, F.** (1986) *The Road to Serfdom*. London, Ark Paperbacks.
- Hazelgrove, S. (Ed.)** (1994) *The Student Experience*. Milton Keynes, Open University Press.

- Heath** (1981) *Social origins*. London, Fontana.
- Heath, A. and Britten, N.** (1984) 'Women's jobs do make a difference'. *Sociology* Vol 18, No. 4, pp. 475-490
- HMSO** (1981) *First Report from the Education, Science and Arts Committee: Expenditure Cuts In Higher Education: The Effects On The "Robbins Principle"*. London, HMSO
- HMSO** (1985) *The Development of Higher Education into the 1990s*. London, HMSO
- HMSO** (1987) *Higher Education: Meeting the Challenge*. London, HMSO
- HMSO** (1988) *Top-up Loans for Students*. London, HMSO
- HMSO** (1990) *Interdepartmental Review Highly Qualified People: Supply and Demand*. London, HMSO
- HMSO** (1992) *Further and Higher Education Act 1992*. London, HMSO
- HMSO** (1993) *The Administration of Student Loans*. London, HMSO
- HMSO** (1998a) *Teaching and Higher Education Act 1998*. London, HMSO
- HMSO** (1998b) *Student Loans (Education) Act 1998*. London, HMSO
- Hesketh, A.** (1995) *The influence of Finance on the Undergraduate Experience*, (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis: University of Lancaster)
- Hesketh, A.** (1996) *Beg, borrow or starve? How to finance your degree*. Lancaster, Innovation in Higher Education/Times Higher Publication.
- Hesketh, A.** (1999) Towards an economic sociology of the student financial experience of higher education. *Journal of Education Policy* 1999, Vol.14 No.4 pp.385-410.
- Higgins, M.** (1991) The Student Market. *Higher Education Quarterly* Vol.45 No.1. pp.14-24
- Higher Education Statistics Agency** (1996) *Data Report: Students in Higher Education Institutions 1995/6*. Cheltenham, Higher Education Statistics Agency.
- Higher Education Statistics Agency** (1999) *Data Report: Students in Higher Education Institutions 1998/9*. Cheltenham, Higher Education Statistics Agency.
- Hindiss, B.** (1988) *Choice, Rationality and Social Theory*. London, Unwin.
- Hodkinson, P.** (1998) Career decision making and the transition from school to work; in Grenfell, M. and James, D. (eds) with Hodkinson, P.; Reay, D.; and Robbins, D. (1998) *Bourdieu and Education: Acts of Practical Theory*. London, Falmer Press
- Hodkinson, P. and Bloomer, M.** (2000) Learning Careers: continuity and change in young people's dispositions to learning, *British Educational Research Journal* Vol. 26 No. 5 pp.583-597.
- Hodkinson, P. and Sparkes, A.** (1995) Markets and Vouchers: the inadequacy of individualist policies for vocational education and training in England and Wales; *Journal of Education Policy*, 1995, Vol.10, No.2, pp.189-207.
- Hodkinson, P., Sparkes, A. and Hodkinson, H.** (1996) *Triumphs and Tears: Young people, Markets and the transition from school to work*. London, David Fulton.

- Hogarth, T., Maguire, M., Pitcher, J., Purcell, K., Wilson, R.** (1997) *The participation of non-traditional students in higher education*. Bristol, HEFCE.
- Howarth, A.** (1991) Market Forces in Higher Education *Higher Education Quarterly*. Vol. 45 No.1. pp.5-13
- Hutchings, M. and Archer, L.** (2000) Bettering Yourself? Discourses of risk, cost and benefit in ethnically diverse, young working-class non-participants' constructions of higher education. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, Vol.21, No.4 pp. 345-367
- Hunter, L** (Ed.) (1970) *Labour Market Issues of the 1970s*. Edinburgh, Oliver & Boyd.
- Independent Committee of Inquiry into Student Finance** (2000) *Student Finance: Fairness for the Future*. Edinburgh, ICISF.
- Jackson, B. and Marsden, D.** (1968) *Education and the Working Class*. Middlesex, Penguin Books.
- James, D.** (1995) 'Mature studentship in higher education: beyond a 'species' approach' *British Journal of Sociology of Education*. Vol.16 No.4 pp.451-466.
- Jarrett Report** (1985) *Report of the Steering Committee for Efficiency in Universities*. London, CVCP.
