

Young People's Access to Employment
in Disadvantaged Communities in
Wales

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April 2022

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This thesis is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of:

Doctor of Philosophy

Summary

The result of a collaboration between the ESRC and the People and Work charity, this thesis explores the narratives of working-class young people as they share their stories and experiences of navigating their personal journey through the education system and into the world of work. The research investigates how young people from working class households fare in gaining employment in local contexts of poor work and job shortages, particularly in one of the most disadvantaged communities in Wales and to understand this from the young person's point of view. This research, based in a community in the heart of the South Wales Valleys, adds to a wealth of literature documenting the decline of the once industrial communities in South Wales and explores the narratives of the young people who live in a situation of poverty and disadvantage.

The thesis argues that these young people's access to employment is not a straightforward, linear progression from school to employment. Rather, it is marked by unpredictability, impacting upon aspirations that change with time and are made uncertain by a future that is not always imaginable. Class is the silent, salient narrative threading its way through the discourses of aspiration, transition and future thinking, as conceptual underpinnings of community, place and space are interwoven.

As an ethnographic enquiry, the research utilises a mixed method approach. It combines secondary data analysis of existing charity data with qualitative data, including ethnographic field notes, observations and biographical narrative interviews with 15 young people who took part in the study. A thematic analysis was used to analyse the young people's narratives.

The thesis concludes that the policy which understands working class aspiration as a deficit to be filled, is misplaced. Rather emphasis should be placed on the support for a politics of hope and possibility.

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Acknowledgements

These acknowledgements I have pondered over for some time, and yet I still don't feel I can find the words to do justice here. This thesis has taken a village to see it come to completion and I would like to thank everyone who has made this thesis possible.

First and foremost, a huge thank you to each of the 15 young people who have made this study possible. Thank you for your time in meeting with me and your honesty as you shared your story with me. I hope that this thesis does you justice and that your voices shine through these pages. Thank you also to the wider community of Brynhaul who welcomed me into their homes and made me feel a part of the community. Thank you to everyone who worked in the regeneration office for sharing your time with me and making me feel like part of the team.

Thank you to my supervisors Prof. Bella Dicks and Prof. Valerie Walkerdine for your unwavering support and for believing in me even through the times I did not believe in myself. Thank you for encouraging me to keep on questioning. Your knowledge, signposting and encouragement are what has carried me through this academic journey. Thank you for your patience and encouragement throughout this process. I also want to thank Dr. Dawn Mannay for being my progress reviewer, challenging my ideas and helping me explore them more fully. I also include Dr. Sarah Lloyd-Jones in my supervisory team, thank you for giving up so much of your time to come to supervision meetings and for sharing invaluable information and knowledge of the project and the research site. Thank you also to everyone in the Grad office for their kindness and help.

This research is funded by the ESRC and also People and Work. Without this funding, this research would not have happened. I am incredibly grateful to have been afforded this opportunity. I would like to thank everyone at People and Work for your willingness and openness in supporting this research.

I would next like to acknowledge next the immeasurable support I have received from family and friends throughout the PhD journey. I have been blessed with amazing family and friends whom without this would never have been possible. As I

write this I am still not sure how I can put into words what the support of family and friends has meant, and the difference it has made to the journey.

My husband Hywel, you have been my absolute rock. You have encouraged me and supported me in every way within your power. You have been my biggest encourager and my most honest critic. You have been the best partner I could have asked for to travel this journey with me, experiencing all of the highs and the lows throughout the journey together. I look forward to our next adventure!

My parents Karen and Paul Morgan, you have selflessly supported us as a family throughout this time (and always). You have encouraged me to dream, to hope and to never give up. I cannot thank you enough for the values you have embodied of hard work and determination which I hope have rubbed off on me too. Thank you for every minute of your time you have given to look after Anwen and for every meal cooked. The list of things I need to thank you for is endless. I hope you know just how much I value your unconditional and constant love and support.

Anwen, my beautiful daughter, you joined me during the PhD journey. You have continually reminded me of what is important and have given me a whole new way of seeing things. Through Covid, you became my full time colleague and I will treasure the memories of that time, of us reading and writing together. Yes Anwen, I have finished my chapter now. Have you finished yours?

It is so true that good friends are worth their weight in gold! Jan Stephens, you are a colleague who became a good friend. Without your encouragement over the past 9 years, the thought of me doing a PhD would have forever remained a dream rather than a reality. Jan you have always seen something in me that I cannot see myself. Thank you for all of your support and guidance throughout the PhD process.

I owe heart-felt thanks to too many friends to name here but some friends I would like to mention are: Sarah Kingdon, thank you for providing Anwen with a toucan box every month since we went into lock down, giving me more time to work on this thesis. Sarah Passmore, thank you for committing to run with me three times a week since Covid restrictions allowed, helping me to find some head space and listening to my constant discussions around this thesis. Dr. Aimee Ridsdale, one of my oldest

childhood friends, thank you for being there, for understanding and knowing what I am thinking and how I am feeling without me needing to say a word. To My PhD friends in the office, thank you for your support and the trips to the pub. A special thank you to my fellow PhD friend Kasope Wolffs, for understanding the complexities of navigating writing a PhD thesis whilst parenting a young child. Thank you also to my church family for continually considering me in your prayers and for reminding me the so many times I have needed to be reminded, to have a little faith!

In loving memory of my grandad
Howard Morgan,
Who I lost during the first year of my studentship.
I hope I have done you proud.

For My daughter

Anwen Stevens

Born during the second year of my studentship

My happy, funny, kind, clever, darling girl, you are and always will be light and hope to all who love you. I pray that your roots grow deep, anchoring you home with those who love you, whilst you grow your wings to fly and dream the biggest of dreams. As my mam told me, and as her mam, Vera Tozer, told her, I urge you to never forget where you are from, because where you are from is precisely what has got you to where you are. That is always to be valued!

1. CHAPTER ONE: Introduction

1.1 Introducing this research

This thesis explores the narratives of working class young people, their stories and experiences of navigating their personal journey through the education system and into the world of work. In this political age of individualism, amid the primacy of social capital as the method for communal investigation, working class communities have been made to appear lacking, with a deficit view of communities within ex-industrial localities predominant in the literature.

These communities were once the bedrock of hard work, the economic fortune on which the rest of the economy was built. In many of the ex-industrial towns and villages across the UK, the local employment opportunities have never been replaced, the heritage of industrial work has all but been stripped away, leaving only the people, the ex-working class population; people and communities, being forever told that it's their fault: their fault if they don't have jobs, their fault if their children's educational capacity and attainment is substandard and their fault if they don't aspire to more.

In Wales, the reductionist policies of the past two decades, notably those associated with the 'Communities First'¹ project, have heightened the discourse around 'disadvantaged communities'. The array of 'poverty porn' (Jensen 2014, p. 4) on TV available on demand has heightened and reinforced the stereotypes of a leeching working class: an idealised class of people unable to work even if they are able to find it, unable to really imagine a future; unable to apply themselves in school because their parents do not value education, unable to achieve the grades needed to escape.

¹ Welsh Government's long term strategy implemented from 2001 until 2018. Welsh government presented this as its flagship program for aiming to "improve the living conditions and prospects for people in the most disadvantaged communities across Wales" (Welsh Government, 2001. Pp,1).

I argue that decades of individualisation have stripped away any positive view of 'working class communities'. All while suggesting that the people who find themselves in this situation, at the centre of these government policies, are expected to make use of social capital and education to further their own life course trajectories and if they fail to achieve this it is simply because they or their communities, are deficient. It is in this instance then, that 'the subject has to be able to cope without strong community routes or ties' (Walkerdine et al 2001, p. 3).

This of course means that in order for one to make it alone, to rise in society, there is a requirement to, at least in part, to distance oneself from those who do not strive for such mobility, those who do not feel the need to raise their aspirations.

Class is the silent, salient narrative which threads its way through the discourses of aspiration, transition and future thinking. Its most obvious manifestation being the utter lack of understanding exhibited by the middle classes and the elite concerning the life of the communities and individuals they seek to change. Value sets of the working class, often found within the working class communities are at best, not understood and at their worst, neglected. Pathologizing nostrums such as 'deficit community' simply serve to conceal this neglect and this failure to investigate.

This thesis argues that young people's access to employment from a disadvantaged community in Wales, is not straight forward one. It is not often a linear progression from school to employment. Aspirations change with time. Lives and communities are marked by unpredictability and uncertainty and the future becomes something not always possible to imagine.

1.2 Details of this research

This PhD studentship was co-funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and People and Work (P&W) an independent charity working in Wales. The charity 'seeks to make a positive difference to life in Wales' (People and Work 2021) and has two core aims which are:

1. to promote the value of education and learning as a tool for tackling inequalities and promoting employment, through a programme of community based action research projects.
2. to undertake commissioned research and evaluation work for the public and third sectors in Wales addressing inequalities in areas such as education, health and employment (P&W 2021).

The charity has delivered a number of projects in Wales over the past few decades, as well as contributing to academic study and Welsh Government policy. Much of the charity's work has been community based and within the context of community and education, aims to 'equip staff and community members with education and life skills which in turn will influence the lives of others, thus helping to break cyclical poverty' (P&W 2021). One such project is explored in this thesis. To protect the anonymity of the place and the young people involved, the name of the project and the place will for the purpose of this thesis, be termed the School Community Linkup (SCL).

The next chapter section provides details of this project and why it is explored in this study before outlining the details of this study.

1.2.1 People and Work: School Community Linkup

The original evolution of the project came about when People and Work (P&W) were approached by the head of the Communities First team in Brynhaul concerned about a kind of educational deficit occurring in the secondary school. As the SCL project

began, 50% of the adult population in the area had no qualifications at all. P&W state that it was the aim of the project to 'encourage, enthuse and excite families and local communities with the life changing possibilities available through education leading to better employment, health and well-being' (P&W 2021). The program ran from 2009 until 2015 and was funded by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation. In conversations with the charity concerning why they felt there was a need for this programme to be delivered in Brynhaul, they noted how the primary schools believed their brightest stars were disappearing when they got their GCSE results and wanted to know what was happening to them. P&W started with a baseline study in Brynhaul, looking at the statistics in relation to scores and outcomes. At this time, 50% of the adult population in Brynhaul had no qualifications at all. After receiving a small grant from the Welsh Government, P&W spent a four year period doing a baseline study in Brynhaul, looking in detail at the statistics of the two primary schools in the area and building a picture of the community. In these discussions it became clear that for the community, education was perceived as a low priority.

In conversation with the secondary school into which the two primary schools fed, P&W found that Brynhaul pupils were seen as a problem and the school's interest was focussed on behaviour. P&W brought together a steering group that involved the two head teachers of the primary schools, the head teacher of the secondary school and some local people. They found that the primary school results were not very good. From the discussions with the community the key things that emerged concerned the relevance of school and the way that young people thought about education. Concern was also expressed regarding post school opportunities and the community's belief that once the young people left school, there was very little for them. Once all of the baseline data had been gathered, the CSL programme was then developed with the Communities First team in Brynhaul.

A programme was designed, that would enable P&W to follow two cohorts of children, one from the last year of the primary school year 6, through to year 11, and

the other from year 7 through to year 12. The aim was that P&W could work with the children and their families to try to understand this correlation between poverty and education, but also to impact on it as well. The idea was that P&W would monitor the progress of the children in the cohorts in terms of academic attainment, what was happening to them in school, and what was occurring in the community. A woman from the Brynhaul estate was employed as part of the programme, to be engaged in a community activist capacity. Her role was to be the link between families, school and community. She worked full time and the intention was that she would build up relationships with the students. The core over-arching structure within CSL was 'can we make Brynhaul more focused on learning as a positive thing?' because the baseline study had evidenced a community culture that was almost anti-learning (My fieldwork notes: meeting with Charity Director).

To support families in making the most of the opportunities provided by formal education, the CSL project utilised an approach of informal education. It was hoped this would provide a 'possible way to break the cycle of low educational attainment often found in disadvantaged areas' (P&W 2021). In reality this meant that the project worker's work was really focused on a small number of families, ones who would broadly be described as being in the school and behaviour focused groups. As such a lot of her work was around helping parents to get their children to attend school. The project worker had a base in the secondary school and in the local community and she had an intensive role in supporting parents in getting their children into school and managing their behaviour. Poor literacy levels were also picked up very early on and the project worker took on a support role with secondary school children from Brynhaul particularly those whose reading level would cause difficulty in accessing the curriculum.

After three years, the project worker left the position for another job and a new project worker was recruited. The second project worker, had a different focus to her predecessor as the young people were now older. It now felt more appropriate for

the new project worker to be engaged in academic support, with a focus on things like work experience and future planning for progression routes to further education or higher education. The second project worker also enabled quite a lot of additional support of the GCSE work, there were some young people who retook a maths GCSE five times. The programme also provided a law tutor because the law A level course was being taught so badly at the school.

For these reasons the second project worker's role was much more focused on immediacy and the logistics of academic needs: printing school work, providing study space, as well as the practicalities of taking young people to interviews at colleges, taking them to look at colleges or on visits to university open days. The project worker also helped with application forms and UCAS forms.

1.2.2 People and Work and a PhD Studentship

It is the intention of this collaboration between People and Work and a doctoral studentship that the study would find out where the 43 young people were now in their transitions from school to employment and how their aspirations and dreams had changed along the way. The collaboration aimed to map out the current positioning of these 43 young people, to find out whether they had progressed through Further Education, Higher Education, training, employment or work experience opportunities. From the first this project had a keen interest in understanding these life experiences from the young person's viewpoint. It is from this perspective that this current study seeks to understand of the impact of this SCL project on the lives of the young people engaged with it.

It is intended that this study will provide an academic presentation of learning from the SCL project for People and Work.

1.3 Details of this study

This study is based in a community in the heart of the South Wales Valleys. It is located on a housing estate developed in the 1950s on the outskirts of a large town. This study utilises a mixed method approach of both secondary data analysis of data previously obtained by the charity through the SCL Programme, coupled with the analysis of qualitative data obtained through empirical research on the part of the researcher.

The qualitative data includes ethnographic field notes, observations and biographical narrative interviews with 15 of the young people who are members of the cohorts of 43. Much of the design frame for this PhD has been prescribed by the secondary data gained through the collaboration including the research site itself. This will be detailed further in chapter 3.

This thesis adds to a wealth of literature documenting the decline of the once industrial communities in South Wales and explores the narratives of the young people who find themselves living in a situation of poverty and disadvantage.

1.4 Research aims and objectives

The main goal of this research has been to investigate how young people from unskilled households fare in gaining employment in a local context of poor work and job shortages. To this end the research tried to 'get into the shoes of the young people'; to really understand how conditions are lived and experienced by these individuals as they move from their early formative years, up to the time of their transition into employment. To explore the subjective realities of these young people, an awareness of how their families, and the family context itself, impacts upon them. It is also important to understand how young people experience their school years given that clearly figures regarding attendance and attainment are not

sufficient to explain their everyday experiences. Teachers' responses and interactions shape habitus and are of analytical interest. Additionally, young people are a product of their history, which impacts on their educational and employment trajectories. This research has utilised both empirical research and secondary data to enable this aim to be achieved. The research questions established for this study were:

- What particular challenges do young people from disadvantaged communities and unskilled households face in transitioning into employment?
- How are these challenges actually experienced by young people in their everyday lives and concrete social situations – in families, peer-groups and neighbourhoods?
- How can accessing real-life, close-up contextual factors allow us to understand these challenges?
- What aspirations do young people from disadvantaged communities express, and how can the empirical work undertaken inform the current policy-agenda on young people, poverty and aspirations?

This thesis therefore presents itself as a counter narrative to the deficit view of working class community. In that view the overwhelming emphasis is upon the individual divorced from any context. In these pages however, you will read the voices of the young people who took part in the study. Voices which provide insight and understanding of the every day lived experiences growing up in a disadvantaged community.

1.5 The Story of Roots and Wings

Central to this thesis is an analogy of roots and wings. I find that it helps to visualise the inter-connectedness of affective relationships within working class communities. To imagine that each of us have roots, that grow and develop from birth. That we each have these roots that grow deeper with time, entwining with the roots of others, as we forge connections with people and places.

In my mind, the more these roots become more entwined with those of others the more we look to others for support and solidarity, empathy and understanding. And of course they are further developed and strengthened through connections with others almost anchoring one to the place in which they find belonging and meaning. Each person then also has wings, as unique to each other as our finger prints. I'm proposing here that these wings are socially constructed in the same way as roots. But the wings are shaped by what we see around us, our experiences, our beliefs, hopes and dreams. Every one grows wings but every set is unique and the roots affect the way in which these wings are utilized.

1.6 The Estate on a Hill: Brynhaul

This section illustrates the research site, provides a descriptive account of the area, some information on its history and highlights some of the key statistics in relation to this research project.

This research has been carried out in a council estate in the South Wales Valleys, which for the purpose of this study, has been given the pseudonym Brynhaul. Brynhaul is a small village about two miles uphill from a large South Wales valley town, according to the county council plans, the development of housing on the site commenced in 1954 (Anonymous 1955, p. 7). At that time the proposed estate was expected to extend to about 100 acres on completion. The original plans noted that much of the area on which this new council housing was to be built, was too steep for building. As a result the plans stated that such land as was too steep for building, and was to be preserved as open space or woodland (Anonymous 1955, p. 7).

The plans also noted that in addition to housing, 'provision for schools, shopping areas, open spaces, allotments and other facilities appropriate to an area of this size will also be made' (Anonymous 1955, pp.7). The 100 acre council estate is noted as

being somewhat detached from the local town centre: being located outside the local town; on a hill between the town and another village (Anonymous 1955, pp. 7).

In considering the reason why there was a need for these houses to be built at all, the plans states that there was:

‘the need to reduce overcrowding in existing dwellings, to provide for the increased number of households requiring a separate dwelling, and to rehouse occupants of houses expected to become ripe for clearance or replacement by other uses,’

All of which at least implies a continuing demand for additional housing (Anonymous 1955, pp. 7).

Arguably these plans suggest that the whole purpose of the building of Brynhaul was to provide a slum clearance (Jones 2010) from the local town to make room to attract new business and more money with better housing in the town centre. Studdert and Walkerdine (2016) describe a similar process occurring in ‘Market Town’, also in Wales, during the same period. In other words, taking the problem of the town and locating it away on the slope of a hill, somewhat detached from the town. The development of the housing estate on a hill provided housing for people who were living in slums in the town. Cheaper land was used for the estate, well away from the town centre. I question whether the stigma of place (Butler-Warke 2020) presented itself from the very beginnings of this community and that the people who these houses were built for, were seen as a problem to be solved (Studdert & Walkerdine 2016).

As I began this research in 2015, the estate was still made up of mainly social housing, some now privately owned or rented. Within the research site there were two primary schools which both feed into the local comprehensive school a few miles away. There was also a community centre, the hub of the community, providing a food bank, youth clubs, work clubs and home to the community regeneration staff. The community centre was also used as a pupil referral unit for the local comprehensive school.

On the estate there is a social club, a rugby club, three shops and a pharmacy. The local college is 6.8 miles away and a campus of the nearest university around a distance of 4 miles away. There are frequent bus services to the nearby town but then users have to change to access the nearest city centre, about 15 miles from Brynhaul.

1.6.1 Population data, Employment and Education

In relation to home ownership, employment and education the most recent statistics for the area are held by the office of national statistics (ONS). The most recent data available on Brynhaul is presented here.

There were 2,895 people living in the area, 48.6% of these were males and 51.4% were female. There is a total of 1,254 households in the area. The amount of households which were owned in the area either outright or by mortgage, is 57.7%; while 33.7% are social renting and the remainder, 6.7%, are privately rented (Office For National Statistics 2011).

I also note the vehicle ownership statistics by household: vehicles being important in providing access to employment. Statistics show that 36.9% of households in Brynhaul do not have a car or van. There is only one vehicle in 39% of households, with 18.8% of households having two vehicles.

The Office for National Statistics (2011) also provides information on the numbers of people in the area who are not in employment. Of the 1,254 households that live in the area, 573 households have no employed adults, that is 45.7%. There are 147 households classed as lone parent households with dependent children: in these instances, 37 of these lone parents are in part-time employment, whilst 18 are in full time employment and 92 are not in employment at all. Breaking this down further to

consider the significance of gender: of the 147 lone parents, only 6 are male, with 5 of these classed as not in employment and one in full time employment. There are 141 female lone parents, of which 37 are in part-time employment, 17 are in full time employment and 87 are not in employment at all. Within the community, 61.6% of all usual residents aged 16 to 74 are economically active; with 52.3% considered as in employment. This breaks down into 14.2% employed part time, 31.9% employed full time, 6.3% are self-employed and 7.1% are unemployed. There are 46 full time students which is 2.1%. here are 821 residents or 38.4% economically inactive: 12.2% were retired, 5.2% were students, 5.8% were looking after home or family; finally, 12.1% are classed as long-term sick or have a disability. Statistics provided by the office of national statistics also show that more people in the 16 to 24 age grouping were unemployed at 65 (3%), compared to 23 people (1.1%) in the 50 to 74 age grouping (Office for National Statistics, 2011). The table below illustrates the distribution of employment across those of working age, according to the 2011 census:

Table 1: Distribution of Employment accross those of working age in Brynhaul

Industry	Persons	
	Ward (as of 2011)	
	Count	%
All usual residents aged 16 to 74 in employment the week before the census	1,158	100.0
A Agriculture, forestry and fishing	2	0.2
B Mining and quarrying	4	0.3
C Manufacturing	138	11.9
D Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply	18	1.6
E Water supply; sewerage, waste management and remediation activities	13	1.1
F Construction	128	11.1
G Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motor cycles	205	17.7
H Transport and storage	79	6.8
I Accommodation and food service activities	79	6.8
J Information and communication	9	0.8

Industry

Persons

	Ward (as of 2011)	
	Count	%
K Financial and insurance activities	23	2.0
L Real estate activities	12	1.0
M Professional, scientific and technical activities	19	1.6
N Administrative and support service activities	62	5.4
O Public administration and defence; compulsory social security	46	4.0
P Education	86	7.4
Q Human health and social work activities	180	15.5
R, S, T, U Other	55	4.7

As is evident in the above table, the most common form of employment is, 'Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motor cycles' at 17.7%. Followed by 'Human health and social work activities' at 15.5%.

The third largest form of employment was 'Manufacturing' at 11.9%. and the fourth was Construction at 11.1%. All these jobs – the majority of jobs for those who lived on the estate – are working class positions.

The statistics on levels of educational attainment show that the total of all usual residents aged sixteen and over is 2,290. Of these, 976 people (42.6%) have no qualifications; 16.5% have level one qualifications; 13.8% have level two qualifications; 3% have apprenticeships; 7.9% have level three qualifications; 11.9% have qualifications level four and above. There is also a further 4.3% noted as having other qualifications (Office for National Statistics 2011). This illustrates how in 2011 Brynhaul had low levels of educational attainment amongst those who lived on the estate: with over 40% having no qualifications at all. This correlates with the four biggest forms of employment noted in the table above.

1.6.2 The Use of Food Banks

A report issued for the local foodbank in April 2021 noted an increase in the number of people in Brynhaul using the foodbank in the three years prior. The table below illustrates how during the global pandemic (2020), the Brynhaul foodbank had a 387% increase in referrals. The year prior to that (2019) saw a 49% increase in referrals (Anonymous, 2021).

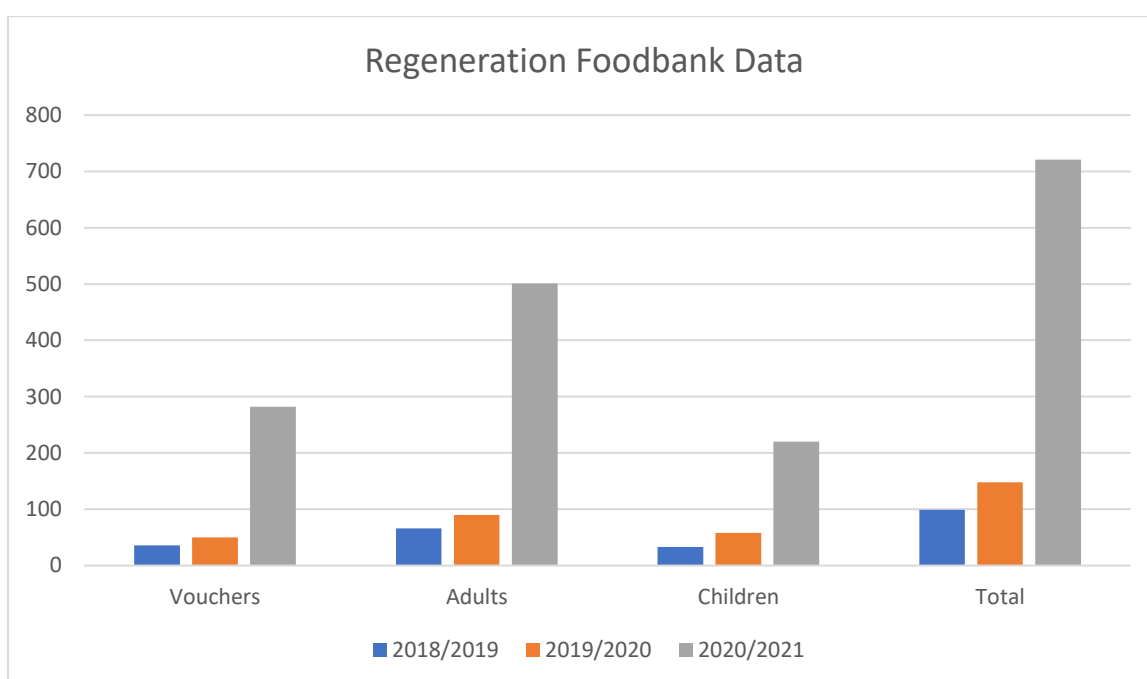


Figure 1: Use of Foodbanks in Brynhaul 2018-2021

2018/19-2019/20 Total=49% increase 2019/20-2020/21 Total=387% increase

These statistics show that poverty levels in the area are high and increasing, with more families needing to rely on the local foodbank for basic essentials.

1.7 A Reflexive personal account of my own biography & motivation for undertaking this research

The opportunity to explore this research, has allowed me to understand my own positioning and reflexively consider my own personal aspirations and transitions

motivating my academic journey. My own trajectory saw me leave school with good GCSEs, poor A levels and no clear understanding of what to do next. In my own childhood, whenever I was asked in primary school what I wanted to do 'when I grow up' I would respond with 'want to be a children's nurse'. I assumed that this was as a result of a hospital stay after surgery when I was just five years old, an event I still recall with clarity as something frightening and scary. I remember how kind those nurses were to me and I remember how they made me feel. As my academic journey continued into secondary school, I still maintained that I would one day become a paediatric nurse. I held this aspiration until I was choosing my GCSE subjects. According to my teachers, I was not clever enough for the sciences so I chose a BTEC in Health and Social care instead and then stayed in school to complete my A levels as I had no idea what to do next. I had heard of university and knew of others in my cohort who were applying through UCAS. To me it was all foreign and sounded daunting. I didn't really know what university was. To be honest I thought it was something that really clever people did once they finished school.

A year later, after working as a waitress in a local restaurant, my higher education trajectory began, a year later than my own cohort whilst I was still unsure of what my aspiration was, or what university would be like. The nursing aspiration was lost to an initial feeling of academic incompetence and failure which left me wondering what could I possibly do. I did not know the answer to that, I just knew that I did not want to be in casualized employment forever. As the first generation in my family to go, I headed off to a post 1992 University and began a journey that would lead to a love of learning and a passion for social justice. Throughout my entire academic journey within Higher Education I have grappled with what Bourdieu would refer to as: 'an ascension to a place where I don't belong' (Bourdieu, 1992, p. 117). I have taught on Cardiff University's Live Local Learn Local Programme for the past nine years. Throughout that time I have worked with many young people and mature learners who are returning to education and most of these learners are from disadvantaged communities. When I saw this PhD advertised, I met with P&W before applying to find out more about what the doctoral study would involve. Being from

an area just five miles away from the research site, and having had family live there, tied together with my own personal academic trajectory and experiences of the world of work. I felt drawn to this research as something I wanted to explore.

1.8 The Onset of a Global Pandemic

As I finish writing this thesis, a global pandemic has encompassed the whole world. Society has shifted overnight to a new way of being, with new social norms. The economy is changing as people are furloughed and the UK's fastest growing economic sector: the service industry, has taken a major blow with many businesses closed for months. Community as a term, is losing its negative connotations as people rely upon each other for support and help through the pandemic. The rhetoric of meritocracy affording social mobility is still evident. As working class young people's aspirations are 'raised' to attain a higher education degree, the bar is being raised again. Now as well, amidst rising unemployment and difficulties for graduates in finding appropriate employment, what counts as aspiration is also rising to higher levels, a degree is now no longer enough. I mention the pandemic at this point as when this research began, no one could have imagined the events that unfolded over the past 18 months. Recently Welsh First Minister Mark Drakeford acknowledged how valuable community had been during these unprecedented times. He presents radical thinking from government regarding how Wales as a nation progresses out of the global pandemic into the next decade. In the press release, introducing the next program for government, he nodded to the value of affective communities (Walkerdine 2010), stating 'People in Wales look after each other, and this program is built on exactly that principle' (Drakeford 2021).

It is hoped this thesis contributes, in a small way, to this developing discussion.

1.9 Chapter Outline

1.9.1. Chapter Two: Review of the literature

This chapter provides a review of the literature, presenting the literature on the key areas of focus for this study.

1.9.2. Chapter Three: Considering the Research methods

This chapter details the methods of inquiry utilized in this study and provides an outline of my ethnographic approach and the reasons this approach was adopted. I provide a detailed account of my data gathering and data analysis framework. I share my reflections upon which my methodological choices were based, the ethical considerations throughout the process and a brief overview of the community in which this study is located. I explore my positionality and reflexivity from my research perspective.

1.9.3. Chapter Four: A Temporal Account

The first of the findings chapters, this chapter positions itself as a temporal account of the lives and experiences of the young people during their school years and their journeys managing the subsequent transition from school to work.

As a counter narrative to the 'raising aspiration' objective, it provides support for the argument that young people from disadvantaged communities do indeed have aspirations. They have childhood dreams of what their post school trajectories may look like. Yet many of the young people learn that they will not achieve them. This argument provides weighting to the notion of the transition to employment being something which begins prior to the end of compulsory schooling, arguably instead, taking place in the early formative years in line with the construction of habitus.

This data demonstrates that for the minority of the young people who do achieve what at times is a somewhat altered and re-evaluated aspiration, the role of the project worker in providing tailored support is vital.

1.9.4. Chapter Five: Exploring spatial understandings

The chapter discusses key themes and challenges within the context of space, place, community and belonging. The argument highlights the central role community has played throughout the lives of these young people: impacting on their past experiences, present circumstances and also on their idea of their own, possible 'futures'.

1.9.5. Chapter Six: Everyday realities

This chapter focuses on where the young people are now and what they are doing for work and study. All of the young people expressed a desire to work and there was a prevalence of agency work and casualised employment among the young people on the estate. The complexities of every day existence faced by these young people are numerous and multi-dimensional, affected by social class, gender and travel ability, all of which impact employment availability and opportunity. Against the rhetoric which depicts these young people and others like them as ignorant, lazy and work shy, I present here findings which demonstrate that these young people do indeed want to work and illustrate the way in which the young people experience the world of work with the complexities and contentions they encounter.

1.9.6. Chapter Seven: A future hoped for

The final findings chapter investigates how these young people imagined their futures at the time of my interview with them. The chapter discusses their difficulties in imagining the future and the vitality of hope as a form of agency. This chapter demonstrates that an imagined future is not easy to contemplate when living a day by day existence in a world of financial disadvantage and economic precarity as is the case for many of these young people.

I discuss the link between hope and agency, hope as a form of agency and therefore a form of capital. I show how this lack of future planning by some of the young

people, presents as a lack of hope. I argue that this impacts the perspective from which subsequent aspirations are constructed.

1.9.7. Chapter Eight: Conclusion & Discussion

This concluding chapter summarises this thesis by providing a discussion around the findings presented in the previous four chapters in relation to the four different research questions. This chapter will also explore any other issues from the findings including ones which appear significant but not reflected in the research questions or the literature review. It also addresses the implications of the work for further research and for policy and practice.

2 CHAPTER TWO: Review of the Literature

2.1 Introduction

This chapter explores some of the key literature around community, space, place, youth, class, aspiration, transition and employment, particularly precarious employment. The range of literature within these topics is vast, far too vast to be comprehensively covered in some general summary. I propose therefore to discuss the literature by grouping it around the key strands my thesis intends to explore. The first strand is 'community and policy' and the ideas around those terms.

Concerning other strands such as 'Aspiration', 'Space/place', 'Transition', these topics are of more recent origin than either class or community. They do not have the long history of debate and positioning occupied by the wider topics of class and community (see the work of Studdert and Walkerdine (2016)). I have therefore concentrated in these sections on presenting the use of community in policy initiatives as this informs my research questions and my research site. As the previous chapter detailed, this study is addressing the young people's narrated stories of their experiences of education and their post school transitions.

I will therefore give a brief account of the major strands of thinking about these topics, before then discussing specifically the works which have driven the thinking and practice underlying this thesis beginning with the role of community in policy.

2.2 The Role of Community in Policy

As Studdert (2006) and Studdert and Walkerdine (2016) argue community as a concept has a complex and contested history. In much sociological work it rather fell out of fashion as it was often associated with something regarded as backward.

It came back into focus in the 1990s when successive governments began to use community as an object of policy intervention. We can see this is in various approaches such as Putnam's social capital (2000) or asset-based approaches

(Putnam 1993). Community became the focus of interventions designed to find ways to get impoverished and de-industrialised communities back in work and working together. We can understand the Welsh Government's Communities First initiative as one example of this. This lasted from 2001 and was discontinued in 2018 precisely because it failed to deliver the grandiose changes upon which it was predicated – i.e. to abolish poverty.

Over the past two decades, the Welsh government has compiled a plethora of policies and initiatives including: Our Valleys Our Future: Delivery Plan, 2019; Vibrant and Viable Places New Regeneration Framework, 2013; Policy Statement on Skills, 2013; Youth engagement and progression framework: Implementation plan, 2013 and also Tackling Poverty Action Plan 2012-2016. These are all aimed at solving the problem of disadvantaged communities. Most notably, at the turn of the new Millennium, under a 'New Labour' orientated government in recently devolved Wales, the Communities First (C1) programme was born. This programme was implemented in Brynhaul, as Brynhaul was classed as a disadvantaged community. Brynhaul remained under the umbrella of C1 until the programme ended during the time in which this research was being carried out (see chapter one). Communities First was a long-term strategy which spanned two decades. Welsh government presented it as its flagship programme tasked to 'improve the living conditions and prospects for people in the most disadvantaged communities across Wales' (Welsh Government, 2001. p,1).

Notably this entailed a regeneration programme which 'invoked active citizenship to address democratic deficit and economic crisis' (Dicks 2014. p,659). The Welsh government noted that it was presenting Communities First as a 'strategy to address the deep-rooted social and economic problems of those communities' (Welsh Assembly Government 2006, p.1), that is those considered the most disadvantaged communities in Wales. Arguably Communities First was presented as an eliminator of social exclusion, a way of tackling society's ills (Dicks 2014, p. 962).

One of the first documents produced by the then, Welsh assembly government: Communities First: A 2001 baseline, noted that 'this programme is targeted

exclusively at the most disadvantaged communities, of which there are 142, at least one in every county or county borough in Wales' (Welsh Government, 2006) and that the included communities have 'experienced social and economic disadvantage over many years, in some cases for generations' (Welsh government 2006, p.1). The C1 programme set out its objectives underneath the umbrella of 'building strong and sustainable communities' (Welsh Assembly Government 2006, p. 2), this raises the question: does this designation 'disadvantaged' add more fuel to the fire for the pathologization of the working class community, by suggesting that such communities are weak and unstable victims incapable of helping themselves thus creating a cycle of dependency and 'under achievement'?

In a review of the programme, it has been argued that 'Communities First' mutated from a bottom-up participation project to being centrally steered, meaning that the focus of building regeneration within the most deprived communities became instead a focus on managing risk and financial accountability (Dicks 2014, p. 959). In a paper which Dicks (2014) discussed the 'contradictions of citizen participation in regeneration, focusing on the South Wales Valleys, she notes that 'hidden unemployment is a chronic problem' and formulates the argument that the radical aims of the Welsh Assembly to empower communities and to set the regeneration agenda, were undermined by the C1 partnerships. What is strikingly apparent about C1 in relation to employment, is that deprivation within communities is attributed to the barriers and deficits of the local communities, rather than unequal access to employment itself (Dicks 2014, p. 961). It is uncontested that the South Wales Valleys, once an enviable industrial homeland has, since the closures of the mines and the decline of the coal and steel industries, not seen these lost jobs replaced with substantial prosperous, local employment opportunities (Dicks 2014).

As this thesis neared completion, eighteen months into the Covid-19 global pandemic, the undeniable inequalities within Wales are increasingly prominent. As the Welsh First Minister, Mark Drakeford notes: 'It has laid bare the deepening inequalities in our society' (Welsh Government 2021). Communities like Brynhaul

have seen an increase in food bank use, not just by those out of work but by those in work (illustrated in chapter 1).

Recently First Minister Drakeford set out his programme for the Welsh government in the sixth term in Senedd in June 2021. In it, Drakeford and Welsh assembly acknowledge how valuable community is and present radical thinking regarding how Wales progresses from the global pandemic into its desired future. In the press release he gave introducing the new programme, he nodded to the value of affective communities (Walkerdine 2016) as highlighted in the previous quote from First Minister Mark Drakeford (page 16). The shift in thinking portrays community in a much more positive light than previously. This shift is what this thesis believes is needed for a change in how we understand, interpret and support the aspirations, opportunities and future thinking of young people. The Welsh Government finally appears to recognise the importance of community in people's lives.

To view communities in this manner as the outcome of positive socialites and meanings rather than of communal and personal failure, is to shift away from judging communities exclusively on the basis of location and a check list of statistical failures. Further, it is entirely in accord with Studdert and Walkerdine's approach. It shifts the focus away from the static reductionist notions of community marking both phrases of previous investigation, towards one where 'meanings in common' provide the basis for how the government and the communities of Wales interact.

Communities are much more than simply geographical locations, or failures or deficit, emotional ties and social relationships run deep within a community which have all experienced stigma and hardship (Walkerdine and Jimenez 2012). It is with this in mind that this study positions itself with an understanding of community as an outcome on an ongoing, affective communal being-ness, as put forward by Studdert and Walkerdine (2016).

Studdert and Walkerdine (2016) argue that community, while always proposed theoretically as an instrumental means for individual self-realisation' (2016, p. 15), is

rather an on-going myriad of endless actions of sociality sharing, imagining and enacting a constant communal being-ess in their communal activity. (ibid page 53). With this in mind, Studdert and Walkerdine call for a consideration of rationality in the understanding and conceptualising of community, with a focus on social relationships rather than individual self-realisation. They present the case which explains why 'community' should be understood through a relational analytic (Walkerdine 2016, Pp. 299) and this is the conceptualisation of community used throughout this thesis. Here, community is understood as affective relationships that occupy space within a given place.

2.3 Notions of place

Place attachment is often considered part of a person's identity, and identity which is then built up of meanings, emotions, memories and feelings which have been learnt and associated with their physical surroundings (Tuan 1977, cited in Jack 2010). An attachment to place which is so often presented within the working class narrative (Green and White, 2007; Mah 2015), has always been seen within a negative positioning; as a roadblock to modernisation (Studdert 2016), as a repository of anti social attitudes and superstitions, all retarding personal and rational social progress. The essence of social mobility is built upon people moving away from their geographical location, thus leaving behind their affective community in order to widen horizons and better jobs (Cabinet office 2009). It seems that there is no value spent in providing opportunities for or encouraging, a discourse around creating real opportunities for a social mobility in which whole communities rise together.

The post-modernist celebration of individualist lifestyles promoting, mobility and choice with the consumerist perspective (Bauman 2000) neglects the working class values of solidarity and mutuality (Mckenzie, 2015). As a result of this, we are then left with an aspirational discourse, in which working class community is presented as problematic to those from working class backgrounds.

This shift in Welsh government policy raises the question of how do the young people who live within a disadvantaged community talk of their relationships with others from the same place and the impact these relationships have on the lives of the young people?

Place is about so much more than a geographical location. It is about a sense of identity, a belonging. People are left with a warmth of living in that place but actually the economic advantage of living in that place has disappeared (Lloyd-Jones 2018). There is a closeness of relationships that provide strength and support.

As Evans argues, this means that 'communities which foster strong place attachments are obstacles to young people's capacity to realise their aspirations' (Evans 2016, p. 502). Therefore it is through the lens of community we are able to see the lived experience of the hidden injuries of class (Sennet and Cobb, 1972). There is a long tradition in human geography and sociology of distinguishing place from community. In her work on heritage, place and community, Dicks (2000) in considering the construct of community discusses how, due to the focus on local the 'place-bound qualities and key local social institutions' (Dicks 2000, p. 106) were more clearly emphasised within a working class community with a shared way of life with 'subjective values and ways of life' (Dicks 2000, p.106). Reay (2017) has written extensively about how the working class norms are not valued within the state education system. As a counter narrative to this, it could be argued that in the conditions of hardship, as uncertainty and risk increase through modernity, an attachment to place becomes a lifeline.

This sense of belonging and security, this attachment to place, particularly the affective relationships within it, becomes vitally important in providing security in the face of risk and adversity (Jack 2010). This thesis challenges the dominant political discourses which problematizes the working class young people's roots of communal being-ness within their geographical locations and as a counter that position, seeks to further understand how the problem of place can be approached differently.

I draw upon the roots and wings analogy again here, and suggest that the ‘problem’ with the young people from ‘disadvantaged’ communities is that the people within these communities often place value in the roots of knowing where you are from. Being-ness is shaped through the everyday interactions, relationships and ‘communal being-ness (Studdert and Walkerdine 2016), value is found in networks of support. I argue that the Neoliberal thinking and government policy up until this latest term in Senedd, places value only in wings, in the shape and formation they take and in how far the young person is prepared to use them for mobility, up and away from their home communities. A reductionist view, that to this date, has been unsuccessful in achieving, even its often low, expectations (ibid).

2.3.1 Place attachment

‘Place attachment’ as a psychological quality, is well documented in Sociology and Geography literature and has emerged as a key theme in relation to mobility. It has also been suggested that attachment to place is a fundamental human need (Relph, 1976). Altman and Low, illustrate the distinction between the cultural and the psychological definitions and understandings of place attachment:

‘Place attachment is the symbolic relationship formed by people giving cultural shared emotional affective meanings to a particular space or piece of land that provides the basis for the individual's and group's understanding of and relation to the environment’ (Altman and Low 1992, p. 165).

Note that attachment here, remains fixed on location as the principal constructor of place attachment.

Mah (2009) addresses place attachment to ‘home’ within the context of post-industrial change and views the relationship between self and place as a ‘form of individual socialization and as part of a collective identity’ (2009, p. 289). She poses the question: ‘In the economic context of low employment opportunities, physical dereliction, and trends of depopulation, why do people still attach great value to their homes and communities?’ (2009, p. 290). Mah also highlights how the concept of ‘community’ has been criticised within academia as problematic because of its

relationship to romanticized and nostalgic notions of social cohesion and place identity (2009, p.290). Mah presented the finding that attachment to place, or 'home' 'provides the ability to work together and support one another in the face of hardship' (Mah 2009, p. 307). Bailey et al (2012) also highlight the positive aspects of place attachment as it has the capacity to provide social cohesion and a source of security. They note however, how globalisation has been seen as a threat to undermine place attachment (Bailey et al 2012, p. 208). They present a correlation between age and place attachment, with the early years and older people having a strong attachment to place. They argue that age and length of time lived in the neighbourhood appear to have the strongest impacts on attachments (Bailey et al 2012, p. 216).

It has also been noted how an attachment to place, can prove to be highly important in a child's identity development (Jack 2010). Arguably then, this attachment to place as a 'fundamental component in the way that most people understand who they are' (Jack 2010, p. 756) and the potentially enduring bonds which are underpinned by security and belonging. These traits are established through an emotional attachment to place (Jack 2010).

There is a sizeable literature debating the differences between place and space. The concepts of space and place are rarely used in isolation, they are more commonly presented together as the definition of place is dependent on the definition of space (White and Green 2015). Place is geographical location, but it is also perhaps a way of knowing the world through social relationships, understanding and seeing the world as a place of connections, a vantage point from which social interaction is based. Their findings suggest that 'social networks operate in complex ways, both enabling and constraining, with varied intersections of family, friends and community influence' (White and Green 2015, p. 309). This suggests that what a place is like is dependent upon the interactions and inter-relationality that is carried out within place, how the space is experienced and understood. With reference to place, Ward (2007) states:

‘Not only is place more than context. Places are not given, they are socially constructed, the product of a host of human practices [...] Understood in this way, places are both material arenas for the conduct of everyday life and the focus for the development of local identities and loyalties.’ (Ward 2007, p. 269).

Understood in this way, place provides a bridge and requires an understanding of sociality (Studdert 2006) and can help explain how individual outcomes are shaped in relation to ‘area effects’ which in turn helps understand how wider factors impact upon characteristics at individual level (Sthal and Baars 2016). One of the ways it impacts young people is in terms of identity and belonging. It is noted that for young people, the feelings of belonging tended to be ‘strongest among those young people who perceive that they have been fully accepted within their local community’ (Jack 2010, p. 758). This then suggests that community belonging can connect people to others around them as well as leading to a sense of being valued, recognised and listened to (Bourn 2008, p. 3).

Angew and Duncan (2014) state that a major argument around the topic of community is that within much of the social science debate, two other concepts, that is those of community and class, ‘have dominated to the extent that thinking and talking in terms of place has been largely impossible’ (Angew and Duncan 2014, pp. 12). Governments taking an area based approach to tackling disadvantage within communities (Sthal and Baars 2016) is something evident in the Welsh governments Communities First initiative. The next section will explore literature around aspiration.

2.4 Aspiration

The social sciences have long presented a cause and effect relationship between aspiration, formation of children, young people and community (understood as affective relationships within place), with the government taking an area based approach to tackling disadvantage within communities (Sthal and Baars 2016). Just as was the case with the term ‘community’, the term ‘aspiration’ is considered lacking

in conceptual precision as it is used broadly across both government policy and academia (Hardgrove 2015, p. 163).

Arguably, locality, place and space impacts upon aspiration formation (Sthal et al, 2016; Allen et al, 2013). Traditional working class communities are places where the roots of community run deep and entwine to create networks of support. Sthal et al (2016), argue that ‘aspirations are formed in a contested space between traditional, localized, classed identities and a broader Neoliberal conception of the ‘aspirational’ rootless self’. If aspirations then are influenced and modified by habitus, there must be a recognition that habitus formation does not happen in the vacuum of individualistic idealism and instead it is deeply entangled within the structural roots of spatial and geographical existence.

Allen et al (2013), understand Bourdieu’s Habitus as relating:

not simply to class-based dispositional understandings of what is thinkable for ‘people like me’, but also for ‘people from round here’. We see young people’s aspirations—their sense of where they belong—as being deeply entangled with their social and spatial location (Allen et al 2013, p. 501).

I return to the roots and wings analogy here. Allen et al’s positioning on Bourdieu’s concept of habitus and social class aims to view aspiration as informed by, and a part of, social and spatial location; suggesting then that aspiration is linked to what is known and understood and therefore plays out as lived experience.

In the roots and wings analogy I wrote about how the roots are all interconnected, wrapped round each other, both supporting and constraining each other. The above quote suggests that there is a direct link between the psychological feeling of belonging within space and how that in turn moulds and shapes the young person’s aspirations.

It has been noted that how a young person views themselves will impact upon their aspirations for the future. How the young person considers the future and their

aspirations within it, requires the young person to develop a sense of identity which is noted and widely accepted 'that the tasks of finding meaning in life and achieving a sense of identity are key developmental tasks for adolescents and it has been asserted that this may be particularly pertinent when young people are confronted with persistent and complex challenges.' (Crawford & Rossiter, 2006 cited in Noble-Carr et al, 2014 p. 392).

For young people, self-perception, how the young person views themselves and whether or not they have a positive identity, is the key to how young people will achieve and succeed in their individual transition into independent adulthood (Jones 2005, p. 3). It could be argued that this self-perception would be greatly affected by their social context. The work of Jones (2005) also notes that the external factor of the labour market conditions, also affects young people's aspirations (Jones 2005, p. 36). This is something over which they have no control. This is supported by (Mann et al 2020) who suggest that young people by age 7, have based their aspirations on the labour market they see around them. It is also recognised that parents, places and poverty have an impact upon aspirations (Kintrea et al, 2011).

2.4.1 Class & Aspiration

I will not give a historical account of debates around this topic. Unlike community, the broad approach and positions are well known, widely shared and long established. Rather, I will examine those works dealing specifically with elements of class relevant to my thesis. First among these is the work of Bourdieu (2010, 1993, 1988, 1977). The work of Bourdieu as a sociological framework, is useful for understanding social class and in enabling an understanding of how one is shaped by their interactions with others and how one positions oneself around social class. Work in a Bourdieusian tradition has noted that 'structures of social space are, in a blurred form, inscribed in physical space', (Garbin and Millington 2012, cited in Verdouw & Flanagan 2019, pp. 56). Therefore, it can be argued that processes of social belonging and social exclusion are indeed spatial (Verdouw & Flanagan, 2019). Studies which draw from the work of

Bourdieu, recognise that Bourdieu's much contested (Hay, 2003) understanding of habitus embodiment as socialised:

A structured body, a body which has incorporated the immanent structures of a world or of a particular sector of that world-a field-and which structures the perception of that world as well as action in that world. (Bourdieu 1998, p. 81).

Bourdieu's work provides a useful framework for understanding aspiration and future thinking. In understanding habitus, as he states that: 'the habitus, an objective relationship between two objectives, enables and intelligible and necessary relation to be established between practices and a situation, the meaning of which is produced by the habitus through categories of perception and appreciation that are themselves produced by an observable social conditioning' (2010, p. 95) 'the habitus is a virtue made of necessity' (Bourdieu 2010, p. 373).

Working-class young people make the speediest transitions into the labour market, to parenthood and to independent living; they face greater risks of the negative outcomes associated with social exclusion (MacDonald 2005, p. 875). Research has suggested that working class people in post-industrial communities believe 'hard work and education seem to lead nowhere' (Charlesworth 2000, p. 5). Arguably, this suggests that perhaps that young people from a disadvantaged communities, are less likely to buy into the Neoliberal dream of meritocracy. As a result there is an ever growing body of research which utilises Bourdieu's work to seek to understand how aspiration and imagined futures are connected to communal ties.

It could be argued that aspiration is defined as 'climbing up the social ladder and becoming middle class' and that 'being working class is something from which individuals must escape' (Allen 2013, p. 761). This in itself devalues working class communities and neglects the importance of the roots established by young people in their working class communities. It suggests that, for one to have an aspiration which amounts to something less than pursuing a career from the vantage point of higher education, then that aspiration is not good enough. Alongside a government narrative from both Central and Welsh government of the need for the working class

to aspire to be middle class, the media plays a role in normalising the pathologizing of the working class, heightening the stigma that arises for a working class positioning. It is recognised that the working class is publicly humiliated for “their failure to adhere to middle-class standards in speech or appearance” (McRobbie 2005 cited in Tyler 2015, p. 503). With Channels 4 and 5, broadcasting programs such as ‘Benefits Street’, ‘Rich House, Poor House’, the access to so called poverty porn (Tyler 2015, p. 504) is available on demand and frames the working class. All of this media coverage depicts those from a working class community as work shy, uneducated and in need of greater aspirations: feckless wastrels. The symbolic violence is evident here as the policies around ‘raising aspiration’ also correlate with educational engagement and future trajectory, insisting on the understanding of: ‘if aspiration could be ‘raised’, educational achievement and later life success would follow’ (Spohrer, 2011, p. 57 cited in Rainford 2021, p. 2).