- Jenkins, R.** (1992) *Pierre Bourdieu*. London, Routledge.
- Johnstone, B.** (1989) 'International Comparisons of Student Financial Support' in Woodhall, M. (Ed.) (1989) *Financial Support for Students: Grants, Loans or Graduate Tax*. London, Kogan Page in association with the Institute of Education.
- Kelle, U.** (1995) Introduction: An overview of Computer aided methods on qualitative research; in U.Kelle (Ed.) (1995) *Computer-Aided Qualitative Analysis: Theory, Method and Practice*. London, Sage Publications
- Kelsall, R.K.** (1970) *Six Years After*. Sheffield, Sheffield University Higher Education Research Unit Department of Sociological Studies.
- Kelsall, R.K.; Poole, A.; Kuhn, A.** (1972) *Graduates: The Sociology of an Elite*. London, Tavistock Publications.
- Kogan, M** (1975) *Educational Policy-Making: A Study of Interest Groups and Parliament*. London, Allen and Unwin.
- Kogan, M. and Kogan, D.** (1983) *The Attack on Higher Education*. London, Kogan Page.
- Laruea, A.** (1989) *Home Advantage: Social Class and Parental Intervention in Elementary Education*. Lewes, Falmer Press.
- Layard, R. and King, J. and Moser, C.** (1969) *The Impact of Robbins*. Middlesex, Penguin Books.
- Lofland, J.** (1971) *Analyzing Social Settings: A guide to qualitative observation and analysis*. California, Wadsworth Publishing.

- Lofland, J. and Lofland, L.** (1995) (3rd edition) *Analyzing Social Settings: A guide to qualitative observation and analysis*. California, Wadsworth Publishing.
- Lonika, M.** (1995) Grounded theory as an emerging paradigm for computer-assisted data analysis; in U.Kelle (Ed.) (1995) *Computer-Aided Qualitative Analysis: Theory, Method and Practice*. London Sage, Publications.
- Lupton, T. and Hamilton, R.** (1970) 'The Status of the Industrial Worker' in D.J. Robertson and L.C. Hunter (Ed.) (1970) *Labour Market Issues of the 1970s*. Edinburgh, Oliver & Boyd.
- Mac an Ghail, M.** (1994) *The Making of Men: Masculinities, Sexualities and Schooling*. Buckingham, Open University Press.
- MacFarland, L.** (1993) 'Top-up Student Loans: American Models of Student Aid and British Public Policy' in Finegold, D.; McFarland, L.; Richardson, W. (Ed.) (1993) 'Something Borrowed, Something Blue? A Study of the Thatcher Government's Appropriation of American Education and Training Policy' *Oxford Studies in Comparative Education* Part 2, Vol 3 No.1.
- MacLeod, D.** (1998) Outside Looking In; *Guardian: Higher Education Supplement* 24/3/98; p.i; Col:1.
- Maglen, L** (1990) 'Challenging the human capital orthodoxy: the education-productivity link re-examined' *Economic Record* 66, pp.281-294 cited in Marginson, S. (1997); *Markets in Education*. Sydney, Allen and Unwin.
- Majumdar, T.** (1983) *Investment in Education and Social Choice*. Cambridge, Cambridge U.P.
- Marginson, S.** (1997) *Markets in Education*. Sydney, Allen and Unwin.
- Marhar, C., Harker, R., and Wilkes, C.** (1990) 'The basic theoretical position', in R. Harker, C. Mahar, and C. Wilkes (eds.) *An introduction to the work of Pierre Bourdieu - The Practice of Theory*. Basingstoke, MacMillan.
- Marris, P.** (1964) *The Experience of Higher Education*. London, Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Marshall, T.H.** (1964) *Class, Citizenship, and Social Development*. New York, Doubleday.
- Marshall, G., Rose, D., Newby, H., and Vogler, C.** (1989) *Social Class in Modern Britain*. London, Unwin Hyman.
- Martin Committee** (1964) Tertiary Education in Australia, Volumes 1 & 2; Australian Universities Committee, Melbourne cited in Marginson, S. (1997) *Markets in Education*; Sydney, Allen and Unwin.
- Martinelli, A. and Smelser, N.** (eds) (1990) Economy and society: overviews in economic sociology *Current Sociology*, Vol. 38 No.2/3
- May, T.** (1993) *Social Research: Issues, Methods and Process*. Buckingham, Open University Press.