Walkerdine (2011, p. 256) notes that:

in industrial communities, aspiration, understood as the desire to better oneself, could be understood for many as antithetical to mutuality and solidarity, which stressed mutual strength and support through sameness.

I submit that this suggests that for a young person to go on to university study from a working class background, it could be seen by the community as setting oneself apart.

Class as a system, and as a barrier remains salient throughout all political discourse. Bringing ‘class’ into the debate shifts the debate to issues of resource distribution and poverty. This would allow for an alternative understanding, rather than putting blame on the young people raised in disadvantaged communities for not aspiring to more, for holding aspirations that are not good enough. Indeed this perspective makes class and questions of power and access to resources, invisible (Reay 2002).

In writing about classificatory struggles: class, culture and inequality in Neoliberal times, Tyler (2015) argues that: ‘the sociology of class, should be grounded not in the

assumption and valorisation of class identities but in a more radical understanding of class as a struggle'. In understanding class as struggle, might we better understand how to support young people in their post-compulsory traditions?

The aspiration narrative generally assumes an individualistic approach to future thinking (Bryant and Ellard 2015), promotes the necessity to imagine a future in which young people from 'disadvantaged' communities can become socially mobile. To do so of course these young people must contend with a reality of leaving behind those they are surrounded by. To move from the known to the unknown as Bourdieu understands, is an aspiration, 'an ascension to a place where I don't belong' (Bourdieu, 1992, p. 117).

I find that the roots and wings analogy is again useful here, as one can consider the difficulties of using wings to move to an alternative positioning because of the roots simultaneously holding one fixed in place. Arguably, communities in which there are strong ties of attachment to place, are through the individualistic lifestyle celebrated by post-modernity (Bauman 1992; Studdert 2006), are viewed as limiters to success and achievement of the individuals who live within them (Evans 2016).

2.4.2 Aspiration and Education

Aspiration is often discussed with particular reference to education. There is a range of literature which addresses the relationship between education and poverty. Welsh Government recognise the central and pivotal role schools have in breaking the link between deprivation and educational attainment. But within this, they noted that the home background of the child is the factor most likely to determine the educational outcome, which then translates to raising social mobility (Welsh Government 2014, p. 5). The report states that:

Education and skills are key to improving life chances but the stark fact is that children's educational outcomes are more likely to be determined by their home background than by their personal characteristics. (Welsh Government 2014, p. 4).

Working-class young people make the speediest transitions into the labour market, to parenthood and to independent living, and therefore face greater risks of the negative outcomes associated with social exclusion (MacDonald 2005, p. 875). Research has suggested that the view of working class people in post-industrial communities is that 'hard work and education seem to lead nowhere' (Charlesworth 2000, p. 5). Suggesting then, that young people from a disadvantaged community are less likely to buy into the Neoliberal dream of meritocracy.

For this strand Bourdieu's work provides a useful framework for understanding aspiration. In understanding the inter-relationship of elements that feature in the construction of habitus. As he states: "the habitus is a virtue made of necessity" (Bourdieu 2010, p. 373). I suggest this enables an understanding of aspiration as something which is inherently derived from community and experiencing social norms even though government pushes an agenda of individuality. As Bourdieu understands:

the adjustment between objective chances and subjective aspirations that is thereby established is both more subtle and subtly extorted, but also more risky and unstable. Maintaining vagueness in the images of the future of one's position is a way of accepting limits, but it is also a way to avoid acknowledging them, or to put it another way, a way of refusing them (2010, p. 152).

2.4.3 The raising aspiration rhetoric

Researching the aspirations of children and young people has become an important part of social science research more specifically so in relation to working class young people and aspiring to higher education. It has been noted that, 'Aspirations are complex understandings of the future pathways available to people, influenced by individual experiences and those of the family, which emerge within particular social, economic and cultural circumstances' (Ball et al. 2002).

Much of the sociological research tries to move away from the deficit view of individualised aspiration in which the responsibility of considering aspiration and the subsequent attainment of an aspiration falls upon the shoulders of the individual

(Allen et al 2013). It is a question which is frequently asked of children throughout their early formative years and in the years which follow; 'what do you want to be when you grow up?'

In 2001, in a paper which presented an argument around working class relationships with education, Diane Reay wrote that 'working-class relationships to education have always been deeply problematic and emotionally charged, inscribing academic failure, rather than success'. She is acknowledging here that there is still an 'educational system in which working-class education is made to serve middle-class interests' (Reay 2001). This is the same argument she makes in her more recent work (2017) suggesting that this is something static and that this has not changed in the past 20 years. Considering the work of Bourdieu here, one could also consider the education system as a way in which these class understandings around education and aspiration are reproduced.

Ultimately keeping people in their positioning (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977) continues to entrench inequality of opportunity and subjecting the working class to symbolic violence (Reay et al, 2009). Around the same time at which Reay wrote this paper, a New-Labour government was pressing its agenda of raising attainment and aspiration (Spohrer et al 2017). The way in which education is intended to support the raising aspiration rhetoric also serves the interest of the middle class, suggesting that the way to be upwardly mobile is to gain a degree through Higher Education. This Neoliberal rhetoric inaugurated a plethora of policies across the UK which continued into the following conservative government; rhetoric which continues to present working class communities as 'disadvantaged' and problematize the individuals who live within them (Tyler et al 2015).

An internet search of the terms 'working class' and 'aspiration' produces a whole range of different headlines suggesting that working class children have lower aspirations than their middle class counterparts. Many of the previous policies of both Welsh and Central Government imply that working class young people need to have higher aspirations to achieve social mobility and mitigate the effects of living in

a disadvantaged community (Mckenzie 2015, Reay 2017, Walkerdine 2011). Again this draws on notions of individualism, putting the positioning of success or failure, measured by maths and institutions, squarely on the shoulders of individuals.

Archer (2013) analysed the views of thousands of young people. They argue that young people do not suffer from a 'poverty of aspiration' which limits their ambitions. Instead they proposed that young people from all sorts of backgrounds in England indeed have high hopes for their futures. They state that from their research, it can be seen that:

most children, across all social groups, aspired to professional, managerial and technical careers, with very few aspiring to skilled manual or, especially, unskilled manual, occupations (Archer 2013).

However, it has been noted that 'poverty of aspirations' was a central feature of New Labour's education and social policy, locating working-class youth as lacking in or having the 'wrong' aspirations' (Allen 2013, p. 760). It is worth noting here that Charlesworth (2000) suggests that it is not straightforward to describe the nature of the working class in 'an age of such fragmentation and atomisation' (Charlesworth 2000, p. 1). Much of the recent Welsh Government policy regarding education appears to focus aspiration and attainment with particular reference to disadvantaged young people, suggesting a deficit view of aspiration (Rainford 2021) for those living with a working class subjectivity.

Young people's aspirations are affected by the labour market and other opportunities in their local area, the people they know; their beliefs in their own abilities and their sense of control over their circumstances' (Jones 2005, p. 36). It is difficult to imagine that these would be the only factors which impact upon the aspirational development of a 'disadvantaged' young person. Aspirations are multifaceted as in her work on locality and career aspirations, Evans (2016) notes:

Young people's aspirations are multifaceted and informed by their social and spatial contexts, as well as by desires, dreams and hopes for future selves, and also critically by their relationships with their home localities (Evans 2016, p. 502).

Other research has expressed the complexity of aspiration within enduring traditional working-class culture, (Stahl and Baars 2015) and view aspirations within this context as a 'complex negotiation, always evolving and deeply linked to value construction' (Stahl and Baars 2015, p. 315). Although there is wide ranging expression of how young people's aspirations are multi-faceted and informed by social circumstance, there is a paucity of information around the fluidity of aspiration, that is, how, and why aspirations change over time.

2.4.4 Habitus, hope and Aspiration: a shift from the individual to communal

There appears to be clear connections between hope, agency and capital. Other research has pointed towards narratives of a future imagined, being specific to what opportunity structures are available to the young people (Bryant and Ellard, 2015). If habitus is considered as historical, a past form which one has learnt (Steinmetz 2006) and into which young people are socialised, then over time this will shape their imagined future. In the concluding chapter (chapter 8) I present a chapter section which connects my use of the 'roots and wings metaphor with Bourdieu's concept of habitus.

Hope then plays an important role in considering aspiration and agency and has been noted as being a 'potentially transformative human experience' (Bryant and Ellard 2015, p. 488). It functions therefore as a critical resource for young people who are on the margins of society in a situation of economic disadvantage (Riel 2010). Considering hope as having a transformational capacity, (Robb et al 2010), leads to an understanding of hope as a form of agency (Bryant and Ellard 2015). In other words, it is by having hope that we are able to imagine the future and therefore take some control in planning it. It has been argued that hope is a 'crucial resource' when working with the young people who experience social exclusion through living in a disadvantaged community (Riel 2010, p. 35).

In their work on 'hope as a form of agency in the future thinking of disenfranchised young people', Bryant and Ellard (2015) note that indeed, hope as a category of the future thinking of young people has not been paid much attention in the discourses around aspiration. They propose that hope as category of future thinking, should be considered as a form of agency in itself, one which is 'conceptualised through relational theories of practice' (Bryant and Ellard 2015, p. 487). Arguably, this suggests that by considering hope as a form of relational agency it changes the aspiration narrative from that of an individual positioning to a communal understanding. This shift in narrative then could enable an understanding of how the individual, hope based agency is affected by social context and how hope as a learnt behaviour, creates ripple effects within community.

It has been suggested that caution should be expressed when considering hope theory in relation to disadvantaged young people as it could present the perception of individual blame and attribute a lack of hope to seemingly proposed deficits of the young people themselves, their families and their communities in which they live (Riel 2010, p.37). Thus, again presenting a lack of hope as an individual problem, one to be experienced in the immediate and yet something which is not relevant to the understanding of how futures are imagined. Pimlot-Willson (2011) presented the argument of the cruciality of hope as an essential driver for young children in their judgement of feasibility of future goals and their ability to overcome barriers. I submit that this is extendable to the life stage of young adult hood.

I submit that what is lacking in the literature is an understanding of hope as subjectivity and an extension to habitus, that is in that hope has the capacity to impact upon the way in which habitus develops and evolves. Bourdieu, in his later works refers to psychoanalytic ideas extensively (Aarseth 2016, Steinmetz 2006) and by considering the conflicts in the habitus of how people adapt when entering new fields, we can come to understand a 'potentially productive meeting place between a Bourdieusian and a psychoanalytic relational concept of socialised subjectivity' (Layton, 2006 cited in Asrseth et al. 2016). Place and

space have been noted to play a role in the formation of aspiration, with many sociologists utilising the work of Bourdieu.

2.5 The social mobility agenda

Social mobility is discussed in relation to aspiration. Through the past decade, UK government policy has presented the ideology of an 'expanded middle class' (Brown 2010 cited in Allen 2013), a society in which working class people are better equipped to be upwardly mobile. Arguably this neglects any value in the current positioning of the working class. However, it could be argued that those at the top view this as an issue which will be solved by the attitudes of the disadvantaged being changed with very little mention of opportunities being increased.

The former Prime Minister David Cameron stated, 'Social mobility will only rise when those people are persuaded to change those attitudes' (Dominizak 2013). One could suggest that this statement points the finger of blame at the young person embedded within a situation of poverty and disadvantage and neglects the role of the hierarchical structure of a society and currently, a precarious and casualized labour market.

Allen argues that:

This rhetoric of aspiration and concurrent framing of upward mobility as an unequivocal good, ignores a raft of sociological evidence that reveals no shortage of aspiration among working-class families (Allen 2013, p. 761).

2.5. Transition to Higher Education

Academic literature illustrates the difficulties experienced by young people transitioning to higher education from a working class positioning. Reay et al (2010) utilise the work of Bourdieu for understanding how the habitus of the working class student is shaped by prior learning experiences which can impact upon how higher education study is experienced when they note that:

There is a match between institutional and individual habitus, but one that is potentially counterproductive, reinforcing earlier school learning

dispositions often grounded in a lack of academic confidence and a tenuous sense of being 'a good learner' (Reay et al 2010, p. 120).

This suggests that even when working class young people overcome barriers to attend particularly Russell Group universities, their understandings, shaped by their past experiences, still play a role in the present. Walkerdine (2011) also acknowledges the psychological considerations in working class transition to higher education when she presents the centrality of the role played by fantasy and imagination for those working-class students who hope to transition to higher education once completing their compulsory schooling. University students from a working-class background have often talked of working class life as something they have escaped from (Evans 2006, p.13). Mannay 's 2013 (p. 18) working class university study, discusses how the centrality of the history of place remains a central concern in understanding working class transition to Higher education.

Welsh Governments focus on Civic Mission and the Future Generations Act (2015), presents seven 'Wellbeing' goals and five ways of working which require universities to support the health, wealth and 'wellbeing' of the people of Wales by working with schools and colleges to support young people to achieve their potential and working with communities through community projects.

Welsh Government believes that these programmes play a major role in shaping projects which seek to tackle poverty, boost the economy and improve health, education and 'wellbeing'. Arguably the Neoliberal drive for widening participation across the UK's higher education institutions is grounded in the ideology that the working class should want to better themselves by desiring a middle class life-style achieved through gaining a degree (Archer and Leathwood, 2003). Widening participation is aimed at the university's non-traditional university entrants.

For those young people from working class backgrounds who do not go on to University study, there is often a transition to poor work, casualised and precarious

employment. Macdonald argues that this is the case for many young people. The next chapter section will address this strand.

2.6 Transitions to Poor work

As young people progress from education onto whatever it is that comes next, these transitions are experienced in the present, the immediate. It has been noted that as well as transition being inherently a present positioning, it also provides the young person with change, a movement towards the future (Hardgrove et al 2015, p. 164). I tentatively suggest here that there is a relationship between the immediate progressive journey of transition and the role of hope in the form of agency and subjectivity in which the young person has to orchestrate and make decisions within the transition process. In literature it is suggested that in terms of young people's aspirations for the future, young people from a disadvantaged background voiced a preference for a biography which is often considered as a standard one with family being seen as a marker which indicates normality (Bryant and Ellen 2015).

The value of the concept of transition has been hotly contested in youth sociology. Because the movement to adulthood now 'tends to be marked by unpredictability, backward steps and false starts' (MacDonald 2005, p. 874). This is supported by the work of Hall et al (2009) who note that 'Young people's transitions to adulthood are increasingly framed in relation to individuals tracking back and forth across a number of thresholds (for example, education, training, work, family and consumption)' (Hall et al 2009, p. 551). There is a suggestion that the world of work may be a more harder transition for today's generation rather than previous generations. It could be said that 'young people today are far more likely to encounter a longer, more uncertain and hazardous transition to work' (LGA 2014, p. 28). A criticism of transition studies is that they have too often been focused on 'school-to-work careers' without giving enough consideration to wider aspects of youth realities and experiences (Cohen and Ainley 2000).

The problematic theorisation of transitions to adulthood is not new: 'Since the early 1980s, young people's transitions to adulthood have been increasingly theorized as problematic. Central to this proposition has been the phenomenon of youth unemployment' (Hall et al 1998, p. 306). Chaos theory has been used in research, 'characterising the post-school transitions of disadvantaged young people' (Shildrick et al 2007, p.599). This certainly does not denote a linear progression through education to employment.

One criticism of studies of youth transitions is that 'in the past, transitions studies have been too pre-occupied with labour market experience at the expense of a more rounded view of youth' (Shildrick et al 2007, p. 599). It would appear that this is something which quite often is still the case. The work of Carabelli and Lyon (2016) suggests that in terms of trajectory, 'paths were often not linear, but rather the results of negotiations between what participants wished for, what they felt could be possible and their existing possibilities' (Carabelli and Lyon 2016, p. 15).

Academic research highlights the fact that for many young people the transition from education into employment is by no means linear but rather described in a variety of negative terms such as: 'long', 'broken', 'extended', 'protracted', 'uneasy' and 'fractured' (Shildrick et al 2007, p. 591) and that life's pathways are no longer ordered and traditional, meaning young people are needing to actively construct their own futures within the landscape of individualisation (Bryant and Ellard 2015). We might question just how fit for purpose the Welsh Government Policies are, as they present a Neoliberal dream of a highly individual, middle class approach to aspiration, progression and transition.

There is a long held belief among policymakers and educators that education is the key to social mobility and accessing good sustainable work. When reading the policy document 'Youth Engagement and Progression Framework: Implementation Plan', one could be tempted to think that every young person has the opportunity to achieve any goal they dream in life. The framework states that Welsh Government is developing a 'proactive and positive Youth Guarantee that will help to ensure that

every young person has access to a suitable place in learning post 16' (Welsh Government 2013). However, there does not appear to be any explanation of exactly what 'suitable' means. Potentially, are we encouraging young people to pursue careers which in reality are hard to come by, or do not exist? The skills implementation plan states that the primary focus of Welsh Government is to 'raise productivity, reduce barriers into work and supporting people into sustainable employment' (Welsh Government 2014).

There is a wealth of academic literature that supports the idea of a difficult transition to work for many young people from disadvantaged communities. There is also a vast amount of literature on the idea of poor work and the cyclical relationship between employment and benefits. It is also worth noting here that for many families in Wales, being in work does not necessarily mean being out of poverty. There are many in work families in Wales who are living in poverty (Williams 2011, p. 10). Current cuts in welfare may be adding to this difficult situation along with precarious work and casualization in the workplace to heighten job insecurity.

There is still a widely held view that there is 'a culture of worklessness – 'values, attitudes and behaviours that prefer welfare dependency to employment' (Shildrick et al 2012, p. 5). There is the commonly accepted term of 'three generations unemployed' as Mac Donald notes: 'Politicians, policy makers and welfare practitioners talk confidently of 'three generations of families where no-one has ever worked' (Shildrick et al 2012, p. 15). The Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) set up a project to explore whether cultures of worklessness helped explain long-term unemployment in families across generations (ibid). The findings of this study challenged the idea that some young people are being brought up in a culture of worklessness. A couple of the key findings support the case that many unemployed families 'remained committed to the value of work and would prefer to be in jobs rather than have 'the miserable existence' of a life on benefits' (Shildrick et al 2012, p.26). And secondly, that, working-age children remained strongly committed to conventional values about work as part of a normal transition to adulthood. They

were keen to avoid the poverty, worklessness and other problems experienced by their parents. (Shildrick et al 2012).

These findings suggest that generally people want to work and realise the importance of work. We could argue then that for many people unemployment is not a choice that they choose for themselves or their children. This idea is supported by Goulden who states: 'Worklessness is driven by decayed job markets, not the people out of work' (Goulden, 2013). When considering employment and looking at the statistics, it is easy to think of unemployment as a fixed situation for many people over a long period of time. However, many young people move in and out of insecure, poor quality jobs (Shildrick et al 2010). This leads us to question the nature of current employment opportunities. Particularly the opportunities open to those with least amount of qualifications. 'Since the recession the labour market has become increasingly competitive, with fewer vacancies, which are filled more quickly. There is a deficit in labour demand' (Tunstall et al 2012). This is supported by Ray et al who state, 'Labour market insecurity sets the broader context, shaping people's work trajectories' (Ray et al 2010, p. 6).

Poor work can be difficult to define and it is also not always easy to identify the extent and pattern of low-paid, insecure employment. There is no legal definition in the UK of what constitutes 'Temporary work' (Metcalf and Dhudwar 2010). Research by MacDonald et al (2005) found that for many young people, 'their main problem was not finding work, but keeping it'. They do not believe that employment insecurity reflects negative attitudes on the part of the young people, neither was it necessarily due to a lack of skills. MacDonald et al believe 'it was almost entirely a consequence of the 'flexible' nature of low-skilled employment in modern Britain' (MacDonald et al 2005, p. 881). Is this policy failing? What support is there to help a young person keep their job once they have found one? This reality does not fit the current up skilling policies in Wales. Should there be a focus shift away from upskilling policies and frameworks?

Other practices found in low-paid jobs include zero hours contracts and few hours being offered to recruits (with hours increasing with seniority

and performance). Temporary contracts contribute to recurrent poverty as individuals move out of employment when their contracts end. We would expect low and variable hours also to contribute to the low-pay/no-pay cycle through stress and other difficulties caused by variable earnings, leading to resignation or dismissal. Lack of training and progression helps lock individuals into low-paid work (Metcalf and Dhudwar 2010, p. 8).

Shildrick et al in a report published for the JRF, 'The low-pay, no-pay cycle', note that one of their key findings points towards 'to the resilience and lasting work commitment shown' and that this was, 'despite the frustrations and setbacks associated with their repeated periods of unemployment and low-paid jobs' (Shildrick et al 2010, p. 5). It is also worth noting here that their research found that many participants avoided making claims for welfare benefits even though they were entitled. They believed this to be because a 'strong work attachment was learnt across generations' (Shildrick et al 2010, p. 5). Their research also suggested that 'Interviewees were aware of the social and psychological benefits of a job, and of the personal negative consequences of being unemployed' (Shildrick et al 2010, p. 5). This supports the work of Goulden (2013) previously noted, that worklessness is driven by a lack of opportunity, not a lack of desire to work, in fact young people today are more likely to be involved in their local communities and spend their time volunteering than previous generations (LGA 2014, p. 2).

The work of Ray et al (2010) in a longitudinal study over two years, looked at the trajectories of low-skilled workers. They found that there were certain credentials that made people more vulnerable to a job exit. These included; 'Low qualifications, being single, living in social housing and having a child under the age of five' (Ray et al 2010, p. 5). Four factors which they believe to be interrelating and either enabled or constrained stability in work trajectories were also identified. These include: labour market insecurity, employee flexibility, social and financial resources and individual responses and attitudes (Ray et al 2010, p. 5).

The inextricable link between poor and insecure work and poverty appears to be documented throughout literature and research on this topic. Shildrick et al capture this relationship well when they state:

The predominant experience of our interviewees was of recurrent poverty – of moving in and out of low paying jobs but never moving far from poverty. Even occasional ‘escapes’ from poverty were temporary, reflecting the insecurity of the jobs they got; our interviewees usually did not move far above the poverty line, reflecting the low-paid employment most accessed (Shildrick et al 2010, p. 6).

2.7 Availability of work?

This next chapter section explores the literature around the availability of local work as the availability of work is also a key factor within society which shapes the needs of the young person. It is worth noting here that young people's aspirations are affected by ‘the labour market and other opportunities in their local area, as experienced by the people they know; their beliefs about the own abilities; their sense of control over their circumstances’ (Jones 2005, p. 36). Local communities, however disadvantaged, can provide bonding social capital which is hard to relinquish. This is also supported by Carabelli et al when they note the existing debate on the ‘character of youth transitions and the trajectories now available for young people into adulthood which recognises huge variability in life courses or indeed lives without courses’ (Carabelli et al 2016, p. 8). Statistics show how unemployment in Wales increased during the recession in 2008 and this has been problematic for many communities in Wales since (Williams 2011). For young people who live in communities where there are generations of unemployment there becomes a cycle of entrenched multiple deprivation and disadvantage. Thomas (2014, p. 6) recognises that ‘young people not engaged in productive activity are at greater risk of sustained periods of unemployment, lower wages or suffering poorer health and are more likely to engage in criminal behaviour than other young people’. The way the labour market has changed over the past few decades may also impact upon how a young person views the world of work and the opportunities it brings. The work place is no longer a place of permanence with bonds of identity and loyalty and a sense of purpose (Bourn 2008, p. 3).

A document which addressed the problem of young people considered NEET in local authorities in England regularly, suggests that underemployment is also a big issue for young people particularly in terms of their aspirations for post 16 education and also for university leavers (LGA 2014, p. 25). Many Welsh Government policies set targets for the reduction of NEET in Wales. For example, in 2017, 4000-4500 young people need to move into employment, training or education by 2017 for the government to meet their target (Welsh Government 2014) Is there a danger that young people may be forced into something they don't want to do because of government targets?

2.8 Summary

This chapter has explored some of the key theoretical issues and debates around community, aspiration and social class. The chapter began by conceptualising community as a relational concept: one in which sociality is central to understanding place attachments and identities. Aspiration has been presented in a Neoliberal context of a drive to better oneself, to be upwardly mobile with understandings of how aspirations are gained. It has presented literature around the notions of transition and poor work and the availability of work. Hope has been understood as a part of agency and future thinking, therefore inextricably linked to aspiration formation. The next chapter provides the methodological considerations of this study.

3 CHAPTER THREE: Methodological Considerations

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the methodological considerations underlying this research. In this chapter, I outline my ethnographic approach and the reasons why this approach was adopted. I then provide a detailed account of my framework of data gathering and data analysis. I also share my reflections upon my methodological decisions.

This chapter aligns with the research aim and objectives of this PhD study. In that light I discuss my ontological and epistemological positioning, followed by a description of the design frame of this research as well as a discussion of the ethical considerations arising throughout the process. Finally, I provide a brief overview of the community in which this study is based. I also explore my researcher positionality, and the limitations of this data. The reflexive considerations of the difficulties within this study are interwoven across the sections that comprise the chapter.

3.2 Ontology and epistemology

Ultimately, my ontological and epistemological stand point informed my methodology for this research so this was my first consideration in the research process. Ontological positioning specifies the 'relationship between the world and our human interpretations and practices' (Braun and Clarke 2013, p. 29). Epistemology 'determines what counts as trustworthy, valid and 'true' knowledge within a community' (Braun and Clarke 2013, p. 29). As is a particularly common approach within qualitative research, this study is situated within the notion of critical realism (Braun and Clarke 2013, p. 27) in ontological positioning. It is proposed that a pre-social reality exists but we can only ever partially know it (Braun and Clarke 2013, p.27). Realism is sometimes described as a philosophical 'third way' between empiricism and idealism and although methodologically it borrows from both of these traditions, it is a distinct philosophy, and especially a distinct philosophy of science, in its own right (Williams 2016, p. 190).

For this study, an understanding of critical realism is proffered as this view holds the understanding that knowledge is 'socially influenced' and an external reality such as feelings, provide foundations for knowledge (Braun and Clarke 2013, p.27). Critical Realism is important for me as I believe that as long as the researcher is using the right tools, one is able to find authenticity and respect even if we can only ever partially access reality.

An inductive approach to this research has been taken, recognising that the data generated will enable me to discover themes and search for patterns throughout the data set. This is in contrast to 'a universal view of a situation and working back through the particulars' (Gray 2009, p. 14). Gray describes this as taking place '... through a process of gathering data, it attempts to establish patterns, consistencies and meanings' (Gray 2009, p.15). I would also note that this research is exploring knowledge as something which is 'tied to the social world in which we live' (Braun and Clarke 2013, p. 30) giving it a Constructionist approach. The Constructionist approach is important for this research as it allows for an exploration of the meaning the participants ascribe to what they discuss (Flick 2018, p. 598). It has been suggested that: 'Constructionism is concerned with relationships and experiences that can involve multiple realities. Truth is therefore relative to the frame of reference employed by the observing systems and is subject to change; knowledge is being constructed through social and individual beliefs (Braun and Clarke 2013, p.30). It is this stance which is taken throughout all stages of this research project.

3.3 Research aim and objectives

As previously noted, the main goal of this research is to investigate how working-class young people from an estate in the South Wales fare in gaining employment amid a local context of poor work, job shortages, and disadvantage.

It is with this in mind that this research has tried to 'get into the shoes' of the young people. The research seeks to understand how these conditions are lived and

experienced by these young people as they move through the early formative years, as they move and live in their community and how they experience school right through to the time at which they transition to employment.

The research seeks to explore the subjective realities of these young people. To gain an awareness of how their families, and the family context itself, impact upon youths considering work and options and having aspirations. As such, it is also important to understand how young people move through their school year. Figures around their attendance and attainment are not sufficient to explain their everyday experiences. Teachers' responses and interactions shape habitus and are of analytical interest. Additionally, young people are a product of their history, which impacts on their educational and employment trajectories. This research has utilised both empirical research and secondary data to enable this aim to be achieved. The questions this research seeks to explore are the following:

- What particular challenges do young people from disadvantaged communities and unskilled households face in transitioning into employment?
- How are these challenges actually experienced by young people in their everyday lives and concrete social situations, in families, peer-groups and neighbourhoods?
- How can accessing real-life, close-up contextual factors allow us to understand these challenges?
- What aspirations do young people from disadvantaged communities express, and how can the empirical work undertaken inform the current policy-agenda on young people, poverty and aspirations?

These research questions for this study were given by this particular studentship and developed in partnership with my supervisory team and PWU. The following chapter sections will explain the background to this research and its parameters.

3.4 Design frame

As previously noted in Chapter One, this PhD is a collaborative award between Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and People and Work Unit (PWU) and is a mixed method approach of both secondary data analysis of data previously

obtained by the charity and also the analysis of qualitative data obtained through empirical research on the part of the researcher. This has meant that much of the design frame for this PhD has been prescribed by the secondary data gained through the collaboration including the research site itself. Details on this can be found in chapter 1. This chapter outlines all of the secondary data which has been presented for this research in the context of the community in which that research took place. It is worth noting here, that this has been a complex process which began with cataloguing all of the data provided by PWU (detailed in chapter 1) which included: project worker diaries, spreadsheets, attendance records, exam grades. It also included surveys which were carried out annually in the school to gain the perspective of the young person: how they felt about school and how they felt they were doing in school. The surveys have not been used in this thesis as they did not aid the answering of the research questions. However, as part of the studentship I undertook a Social Science Research Methods quantitative research module and used the surveys to write a report which can be made available. I was given permission by PWU to use all of the data they provided me with, but I also understood that it did not have to be used.

Once I had catalogued all of the data, I began the drawing up of timelines for each of the 43 young people before illustrating this in in-depth vignettes which provide a detailed picture of everything known about each of the young people. Then PWU wrote to 43 young people using the addresses they already had for them to say that this research was being carried out and that I would be making contact with them. The letters detailed contact details for PWU and an opt-out date by which to make contact. Once that date had been reached I began trying to make contact with the young people and this will be presented in more detail later in this chapter. This chapter goes some way in exploring the complex and multidimensional nature of this research set out in different chapter sections exploring the different methodological considerations as I make reference to my research diary throughout this chapter to illustrate the process.

3.5 An Ethnographic approach to research design

As I considered my approach to designing this research and began my reading around research design, it was apparent that there were many potential ways in which this could be embarked upon. Having spent months trawling through secondary data sets provided by the PWU to develop in depth vignettes of each member of the cohort, I realised that not one of those pieces of information alone could paint the picture that had been created by using them all together. What I still felt was lacking in all of it though was the voice of the young person themselves as everything that was recorded about them was done so by educational professionals and project workers. I realised that to gain as much knowledge as I could about these young people's lived experience, I needed to immerse myself in it and become a part of life in the community with these young people as much as I could.

With this in mind I decided that an ethnographic approach would be vital, as it would allow the research to both explore and experience the conditions of existence of the young people involved in the research. The central aim of ethnography is to 'build a systematic understanding of all human cultures from the perspective of those who have learned them' (Spradley 1979, pp. 10) Ethnography is usually done with a single general problem in mind: to discover the cultural knowledge people are using to organise their behaviour and interpret their experience (Spradley 1980, pp. 30-31). This was deemed an appropriate way in which to enable the exploration of the conditions of existence of the young people who have grown up in this community and particularly appealed to me. It would enable me to see the young people and the community in which they lived with as much realness and honesty as possible. It is vital that this research primarily illustrates the voices of the young people, their truths and I believed that an ethnographic approach would give me a good positioning to achieve this.

As the work of 'describing a culture' (Spradley) ethnography 'consists of participation, observation, listening, asking questions and collection of any kind of

data that is instructive for the issue of research' (Flick 2018, p. 336). Spradley notes that to enable the researcher to gain the ability of discovering the 'hidden principles of another way of life the researcher must become a student' (Spradley 1980, p. 4). It was with this in mind that I entered the research site with the mentality of 'here to learn' and understand the day-to-day realities and practices within the community whilst consciously positioning myself with an attitude of almost complete ignorance (Spradley 1980, p. 4). This research has adopted a constructivist approach to ethnography, and reflects the understandings of ethnography put forward by Maynard (1989) when he suggests that:

In doing ethnography, researchers attempt to draw a picture of what some phenomenon 'looks like' from an insider's account of the phenomenon and for some audience who wants to know about it. The ethnographer, in general, is in the business of describing culture from the members' point of view (Maynard 1989, p. 130).

Within an ethnographic approach, this research has utilised a 'multi-pronged' approach, accommodating many different methodological approaches, including observations and interviews, whilst being involved in community activities. Ethnographic approaches have proved useful in contemporary studies of young people's educational and employment trajectories in Wales, including Ward's work on working class masculinities, education and deindustrialisation (Ward 2015). Once I had decided that an ethnographic approach was the best fit for the purpose of this research I then had to gain access to the research site.

3.6 The research site and gaining entry

As previously noted in chapter one, the geographical location in which this research has been carried out is community of about 3000 people based on the outskirts of a large South Wales Valleys town. The community is classed as a disadvantaged

community and received Communities First funding up until the programme ended in 2018.²

The estate itself is situated about a mile uphill from a town centre and it has seen much regeneration and refurbishment over the past few years with the council houses being refurbished and given new rendering. There is a community centre based in the heart of the council estate, which is home to the community regeneration charity and many of the other activities which run on the estate. Many different services are provided at the community centre, some of which include the use of a phone, food bank, job club and essential skills courses.

The area comprises of a large council housing estate, two primary schools, three convenience stores, a community centre, rugby club and a social club. There is also a large playing field, a park and woodland. When considering the research site, I think about this in two parts in terms of access. First, the wider community, the estate itself in which I spent a few days a week in exploring the wider community and gaining insights to the inhabitants' everyday existence.

The second part, then, is the community centre itself, in which the community regeneration charity existed under the umbrella of Communities First. It is often noted that one of the most difficult parts of qualitative research is gaining entry to the research site (Bryman 2008, p. 407) and this research has not been without its difficulties. There have however, certainly been many advantages to working with a research site which has previously worked with the charity which is co-funding this PhD. I will discuss negotiating access to both of these different strands of the field, beginning with the community as a whole. I note that it is difficult to narrate these two parts as two entirely different entities as my time in the field proved them to be inextricably linked.

² The Welsh Government's Communities First programme came to an end during this research as I was carrying out data collection.

3.6.1 My feel of the area

The first thing that struck me about the area was the sense of community, an overwhelming feeling of people supporting each other. I was often welcomed into homes of some of the people who lived there. Ever since I first travelled up to Brynhaul I have had this overwhelming feeling of the estate as a place of somewhat temporary existence even though it has been there for decades. I find this really difficult to put into words. As a child, I spent many weekends and summer holidays camping with my family. There was something lovely about the sense of security, simplicity and safety on a camp site. Everything felt as though it was shut off from the outside world. It was a place where for us as children, the rules were different, for example being allowed to go further afield on our bikes for longer which we weren't allowed to do outside our home. Every day felt like a new day where you made plans for today only, even down to meal choices, that was more about what was available to us than what we may have really wanted. This is the lifestyle Brynhaul reminds me of this, with the children playing in the freedom of the streets. One of the shops has a bread and milk deal sign written in board pens on flip chart paper as you walk in through the door, which adds to a temporary feeling.

The use of space, to me feels like a campsite, the estate with its streets full of children playing and neighbours chatting, the three four shops placed around the estate, a takeaway, a social club, a wood, community centre, numerous play places dotted around make you feel that you can exist within a self-contained community shut off from the world around you. It is like some sort of micro-climate. The reason why to me, it feels temporary is maybe because my experience of camping always ended, I always came home, there is something about existence in Brynhaul makes me feel as though the day to day existence cannot be sustained for ever.

In December 2016, I began to spend time in the community to try and 'get a feel' for the place. As I began the PhD process and started drawing up ideas of how this research could look, I had imagined that this part of the research to be very different from the reality of it. This was an area I had gained so much information about and felt like I knew as I arrived, I had imagined that I would see the young people I had read about and that it would be easy to build relationships with people in the community. In reality, in a cold, dark, December, there were very few people around. In the first few weeks I would walk the streets trying to engage the people I passed in conversation and gain a sense of the place. I would visit each of the local shops, and make conversation with the people working in them, and go for a drink in the social club and the rugby club and the community centre. It was obvious at times that people were suspicious of me as I walked the streets, some people would not talk to me and some people, in conversation with others would be obviously watching me. As, I began to realise just how difficult it was going to be to contact the cohort, this will be discussed later, it was becoming apparent that the regeneration charity was going to be vital to carrying out this research in terms of their knowledge and involvement with the cohort and also in their work with the wider community.

As previously noted above, the second strand of the research site Identified was the community regeneration charity. When I began my time in the field, this was located in flats on a street in the heart of the estate but in 2016 this moved to the community centre. This was to become an invaluable space in which I could carry out empirical data collection. As a researcher, I was very privileged to be able to gain entry to this research site with so much acceptance and barely any negotiation. People who had previously worked with the community on different projects run by the charity were well regarded by both community members and people who worked within the community regeneration office. There were many challenges and advantages to being able to work with a site which has previously been worked with. Research suggests that there may be questions of validity when choosing a research site in this way, as Mulhill notes 'there is always the lurking consideration that the site has been chosen partly because of its accessibility to the researcher' (Mulhall 2003, p. 310) but

I believe that in this case it was essential that the research site chosen was to be the one from which all of the prior knowledge and data had been obtained.

My first point of contact with the charity was with Rachel, a gatekeeper, who had agreed to meet me at her office. She knew most of the young people with whom I needed to gain contact. I realised that relationships with people at this office were going to be key in gaining the opportunity to experiencing insights into life and everyday existence on the estate and also potentially establishing communication with the young people in the cohort. There were many advantages to using a stipulated research site including: prior knowledge of the area, a pathway to relationships with key workers in the area which had already been forged by over a decade of working with PWU, an ongoing relationship with the PWU which supported my developing relationships with the key workers in the community centre. Once I had gained access to the research field, the next step was to decide how to tackle the problem of how to reach the most interesting participants. Establishing relationships was essential to this process (Flick 2018, p. 165). I next consider the research relationships which have enabled me to complete this research.

3.7 Research relationships

Prior to this PhD research, my professional background was within adult education. As a qualified teacher, I have been teaching at further education colleges, for local authorities within the context of adult community learning and most recently at a university. Much of my role as university tutor has involved teaching on the widening access programme out in the communities surrounding the university, most often in areas considered disadvantaged. This led me to indirectly work with the regeneration charity³ for a number of years before beginning the PhD research. Four years prior to beginning this research I delivered community courses in locations

³ The local community regeneration charity runs out of the community centre and organises educational courses and communities for work meetings as well as other local events and the food bank.

which were served by the regeneration charity; this meant that I had the opportunity to previously build up a relationship with one of the key workers. I believe that this relationship was critical in me gaining the trust of the other charity workers. During the stages of data collection, I also continued to teach for two hours a week, this opportunity was vital in providing insights to the local community and strengthening a relationship of trust with those who worked with the regeneration charity. Also, with many of learners on the course being from the area, they were able to help me better understand the local area.

I was aware that the impression I gave of myself to others was crucial in developing relationships and networks that would allow me access to honesty from the people who worked at the community centre. Silverman (2005) notes the importance of Impression management when entering the field, particularly in a setting which requires the assistance of gatekeepers in gaining access to the exposure of the everyday realities and existence. It is suggested that:

Whether or not people have knowledge of social research, they are often more concerned with what kind of person the researcher is than with the research itself. They will try to gauge how far he or she can be trusted, what he or she might be able to offer as an acquaintance or friend, and perhaps, how easily he or she could be manipulated or exploited (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983: 78 cited in Silverman 2005, pp. 255).

In the beginning weeks, at times I would feel an inconvenience or in the way. As time went on, people began to trust me and talk to me honestly and openly quite often sharing information with me in complete confidence about the future of the charity, particularly as Communities First funding was coming to an end as well and people's employment with it. A great deal of thought was put into what I wore and how I spoke, particularly when I was meeting with the young people to interview them.

I was able to build relationships with people in the community; a couple who were relatively new to the area invited me round for dinner. A couple of times they welcomed me into their home and, as we ate together, they shared with me their

experiences of moving onto the estate as outsiders (originally from just a couple of miles away). They also shared with me some of their understandings of the hardships experienced on the estate and also positive stories of support and community. The relationship I was able to build with this local couple was important as they were able to provide insights gained from living on the estate that I could not have gained otherwise. It also helped me personally gain confidence in my being there alone.

3.8 Reflexivity and Researcher Positionality

When engaging in ethnographic research, it is important to consider your position as researcher and to engage in a reflexive practice. The view that this reflexivity is a positive aspect of ethnography has been 'growing among anthropologists since the early 1970s' (Davies 2008, p. 11). Reflexive practice involves the continual and joint evaluation of how I, as the researcher, am potentially affecting the research and how the research impacts me as the researcher. Recognising all the time that as a qualitative researcher, I am a part of this research process. Flick notes that qualitative research methods take the researcher's communication with the field and its' members as an explicit part of knowledge instead of deeming it an intervening variable (Flick 2018, p 8). This is also supported by Coffey as she writes 'fieldwork helps to shape, challenge, reproduce, maintain, reconstruct, and represent ourselves and the selves of others' (Coffey 1999, p. 8). Through my time during the PhD process, the notion of reflexivity has caused me to continually reflect upon the information I was being presented with and my understanding of it. It has been noted that a broad definition of reflexivity:

means turning back on oneself, a process of self-reference. In the context of social research, reflexivity at its most immediately obvious level refers to the ways in which the products or research are affected by the personnel and process of doing research (Davies 2008, p. 4).

Thus, an ongoing process which is multi-dimensional and multifaceted. Davies (2008) writes that 'reflexivity in social research is not a single phenomenon but assumes a

variety of forms and effects of the research process through all its stages' (Davies 2008, p. 7). This is something I have considered throughout every step of the research process. It is important to consider how I was viewed in my role as a researcher; 'insider/outsider' discourses are important as they place the researcher at the centre of the production of knowledge' (Mannay 2016, p. 29).

I consider here the research process that this studentship entailed and my own reflexive response to this study. When I began travelling to the field I had previously taught in the area, delivering adult learning courses as part of the universities widening participation programme. I had also taught in other near-by communities and this had been arranged by someone in the regeneration charity who I had known for two years before this research began. I was not seen as a total outsider to the staff of the community regeneration program for that reason. I already had a good working relationship with the person who knew me in my teaching capacity and this aided me in gaining the trust and support of other staff members. I had not taught any of the participants of this study so they were unaware of my teaching identity. I found that the participants often assumed a connection between me and PWU and I would have to explain that I did not work for the charity and I would explain that I was a student/researcher at Cardiff University.

For me personally, there were many points of familiarity within the field. I have previously noted that I became a mam for the first time during my studentship. My baby was born towards the end of my time in Brynhaul so I carried out most of my fieldwork pregnant and continued three more interviews once I returned a year later from maternity leave. I found that pregnancy impacted my thoughts, understandings and emotions during the data collection. I found that being pregnant highlighted points of similarity and difference between myself and the participants who had or were expecting children. One of the first interviews I conducted was with a young person who at the time had a three month old baby. I met her again three months later when we had a cup of coffee and a catch up in the community centre. She asked

me about when I would return to work after having my baby and I responded with my intention of working when my baby was six months old.

She was horrified at the thought of me leaving my baby so young and almost shouted “what, your going to leave your baby when its younger than him” whilst pointing at her own child. I had felt the familiarity reached between us when she knew I was about to become a mam was lost in that moment. She clearly saw me as different. So I back tracked and said something about not knowing what I would really do after the baby was born, as I was about to become a mam for the first time and had no idea what to expect. Another cohort member was pregnant and our babies were due within a week of each other. Even though in some ways we were experiencing very different circumstances, we bonded over that and in her interview, we talked about pregnancy and compared notes on how we were feeling before the interview. This provided the opportunity for this informant to see me as familiar. We also bumped into each other a few times at the local hospital for our prenatal appointments and she always came and spoke with me.

I note later that I offered money to all of the participants, not one person felt comfortable taking the money until they were assured that I could claim it back from the university and that it was not really my own. As I reflected on this, I considered the understanding these young people had of hardship and the difference £10 can make. I felt that this refusal to take the money if it left me out of pocket was a reflection of how they saw me as similar to them in that the loss of £10 pounds would be a hardship for me too.

Throughout the research process, I never felt like a total outsider. There were points of similarity, such as my accent and the dialect. I live only five miles away and it is an area I have family connections with. As a child my mam’s auntie, uncle and cousins lived on the estate, her dad died when she was 7 and after his passing, she would

frequently go and stay with them. My father also has colleagues and friends on the estate from when he did his apprenticeship in the area 35 years ago and we would go and visit them. I know that these are very tentative connections that cannot lead me to gain full insider status, but I felt that it gave me a feeling of Brynhaul as familiar.

For me the whole interview process was often emotional, there were times I empathized with the young people's stories and there were other times the young people shared things with me that were harrowing experiences, such as the young man who found his mother after she had passed away when he was still in primary school. As young people shared stories of a less than enjoyable time of school, I saw my own experiences in a similar light and their stories often bought back my own personal memories of school that had long been buried. I continuously needed to be aware of my own emotions and understandings to ensure that I was not bias in my understanding of the data I was gaining.

3.9 Research diary

To aid with the process of reflexivity, throughout the PhD process, I maintained a detailed research diary. This enabled me to maintain a reflexive stance throughout the research process. Reflexivity implies an open-minded critical approach to the research (Silverman 2005, p. 249). Huberman and Miles suggest that a 'reflexive stance' involves, 'regular, ongoing, self-conscious documentation- of successive versions of coding schemes, of conceptual arguments of analysis... episodes- both successful ones and dead ends' (Silverman 2005, p. 249).

I maintained a research diary to help make my reasoning throughout the process, transparent. I have documented my research activities with dates, my reading, details of data collected, directions of data analysis including 'special achievements, dead-ends and surprises' (Silverman 2005, p. 251). As well as my own personal

thoughts and reactions and my supervisors' reactions and suggestions. This helped me to be organised, track the progress of the research and also aided my own reflexivity throughout the research process. This was immeasurably valuable to be able to read back through as my maternity leave came to an end and I began to plan to go back into the field after a year away.

3.10 Ethical considerations

In accordance with Cardiff University's ethics guidelines procedure, a written application detailing what the research would entail was submitted to the ethics committee. Throughout this project I have ensured that the Economic and Social Research Council code of conduct and research standards has been followed. I have also familiarised myself with the PWU code of conduct and other policy documents. There have been many ethical implications to consider throughout this research, involving the safety of both my participants and myself throughout this research.

These ethical considerations consist of informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, and the avoidance of harm. Before entering the field, I mapped out all of the ways in which I thought that these ethical considerations may be encountered and mitigated.

Fully informed consent was gained for each participant who was interviewed. Before entering the research field, I designed a leaflet advertising the research that was taking place (See Appendix). This leaflet included information about me and the research that I would be carrying out, what would be required of participants and my contact number and email address. This was sent to the home postal address of all the young people in the cohort, where the charity held up-to-date contact details. The charity also included a letter with this information leaflet, which stated a contact number for one of their project workers who had worked with the cohort and an opt out date if they were not happy with me trying to make contact with them. Additionally, I created a Facebook page specifically for this research and advertised

the leaflet there. I found that knocking on doors at addresses we had for the young people and being in the community centre was the best method of recruitment. The young people were often happier to meet with me for interview when they had previously met me compared to those I was only able to make contact with over Facebook messenger. When using Facebook and private messaging to contact the young people, I found that even the meetings which had been arranged with dates and times for interview did not often materialise.

When a member of the cohort came to meet me for interview, I presented them with the leaflet providing information about the study again and discussed with them about the research. Prior to the interview commencing, I asked that they sign a document which detailed exactly what they were consenting to. I wanted all of the informants to feel comfortable in the situation and told them that they were indeed free to leave at any point and that they did not have to tell me anything that they were not comfortable telling me. It was important to ensure that the young people were not put in the position where they would find talking about life distressing (Corbin and Morse 2003).

To respect anonymity and confidentiality of all of the information of participants obtained including: secondary data consisting of attendance and attainment records, project worker diaries, addresses and also the audio recordings and transcripts, were stored in accordance with Cardiff University's rules and regulations in a locked cabinet. All electronic documents with sensitive information on were password protected. I expressed to all informants that the research was being gathered to be presented to Cardiff University in a written report as part of the requirements of PhD study. I also noted that I may use this research to present oral presentations at academic conferences and for the purpose of academic publication. To protect identity, Pseudonyms have been used for the informants who have engaged in this research, the geographical location in which the data was gathered and also the

name of the project which was run by People and Work has also been allocated a pseudonym.

Ethical issues permeate interview research. The knowledge produced depends upon the social relationship of the interviewer and interviewee, which again rests upon the interviewer's ability to create a stage where the subject is free and safe to talk of private events for later public use. This again requires a delicate balance between the interviewer's concern of pursuing interesting knowledge and ethical respect for the integrity of the interview subject (Kvale 2007, p. 8). For example, when one of the participants told me about the death of his mother, in explaining her death and how he found her he gave a different reason for her death than I had been told by someone in the regeneration charity. I did not question this, or suggest that I had been told something different. I did not question it because, this is evidently a traumatic experience for the participant to have experienced in his childhood and I had to respect what he was willing to share with me about his personal life.

Throughout the data collection period it was also important for me to carry out a risk assessment and consider my own safety as a lone worker. I was going into people's houses alone and spending time in the community alone. When interviewing, in all but one interview I ensured that private yet public spaces were used. This meant that both the participant and I had the privacy of no one overhearing our conversation and the safety being in a public space with other people around. The one interview which was not in a public space, took place in the participant's home in his downstairs living room which also housed his bed. He had recently had surgery on his foot and was unable to easily walk up and down the stairs. His mother was at home upstairs during the interview and on this occasion, my husband knew the address at which the interview was taking place.

3.11 Methods

In the early stages of the research process, I read widely in areas around qualitative research methods to best inform my approach to methodology. I had first considered sending out a survey to the cohort, as this is something which they were familiar with, having completed one for the charity whilst they were in school. However, I realised that this probably would not gain the best response and discarded the idea. There were logistic issues, relating to the veracity of addresses provided, coupled with the likelihood or not of people taking the time to return the survey. More importantly, on a deeper level I felt a survey would be less likely to provide the rich descriptive accounts obtainable through face to face interviews. Precisely the sort of accounts I wanted.

In consequence, this study is comprised of traditional ethnographic methodological techniques, including observations and interviewing, cataloguing the data, drawing up in depth Vignettes and using computer software Nvivo to analyse data.

3.12 Establishing contact and Recruitment

Prior to entering the field, I spent months going through the project worker diaries and attainment and attendance information to complete comprehensive vignettes of each member of the cohort. This gave me invaluable insights to the backgrounds, educational achievements, family life and personal lives of some of the cohort. The project worker diaries are written from the perspective of the project workers and are therefore, interpretations rather than the accounts of the young people themselves. This meant that I could never fully know their accuracy.

Establishing contact with the young people and recruiting participants was challenging and problematic at times. It was decided by PWU that the young people who would be interviewed would be from the original cohort of 43 young people. I

had hoped that I would be able to make contact with each of them. Contact began in November 2016 with PWU sending out letters to the postal addresses of the potential participants; letters containing information leaflets detailing why they were being contacted and what the research entailed for each of the young people contacted. The young people were given a contact number and an email address to contact to opt out by a certain date if they so wished. Making contact with the young people proved to be a very difficult and time-consuming task.

In December 2017 I began to spend time in the community and started knocking doors of all of the young people for whom I had addresses. In reflection, this could be seen as an invasive or aggressive form of recruitment. My rationale for doing this was that as the sample of participants for the study was provided by the PWU, I needed to make contact with these particular young people and we could not be sure that we had the most up to date contact details for them. I tried to mitigate the potential invasion and aggression by agreeing that the charity would first send a letter to the home address, in the name of the charity and the project worker who they would be familiar with. At first I would do this a couple of times a week and at different times of the day. Initially, the progress in making contact was very slow. Many of the houses when I visited, there was no one at home. I met some of the young people's parents who often invited me into the home even though the young person was not there but this meant that I got to chat with their parents about the young person and the research. Parents often gave me a contact number for the young person. Some of the addresses which I had been given were no longer the right address as the young person or their family had moved away. Spending time in the community was not as fruitful as I had thought it could be in accessing members of the cohort. However, what my observations in the community did do was enable me to 'get a feel' for what day to day existence is like within the community; and two of the interviews took place because I had met the informants whilst I was in the community centre.