- McDonough, P.** (1996) *Choosing Colleges: How Social Class and Schools Structure Opportunity*. New York, State University of New York Press
- McPherson, A.** (1991) Widening the Access Argument; in T. Schuller (1991) *The Future of Higher Education*. Buckingham, SRHE/OU Press.
- Metcalf, H.** (1997) *Class and Higher Education: the participation of young people from lower social classes*. London, Council for Industry And Higher Education.
- Metcalf, H., Modood, T., Virdee, S.** (1997) *Asian Self Employment: The interaction of Culture and Economics in England*. London, Policy Studies Institute.
- Miles, M. and Huberman, A.** (1994) *Qualitative Data Analysis: A sourcebook of new methods*. London, Sage Publications.
- Modood, T.** (1993) The number of ethnic minority students in higher education: Grounds for some optimism *Oxford Review of Education*, Vol.19, No.2 pp.167-182
- Modood, T. and Shiner, M.** (1994) *Ethnic Minorities and higher education: why are there differential rates of entry?* London, Policy Studies Institute.
- Modood, T., Beishon, S. and Virdee, S.** (1994) *Changing Ethnic Identities*. London, Policy Studies Institute.
- Modood, T., Berthoud, T., Lakey, J., Nazroo, J., Smith, P., Virdee, S., and Beishon, S.** (1997) *Ethnic Disadvantage in Britain*. London, Policy Studies Institute.
- Moore, P.** (1987) University Financing *Higher Education Quarterly* Vol.41 No.1. pp. 25-42
- Moore, P.** (1989) Marketing Higher Education *Higher Education Quarterly* Vol. 43 No.2. pp.108-124
- Murphy, J.** (1994) 'The Graduate from Mass Higher Education', in Hazelgrove, S. (Ed.) (1994); *The Student Experience*. Milton Keynes, Open University Press.
- Nash, R.** (1990) 'Bourdieu on Education and Social and Cultural Reproduction' *British Journal of Sociology of Education*. Vol.11 pp.431-47.
- National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education** (1997a) *Higher Education in the Learning Society*. London, NCIHE
- National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education** (1997b) *Higher Education in the Learning Society: Report 5 Widening participation in higher education by ethnic minorities, women and alternative students*. London, NCIHE.
- National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education** (1997c) *Higher Education in the Learning Society: Report 6 Widening participation in higher education by students from lower socio-economic groups and students with disabilities*. London, NCIHE.
- National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education** (1997d) *Higher Education in the Learning Society: Report 2 Full and part-time students in higher education: their experiences and expectations*. London, NCIHE.
- Office for National Statistics (ONS)** (1995) *Social Trends 25*. London, ONS.

- ONS** (1999) *Social Trends 29*. London, ONS.
- ONS** (2000) *Social Trends 30*. London, ONS.
- Oakes Report** (1978) *Report of the Working Group on the management of higher education in the maintained sector* HMSO London
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development OECD** (1985) *Education in Modern Society*. Paris, OECD
- OECD** (1992) *From Higher Education to Employment* (4). Paris, OECD
- OECD** (2001) *Cities and Regions in the New Learning Economy: Education and Skills*. Paris, OECD Publications.
- Parsons, D. and Marshall, V.** (1996) *Skills, Qualifications and Utilisation: A Research Review*. Sheffield, DfEE.
- Pascall, G. and Cox, R.** (1993) *Women returning to higher education* The society for research into Higher Education Buckingham Open University Press,
- Pearson, R and Pike, G.** (1989) *The Graduate Labour Market in the 1990s* Institute of Manpower Studies. Brighton, University of Sussex.
- Pierre, J.** (1995) 'The Marketisation of the State: Citizens, Consumers, and the Emergence of the Public Market' in Peters, B.G. and Savoie, D.J. (Ed.) (1995) *Governance in a Changing Environment*. Canada, Canadian Centre for Management Development.
- Phillips, L.** (1996) 'Rhetoric and the Spread of the Discourse of Thatcherism' *Discourse and Society*, 7 (2) pp. 209-41
- Phillips, L.** (1998) Hegemony and Political Discourse: The lasting impact of Thatcherism *Sociology* Nov.98; Vol.32; No.4, pp.847-867.
- Plant, R. and Barry, N.** (1990) *Citizenship and Rights in Thatchers Britain: Two Views*. London, Institute of Economic Affairs Health and Welfare Unit.
- PCAS** (1993) *Annual Report and Statistical Supplement*. Cheltenham, PCAS.
- Polyani, K.** (1957) *The Great Transformation*. Boston, Beacon Press.
- Powell, B.** (1992) *Securing Adult Learning: Practical Strategies for Implementing the Further and Higher Education Act 1992* The National institute of Adult Continuing Education.
- Powney, J. and Watts, M.** (1987) *Interviewing in Educational Research*. London, Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd.
- Pratt, J.** (1997) *The Polytechnics Experiment 1965-1992*. Buckingham, Open University Press.
- Pratt, J. and Burgess, T.** (1974) *Polytechnics: A report*. London, Pitman.
- Pritchard, R.** (1994) Government Power in British Higher Education *Studies in Higher Education*, Vol 19, No.3. pp.253-265,

- Purcell, K. and Pitcher, J.** (1996a) *Great Expectations: The new Diversity of Graduate Skills and Aspirations*. Manchester, Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services (AGCAS)/Higher Education Careers Service Unit (CSU)
- Purcell, K. and Pitcher, J.** (1996b) *Gender Divisions in the Labour Market: Gender differences in graduate transitions from higher education to employment*. Institute of Warwick, Institute for Employment Research
- Purcell, K. and Pitcher, J.** (1998) Diverse Expectations and Access to Opportunities: is there a graduate labour market? *Higher Education Quarterly* Vol.52, No.2, pp.179-203
- Purcell, K., Pitcher, J. and Simm, C.** (1999) *Working Out? Graduates' Early Experiences of the Labour Market*. Manchester, CSU.
- Quality Support Centre** (1996) UK Higher Education in the 1990s, Diversity: Too much or too little? *A Special Digest of the Quality Support Centre: Higher Education Digest*. Milton Keynes, Open University Press.
- Ramsden, B.** (1997) Paper from a seminar on Widening Participation in Education held on 27 March 1997
- Rasekoala, E.** (1997) The black hole in the science ranks *Times Education Supplement*, January 24, p.12
- Reay, D.** (1998a) 'Cultural reproduction: Mothers' involvement in their children's primary schooling' in Grenfell, M. and James, D. (eds) with Hodkinson, P.; Reay, D.; and Robbins, D. (1998) *Bourdieu and Education: Acts of Practical Theory*. London, Falmer Press.
- Reay, D.** (1998b) *Class Work: Mothers' Involvement in their Children's Primary Schooling*. London, UCL Press.
- Rees, G. and Fielder, S.** (1992) The Services Economy: Subcontracting and the new employment relations: contract catering and cleaning *Work, Employment and Society*, Vol.6 No.3, pp 347-368.
- Rees, G.; Fevre, R.; Furlong, J; Gorad, S.** (1997) 'History; place and the learning society: towards a sociology of lifetime learning' *Journal of Education Policy*, Vol.12, No.6, pp. 485-497
- Rees, G. and Stroud, D.** (2001) 'Creating A Mass System Of Higher Education: Participation, The Economy And Citizenship' in J.Furlong (Ed.) *Education, Reform And The State* London RoutledgeFalmer
- Rees, G., Williamson, H., Istance, D.** (1996) 'Status Zero': A study of jobless school-leavers in South Wales *Research Papers in Education* Vol.11, No.2, pp. 219-235
- Rees, T.** (1992) *Women and the labour market*. London, Routledge.
- Roberts, K** (1995) *Youth and Employment in Modern Britain*. Oxford, Oxford University Press.

- Robbins, Lord** (1963) *Higher Education: Report of the Committee appointed by the Prime Minister under the Chairmanship of Lord Robbins*. London, HMSO.
- ‘St.David’s University’** (1997) *Annual Report 1997/8 ‘St.David’s City’ ‘St.David’s University Press’*.
- Salter, B. and Tapper, E.** (1981) *Education, Politics and the State: The theory and practice of educational change* London Grant McIntyre
- Salter, B. and Tapper, E.** (1994) *The State and Higher Education*. Essex, The Woburn Press
- Saville, A.** (1997) ‘Higher Education without the State’ in Saville, A. and Tooley, J. (1997) *The Debate on Higher Education: Challenging the Assumptions*. London, The Institute of Economic Affairs.