Another way in which contact was attempted was through social media. I noted previously the Facebook account I'd established for the project. The account which detailed who I was and what research I was carrying out and why. I then used the option to search for each of the 43 young people. Private messenger on Facebook was used to try and locate the young people. People who worked for the charity and also for Communities First were able to help me find people on Facebook who I had not been able to find and by using the 'friend' function on social media site Facebook I was able to forge links. Hannah (community regeneration worker) was helpful in being able to share any knowledge she had on where any of the cohort members were based now and what they were doing, and helping me find them on Facebook, although she was not able to directly arrange for anybody to meet me. Each time I met with a young person to interview them I asked them who they were in touch with. I recognise that this had the possibility to impact upon the terms of confidentiality so I only asked if they are in contact with anyone else but never disclosed who had or had not been interviewed to see if they could help me make contact with anyone. Again this did not prove to be as fruitful as I would have imagined as many of the young people rarely had contact with other members of the cohort.

To encourage young people to take part in this study, they were offered money for their time in participating in the study. Having carried out research in the estate previously, PWU suggested that this may encourage some of the young people in the cohort to take part in the research. I offered the participants £10 to show an appreciation of their time. Not one of the informants wanted to take the money when we met face to face and had to be persuaded to do so, after being assured that it was not my money. Many of them noted before the interview that they were happy to give me their time without gaining the financial incentive. I found that coming back from maternity, the time which had passed gave me access to more interviews with informants who I would not have had access to if I had not taken a year maternity leave.

The community centre itself proved to be a space of critical importance throughout the research and fieldwork process. It provided me with access to a wide range of informants. This appeared to be just as vital a space to the community, as it provided a food bank, the use of a land line and internet access, a meeting place the different clubs and associations in the wider community; and it also provided me with the opportunity to meet with professionals from different organisations and government initiatives. Additionally, it was a space in which I could arrange to meet people, which was safe and neutral. The room in which interviews took place at the community centre was different depending what was going on in the centre during the time which the interview was scheduled for. Sometimes a smaller room with chairs and tables in was used and other interviews we carried out on comfy seats at the far end of the large sports hall. Both of these places provided confidentiality and for the participant to be able to talk without being heard.

3.13 Observation

With reference to observation, Flick notes that it is an 'everyday skill which is methodologically systemized and applied in qualitative research' (Flick 2018, p. 325). There are many different forms in which observation can take place in qualitative research and different observer positions which can be adopted by the researcher. Within the field, I adopted the position of observer-as-participant (Gold 1958 cited in Davies 2008, p. 82) as much as I was able to. I found that during my time in the field, my positioning as an observer changed depending on the situation I was observing and the amount of time I had spent there. In the early stages of observation, I was very much the complete observer. As I began spending time in the community and exploring the environment, I would watch people's interactions and make conversation in different places in the community, observing how the different spaces within the community were used. As the weeks went on and relationships with the regeneration charity staff evolved, I began to become more involved. This meant that I was able to take part in the youth work sessions that took place in the community enter and other meetings such as the tenants and residents' association.

I started attending the local youth club based in the community centre, in the first couple of weeks, I was initially observing the young people, their activities and their interactions with the youth workers. I began to build relationships with some of the young people, particularly some of the ones who I was seeing regularly in the community centre and also out in the wider community. One evening when I turned up, the lead youth worker asked if I would mind cooking for all of the young people. Before I knew it, not only was I cooking for an expected forty young people, but I was also having them help me cook and showing a group of them what to do. This gave me invaluable insights to life in the community that I would not have experienced otherwise. Although it did not give me access to the cohort, I met with the young people a few years younger in a setting that many of the young people who were interviewed talked about. I met some of the siblings of the cohort members. I met with young people who shared their experiences of living in Brynhaul and I was able to see first-hand things which I could not have understood without witnessing. What my involvement with the youth club did, was heighten my awareness of the level of poverty that some of the young people on the estate were living in and also how important the youth workers were as role models to the young people. I also saw how adults on the estate came to the community centre for support with things like job applications, form filling and needing to use the food bank.

For this research, it was deemed appropriate to carry out interviews with the young people but also to have recorded conversations with people who work in the community and with those who have worked on the project run by PWU. Throughout the duration of my time in the field, I would try and find any opportunity to talk with anyone working out of the community centre. By doing this I hoped to gain more understanding and contextualisation of the topics that were coming to light in the interviews and to gain greater insight to conditions of existence from another perspective.

3.14 Interviews

As I began to spend time in the community, I also began to finalise my plans for how I would go about gaining information from the informants. Having decided that a survey would not provide the in depth, narrative of information I was hoping to gain, I decided that interviewing was the right way forward. Kvale writes that the qualitative interview is a 'key venue for exploring the ways in which subjects experience and understand their world. It provides a unique access to the lived world, who in their own words describe their activities, experiences and opinions' (Kvale 2007, p. 8). When considering the forms of qualitative interview available I recognised the importance of providing the informants a platform on which they would be able to provide as much authentic, detailed and open reflections of their own experiences as they so wished. I note here that this research is built upon the foundations of a constructionist stand point and that 'according to constructionism, interviewers and interviewees are always actively engaged in constructing meaning' (Silverman 2011, p. 169). I wanted to find a way in which the participants' active engagement in constructing meaning was of paramount importance.

Therefore I felt that for this study, a structured interview with strict interview schedules would not be suitable, neither did I feel, would a semi-structured interview. While the latter would allow open spaces for more open responses from the participants, I still felt it would be too researcher led. I needed to find a method which would use as little of me as a researcher in the interviews as possible, whilst still allowing me to gain some understanding both of the everyday realities for these young people, and how they viewed their past present and future.

As I first explored the interview options available, I really liked the idea of using a timeline interview method (Adriensen 2012) I thought that I would create bags containing the paper and other creative materials with an instruction brief. I had

considered that I would be able to take these bags with me as I knocked the home addresses of the young people and then give them out for them to create their own timelines and bring the timeline with them when we had arranged an interview to take place. As I began trying to make contact with the young people, I realised that this would not work. It was already proving to be a lengthy process of trying to locate the young people and then when I had located them it was proving difficult to get many of the potential informants to reply to messages or arrange for us to meet.

I went away to a National Centre for Research Methods conference in Bath at the end of my first year of the PhD programme. It was here I attended presentations where people had used the Biographical Narrative Method of interviewing. On beginning the PhD, this is a research method that I had not explored before so I began to read around this form of gaining information and I found that the 'use of biography, or life history, has long been a methodological approach available in ethnographic research' (Davies 2008, p. 204). The narrative biographical interview method (NBIM) first introduced by Fritz Schutz (Rienmann and Schutz 1987) has been chosen because research suggests that it is a good way of accessing the view point of the interviewee. Goodson and Sikes (2001) suggest that life story is concerned with understanding a person's view and account of their life. As I wanted to gain a narrative that was relevant to the research questions, I presented broad questions which afforded the young people the space to narrate their own histories, as Riemann and Schutz state that a narrative interview begins with a 'generative narrative question' (Rienmann and Schutz 1987, p. 353). As the young people narrated their histories around the topics of education, growing up in Brynhaul and their experiences of both looking for and gaining employment or further study, I was able to ask prompting questions to gain further details. It has been noted that the life story interview has been considered a method which enables for the capturing of 'people's own perceptions of their lives' (Goodson and Sikes, 2001, p. 42) which has been the aim of this research.

Prior to the interviews commencing I also considered the idea of also using a methodological tool which would allow for creativity, alongside NBIM. I had envisaged providing the informants with the opportunity to physically map out a timeline on A3 paper as they shared their stories with me. I had hoped that this would enable the young people focus on points of specific importance (Adriansen, 2012). I also felt that, possibly, drawing a timeline and having something in front of them to focus on, might dispel any nervousness they had about talking to me. It has been suggested that the use of timelines 'can make the interview a collective process allowing the interviewee to take ownership of the process' (Adriansen 2012, p. 44). As the interviews commenced, I tried the creation of time lines out in the first two interviews and found that it did not work. The two participants were more distracted by the need to write something and were voicing their concerns that what they were illustrating was not good enough or what I was looking for. Even though I tried to reassure the participants that there was no right or wrong way and it was to be theirs as they saw fit, I understood that they were nervous putting pen to paper and would rather just talk. I decided not to continue with the timelines as I did not want to put unnecessary pressure on the participants. On reflection, I can see how this may have made the interview feel more school like and formal, understandably a nerve inducing experience for someone who recalls their school days as not such a positive experience. Going forward, I decided that their voice was the most important factor.

It was particularly important that the voice of the young person was heard to understand their original interpretations of their personal experiences and realities. Atkinson (1998) notes that story telling can be important and seen as a fundamental form of human communication. This is because it can serve an essential function in our lives. We often think in story form and bring meaning to our lives through story (Atkinson 1998, p.1). It was suggested that for the young person to be heard, the researcher needed to be removed from the interviews as much as possible. This means then that the finished product is entirely a first-person narrative, with the researcher removed as much as possible from the text (Atkinson 1998). I felt that this was important in being able to hear the young people's stories in their own

words. At times, some of the young people were nervous but on the whole the interviews worked well. At each interview I was friendly and tried to make the participant as comfortable as possible. I introduced myself, presented the young person with the informed consent paperwork which had previously been made available on the Facebook page. I explained what the interview process would involve. Once the participant was comfortable, I asked them to tell me their own story around their memories of school, what life was like growing up in Brynhaul and their post school experiences focusing on post compulsory education and employment.

It had been hoped that, by using a narrative biographical research method it would allow the young people to contemplate their own situation and then tell their own story, using their own language and perceptions. It has been suggested that narrative descriptions exhibit human activity as purposeful engagement in the world. Narrative is the type of discourse that draws together diverse events, the happenings and the actions of human lives (Polkinghorne 1995). For this reason, the interviews were intended to be as participant led as far as possible. It was hoped that this would allow for the exploration of their own life story with regard to their time in the formal education system and their trajectory since. The intention then was to understand how the patterns of different life stories can be related to the wider historical, social, environmental and political context. Narrative descriptions exhibit human activity as purposeful engagement in the world. Narrative is the type of discourse that draws together diverse events, happenings and actions of human lives (Polkinghorne 1995) and the life story interview has been taught as a method for capturing people's own perceptions of their lives (Goodson and Sikes, 2001; Adriansen 2012). Thus, this would enable real insight to the young person's personal perspective.

Before beginning the interviewing stage of the research process, I piloted the interviews with three young people who I had worked with in the past and were of a similar age to members of the cohort. I carried out this stage of piloting to assess

this methodological tool's fitness for purpose and to enable me to make any refinements and adjustments when they are perceived as inadequate in collecting relevant data (Sampson, 2004). During the pilot interviews, I learnt that the biographical stance of 'tell me your story' was far too vague in accessing the relevant information for this study. I realised during these interviews, that all though I wanted the voice of the researcher to be as invisible as possible, my role in these interviews would be to guide my informants to share their memories and understandings around themes. As a result of the pilot interviews, I decided that it would be appropriate to develop a list of themes that I would encourage the young people to share their experiences of rather than carrying out a full life story interview. I began the interviews with "tell me about your memories of school". The topics I had noted as important for the interview included: memories of school, life in the community, employment and the future. I bore these key topics in mind throughout the interviews and found it helpful to use an occasional question from within these topics if any prompting was required. During the interviews, I focused on three key areas; their memories and experience of education; what they have been doing since leaving school; and their future plans both immediate and long-term. It was along these lines that I provided prompts when I felt it was needed.

Once I was confident that the planned interviews were fit for purpose, I began interviewing the cohort. As noted, arranging for the interviews to take place proved to be a lengthy process. Many of the potential informants would agree to meet me and then not turn up, or would message me at the time we were supposed to be meeting asking if we could arrange a different day or time. Once the participant had agreed to meet with me, I gave the opportunity the choice of where we would meet. In either the community centre, a coffee shop in the large town nearby or at their own home. I gave the participant a choice as I wanted them to be as comfortable as possible and share their story openly with me. Of the interviews carried out, one took place in a coffee shop of a nearby cinema, seven interviews were carried out in the community centre, five were carried out in a coffee shop in the nearest town, one interview was carried out in the young person's home.

I felt that there were advantages and disadvantages to the interviews taking place in each of the three venues. Of the interviews which took place in the community centre, some were carried out sat on comfy chairs at the back of the sports hall and some were carried out in the smaller office room. It all depended upon the availability of rooms. All participants were offered refreshments but this was refused by all informants who I met at the community centre. The advantages of the community centre was that it was local to all informants and easy for them to access. However, there were some disadvantages, mainly that it was never a completely private space and at times someone would walk in so we would pause the interview. The interviews which took place in the coffee shop worked really well, on reflection. I believe that it set the tone of a relaxed atmosphere and the situation appeared much more informal than it felt on the community centre. It felt as though the participants who were interviewed in Costa on the whole appeared much more relaxed. However, there were also difficulties which arose from interviewing in such a public space, especially with regards to transcription with a lots of background noise from blenders and coffee machines.

As mentioned earlier, one interview which took place in the participant's home took place there due to a recent surgery and consequent lack of mobility. We sat in the living room which was at the time converted into the bedroom due to an inability to use the stairs. The informant's mother and siblings were upstairs throughout the interview, but this did not appear impede the informant's ability to talk openly in any way.

Naively, I went into the field believing I would be able to make contact with all of the young people whose contact details I had been given and I assumed that many of those would be accessible and available too interview. At times this was a very frustrating process. I had hoped that I would be able to interview the vast majority of the 43 young people, but in reality, this was not the case. I note previously

difficulties arose on a number of occasions, young people said that they would be happy to meet with me and then never showed up or gave last minute apologies, so interviews were re-scheduled. Some never even materialised. From the original cohort of 43, I was only able to interview fifteen of the cohort. The process of recruitment was an ongoing process which continued throughout the process of data collection and later during data analysis. As I have previously noted, overall, even with addresses and contact numbers the cohort were very difficult to contact.

3.15 The use of social media for interviewing

I noted previously that, at times, establishing contact and accessing the informants was a difficult process. By and large, the most effective way in which contact was made with informants for this study was through the social media website Facebook, more specifically by use of the private messenger service Facebook provides. Most of the interviews were set up using either Facebook messenger or text messages. In two instances, it was not possible to interview the young people face to face either because they have moved away to another part of the UK or because they felt that work and study commitments did not afford them the time to meet with me. Two informants had suggested, that although they would not be able to meet with me face to face, they would be more than happy to answer any questions on Facebook messenger. While this did not provide the thick descriptive account of their own interpretations of experience which was gained through BNIM, it did provide data which could form part of the analysis in answering my research questions but these are in addition to the 15 young people who took part in the study. As I noted previously, through this research I have needed to maintain flexibility and adaptability to best suit the needs of the informants throughout the research process.

3.16 Field notes

Throughout the time I spent in Brynhaul I kept a diary of field notes which provided a way of documenting and reflecting on the ongoing research processes (Flick 2018,

p. 436). I maintained these hand written in a spiral bound A5 notepad. When I left the research site each day I would type up the field notes with as much detail as I could recall so that my writings were as close in time as possible to the events. Once I had typed up the notes, I would take the pages out of the note pad so that previously written notes never returned to the research site in case the notepad became lost or stolen. It is suggested that field notes made by the researcher during observations, even though in detail, are 'still to be considered constructed through the lens of the researcher' (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). I felt I needed to be aware of my own positionality, subjectivity and understandings.

The framework I used in developing my field notes, was in line with the schema for field notes presented by Mulhall (2003) who suggests that the key things to write about in recording ethnographic field notes were the structural and organizational features. In these instances I described the buildings, what they were used for and who used them. I recorded people, those whom I saw at a distance and those with whom I made contact. In these instances I made notes on the way people behaved, interacted with myself and others and how they were dressed. I detailed daily processes in the community centre with the activities that ran on a daily or a weekly basis. I recorded special events, such as the regenerations annual general meeting detailing who was there, what was discussed and how people responded to each other and the topics. I made notes on dialogue, the conversations that were happening around me and involving me. I also made notes in my research diary about the young people as they were interviewed, making notes on their body language and eye contact and anything else that was important. The research diary read as a daily diary of events as they occurred chronologically. I also used the research diary as a personally reflective space, allowing me the ability to note the thoughts and emotions occurring each day around my engagements on the estate. Using the diary as a reflective space afforded me the ability to consider my own life experiences and reflect upon how my own life may have influence upon how what I observe is filtered (Mulhall 2003, p. 311).

3.17 Transcription, Coding & Identifying themes and Analysis

Transcription was an arduous process, and I underestimated the amount of time that this would take. I undertook all of the transcription myself as I believed that it would enable me to gain greater familiarity with the content of my data and provide the opportunity to begin analysis (Gibbs 2018, p. 24). For me it was important that I transcribed the interviews completely as I had taken a year's maternity leave between the periods of data collection and data analysis.

Once all of the interviews had been transcribed verbatim (Gibbs 2018, p. 23), these were all added into the computer software program NVivo. I decided that the use of computer software was important as it enabled me to increase the organisation my data and view everything in one place and it also proved to be time saving when searching for codes made within the data (Braun and Clarke 2013, p. 219). All of the data was organised one place, in a computer software program. This included all of the interview transcriptions, text messages and Facebook private messages with the participants and also field notes were added to NVivo. I also uploaded all of the vignettes I had written about each of the young people which compiled the data previously obtained by the P&W. This was very time consuming and involved cutting and pasting word documents into different files in NVivo.

Satisfied that all of my data was organised in one place, and that I was familiar with the data having read the transcripts several times (Flick 2018, p. 475), taking the approach of complete coding, I began with thematic coding by identifying aspects of the data related to the research question (Braun and Clark 2013, p. 206). This was so that I was able to organise the data as the beginnings of thematic analysis. As I had asked the participants to narrate their stories around particular topics (noted previously) there were clear themes evident within the data as I began coding. Braun and Clarke suggest Thematic analysis not as an alternative approach but rather, a

way of combining approaches (Flick 2018, p. 474). Thematic analysis is defined as being:

A form of analysis which has the Theme as its unit of analysis, and which looks across the data from many sources to identify themes (Braun and Clarke 2013, p. 237).

As I refined the codes further, I developed a thematic map to explore. Defining themes is an active process, this is because rather than discovering potential patterns from within the data, the researcher examines the codes and the coded data to create potential patterns and then interrogates and interprets the patterns identified (Braun and Clarke 2013, p. 229). It is noted that themes to be considered 'good' are those which are distinctive, they make sense alone whilst also fitting together to form an overall analysis (Braun and Clarke 2013, p.231). I noted themes which had presented themselves on the date and then sub themes within the overarching themes. I mapped these out on paper so that I was able to draw connections between them and visualise the patterns that were occurring within the themes.

The process of analysis is intrinsic to all stages of ethnographic research, and not something that begins when data collection is complete (Davies 2008, p. 231). It is suggested that the interview needs to be understood at three levels: the level of discourse produced, the text; the level of interaction, that is, the process of production and interpretation that go on between the individuals involved in the interview; and the level of context, that is, the social conditions that affect both interaction and text. These three levels are not fully separable (Davies 2008, p. 110). I understood this to mean that throughout the process of gathering data, analysis was always ongoing and present as analysis was taking place continuously whilst in the field.

3.18 Data Limitations

This concluding section considers the limitations of the data in this study, a topic which has at times been touched upon throughout the rest of the chapter.

Throughout the research, difficulties have arisen. Notably the data in this thesis is limited to one geographical location in the South Wales Valleys and a particular cohort of two school year groups. Between the two cohorts totaling 43 young people, I was only able to meet with 15 for interview. As my time in the research site came to an end, I had a feeling of personal failure over not being able to contact everyone one of the cohort for interview, I felt that there were so many important stories missed out on. So many voices unheard. In considering this, I accept that this is part of the story, that the missing voices tell a story for themselves.

This chapter has illustrated the data which was obtained from PWU, and although this is a strength of this study, it is important also to recognize the limitation of this data. The project worker diaries hold detailed accounts of the project workers' engagement with the participants, but they are also personal reflections. The potential for bias, misunderstanding and misrepresentation needs to be considered as the project workers will have held their own thoughts and attitudes that they would have been aware of.

In summary, this chapter has explored in detail the methodological considerations of this study. It has illustrated the ethical considerations prior and during the research, my own reflexivity as a researcher carrying out this study, how this research has been undertaken in the field and then analyzed thematically. All of this serves the objectives of the investigation. The next chapter is the first of four findings chapters.

4. CHAPTER FOUR: A temporal account

4.1 Introduction

This work argues that aspiration far from being a matter of simple choice, is shaped by the context in which the aspirant exists. I have posed a series of questions to investigate the validity of this argument. Using data research, this chapter begins to address the fourth of the research questions outlined in Chapter 3.

In the literature review we saw many accounts where the complexities of aspiration formation are reduced to one simple element i.e. personal choice. We have seen accounts where aspiration is presented as a striving to become middle class' and conjointly with this, 'being working class' presented as something from which individuals must seek to escape' (Allen 2013, p. 761).

The core of these versions of aspiration, the pay-off if you like, is precisely this ascendancy, this movement up the social ladder, this bettering of one self. We have also seen how this narrow and reductionist focus on 'bettering ones-self', creates another 'insight' which is that the working class as a whole are devoid of aspiration; that there is a 'Poverty of aspirations' among working communities. Working-class youth lacked aspiration or have the 'wrong' aspirations' (Allen 2013, p. 760).

In contrast to this very familiar approach the first research question mentioned in chapter 3 seeks an evidence based approach, organized around a specific question: What aspirations do young people from disadvantaged communities express, and how can the empirical work undertaken inform the current policy-agenda on young people, poverty and aspirations? The findings within this chapter, are based primarily on the data obtained from the PWU. These include project worker diaries, spreadsheets and data gained through interviews.

4.2 Aspirations in year 11

All data on the forty-three young people, was gathered together to paint a picture – both individual and collective - across two different school years. All the students came from the working class community of Brynhaul. Initially all data, including project worker diaries, attendance figures and attainment results, were mapped onto individual timelines, allowing the bigger picture to become visible and to construct the particular data sets as an individual's journey through the school years. These constructed timelines displayed: attendance records, attained grades, aspirations held, future plans and project worker diary entries and they did so for all 43 interviewees. These timelines were mapped before I interviewed any young people and have been detailed in chapter 3.

The spreadsheet data documents the aspirations for each of the young people during year 11 or year 12. The method involved contacting 43 young people and requesting interviews. I provide this information including Gender and stated aspiration in the tables below.

Table 2 Documented aspirations amongst older year group

Documented aspiration for post compulsory education and training during year eleven amongst the older group			
<i>Gender</i>	<i>Aspiration Recorded</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Aspiration recorded</i>
Hannah Female	Acting	DO Male	Carpenter
LT Female	Events management/tourism	KE Female	Psychology at University
SP Female	Army	Sophie Female	Youth work
Ben Male	University	BE Male	Not Sure
Chelsea Female	Nursing	CD Male	Police
JG Male	Carpenter	SC Female	Care work
IC Male	Not Sure	Sammy Female	Childcare
Kyle Male	Army	Josh Male	Nothing written
JH Male	Construction	Liam Male	Not Sure
AM Female	Art	KW Female	Not Sure
JS Male	Art		

Table 2: Documented aspirations amongst younger year group

Documented aspiration for post compulsory education and training during year eleven amongst the younger group			
<i>Gender</i>	<i>Aspiration Recorded</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Aspiration recorded</i>
CA Female	Beautician	CM Male	Nothing written
PP Female	Lawyer/Forensic Scientist	Laura Female	Not sure
CH Female	Midwife	RM Male	Electrician
Alex Male	Engineer	JR Female	Not Sure
JR Female	Not sure	Luke Male	Chef
CT Female	Journalism	LW Female	Drama?
JB Male	Electronic Engineer	Tom Male	Lawyer/curator
CT Female	Work with disabled children	SW Male	Carpenter
Willow Female	Not Sure	GJ Male	Nothing written
CG Male	Nothing written	DS Male	Nothing written

MacDonald et al (2007) suggest that working class young people aspire to a speedy transitions into the labour market, into parenthood and into independent living. It is further suggested that it is precisely these young people who 'face greater risks of the negative outcomes associated with social exclusion' (MacDonald 2005, p. 875). In the older group, all the response documented as 'Not sure', (with one exception) were male.⁴ It is also interesting that all the desired occupations recorded could be considered 'respectable', achievable 'community' and 'working class' aspirations (Brown, 2011).

The first thing of interest was the manner in which these aspirations have been noted differently by gender. The female responses for instance, are mostly not linked to a specific job role. Theirs is a desire for an academic education and what is generally regarded as a 'career' in middle class terms, that much is clear. However it could also be that the female respondents envisaged other paths having less to do with a 'career' and more to do with you could term social roles: caring, housewife etc. There are other questions relating to these responses, questions relating to education

⁴ I am not able to speculate further on 'nothing written'.

attainment and knowledge of the job market for another, which shall be dealt with in due course.

The second immediately interesting thing stems from the documented recorded aspirations at year eleven. Across the two cohorts, only eight of the young people are recorded as being 'unsure' of what they wanted to do post-school. This supports the argument that young people from disadvantaged communities do indeed have aspirations, but these aspirations are in tune with their working class lives and their communal meanings. Of course understanding this, raises further questions regarding how these aspirations are nurtured.

The next section of this chapter seeks to discover the inter-action of these elements by examining firstly, the role locality and familiarity play in shaping aspiration within a disadvantaged community.