- Scase, R.** (1992) *Class*. Buckingham, Open University Press.
- Scott, P.** (1979) *What Future for Higher Education?* London, Fabian Society.
- Scott, P.** (1986) A chorus of disapproval; reaction to the Green Paper on higher education *Higher Education Quarterly* Vol.1 No.3. pp.163-170
- Scott, P.** (1995) *The Meanings of Mass Higher Education* Buckingham Open University Press
- Schultz, T.** (1961) *Investment in Human Capital* New York Free Press
- Seidel, J. and Kelle, U.** (1995) Different Functions of coding in the analysis of textual data, in U. Kelle (Ed.) (1995) *Computer Aided Qualitative Analysis: Theory, Methods and Practice*. London, Sage Publications.
- Seidel, J.** (1991) Method and Madness in the Application of Computer Technology to Qualitative Data Analysis in N. Fielding and R. Lee (Ed.) (1995) *Computer Aided Qualitative Analysis: Theory, Methods and Practice*. London, Sage Publications.
- Sellitz, C., Jahoda, M., Deutsch, M. and Cook, S.** (1964) *Research Methods in Social Relations* Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York; in Silverman, D. (1993); *Interpreting Qualitative Data: Methods for analysing talk, text and interaction*. London, Sage Publications.
- Sennet, R. and Cobb, J.** (1972) *The Hidden Injuries of Class*. New York, Norton.
- Shattock, M.** (Ed.) (1983) *The Structure and Governance of Higher Education*. Guildford, Society for Research into Higher Education.
- Shattock, M.** (1998) Dearing on Governance *Higher Education Quarterly* Vol.52 No.1. pp.35-47
- Silverman, D.** (1993) *Interpreting Qualitative Data: Methods for analysing talk, text and interaction*. London, Sage Publications.
- Skeggs, B.** (1997) *Formations of Class and Gender*. London, Sage Publications.

- Smith, D. Bocock, J. Scott, P.** (1996) *Standard Systems, Non standard Students: Experiences of Progression from Further to Higher Education*. Leeds, Centre for Policy Studies in Education.
- Smithers, A. and Robinson, P.** (1996) *Trends in Higher Education*. London, CIHE.
- Spradley, J** (1979) *The Ethnographic Interview*. New York, Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Stanworth, M** (1984) 'Women and class analysis: a reply to Goldthorpe' *Sociology*, Vol.18 pp.159-170.
- Steedman, H. and Green, A.** (1996) *Widening Participation in Further Education and Training : A survey of the issues*. London, Further Education Funding Council.
- Stroud, D.** (2001) *Student Financial Hardship in Further Education and Higher Education: A Research Review with special reference to Wales*. Cardiff, IIGSHF
- Struass, A.** (1962) Transformations of identity, in A.Rose (ed.) *Human Behaviour and social Processes: An Interactionist Approach*. London, Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Student Loan Company** (1993) *Annual Report*. Glasgow, SLC.
- Student Loan Company** (1996) *Annual Report*. Glasgow, SLC.
- Tapper, E. and Salter, B.** (1998) The Dearing Report and the Maintenance of Academic Standards: Towards a new Academic Corporatism *Higher Education Quarterly* Vol.52 No.1 pp. 22-34
- Taubman, P. and Wales, T.** (1974) *Higher Education and Earnings: College as an Investment and Screening Device*. New York, McGraw-Hill.
- Teichlar, U.** (1988) *Changing Patterns of the Higher Education System: The Experience of Three Decades*. London, Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Tesch, R.** (1990) *Qualitative Research: Analysis Types and Software Tools*. London, Falmer.
- Tett, L.** (2000) 'I'm working class and proud of it' - gendered experiences of non-traditional participants in higher education' *Gender and Education*, Vol 12 No.2 pp.183-194
- Tight, M.** (1998) Lifelong Learning: Opportunity or Compulsion *British Journal of Education Studies* Vol.46, No.5, pp.251-263
- Thurow, L.** (1983) *Dangerous Currents: The state of economics*. Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Tooley, J** (1997) 'Dearing's outdated dirigisme' *Times Higher Education Supplement* 8 August.
- Travis, A.** (2000) How gap between rich and poor has grown in *The Guardian* May 11 p.8; col.1
- UCCA** (1993) *Annual report and Statistical Supplement*. Cheltenham, UCCA.
- UCAS** (1995) *Qualified Applicants: Those who did not enter higher education: Statistical Survey*. Cheltenham, UCAS.
- UCAS** (1998) *Annual report and Statistical Supplement*. Cheltenham, UCAS.

- UCAS** (2000) *Annual report and Statistical Supplement*. Cheltenham, UCAS.
- University Grants Committee** (1970) *First Employment of University Graduates 1967-68*. London, HMSO.
- University Grants Committee** (1973) *First Destination of University Graduates 1971-72*. London, HMSO.
- University Grants Committee** (1976) *First Destination of University Graduates 1974-75*. London, HMSO.
- Wagner, L.** (1998) The Future Funding of Higher Education *Higher Education Quarterly* Vol.52 No.1 pp.64-76
- Walford, G.** (1991) 'Changing Relationship between Government and Higher Education in Britain' in Neave, G. and van Vught, F. (Ed.) (1991) *Prometheus Bound: The Changing Relationship between Government and Higher Education in Western Europe*. Oxford, Pergamon Press.
- Waldinger, R., Aldrich, H. and Ward, R.** (1990) *Ethnic Entrepreneurs*. Thousand Oaks, CA., Sage Publications.
- Walkerdine, V.** (1989a); Femininity as Performance; *Oxford Review of Education* Vol.15 No.3 pp.267-279.
- Walkerdine, V.** (1989b) *Counting Girls Out*. London, Virago Press.
- Watson, D and Taylor, R** (1998) *Lifelong learning and the university: a post Dearing agenda*. London, Falmer.
- Weaver, A. and Atkinson, P.** (1995) From coding to hyper text: Strategies for micro-computing and Qualitative Data Analysis, *Studies in Qualitative Methodology* No.5 pp.141 - 168
- Webb, S. Davies, P. Williams, J. Green, P. Thompson, A.** (1994) *Alternative Entry to Higher Education: Summary Report*. Leicester, NIACE.
- Weber, M** (1948) *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, edited with an introduction by H. Gerth and C. W. Mills. London, Routledge and Kegan Paul
- Weil, S.** (1986) 'Non-traditional learners within traditional higher education institutions: discovery and disappointment. *Studies in Higher Education*, Vol. 11 No. 3 pp.219-235
- Weil, S.** (1989) 'From the language of observation to the language of experience: studying the perspectives of diverse adults in higher education'. *Journal of Access Studies*, Vol.3 No.1 pp.17-43.
- Weitzman, E. and Miles, M.** (1995) *Computer programs for Qualitative data analysis: A software handbook*. Thousand Oaks CA, Sage Publications.
- Willman, P.** (1989) Human Resource Management in the Service Sector in P.Jones (Ed) (1989) *Management in Service Industries*. London, Pitman.

- Williams, G.** (1990) 'Higher Education' in M. Flude and M. Hammer *The Education reform Act 1988: Its origins and Implications*. London, Falmer Press.
- Williamson, B.** (1986) Priority to the power of ideas: an evaluation of the Green Paper on higher education *Higher Education Quarterly* Vol.1 No.3 pp. 271-280
- Willis, P.** (1977) *Learning to Labour*. London, Kogan Page.
- Wolcott, H.** (1995) *Transforming Qualitative Data: Description, Analysis and Interpretation*. Thousand Oaks CA, Sage Publications.
- Woodhall, M.** (Ed.) (1989) *Financial Support for Students: Grants, Loans or Graduate Tax*. London, Kogan Page in association with the Institute of Education University of London.
- Woodhall, M.** (1989) 'International Experience of International Support for Students: recent trends and Developments' in Woodhall, M. (Ed.) (1989) *Financial Support for Students: Grants, Loans or Graduate Tax*. London, Kogan Page in association with the Institute of Education University of London.
- Young, M.** (1998) *The Curriculum of the Future: from the 'new sociology of education' to a critical theory of learning*. London, Falmer Press.
- Ziman, J.** (1991) Academic Science as a System of Markets *Higher Education Quarterly* Winter Vol. 45 No.1. pp.41-60
- Zinneker, J.** (1990) 'What does the future hold? Youth and socio-cultural change in the FRG' in L.Chisholm, P.Büchner, H.-H Krüger and P.Brown (Eds) *Childhood, Youth and Social Change: a comparative perspective*. London, Falmer.