4.3 Familiarity

This section is dedicated to evidencing the role familiarity plays in aspiration formation. Across all datasets there is an undeniable role played by locality and familiarity, something not only evident during the interviews with cohort members, but also in the younger teenagers within the community. Many of the male responses give job roles and types of employment which are already recognised as familiar within the community, for example 'carpenter'. For this reason I argue that the idea of aspiration and subsequent transition to employment does not begin at the end of the compulsory education years. Rather the question of 'what I do when I finish school' is a constant presence from the early formative years, as the young person's habitus is developing. I submit that these young people, as children, were gaining an insight and understanding of the world of work on a constant basis, in the first instance by simply observing those in their households and as they get older, those around them (Walkerdine and Lucey, 1989).

During my field work I gained the opportunity to talk to some of the younger teenagers who live on the estate. One morning at the rugby club during a community event, I was sat outside with some of the young people who I had got to know, both from my time in the youth club and from seeing them generally around the estate. I asked these thirteen year olds what they wanted to do after school.

As recorded in my field notes, the group of young lads, all responded with answers like 'labourer', 'brickie', 'construction'. The young people also all talked about people who could help them achieve their aspiration. They were able to name family members or friends locally who would be able to help them go into this type of work. This supports the idea that young people do indeed base their aspiration upon what they already know as supporting the social constructivist model of understands learning and development as something taking place through a child experiencing the world around them. Indeed why would employment aspiration be any different, at least in part? This enables the roots of these young people to become more embedded to place as the young people rely on their social capital to imagine their futures which is far from the Neoliberal expectation of individualism. The young people also all talked about people who could help them achieve their aspiration. They were able to name family members or friends locally who would be able to help them go into this type of work. (Granovetter, 1973; Putnam, 2000; Phal, 2007).

In conversation with people who work within the community, it appears that these aspirations are not unique. During my field work, it was evident when analysing the interviews and in conversation with younger people on the estate, that many of the people who worked in this area realised how crucial a role community plays, not just in accessing employment, but in shaping their own aspirations.

Bourdieu suggests that capital can be expressed in the form of habitus. As Grenfell 2014 notes: 'A third expression of capital is in the form of habitus. Unlike objectified and embodied capital, habitus does not have a material existence in itself in the world as it includes attitudes and dispositions' (Grenfell 2014. Pp 103; Bourdieu 2010). I think that the chosen aspirations of the young people in the above table

demonstrates the role of community in shaping both young person's aspirations and the value they place on education. It was also noted in some cohort interviews that some young people had entered employment in which parents, relatives and friends already worked. For some of these young people, it was apparent they had gone into employment with family members instead of following their own earlier aspirations; whether this is because of ease or simply reflection is difficult to ascertain. In due course we shall investigate the question of how aspirations change over time. The data provided in this section of the chapter illustrates the inter-relationship between environment, community and familiarity in the construction of aspiration. Many of the young people who had an aspiration documented in year eleven, spoke in their interview about how they followed a different path and went into or are working towards something different. The next section of this chapter explores this in detail providing an analysis of the accounts given from the young people regarding how, their aspirations changed over time.

4.4 Gendered roles

Closely related to aspirations being formed through familiarity with what the young people saw around them was a gender aspect. Looking at the table provided in the previous section, many of the male responses gave job roles and types of employment which are already recognised as familiar within the community, for example 'carpenter'. It is for this reason that I argue that the idea of aspiration and subsequent transition to employment does not begin toward the end of the compulsory education years. Instead, I submit that this is indeed taking place in the early formative years as the young person's habitus is developing. I submit that these young people, as children were gaining an insight and understanding of the world of work around them by observing those in their households and communities going to work. This is something that Walkerdine and Lucey (1989) have written about at length.

It was evident when analysing the interviews and in conversation with younger people on the estate, that many of the people who work in this area recognise a gendering aspect to the job roles which young people set their sights upon entering. I began to realise just how crucial a role community was playing, not just in accessing employment but in shaping the gendered aspirations of the youth within the community.

In viewing education as a Neoliberal meritocratic transaction, it is only as valuable as the perceived opportunities available. Therefore, the world of work and entry to work observed around the young people provides the value on education and aspiration. It was also noted in some of the cohort interviews how some of the young people had entered into employment in which parents, relatives and friends were also in. For some of the young people, it was apparent that this had happened, they had gone into employment with family members instead of following an aspiration which they had previously claimed for themselves. This raises the question of how aspirations change over time.

The data provided in this section of the chapter evidences the seemingly inextricable link between environment, familiarity and aspiration. Many of the young people who had an aspiration documented in year eleven, talked in their interview about how they followed a different path and went into or are working towards something different. The next section of this chapter explores this in detail providing an analysis of the accounts given from the young people of how for the majority of them, their aspirations changed over time whilst assuming the validity of earlier construction of aspiration.

4.5 Change over time

During data collection, it became obvious that some of the young people recalled aspirations of childhood: what they imagined they would like to do for work 'when they grew up'. In most cases these later aspirations did not match the imagined future of their childhood.

To me as a researcher, this ‘miss-match’ seemed important. Welsh Government policy speaks about ‘raising individual aspiration’, an implicit pre-emptive judgment. One which places the problem squarely on the shoulders of the young person from the disadvantaged community. This formulation implicitly blames young people both as individuals and as members of their community, for not wanting to be something ‘more’. Programmes like Schools Challenge Cymru programme targeted at specific schools between 2014 and 2017 explicitly denoted that the aspiration of working class children is not good enough, nor ambitious enough. It is, in their words, something which needs to be ‘raised’ as one of the programme roles was noted as ‘to support learners from deprived backgrounds to do well at school and raise their aspirations for their future’ (Moulding 2018). The below table illustrates the aspirations held by the 15 young people who engaged in interviews for this study, also the aspiration documented for them on the spreadsheet from PWU and their current positioning at the time of interview.

Table 3: Known aspirations at different intervals

Participant	Aspiration noted on spreadsheet	Aspiration Recalled from Childhood	What they were doing at the time of interview
Matt	Not on Spreadsheet	Astronaut	Painter/decorator for Trevallis (a local housing company)
Laura	Not sure	Poet, astronaut, doctor, teacher	In Uni studying
Sophie	Youth work	Youth worker	In Uni Studying
Kyle	Army	Fireman	Leaving Army
Ben	University	Teacher/ rugby player	In uni studying
Luke	Chef	Scientist	In College
Alex	Engineer	Engineering apprenticeship	Apprenticeship
Liam	Not sure	Police Officer	NEET
Sammy	Childcare	Nursery Nurse	New baby
Willow	Not Sure	Hairdresser/teacher	NEET
Chelsea	Nursing	Doesn't remember	Agency work for Peacocks (A highstreet fashion company)

Olivia	Midwife	Midwife?	Working at McDonalds (fast food restaurant)
Tom	Lawyer/curator	Something with history/politics	At University
Hannah	Acting	Acting on stage	Caring for mum/volunteering

Given the central positioning of ambition and aspiration within formal education, I believe it is crucial to grasp how aspiration changes over time or, to put it another way, how it is that some young people are made to feel certain aspirations are unattainable, in some cases laughable. I argue that this policy is expecting something of 'disadvantaged' child that is taken from them at a young age and which to the child perhaps represents not just a name or a title but rather the ability to dare, to dream and to hope for something inconceivably different from what they already are. Neo-liberal aspiration is presented as something crucial, in government reports as almost a form of measurement and yet, clearly from these results, it exists as a subject of ridicule and as something so ambiguous that it exists only as a fantasy, at least for working class students.

Laura

What is clear from the above table is that these young people have aspirations. Despite this during the interviews, it was evident that there was a commonality of young people in school being unsure of what they wanted to do after leaving school. In the course of our conversations, some young people were able to think back to their primary school days and recall what their ambitions for work had been then. Some of the aspirations were ambitious, with two of the cohort suggesting that at some point in their childhood they recall wanting to be an astronaut. The quote below taken from Laura's interview evidences the innocence of a childhood view of being able to be whatever you want to be. There was for Laura, in the young childhood no limit upon what she could achieve when she left school and 'grew up':

Me: In primary if you were asked did you have an idea of what do you want to be when you grow up, could you have answered that?

Laura: I was like poet, astronaut, doctor, teacher, optician like that was all on one line. I think I wanted to be like a vet when I was in primary school

or a doctor because I bought a doctor's set. I used to buy all those biology statue things. I don't know what I was thinking. All those toys on my bed, I had a little stethoscope just listening for their heart beat and stuff. I think I thought you can be whatever you wanted to be. (Laura, interview transcript).

The way she ended her reminiscing of childhood aspirations with the statement, 'I think you thought you can be whatever you wanted to be' (Laura interview transcript) narrates the illustration of a child full of aspiration, a child full of hope for what her future could be. Her list of perceived opportunities were wide ranging; clearly thinking in this way served as a means of understanding and learning about the wider world and grasping its possibilities. As I listened back through the recording of this interview, I felt, that in that statement, 'I think I thought you can be whatever you wanted to be'. (Laura interview transcript), Laura was in actual fact illustrating how she now believed the opposite. I submit that in this statement, she is acknowledging that those childhood aspirations were in reality a fantasy, now lost and left behind. One assumes there must have been a point at which she realised that none of those aspirations would be accessible to her. There is no mention of Laura in any of the project worker diary entries throughout her time in school. Perhaps she spent these years contemplating the closing in of a world she once considered so wide and full of promise.

Josh

When reminiscing on his earlier education Josh also considered a wide range of different career trajectories. In response to my questioning of whether he recalls what he wanted to do he stated:

...think I said something different every time, to be honest (pause) uhh (pause) probably, probably went from being police, fire, army, doctor, vet, a bit of everything (pause) probably wanted something different every time, as you get older it changes so, (pause) (Josh Interview Transcript).

Just like Laura, Josh recognised that there were lots of different hopes he had had for his options after school.

I submit that this suggests that children within 'disadvantaged' communities are not born without aspiration. What I am proposing is that these young people, as all children do, have dreams. I argue that these two examples begin to provide the evidence that the children born into the working class communities do have aspirations as children. The question then becomes: why, and how, does a child learn they cannot or will not attain the achievement of these childhood hopes? As these young people's roots were growing, strengthening their understanding of the world and their place within it, as these roots entwined within the connectedness of communal being (Studdert & Walkerdine 2016), why are these nascent aspirations lost and why is this loss so total? Can it really be, that the answer is as simple as they just were not attainable? How then can this aid an explanation of the role of a young person's roots in future planning? I submit that the imagination used here in the context of childhood to imagine a future, learns instead that imagination should be understood as fantasy, one that cannot, or will not, be attained (Walkerdine 2011, p. 259).

Kyle

When I met with Kyle for interview, he was at the time working his notice in the army. Whilst reflecting on his time in school, Kyle recalls his childhood dream of wanting to be a fireman. It is only a momentary mention which he does not appear to want to expand upon. When mapping out the timelines from the project worker diaries, there is no mention of Kyle ever wanting to be a fire fighter. The way he brushes over this in the interview, it was almost as if he did not want me to know. As through this was a secret which may explain why his current job is so clearly different to the job role he perused after school.

Kyle: I wanted to be a fireman, I was going to do it but I joined the army instead yeah (pause)

Me: At what point did you think that a fireman wasn't going to happen? When did that change?

Kyle: I can't really remember, when I was young I just said I wanted to be a fireman but yeah, (pause) (Kyle, Interview transcript).

According to the project worker diaries from the PWU, the first time an entry is made with reference to Kyle is on 11/09/12 when the project worker notes that he is coming to see her in the office tomorrow night. There is no mention of why this had been arranged. On the 14/09/12 the project worker then writes:

Kyle came in at lunchtime, he confessed to bunking off and put himself into detention with me!!! He took Engineering, Electronics, construction and Technology. He would like to go to College and do Electronics and maybe work in a garage! He went on work experience to a Bike shop in Aberdare and now has a Saturday job with them. He had a D in Maths, B in Electronics, G in English and an E in RE. He will be resitting his Maths GCSE in November and wants to do the revision sessions (Project worker diary: P&W).

Again, here is another aspiration documented for Kyle of working in a garage. This supports the idea of aspiration as a fluid concept with the ability to change over time. It is noted on 28/03/14 that Kyle has completed his CSCS card with Senga and is hoping to get work. The diary states on 02/12/14 that he starts in the army in March. This is the only reference there is of Kyle in the project worker diaries throughout his entire time in school. It is surprising that there is so little mention of the project worker having worked with him when he clearly needed support. It appears that Kyle's contact with the project worker was in relation to his post-schooling plans and his willingness to try and improve his academic attainment.

Ben

Ben left the estate to attend University in a city in Wales about an hour away from his family home. With his mother a teacher and his auntie having also studied at the university, it could be argued that the trajectory through to university study was not entirely new to him. He recalls for instance visiting his auntie who'd studied at the same university he'd chosen for his own higher education. When Ben was asked if he could remember any aspirations from his early school years he couldn't be sure:

I did I think I probably would have said teacher then, yeah, probably, something like after rugby player (laughs) (Ben, interview transcript).

What is interesting about this is that Ben's mother is a teacher and his father a paramedic. Throughout his interview he comfortably recalled his memories of school, his reflections on growing up in the area and confidently shared his post degree plans even though he was not totally sure what they were. Ben didn't live on the council estate, he lived on a private new build estate across the main road from the council estate.

Me: Did you know in school what you wanted to do when you left?

Ben: Um. I always knew I wanted to go to uni but I weren't really sure what it was and then, GCSE I had good marks in geography, so I think I just followed that a bit, then decided, I knew I wanted to go to university so I thought geography really (Ben, Interview Transcript).

There is no mention of Ben in the project worker diaries and I was therefore unable to gain any insights from the project worker's perspective. He appears to understand that there is value in going on to university study, even if he is unclear of what this fully entails and committed to a subject which he enjoys studying. One could ask at this point the question: why did he always know he wanted to go to university?

Luke

Luke took some time to be able to arrange a meeting for interview. After a couple of cancelled meetings, I met with him at his home. He shared with me his aspirations both from childhood and as they were when we met. I had the sense that he had a clear picture of what he wanted for his life and that he had some idea of how to achieve it. Just like many of his peers, he recalled a variety of occupations, the childhood version of himself, that he had fantasised:

Me: Where did this passion for cooking start?

Luke: (pause) oh, don't know, like when I was younger, I always said like I wanted to be a doctor or a scientist, astronaut, but, and then (pause) I started cooking with my dad's mum, I don't know how old I was (pause) and she taught me how to do certain things and stuff like that, she taught my mother as well, and then my mother taught me everything else and I just really enjoyed doing it and I thought like, oh, this is what I want to do so (pause) since then I have just gone with it and (pause) just done, what (pause).

Me: how old do you think you were when you were cooking with your grandmother?

Luke: Uh, (pause) probably about, 5 or 6? (pause) (Luke Interview Transcript).

Arguably, it would appear that Luke is following in the footsteps of his grandmother and his mother. For Luke, cooking was something he knew he was able to do and something he had seen a family member make a business from, all of which positioned his aspiration as both concrete and attainable.

science was something I really wanted to do, like, (pause) it wasn't all primary school, primary school, I think it was just like a little childhood thing cos like in school, and then when I got out into secondary school, like, and with like working with the chemicals and things, I found it really interesting (pause) and it was something I really wanted to do but (pause) after doing all the cooking and stuff it just kind of took over that and yeah I didn't want to do that (Luke, interview transcript).

He could not explain in detail why he did not follow his desire to work in science. I submit that a future of cooking was something he knew he was capable of and something he could imagine. There was a reference within his interview to the perceived femininity of this aspiration, particularly from his father. There was some mention of Luke in the project worker diaries, with particular reference to his aspirations for post compulsory schooling, which particularly references his desire to become a chef. On the 13/09/12 it is noted that 'Luke popped in to see the project worker and talked about how he wanted to become a chef and go to college to do catering' (project worker diary). Meeting with Luke, it was clear that he knew what he wanted to do once he left school and he also knew how to go about achieving it. The project worker makes a note of how she feels Luke is doing. She writes that she believes 'he is focused and doing well' (project worker diary). This is an aspiration held from a young age and informed by roots growing and strengthening during his post compulsory schooling as he watched his mother create a viable business in catering. I argue that this must have been in part due to the lived experience which supported his habitus formation.

Alex

Just as Luke had expressed, Alex also knew what he wanted to do after post compulsory education whilst he was in school. He recalls always knowing that he wanted an engineering apprenticeship: 'yeah I knew in primary school that I wanted to go into this, I don't know why I just always somehow knew I wanted to do it' (Alex Interview). Although he is unable to say where this aspiration came from, it is evident throughout Alex's interview transcript that he was confident in his aspiration and knew what he needed to achieve it. He was able to focus on gaining the apprenticeship and he was also able to deal with setbacks. It is worth noting here that he did not gain the first apprenticeship he applied for:

Alex: from school I wanted to get into GE on an apprenticeship, I applied for that from school but I messed up the practical test (pause) and then when I was in college I applied for I think it was 5 apprenticeships, uh, I changed my mind about GE when I thought about what it's like up there and I got offered one in G10 which was a manufacturing business making all the moulds for parts and one in Haxim I was offered which is, um I can't remember what it was properly now (laughs) I think that was more like you build it and then just let the machine do it. So I didn't really want to do that one. (pause). Then there was British Airways which I got and I'm down in the airport (Alex Interview).

Alex appears to have remained focused even when his applications were unsuccessful. He understood at a rudimentary but practical level, the different aspects of the job. For instance he had an awareness of the specific type of engineering apprenticeship he wanted to apply for and why. I argue that being sure of the aspiration he held, enabled him to stay focussed and future orientated whilst overcoming setbacks. He was able to envisage how to grow and utilise his wings, to imagine such a future played a vital role in Alex achieving his apprenticeship with British Airways. There is very little mention of Alex in the project worker diaries, mapping out his timeline. The first time he was mentioned in the project worker's notes was on 15/01/14 when he went to see A for some English support. On this date, a notes suggests: 'He is keen to pass exams to ensure his chance of getting an apprenticeship'. This suggests that he recognised the merit of doing well in school and the value in his grades. Just two days after that initial mention of Alex in the diary entries, it was noted that he attended a revision session and that the project worker

'went through his English paper with him'. The project worker noted that: 'He was only a few marks off a C so he left more positive'. The project worker's notes suggest that she was able to support Alex in his ambition and help him feel more positive as he worked towards his imagined future. Perhaps this was because Alex himself had a clear knowledge of what he wanted. Alex was able to make informed decisions about his own academic trajectory and had the support from his family in doing so. In the project workers words the diary records:

I spoke to Alex on the 10/03/14 because the school has said that there will be no engineering provision at level 3 in 6th form. He is going to a college open evening with his family tomorrow in case his GE application is unsuccessful (project worker Diaries).

The project worker then followed this up eight days later, there is no reference to whether the project worker made contact with Alex or if Alex made contact but the diary states:

Alex spoke with Andrea on the 18/03/14 about his college trip today. He enjoyed it and would be happy to attend if his application is successful. He openly says that his family are supportive but have no understanding of engaging in education (Project worker diaries).

I argue that Alex's experience, illustrates how he came to have an aspiration and that his experience of navigating the education system, along with support from family and the project worker was important in him achieving it. He was capable of making decisions to achieve his aspiration and overcome set-backs along the way.

Matt

The first interview conducted for this study was with Matt. He shared with me his early memories of school. He talked of his childhood hopes and dreams and what he had aspired to.

Me: what do you want to do? What's your dream job?

Matt: When I was younger I wanted to be an astronaut.

Me: Did you?

Matt: But realistically speaking I want to be a painter and decorator (pause) its bit of a downgrade init (pause) (Matt interview transcript).

It is apparent that he felt that this childhood aspiration to be an astronaut was not something achievable, but he could not be accused of not having high aspirations. He

had dreamt of doing something exciting and adventurous but accepted a reality in which he would do something different. Something much more similar to what he sees around him. I wondered at what point being an astronaut no longer seemed like a viable option for him and he shared further details with me from his time in secondary school which had made it seem impossible to him. I sensed the recalled sadness as Matt talked, as he looked down at the ground, considered his words carefully and wrapped his arms around himself. I wondered how this painter decorator sat in front of me had lost or evaluated his dream to be an astronaut. I wanted to know how, why and when this aspiration was lost. I felt that the information he could provide on this may provide insight into the reality of working class experience, of aspiration formation, or aspiration deconstruction of the young people, who grew up in a community of deprivation.

Me: At what point did you think that for you, you felt that couldn't be for real?

Matt: (pause). I dunno, year 9 year 10?

Me: Did you ever have anyone tell you what you needed to do to become an astronaut?

Matt: No (pause).

Me: Do you remember if you ever asked?

Matt: I did, I remember asking (pause), probably year 7, we were doing like ice breakers, and they asked us what do you want to be when you are older? Un I went "I want to be an astronaut!" the teacher just turned round and looked at me and I think that like hit home a bit, and I thought oh hang on that's something I actually wanted to do with my life, and he just looked at me stood there (pause), I dunno, it's just like, it's the little things that change your mind then, they all add up. (pause). But I can't blame that teacher specifically, there's a lot to do with peers n stuff. You hear people like "oh I want to be a rugby player" and to me mine seemed so far out there that I had to pick something a bit more reasonable (pause) I dunno, I just I think it had do with going through everything. Like when puberty starts and all that changing you a bit like, you got your peers, I dunno, people told doing this doing that, you've never heard of anyone around here being an astronaut. So you think it's out of the normal like. Its just the little things isn't it. Sometimes people haven't got to say anything to you, but you just pick up as you go on like, you notice stuff that's what affects the way you think (pause) (Matt, Interview transcript).

Matt suggests that being an astronaut was an aspiration that he held until well into his secondary schooling experience. It was something that he had hoped to make a

career. As the transcript above illustrates his memories around the time in which he realised that this would not be a possibility for him are detailed. As he sat sharing his story with me, his body language was that of defeat, hunched over, taking up as little space as possible. He remembers how he felt the first time he voices this aspiration in school and the response he gained from his teacher. He recognises that he does not blame her alone but that also she did not need to say anything. Arguably, in even just a look, that teacher was able to alter a perceived life course. He also talked of how he had begun to recognise that his aspiration did not fit with that of those around him. He gave weighting to all of the little details adding up, including the views and the aspirations of the other boys he was growing up with. I argue that his positioning in the heart of this community has indeed greatly impacted upon how he imagined his future and the formation his wings take. His quote 'you've never heard of anyone around here being an astronaut. So you think it's out of the normal like. It's just the little things isn't it' reveals the importance of locality in both the development of an aspiration and also the construction.

One of the first references to Matt in the project worker diaries was made with reference to his educational attainment and his post compulsory schooling. The project worker writes:

Matt came in for a chat and the Wellbeing officer was looking for him.....he had bunked off the previous lesson, so he was now in lunchtime detention! He's taken Electronics, ICT, Construction and Technology. He said that he didn't have any placement for work experience!!! He wants to go to college and be a mechanic! (project worker diary).

There is no mention in any of the project worker diaries of the personal issues faced by Matt after his mother passed away. He talked in detail about this in his interview along with his ADHD diagnosis. I submit that these factors have impacted Matt's employment history. During the interview, Matt made no reference to ever holding the aspiration of becoming a mechanic. He talked of the variety of employment opportunities he had tried since leaving school in a variety of job roles. Matt has the desire to work, but throughout the interview it was evident that he was not really

sure what he wanted to do. It is important to note here, that although it may appear that he is lacking in persistence, he certainly is not lacking in aspiration to work.

Liam

Another cohort member who appeared to be unsure of what he wanted to do for employment was Liam. At the time of interview he was one of two fifteen young people interviewed who was considered NEET. It is evident from the project worker diaries that the project worker had been working with Liam throughout his time in secondary school. When I met with him in a coffee shop, in a community building at the heart of a council estate in another Welsh valleys area, he shared with me what he had wanted to do when he was younger:

Umm, I wanted to be a police officer, I still do, I haven't got a criminal record or anything but it's the thought of going through all the struggle, like umm, (pause) (Liam Interview)

There was no mention of Liam wanting to be a police officer in any of the spreadsheets or project worker diaries. As we will see the diary entries for Liam illustrate a detailed and complex relationship with both school and home. Among this though, there are few mentions of his future plans. Instead we see a subjective account, providing an illustration of a young person who lacks both 'stickability' and a clear picture of what his future could look like. The diary entry section below is an account by the project worker, written after attending a meeting to discuss Liam, his educational attainment and prospects. On the 07/12/12 with reference to Liam she writes:

There was only me, Jack and John at the meeting this morning, we discussed Liam and what to do as he's heading towards exclusion otherwise!!! Me and John suggested a reduced timetable where he does some work with me and some work on the Bike project. A was very keen on this idea, myself and Jim will meet next Monday to discuss this with Liam (Project worker diary) .

The next reference to Liam in the diary entries was not for almost two years. There is no reference to who made contact with whom, just a note to say that the project worker 'took him to A4e (action for employment, a council run programme), he was

positive and wants to continue' on 03/03/14. Another six months later, he appears in the diary entries again, having sent a text to the project worker on 05/09/14 asking for space on a college course. She writes:

I also had a message from Liam asking for a space on a college course. I explained that there weren't any spaces but I will look into it for him. Seeing as he has already tried college, Tydfil and A4E unsuccessfully I am not sure what his options are now! (project worker diary).

I submit that in asking for a space on a college course, he is demonstrating a desire to change his situation and in doing this, even in an unsure state, he is expressing an aspiration. He is written about in the diary entries again on 10/09/14 where the project worker talked about him, I assume with someone who worked in work based learning. She writes:

I also asked about Liam and he had already heard of him and implied that there would probably be no point in him engaging with this programme again. So he has officially done everything – college, A4E, Tydfil, college and work based learning! I messaged him and told him to come along to job club Friday' (project worker diary).

It could appear here, arguably, that the project worker is suggesting there is no hope for Liam. However, what is more likely is that the project officer's job is confined to the sort of help Liam has already received and she has simply run out of options. Regardless of the explanations Liam is still asking for help and support. Given that it seems she has exhausted her remit, at this point the project worker has nothing left to offer him.

Furthermore, it is clear that the project worker can only offer a standard menu of options; once these are exhausted, Liam is on his own. He has no aspiration that these functionaries or this system can accommodate. From that perspective it is clear that without a recognisable middle class 'aspiration' i.e. without some aspiration generated individually within Liam himself, the 'official support' is ineffective. It is a stark reminder that any 'aspiration' must first fit the prearranged template to be recognised as such.

Sammy

Sammy was a new mum with a three month old baby boy. She recalled during the interview what she had wanted to do after leaving school but could not give me a specific period or year. She was sharing with me why she had chosen certain subjects for GCSE: Art, Catering, Childcare. She called them 'the fun ones'(Sammy, interview transcript). In response to my question 'why did you choose those subjects?' she replied:

Sammy: Well um, down the line, I did want to be like um, what are they now? What is it, like nursery classes?

Me: Umm, nursery nurse?

Sammy: Yeah, that's it, I wanted to be one of them then I done 3 years of college then I went into Peacocks then, the factory and obviously I got a baby now. (pause) when he is in school now though, I'll do a course in college then one day a week for 10 weeks, n you get level 2 qualification, no level 3, in Child care. I got level 1 and I got level 2 I just need that level 3 now. (pause) (Sammy interview transcript).

Sammy had an aspiration to go into childcare after compulsory schooling. Even though she is now a full time mum, she still wants to return to college once her son is three years of age and attending school. There was little mention of Sammy in the project worker diaries, this will be explored later. There was however, a note on the spreadsheet mapping out where the young people were in 2015 which read: 'last year she was studying childcare but has dropped out and is signing on'.

During her interview, she talked about her employment prior to the birth of her child and how different this was to what she had aspired to during her time in school. Before she had her son, Sammy had been working at a local high street fashion warehouse with other family members and has not pursued employment in a childcare setting.

Willow

Willow met with me at 29 weeks pregnant. After she had shared with me her academic and work trajectories, I asked her about what aspirations she had held in the past. Her response duplicates Laura's uncertainty:

(big exhale) ohh, I really don't know, I've said all different things, I've said hairdresser, but (laughs) I've always wanted to work with elderly care though (pause) yeah. (pause) or child care, but, it weren't for me when I actually went and done it. it weren't for me and now I don't have a choice (laughs) I'm stuck with it now (gestures at belly). (nervous laugh, pause) (Willow interview transcript).

Willow, like some of the other participants, was unable to pinpoint one particular aspiration she had held as a child. Instead, she noted a range of different things. It is hard to ignore the intersectionality of class and gender here as Willow does not name job roles but instead suggests aspects of the caring professions. Later on in the interview she was sharing with me her memories of her time in school, she reminisced:

At one point I did want to be a teacher until like, until there was one time then (pause) I just, (pause) I was, one time then, something happened that, I can't remember what, it was a pupil being naughty or something and I was thinking in my head, I couldn't do that (Willow Interview transcript).

Willow at sometime, although she cannot state when, had considered a professional career post compulsory schooling as a teacher. There is frequent mention of Willow in the project worker's diaries throughout her time in secondary school. Although, there is limited information documenting her aspirations at that time. The project worker noted that: 'she believes that it will be good for her to have more personalised support which she feels she will need on her post 16 journey'. It was also noted that Willow asked A for advice regarding her English exam on 20/01/14. The project worker's diaries, note a support session on 31/01/14, during which Willow suggested that she was re-thinking her plans to do hair dressing and was thinking about child care instead. There is also reference to the project worker, accompanying Willow to her interview for hairdressing at college (project worker diaries). Like so many of the other cohort members who are documented to have been in contact with the project workers, Willow is looking for advice on how to achieve and develop something recognizable as a middle class aspiration. She feels the need for this, without having any of the conscious framework required to make it happen.

Olivia

Olivia met with me before a shift in a local fast food restaurant. One of the first things she shared with me was her long standing dream of becoming a midwife. In her interview she stated: 'I've always wanted to be a midwife and after college I applied to go into midwifery, but obviously it's really hard to get in'. (Olivia interview transcript). Olivia's application to a local university was unsuccessful. She also applied for a second time to the same university for adult nursing, for which she gained an interview through clearing, but felt that her lack of confidence in the interview left her without a place. Olivia also talked about her experience of studying for a foundation degree in health and social care at the local university for a year before she decided to leave. She detailed her reasons for leaving the course:

I felt like the teachers really didn't care, and they were like, just reading off slides so if (pause) I could of stayed in my house and had the work sent to me and just done the work in the house so I thought it was a bit like pointless really (pause) And I didn't seem to like learn a lot... so I just dropped out and went back to work (laughs) (Olivia, Interview Transcript).

Olivia now works in the fast food restaurant full time and has worked her way through numerous promotions. Looking through the project worker diaries and mapping out a timeline for Olivia there were a number of times that she featured in the diary entries and most of these were related to her post school aspiration and what she had needed to do to attain the aspiration. It is for this reason I present a large quote from the project worker diaries; here taken from my own cataloguing of the data:

The first time Olivia appears in the project worker diaries is on the 13/09/12 where she come to see the project worker, says that she wants to be a nurse. She says that she has been moved from set 1 to set 3 for English and that her mum isn't happy about this. She wants to come to revision sessions. On the 21/01/14 Andrea took Olivia to her college interview she wants to be a midwife but she may need to re-sit GCSE science. On the 22/01/14 the school has agreed to let her re-sit her science. Andrea took her to college after school on the 24/03/14 to sit her numeracy and literacy tests, she achieved level 1 in both. She needs 3 B's for midwifery but is not intimidated by this. Andrea saw Olivia as she came out of her higher biology exam on 14/05/14, she said it was really hard and she probably wouldn't get to study it at A level in college. Andrea notes "I feel Olivia is a great member of the community as she works hard in school, has extracurricular activities (ice skating) and works a few hours on Sunday in the local spar. She is also part of the 'popular' group which

sends out a good message to the younger people living in Brynhaul. Although she does worry at times about achieving I am confident her fears are unfounded due to her effort and staff at school really value her as a pupil". In the year 11 leaver's assembly, Olivia was given an award for sporting achievements. On the 27/08/14 Andrea took her to college to enrol it is noted that she "wanted to study A Level biology as she wants to be a midwife, even though she had great results she only had a C grade at GCSE and so couldn't study this A Level. She wasn't very happy about this but she took Health and Social care in its place (Project worker diary).

I submit that, what is evident about all reference to Olivia in the project worker diaries is that she clearly had aspiration, knew how to achieve it and was prepared to do what she needed to do and work hard to achieve it. With the support of the project worker, she was prepared to re-sit the exams that needed to be resat. When she didn't get the grades she needed in Biology to become a midwife, the project worker supported her by taking her to college to enrol in Health and Social Care.

Hannah

This respondent did not know what she wanted to do post compulsory schooling before she had chosen her GCSE subjects. During her interview, she narrated her own history. As she expressed her biography she talked of when she had developed an aspiration for post compulsory schooling. She explains the moment when she came to the realisation of what career she wanted to pursue,

but I still didn't know what I wanted to do after I did my GCSEs I had no clue so um, well no, I wanted to do drama, I've always wanted to do drama, we went on a school trip actually to see 'Wicked' in the West End and it was like a day trip we went and I was umming and ahing about what I wanted to do and I saw Wicked and I was like, that's it, that's what I want to do now... it was amazing, I loved it, it was just (pause) I don't know, its hard to explain, its like a feeling you get, like a connection you get with the certain thing that's (pause) and I loved it ad I was like, that's it, that's what I want to do (Hannah interview transcript).

For Hannah, the gaining of an aspiration was almost like an epiphany, a light bulb moment. A moment when for her she realised a dream and had a clear idea of what she wanted her imagined future to look like. The project worker was with her on the day trip and Hannah talked of how supportive the project worker was in aiding her to really consider if this was a viable option for her:

I said I want to go to the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama in Cardiff, it's the best school in the UK for drama and performing arts. I want to go there, so she got me the prospectus, she was encouraging, she basically (pause) you know, she was really into it, you know the career advisors weren't, like um, I told them that acting was what I want to do but they tried to gear me towards different, other things. So they weren't very supportive of that which was nice of Andrea when she was you know, if you want to do that, do that (Hannah interview Transcript).

Hannah did not attend the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama, instead she undertook a carpentry course so that she would be able to take part in 'builds' carried out in the Jehovah Witnesses meeting buildings. This is something that other members of her family including her father and her brothers also do. She is also her mother's carer.

It is evident in all of the above accounts from the young people during their interviews, and the notes of the project workers, that all of the young people had an aspiration during their time in compulsory schooling, for some it was more vague than others and for some there were more than one aspiration.

It is also evident from exploring the aspirations of these young people, that for many of them, the project workers played a key role in their lives. The next section of this chapter documents and analyses the importance of the support of the project worker to these young people. The project workers were able to uncover the real-life and close-up contextual factors which then allowed them to understand these challenges these young people were facing on a daily basis and how best to support them in these challenges to overcome barriers. This section has evidenced the fluidity of aspiration as a concept and noted how, contrary to notions such as 'aspiration-poor', these young people as children and as teenagers, did hold dreams for their future. The role of the project worker in supporting these young people throughout their compulsory schooling and how important this was in determining the young person's ability to attain their aspiration is explored in the next section.

4.6 The role of the project worker

As I explored the data sets and began developing timelines for each of the individual young people across their two school years, one of the first things which struck me was the difference between the representation of young people in the diary entries and what was written afterwards about the young people. In the older cohort there were three young people out of 23 not mentioned at all in the project worker diaries. In the younger of the cohorts, all twenty were documented as meeting with the project worker at least once.

I wanted to explore further, so I began to map out what kind of patterns of contact and support each one of the young people across the year groups were receiving from the project workers. The young people can be placed into different cluster themes depending on what types and amount of support they have received from the project workers throughout their time there. Viewing the two cohorts as a whole, there are only three out of 43 young people who are recorded not to have had any contact with the project workers during their time at secondary school. The rest are divided into different support group themes of: 'Support from project worker for academic support and revision', 'support from project worker for academic and pastoral support' and 'contacted by the project worker'.

Finally, I note project workers as plural at times throughout this chapter but it is important to note that there was only ever one project worker working with the young people at one time. As noted in the previous chapter, there have been two project workers in total but one was the successor to the other. The first project worker (2009-2012) was local to the community and lived on the estate. I argue that while the project worker support was vital to the young people in achieving their aspirations, this only worked for the young people who had their own idea of what they wanted to do, people already attuned to personal aspiration, people who in general, also needed less support with other areas of life. I argue that the project workers were able to uncover the real-life and close-up contextual factors which then allowed them to understand the challenges these young people were facing on a daily

basis and how best to support them in these challenges. Although largely subjective and at times anecdotal, the diaries evidence the support the young people received from the project workers throughout their time in school. The type and amount of support was varied and wide ranging across the cohorts and I have categorised the type of support given to the young person in different groups.

The theme of ‘support from project worker for academic support’ is mainly inclusive of recordings of the young people going to see the project worker for photocopying of notes, printing of resources and school work, tutoring and revision sessions. Also within this, are conversations with the project workers about what they wanted to do after school, what their aspirations were. Compiled within the theme of ‘academic and pastoral support’, there is documented and intensive support for some of the young people in many different areas of life. Within the school setting there are records of the project worker supporting the young person in their academic journey and also navigating relationships with school staff and the young person’s peer groups. There is quite a range within this of differing amounts of support for the young person. The project worker’s diaries, also document the project workers’ thoughts and opinions on various situations.

The table overleaf illustrates the numerical break down of the level of involvement the project workers had in the lives of each of the young people across the two cohorts, based upon how much contact each young person had with the project worker and for what reasons.

Table 4: Amount of support from project worker accessed

	No involvement with project worker mentioned in diaries	Project worker sought contact for post school aspiration	Support for academic related issues including travel	Support for academic and pastoral advice and guidance.
Cohort 1	3	1	5	12
Cohort 2	1	2	8	7
Total	4	3	13	19

The project workers were available to all the young people who were in in the two cohorts. Of course some of the young people were supported by the project workers more than others. Primarily because they sought out the support from the project workers. The project worker diaries provided a temporal account of the lives of some of these young people and the insights of the project worker into her feelings, thus gaining a perspective that could not be gained retrospectively. I argue that the diaries maintained by the project workers, although subjective and at times anecdotal, enable an analysis of the role of one to one support in encouraging the young people at different points of their journey and that an analysis of these entries has uncovered the vitally important role of the support worker in some of the young people's lives. In particular, in relation to aspiration and the academic trajectory that preceded it. Cuconato and Walther (2015) suggest that the complex negotiations, processes and interventions is in line with inter-actionist perspectives in shaping educational trajectories. The diary entries also provided insight to the personal lives of the young people.

Below is an extract from the project worker diaries, an extract which details one of the entries conveying the project worker's thoughts of her engagement and involvement with one young person from the group, who are grouped under the title 'support from project worker for academic and pastoral support and guidance'. It depicts the complexities of the role of the project worker in the lives of some of the young people, a role which in practice, is beyond academic attainment alone.

L had a bad day today and we met with the head of year 6 who was fantastic with her – caring, supportive and had lots of patience! She felt a lot better after but generally feels lost at the moment. I still feel L has some way to go. With D going to college and her own self esteem issues I just can't seem to put my finger on what's stopping her to turn that last corner? I really hope over the next few months she will start to see her own potential! She has been looking at university courses and at the moment is leaning towards criminology, but this may change again before she applies! (Project worker diary)

This instance demonstrates how the project worker is able to provide emotional support for the young person and also able to build bridges between the staff and

the students. This extract from the project worker diary demonstrates how the project worker, although primarily interested in the young persons' academic achievement, is able to recognise the bigger picture and all of the forces coming into play with where this young person is at in her life and the implications this has on her education. As the support worker knows what the aspirations of the young people are, she is able to adapt her approach to best fit their needs. I submit that this was vitally important in encouraging the young people to remember what they are working towards and keep them thinking about the future, beyond the immediate situation of school. I argue that for many of the young people, as the following findings chapters will explore, would not have attained the grades they hold at A level or indeed, progressed on to university study. I argue that the relationship the project worker held with each of the young people was an important one. One which had the potential to bridge a gap of understanding, support or need. Ultimately, the project worker diaries illustrate how without this support, some of these young people would not have attended school or progressed through a post compulsory trajectory.

It is previously noted that across the two cohorts, only four of the young people are not mentioned in the project worker diaries. Three of the young people are recorded in the diary under the title, 'support for post school aspiration'. This meant that the only record of them having sought the project worker's help was in direct relation to receiving guidance for what they knew they wanted to do after leaving school. It is evident throughout the diaries, that the type of support received from the project worker by the young person, linked to aspiration held by the young person. How tailored the support received was, was also impacted by how clear a picture the young people had of what they wanted to do after leaving school.

Earlier I argued that for some of these young people, the role the support workers played in their lives was a crucial factor in enabling the young person to consider their future aspirations and developing an understanding of what needs to be achieved. Laura directly talks about this in her interview when she stated:

I've had a lot of trouble and I was a troubled kid so (pause) I think that's given, that give me a grounding, I think if it weren't for the support I've

had with both I wouldn't be where I am, I wouldn't be in uni and wouldn't (pause) (Laura, Interview Transcript).

There was also a positive way in which the project workers affected the young people's ability to believe in themselves. The young people had someone fighting their corner, someone who made it their business to find out how best to support the individual young people. The fact that the project workers were able to work one on one with the young people and gain real insights to what life was really like for them has also meant that they have also been able to encourage them and provide them with the information they need to make their aspiration attainable.

I also argue that the support workers played a role in encouraging the young people they worked with to hope, and more importantly, to translate that hope into actions which determine future results (Bishop & Willis 2014). In viewing hope as a learnt behaviour and a form of agency, this enables young people to envisage the future and work towards a goal or aspiration. This does however, raise the question of how the young people fare in trajectories encouraged by tailored support when the project worker is no longer able to position themselves as a support and guide for these young people's lives. This will be addressed further in the chapter 7.

In many instances, the project worker supported the young people by providing the young person with advice on how to achieve an aspiration and showing the next steps to be taken. The project worker was able to support the young people in their academic development by providing printing when needed, bringing in subject tutors and providing revision sessions. I suggest that these positive relationships which the project worker was able to forge had a positive effect on the young person's education largely by making the future imaginable, for those who the project worker was able to guide and support. I argue that the future was made imaginable by the way in which the project worker supported them in the present.

Project workers were able to help remove a variety of different barriers. One of the barriers which the project workers supported the young people to overcome was a

logistical barrier of travel. Across the cohorts of 35 young people, 22 of these young people are documented as having been given a lift with the project worker for various reasons. Of these 22 young people, nine were in the older cohort and thirteen were in the younger cohort. The reasons the project worker offered these lifts to the young people were wide ranging. Three were noted as being taken to school, the rest are for open days, picking up results, inductions at college, to enrol at college and one where a young person was picked up from a dentist appointment and taken back to school. One of the young people could not attend revision sessions because of the transport being discontinued as the result of funding cuts. The project worker gave lifts to some of the young people to enable them to access the revision sessions. In regards to a female member of the cohort, the project worker notes: 'she would not be coming to maths revision tomorrow night because she can't get home. This is due to funding cuts no more e3 bus' (project worker diary). Recognising that this places this young person at a disadvantage, the project worker notes how she is willing to provide transport.

The project worker giving lifts to the young people was not exclusively about enabling them to attend study sessions by providing them with the means to travel home afterwards. It also included, for some of the young people, lifts to open days and work experience positions. As the extract from the diary entry below conveys, providing the young person with a lift, often enabled them to be fully engaged in their educational experience. I note that this instance was by no means unique to one of the cohort.

It is noted that she had a trip to Bristol zoo on 07/04/14 with her Travel and Tourism course and Andrea gave her a lift to Hawthorn to get the bus. Andrea took her to Hawthorn again on 09/04/14 as she had to complete a role play exercise as part of her Travel and Tourism course (Project worker diary).

I argue that as a model, this type of support has been beneficial, as it has the ability to tailor each of the young people individual support and guidance combined with the ability to work with these young people whatever their situation. As some of the extracts taken from the project worker diaries cited in this chapter show, the project workers were committed to the young people and cared about their educational

achievement and emotional well being and tried to mitigate the effects caused by disadvantage. I suggest that above all else, what mattered most to many of these young people was the fact that these young people had somebody supporting them who they felt genuinely cared about them and was available to them. This was expressed during some of the interviews with the young people crediting their current positioning to the support they were given by the project workers.

An analysis of the project worker diaries illustrated the complexities of the lives of these young people and how the project workers needs to adapt their approach to manage and mitigate the complexities for each of the young people as individuals. By being aware of the aspiration held by the young person and having knowledge of their academic attainment, they were able to support the young person in working towards the aspiration for post compulsory employment. I also argue that the project workers were situated to be able to provide hope to the young person and enable them to imagine a future beyond their own imaginations: hope in others, in believing in themselves and their own capabilities and hope in a future tentatively imagined. I submit then that this hope was continually nursed into a form of agency, a new form of capital the young self-possessed.

4.7 Summary

In summary, this chapter has presented an argument that young people from disadvantaged communities do indeed have aspirations. That young people from disadvantaged communities have childhood dreams of what they would like their post school trajectories may look like, but many of the young people learn that they will not achieve them. I submit that along with this realization, agency in the form of hope is lost. For many of those that do loose hope, the project worker has maintained a role of support and guidance which is uniquely individual for each young person they worked with. What cannot be questioned is the fluidity of aspiration and how they change over time.

For this reason I suggest that the question around aspiration is not one of, how can the aspiration of a young person from a disadvantaged communities and working class backgrounds be improved. The real question here, is why and how does a child learn that they cannot or will not attain the achievement of these childhood aspirations.

This argument and subsequent evidence, has provided weight to the notion that the transition to employment begins prior to the end of compulsory schooling, arguably taking place in the early formative years in line with the construction of habitus and what people know and see every day. This data evidences that for the minority of the young people who do achieve, what at times is a somewhat altered and re-evaluated aspiration, the role of the project workers in providing tailored support to the young people as individuals is crucial.

This chapter has in part answered the research question ‘What aspirations do young people from disadvantaged communities express, and how can empirical work inform the current policy-agenda on young people, poverty and aspirations?’. It has done so by evidencing the wide range of different aspirations these young people from a disadvantaged community imagined and illustrated the fluidity of these aspirations over time. The findings suggest that the Neoliberal rhetoric of raising aspiration and individualism is missing the mark of what these young people really need. I submit that the policy approach of raising attainment, neglects the need of understanding of the individual within a community whilst encouraging the individuality of thinking. This chapter has also provided some explanation to the research question which asked ‘How can uncovering real-life, close-up contextual factors allow us to understand these challenges?’ This has been carried by evidencing the changing nature of aspiration and gaining an insight to what these young people in this disadvantaged community were experiencing through a temporal account of their trajectories through education to post-compulsory education, training and employment.

The literature (see chapter two) presents the argument that there is an overbearing discourse and often salient narrative that young people in disadvantaged communities do not have aspirations as worthy as their middle class counterparts (Skeggs and Loveday 2012). Literature also depicts the importance of place, community and relationship in aspiration formation and subsequent entry to the labour market. This enables an understanding of how complex aspirations are in their evolution and in how they are negotiated whilst being inextricably linked to a value system held by the individual (Stahl and Baars 2015). I argue that this is something which could be further explored, and looked at in the sense of community and sociality to gain further understanding of how a value system of a community in which the roots run deep and entwine exists beyond the Neoliberal assumptions of individualism. Literature on aspiration (Stahl, 2016; Ward, 2015; Berrington et al, 2016) acknowledges the intersectionality of gender and class in the formation of aspirations and this was also evident throughout this study, not just among the cohort but also in some of the younger teenagers who lived on the estate. What was strikingly apparent during this study was the role the project worker played in enabling the young people who knew what they aspired to, to achieve their goal. Analysis of the project worker diaries, portrayed how the project worker was able to bridge individuality subjectivity and community values together. The next chapter focuses on the role of space, place and community in the lives of the young people from this disadvantaged community.

5 CHAPTER FIVE: A Spatial exploration within the context of space, place, community and belonging

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter provided a temporal account of the lives of the young people with reference to their changing aspirations. The argument presented in this chapter is that community has provided a central role in these changes impacting on their past experiences, present circumstances and also in how they consider their futures. This chapter will examine the impact of community and belonging through experiences of otherness, stigma and identity. This chapter considers space, location and place and discusses the key themes around the area of challenges within the context of space, place, community and belonging. In the context of this thesis, the terms space and place are in reference to the geographical locations in which these young people live: the streets they walk throughout their lifetime, the places where they spend time, create memories and gain experiences both positive and negative.

Belonging is about relationships, the social ties we have that continue to impact upon our aspirations, our identity development and our hopes, fears and dreams for the future: their imagined future selves. This constellation of concepts and their relationships to each other are explored in chapter 2. Across the interviews there was an evident pattern of community being both a constraint for the young people but also being a vitally important part of the day to day existence of the young people who took part in the research. All of the young people who were interviewed during this study made reference to their community, as did the workers with whom I met: everyone spoke about the 'sense of community' in Brynhaul.

This chapter will address the second research question: 'How are these challenges actually experienced by young people in their everyday lives and concrete social situations – in families, peer-groups and neighbourhoods?' The data used to explore this question is the biographical narrative interviews which have taken place with the fifteen young people from the community.

The analysis of secondary data provided by PWU, particularly the project worker diaries, has demonstrated the ways in which these young people are presented with particular challenges in terms of their transition to employment. This is within the context of viewing the transition to employment from a life-span perspective, arguing that this transition and the potential difficulties and complexities entwined in the transition process begin long before the young person has reached the end of compulsory schooling.

The findings within this chapter are based primarily upon thematic analysis of the ethnographic data obtained from research undertaken during the field work. The findings presented here have been developed from recorded conversations with people who live within the community and with the community workers working in the estate from the regeneration office as part of the Communities First and Work Clubs initiatives. The data presented here is taken from the Interviews conducted with the 15 young people themselves from the cohort who agreed to be interviewed.

Coding these transcribed interviews, it became apparent that community was being discussed in all of them. Under this theme of community, there were numerous sub themes: community as both safety net and constraint, the reminiscing of a time gone by, a stigma of place, the vitality of family support and friendships, the value of family and friends in the work place, people not wanting to move away for work or university study. It was clear that community provided a network of affective relationships which proved to be of great importance to the young people. As noted in the Chapter 2, the term 'community' is frequently described as difficult to define in the context of social science research (Studdert 2006). For the purpose of this study however, community is conceptualised as the connectedness, affective relationships and 'meanings in common' between people and the geographical spaces of the locality (Studdert and Walkerdine 2016).

5.2 Past experiences formed by community

Community has indeed provided a central role throughout the lives of these young people in a number of ways: impacting on their past experiences, present circumstances and also in considering their futures. Throughout this section how the young people's past experience of growing up in Brynhaul is explored, utilising data gained through the interviews. This section of past experiences formed by community is broken down into the sub headings of: Memories, shaped by community; stigma attached to place and belonging and Identity. These are sub themes which arose during a thematic analysis. It is my intention that each of these sub-themes are presented as simultaneously both a constraint and a support base.

Chapter 2 noted how important attachments with other people are in terms of child development in the formative years (Walkerdine and Lucey 1989). It also highlighted the arguments made that attachment to place has a role in development during the formative years (Jack 2010). I submit that by exploring this notion of the role of formative attachment to place one is better able to understand additional layers of complexity to the discussion around aspiration and post compulsory education transitions. Thus, this could enable a clearer understanding of the Neoliberal narrative of social mobility and the deficit view of working-class young people. I argue that consideration of communal space is of paramount importance in enabling a better understanding of the transitions into employment of young people who have grown up in a disadvantaged community. Space and the community within it, has a role to play in one's decision making and the availability of opportunity structures. As Chawla notes: 'Our places of origin shape who we are whether we like it or not' (1992, p. 66). We are marked by place (Jack 2010), this findings chapter sets out some of the ways in which being marked by place takes shape.

Research suggests that as young people navigate the teenage years, they adopt a more conscious attachment to the place in which they have grown up. As Jack notes this is 'evident in growing identification with the area and the desire to continue living there into adulthood' (Jack 2010, p. 758). This is something which was narrated by the participants in this study as they described their memories of growing up in the

area and considered their plans for the future, as this chapter will explore. I wrote in chapter one, a descriptive account of the geographical location and the overall sense I had of Brynhaul as a place. In that section I presented my thoughts of dichotomy of place, how I sensed the research site as a place, a world of its own and yet a split of two places within that. The different areas of Brynhaul are contrasts. You stand on the estate and look out to the big redbrick houses on the hill opposite or you stand in the red brick houses and look at the huge council estates opposite. Within the estate itself, different streets seem to tell a different story, and also two houses right next door to each other can also seem so different. The way in which some of the participants talked of the estate in which they grew up in with such visible affection made me understand the place and the people within it as fundamentally important in their development, journey and imagined future.

Seemingly inextricably linked to the importance of place appears to be a reminiscing narrative. Many of the young people expressed narratives about the times gone by. They talk of what it was like when they grew up in the area compared to how they perceive it to be now.

5.3 Memories of being shaped by community

During the interviews, a number of participants reminisced about their time growing up in the community and made reference to places where they have memories both positive and negative. They recall the spaces in which they spent time with friends. As the young people reminisced about growing up within the locality, it was often done so positively, with remarks as a comparative between 'then' and 'now'. Many of the young people talked about how good the community was when they were growing up compared to how they believe it is now, with many of their conversations illustrating how time was spent time on the streets with friends, or 'hanging out' under the bridge, up the mountain or in the woods. These places were often associated with 'bunking off' (local dialect for unauthorised absence from school) school, drinking or taking drugs. Taking drugs and 'druggies' are constant features of

many working class estates (Studdert & Walkerdine 2016) and of course memories are made of 'good' and 'bad' things.

Apart from we got a few more smack heads living up ya like, honestly, I wouldn't say anything has changed for the good, for the better, (pause) cos there is nothing for the kids to do around here like nothing (Chelsea Interview Transcript).

In response to my question, what was the best thing about growing up in Bryn?

Well, when we all used to be teenagers and we used to get pissed under the bridge. (laughs). Hanging round the shops. Coed y bridge down by there. Waiting for like um, hour or two up the shops for somebody to get alcohol, (laughs). There used to be loads of us. And then the police coming to catch us then. Its drugs now, this place is just full of drugs. I hate it. you only got to walk up the street and you smell it. (laughs). (Chelsea interview transcript).

There was also some reference made to the community centre and the role that building and the youth club had had in their teenage years. The old community centre had been a focal point of the community for the young people with youth clubs running on different week day evenings. It is remembered by the young people that it would cost 20p to enter the youth club and as a space in where they could do what they wanted.

When we were youngsters up here, I'm still a youngster now like, but when we were younger again, we'd all go up the old community centre, it was up there (she points out of a window). We used to love going to youth club, love it and the disco, everything. Everything was on top form up ya, but now this, since they built this (looks around at the hall we are sat in), (lowers voice) it's just, no one wants to come here like (Chelsea interview transcript).

Sammy

One of the initial interviews which first heightened my awareness of the complexities of how the young people viewed and engaged with their locality was with Sammy. At the time of the interview Sammy was a first-time mother of a three month year old. As she reminisced, Sammy spoke about what she did and did not like about growing up in Brynhaul and how she feels there are no opportunities for people who live here. This is also something she discussed when she came and joined her brother Kyle in his interview.

Towards the end of Kyle's interview, Kyle and Sammy both sat together, sharing their memories and their thoughts around growing up on the estate. They both talked of the good times they had growing up here, spending a lot of their time out in the open up on the mountain. But Kyle notes that now, looking back, he wishes that maybe he had worked a bit harder rather than spending his time up the mountain with his mates instead of being in school:

Me: what were you doing when you weren't in school?

Kyle: Drugs, yeah (laughs) I'd never touch drugs now, I'm tested all the time, I'm really against drugs now, I was just taking cannabis, I think this is why I messed school, cos I just couldn't be bothered to go and everything. Them days used to be fun, or you think but then you look back, yeah and regret every single day like (Kyle, Interview transcript).

As the young people, reminisced about their time growing up on the estate during the interview, many of them talked about what life was like as teenagers and how they would spend their time. As many of the young people tell each of the stories of this period of life, there is one particular narrative described commonly in interviews, either of their involvement in it or their awareness of others. This narrative is one of hanging around under the bridge or up the woods, drinking. How the participants have talked about using the space around them was prominent in the interviews: 'I was never in my house growing up I was never, I was always out on the street playing kerbsy and I was always out. When the streetlight came on that's when I'd go in' (Sophie, interview transcript).

This section evidences how growing up in Brynhaul was a theme which was referenced throughout many interviews as the participants have talked about their childhoods and teenage years. Seemingly inextricably linked to the theme of growing up in Brynhaul is the narrative of friends and neighbours as extended family and of generational familiarity and situatedness to place.

5.3.1 A stigma attached to place

Stigma of place is something which has been written about at length by other researchers (Butler-Warke 2020). In Chapter Three I note my positionality as a researcher, as an outsider, living about five miles away from the community. I noted how I have family ties with the area as members of my extended family have lived there in the past. I wrote in the chapter about the research site, about the information gained about the area and how it is viewed by outsiders. I noted some of the comments I was given in relation to going to Brynhaul from people who live outside the community, most of these reactions were notably negative and along the lines of: 'not as bad as it used to be' or 'what you going there for?' These comments allow us to gain insight to the effect of place on the identity of these young people, the emotional response to place. This then, enables us to draw a clearer picture of understanding the choices/ aspirations made and perceived by the young people in relation to their individual post compulsory education transition.

Kyle

Kyle works and lives in England throughout the week for work but regularly comes back to the estate for weekends to be with family and friends. During his interview he explored his memories of growing up on the estate, it seemed fitting that I asked the question: 'Do you like being from Bryn?'. He responded by saying:

If you say you're from Bryn in certain places it's a problem, umm, like village⁵, um, probably village⁶ as well, I don't know, it's because some people up here want to fight everyone, so like, if you say you are from this place, people think that you're them and want to fight like" (Kyle, interview transcript).

This response provides a snapshot of his perception of how the people who are from his community are viewed outside of the community. He does not answer the question I asked with a definitive yes or no answer, instead, he uses a comparative. This comparative situates his identity and belonging as being from a certain place. This evident in his use of the word 'problem' as it relates to stigma. I think it is

⁵ Place name hidden to protect anonymity.

⁶ Place name hidden to protect anonymity

interesting here, to also note the gender aspect of this response, the masculinity expressed through raising the issue of 'fighting'. Arguably, it depicts a view of a stereotypical working-class masculinity.

Tom

Another participant who notes the negative reputation of Brynhaul is Tom. We have seen previously that Tom is studying for an undergraduate degree in politics at a university in England in a big city just under an hour away from Brynhaul. the area he has grown up in. He lives in the university city during term time and returns for holidays and day visits. Throughout his interview, I had the sense that Tom was trying to set himself apart from the community he comes from. When he was sharing with me his experience of growing up in Brynhaul and his opinions of what the reality of teenage years looked like on the estate. He paints the same picture as many of the other young people of how the young people spend a lot of time together outdoors on and around the estate but his use of language is notably different. When discussion the reputation of Brynhaul, Tom says:

just the hanging around the streets and that, and trouble can happen. It's like that then, which is why of course, to a lot of people has got a pretty bad reputation and it's not as bad now as it used to be 30 years ago (Tom, interview transcription).

Just as the previous quote from Kyle shows, Tom talks of a negative reputation of the area, although he recognised that this is something which has changed through the decades. Just as I had turned off the Dictaphone at the end of T's interview, we walked out of the sports hall together, he turned to me and said: 'am I what you expected from round here?'. Throughout the entirety of this interview I had this feeling that he was working hard to set himself apart from the community. I had the sense that he wanted me to see him as different. It was as though in my positioning as a researcher, he had expected me to have held preconceived ideas of what research site and the people who live in it are like, maybe something akin to his suggested bad reputation.

Danny

A couple of the participants have made reference to a nickname given to people who are from the area by people from outside of the area in neighbouring communities. A name which they recognised has at times been attached to them because of where they are from. During her interview, Danny who was working casual hours for an agency supplying workers to a local warehouse reflected on what being from Brynhaul has meant for her and how she feels she and others from her community are viewed from the outside. Danny laughs as she names the neighbouring communities which adopt this nickname for people from Brynhaul and states: 'Well they call us 'Bryna Stinkers'⁷ don't they... they think Bryn⁸ is more rough' (Danny, Interview Transcription). This supports the previous quote from Kyle's interview where he talked about been seen as wanting to fight. This was also supported by Sophie who makes reference to this nickname for people from Brynhaul. Within Sophie's interview, it comes up within the context of education when talking about her memories of her time at the local comprehensive school. In terms of her own high school experience where students came from other localities in and around the town neighbouring the council estate, she says:

going to school was hard, if you were from Bryn you kind of had that stigma that you were "stinks Bryna⁹" that's what we used to be called in school, "stinka Bryna" and like my mother used to get called it in school, my brother, it was if you're from Bryn it was "ah you're from that scummy place" "rough as hell up there" "go to Bryn you tie your um, make sure your shoe laces are tied". Bryn has always been known as a bad place, so rough and it's not. It might look like it from the outside to people but Bryn everyone would do, you look after your own in Bryn. Its, it's like I said I didn't get raised by my family, I got raised by the community as well (Sophie, interview transcript)

Within this section of the interview, Sophie highlights the negative view in which she feels people from Brynhaul are perceived, a stigma attached to where she is from. There is evidently something particularly powerful about this quote for Sophie, as she spoke about this, she did so light heartedly but with an evident look of hurt and anguish. The way she was telling me was almost like she thought that I wouldn't

⁷ The derogatory nickname of the area is changed but I have tried to keep the same sense of the term.

⁸ The name of the area is locally shortened so I have also shortened the name of the Pseudonym.

⁹ The original derogatory term has been changed to protect the Anonymity of place but I have tried to keep the sense of the term Sophie referred to.

believe her, almost as though she felt that this was too hard to believe. It is also interesting that at this point she also chose to tell me that this is something which has also happened to the previous generations before her, something passed down through the generations as a common sense truth.

Luke

During his interview, Luke made reference to how he recalls young people on the estate spending time in open spaces together just as the other participants had illustrated. He suggested however, said that he was never interested in hanging around and drinking on the streets like some of the others in the cohort by acknowledging that he does not go out. 'It doesn't make much of a difference to me because I don't go out up here anyway, so, I don't (pause) feel like it has made a difference to me. (pause)'. He also said that he didn't believe that being from Brynhaul had had any notable effect on his educational experiences at any point. I argue that Luke's focus on his aspiration gave him purpose. He did note during his interview, when I asked him for his thoughts on what it is like for people trying to find work in the area, he suggested that there are jobs available in the area but he felt that people could not be bothered to work. He presents almost the view of the outsider during this part of his interview, almost as though he is positioning himself as different with a pathologizing gaze on those he talks of in his community as 'them':

Me: what do you think it's like for people around here to find work (long pause)

Luke: I think (pause) a lot, like, (pause) I think it's (pause) easier for them to find work than they think, I think a lot of them just can't be bothered (pause) cos it's that type of area, it's like, (pause) (Luke, Interview transcript).

Willow pregnant with her first baby did not discuss how she thinks people inside the estate are viewed from the outside, but she did make reference to her own opinion of people who live within her community. When discussing the availability of local work, she notes 'there is probably loads around here but people are quite lazy, don't go looking for them, if they wanted one, they could get one...' (Willow, interview transcript). This echoes the thoughts put forward by Luke, it presents the attitude of

putting blame on the individual for not being in work. However, neither Luke or Willow are in work or looking for work.

Throughout her interview, Willow talked to me about her experiences of growing up here in Brynhaul and painted a picture of what her own reality was like growing up on the estate and what she spent her time doing as a teenager. At times she did this with contradictions between her memories. At first she begins by recalling about what used to be in Brynhaul:

Yeah, there used to be a lot up here, but like, I don't see many now, it doesn't even have like a youth for younger ones any more, they used to do that for younger ones, and then on the Thursday, it was older ones. But I don't think they do the Wednesday one any more. There used to be quite a lot around here (Willow, interview transcript)

I asked her more specifically, what she did growing up and her response contradicted her earlier perceptions, whilst providing information which was in agreement with other cohort members:

Me: what did you do growing up?

Willow: (pause) nothing really round here, didn't really (pause) when I used to go out around here, it used to be like (pause) nothing really, you just hang about, you just sit there doing nothing like, anywhere, outside the centre, in the woods, outside the social up there, outside the shop, anywhere (pause) anywhere like, up top I don't know. It's stupid like, it's nowhere really to go round here cos it's so small and people complain and stuff it's not easy like (pause) (Willow, Interview Transcript).

5.3.2 Belonging and identity: tentative thoughts upon the evidence

Many of these young people, seem grounded in Brynhaul. By this I mean the metaphorical roots of connections and comfort of familiarity have grown deep. I wonder what impact this then has had upon the formation and utilisation of these young people's metaphorical wings? Often the young people in this study have not been able to put into words exactly what it is that is keeping them there. Occasionally talk of dislike of the area is expressed but not often; alongside that talk is an expressed desire to leave the area. It provides a sense of belonging as the comments from some of those young people who have moved away evidence. One could argue

that for some of these young people, the community provides a safety net, and the thought of having to leave that with no guarantee of what their futures would look like in another place may be too big a move to even contemplate.

Walkerdine and Jimenez write, 'Even younger people found it difficult to find a reason for them to move out and be separated from the network of affective relations that they know and value' (2012, p. 67). An attachment to place became evident in many of the interviews, particularly with the participants who are looking for local, low paid, unskilled work. This is also supported by the work of McKenzie (2015), who in her work on housing estates, class and culture, writes about the importance of family ties and networks. She notes that the 'networks, family ties and relationship to the estate were very important for both the men and women' (McKenzie 2015, p. 87). It could be understood that this is because these networks and an attachment to place create a sense of belonging for the young people who live there. Social class evidently bears upon how these young people make their decisions, conceive of aspirations, interact with space and people and imagine their futures. This is something written about by (Jack 2010) in recognising that young people gain their sense of belonging primarily from their immediate social networks. For many of the young people who have been interviewed, leaving the estate is not something they hope to do, for others who do want to leave one day, most also want to stay within the local area.

As I reflect on my time in Brynhaul I think one of the things which was most apparent to me was the sense of community (discussed in chapter 2) I experienced. By this, I mean the way in which everybody knows everyone and mostly seem to support each other. There was a sense of knowing and being known, an identity created by the relationships bridged across households, the considering of being related even though there were not always blood or marital ties that supported these bridges of relationship. I use the notion of 'sense of community' to also pay tribute to the often apparent unity within the community, a commonality of understanding and support. This was something that the young people themselves talked about as did people who worked in the community. As chapter 2 recognises, this is not a new finding in itself. It does, however, allow for the further exploration of the affective construction

of working-class identity and belonging within a community, which, within the Neoliberal context, is listed as a disadvantaged community and subjected to the policy decisions of both central and local government.

This then, could help develop an understanding of the impact of psychological, affective attachment to place in the role of the development of a person's sense of identity and belonging that Jack (2010) addresses (see chapter 2).

One of the members of staff employed under Communities For Work Plus, and Communities First when this project began, lives a forty minute commute from the area. He said that what struck him most when he started in his role eight years ago was just how tight knit the community is and how everyone helps each other out. Throughout the time in which I carried out the research, I was welcomed into people's homes, often with no questions asked and people openly spoke about their perspective on what life is like in this place. Other members of the community became friends, inviting me round for lunch in their home in the heart of the estate. Of all the doors I knocked at the beginning of the ethnographic enquiry, only one parent who opened the door asked me for ID and asked me questions about my research. This parent also did not invite me into the home as others did. I feel it is worth noting here that this house was not on the estate, but on the new build development across the road. All the young people I interviewed were friendly and I often got to witness the support and encouragement they would give each other.

5.4 Present need for community

This next section evidences the argument that community has provided a central role throughout the lives of these young people. In the context of their present circumstances these young people place value and need the support of family and friends. The data used within this section evidence this argument from the interviews carried out with the young people. During a thematic analysis of the BNIM interviews, it became clear how much the young people in this community needed the support

of affective relationships in a variety of different contexts and also the familiarity of friends and family in the workplace.

5.4.1 The support of affective relationships

Many of the participants talk about the community in which they live as 'family'. As this chapter illustrates, when asked if they would be willing to leave the community, many of the young people completely dismissed the idea. The networks of friends, family and relatives appear to be invaluable to many of these young people. As one of the young people noted 'she's my auntie, he's my uncle, well not really but that's how we are brought up all family, like' (Sophie, Interview transcript). For those participants with children, family would seem to provide them with support including the ability to work. The community being talked of as a big family is well documented in sociological literature. (Walkerdine and Jimenez, 2012).

Willow

Anticipating the arrival of her first child, Willow acknowledged that her family would play a role in supporting her in that journey. She talked in her interview about how she planned on staying with her parents in their family home once the baby was born highlighting the importance of support from family and friends:

Me: when your baby is born now, are you planning on staying with your parents for a bit?

Willow: Yeah I am, I don't really want to live on my own yet, I prefer to stay with my parents, stay with my mam (pause) but I don't know, if it gets too much then cos my mum is ill and that, I probably would move in with him but I, I don't want to like (pause) it's not my cup of tea like (pause) but (Pause) things might even change, I don't know. (pause) I don't know (sighs) (pause) (Willow, interview transcript).

Sammy

Mum to a three month old baby boy, Sammy said that she would like to work when the baby attends school and suggested that her auntie may be the person to help her achieve this as her auntie doesn't work and could therefore look after the baby.

Me: So you don't plan on working until baby goes to school?

Sammy: No, unless, my mam and dad see work full time, my mam works in a shop, my dad is a bus driver. So it would be hard for me now, really. Unless like I talk nice to my auntie, but I don't want to leave him this soon, yet. He's still young (laughs) he's 3 months now. And then obviously just part time then cos I'll have to take him to school, and then like pick him up. Un if I, or if it was like a 9 till 5 job, at least then I'll have my auntie or brothers. (Sammy, Interview transcript).

For this young person, her imagined route to employment opportunities, requires the support network of local family members. It is this support that makes future opportunities imaginable. Moving away to the unknown without the support of family in her parenting journey is not something even considered by Sammy. One of the things that intrigued me most about this interview was that even though she feels she missed out by living here and she doesn't think it is that nice a place to live, she would stay living here with her son. I argue that this provides a glimpse of how invaluable the affective networks of family and friends within the locality are in creating a support network. Her twin brother also talked about how he likes being in this area during his interview. He noted that even though he works away in England through the week, he still chooses to come home every weekend because all of his family and friends are here. I argue that even though he has found employment outside of Wales, a considerable distance from his home town, for him, this was possible and a less daunting prospect due to the ability he had to return to his safe place. It is worth noting here that Kyle knew all the way through school that he wanted to join the army, and showed determination through setbacks to achieve his goal arguably it was being certain of his aspiration which enabled him to leave Brynhaul.

Sophie

Sat in the local coffee shop, Sophie shared her love of the community she has grown up in, now studying and living away at university in a much larger city, Sophie reflected on how she has been shaped by the community she still feels a part of. She acknowledges the idea that those relationships have played a role in her own personal journey, and that these relationships extend beyond her immediate family. Reflecting on her upbringing she states: 'Its, it's like I said I didn't get raised by my

family, I got raised by the community as well' (Sophie, interview transcript). I argue that this quote illustrates the intimacy and 'sense of community' in day to day life on the estate. Sophie, born in a house on the estate expresses a deep sense of attachment to place, created by both her memories of the use of space within the locality around her growing up, the relationships nurtured through her lifetime on the estate and finally, but conjoined with all of these, those relationships of solidarity nurtured by the generation before her. During the interview, her pride was evident as she talked about how her parents had grown up on the estate as she showed me pictures on her phone of her parents as young people on the estate. The reflexive point at which Sophie is considering this having moved away from the estate, enables her to have a comparative of what life can be like in another communities. In considering what Brynhaul means to her, she says:

For me Bryn is (pause) it's my home, nothing will, I find it so strange being in Cardiff not knowing my neighbours, it freaks me out. I know my whole street I grew up in, I could walk into someone's house like growing up, even the old people like (pause) (Sophie, Interview Transcription).

During her interview she made many distinctions about the differences between the two communities in which she has lived. As she talked about them the aspects she raised were around familiarity and safety. I argue that the above quote displays a sense of comfort within research site that she has not found in the city. This quote suggests that for Sophie, there is a sense of security and safety in Brynhaul. Arguably, this paints a different picture to the one suggested by those outside of the community which was explored under the stigma of place section of this chapter.

Chelsea.

Sophie is not the only young person who expressed the importance of these affective relationships in her day to day existence, both past, present and imagined for the future. One of the first interviews which took place for this study was with Chelsea. We sat in the sports hall of the community centre at the heart of the estate for her interview. In considering the impact of her relationships with others on the estate, she narrates what she feels growing up on the estate as the quote below illustrates:

Me: you're still happy to stay, and bring your children up here?

Chelsea: Yeah (pause) definitely (laughs) probably because I know everyone here as well like so I know that when I'm stuck un whatever, if I need anything (pause). Like a big extended family. Yeah that's what its like, you say he's your cousin, but he's not (laughs) he's your distant like, that's what it is, if you're close to the family, oh that's my uncle that is (laughs). Everyone will talk to everyone, when I moved up ya it was like I didn't even know um un they'd be like, alright? It's a good place to be like, just nothing to do but I was born up ya like, literally born up ya

Me: What like born in the estate?

Chelsea: Born up the top of estate I was, my auntie delivered me, yeah.

Me: So you really are born and bred

Chelsea: (laughs) yeah I am (laughs) wouldn't change it for the world (sighs) but its still crap (laughs). (Chelsea, interview transcript)

It is evident from this quote, and others explored within this chapter, that this positive view of life on the estate comes also with contentions. The first part of this piece of interview transcript provides an understanding of the comfort that comes from knowing others, the comfort of knowing that relationship with others in the locality means that help and support is available if and when it is needed. Thus, it could be argued that what Chelsea is expressing here, is that her relationships with her community is like a safety net. As we saw in Sophie's interview, Chelsea discusses how her family extends beyond blood relations on the estate. The sense of community which evolves from those who live together, are in conversation with each other, thus, creating a network of support, solidarity and togetherness. Coupled with her contention that 'there is nothing to do here', I submit that what she is narrating is a sense of abandonment, arising from the re-location of the estate community to a windy hill adrift from the town. For her the lack of things to do in her immediate environment does not seem to be as important as the relationships grown through years of belonging to this community. This duality of place is noted within the interviews undertaken for this study, but I argue that to the young people who have grown up on the estate, an affective network of support of each other, relationships in the community appears to be more important to the young people than the availability of local work, or the lack of 'things to do'. Throughout this study, it was a common theme that young people spoke in a more descriptive way of the supportive context of the community, the relationships with others, more than the other factors

previously noted. Although, I argue here that this is because these supportive relationships are potentially more tangible and more grounded than abstract opportunities such as secure employment elsewhere.

Willow

Another participant who through her interview, noted the importance of support from those living in her locality was Willow. In her second trimester of pregnancy Willow reflects on why staying in Brynhaul is important to her. Like many of the other participants, she notes the importance of being near and maintaining a physical and geographical closeness to her family.

Me: In the future, where would you want to live?

Willow: Here. Yeah here. I probably won't move now. (pause)

Me: why?

Willow: I don't know (pause). All my family lives around here and then if I went somewhere else like, I'd be lost like, I'd have no one to speak to, it wouldn't be the same as round here cos I know everyone round here. Like, if I moved to like, say, a village over, I would have a clue who is anyone there so I prefer to stay round here (pause) Yeah it's not too bad, I like it round here I do, if I found it rough or anything I would go like, but I like it round here. It's not too bad. (pause). I want, I want to live up here like, so, (pause) ... like, if anything goes wrong then my family are there, like (pause) like there in only two seconds cos its only, we are all in the same place like, but if I'm anywhere else, I can't, like, you know, I don't know no one or nothing so, (pause) (Willow, interview transcript)

For Willow, it was apparent that the support of her mother throughout her pregnancy was critical as she considered her plans for when the baby arrived. She talked of how she planned to stay with her mother rather than moving in with her boyfriend. She spoke also of the possibility of going to work once the baby starts school but suggests that she would need her family around her to help with childcare.

What is interesting is that the majority of the young people who I have interviewed have expressed how important this local area was to them because of the importance of neighbours and friends as family; yet when I asked them about who they are still in contact with so that I could try and gain access to other potential participants, the majority of them were only been able to name one or two people they are still in regular contact with. Some of the young people were not in contact with anyone they grew up with. Even the young people who have been interviewed who are still living

in Brynhaul were often unaware of what anyone else from the cohort is doing at present, and appear to have lost contact with them. I argue that this strikingly apparent lack of knowledge of the others of their peer group in the community, especially in a digital age of social media, is not what one would expect to find within a tight-knit community where “everyone knows everyone”.

5.4.2. The familiarity of friends and family in the workplace

Another sub theme within the theme of the importance of community in deciding aspirations and future plans was around the notion of employment accessed through family and other members of the community. This finding applied to both the men and women, it did not appear to be gender specific. I wrote in the previous chapter about the young people for whom, aspirations appear to be based upon what they see around them, with particular reference to the younger teenagers who I have been able to access. This was something which emerged from the cohort too. This was a familiar story for some of the young people still located on the estate, of parents and their children working for the same employers. Other members of the cohorts mentioned friends in terms of access to employment and also in terms of university choice.

Sophie

As Sophie observed: ‘the thing in Brynhaul is, (pause) you grow up, you leave school you get a job if you get a job in sommet where your family member can get you in and you stay in there’ (Sophie, Interview Transcription).

This was echoed through the narratives of other participants as the next section of this chapter will illustrate. I argue that this supports the idea evidenced in the previous chapter, that employment and aspiration, for some, are imagined within the confines of what is already known and understood, and experienced. Thus, the notion of friendship and family ties enables the support of community to continue beyond the boundary of physical locality. In other words, entering the world of work does not

seem so unfamiliar and daunting in these instances. This then, is another way in which community connectedness can be viewed as a safety net.

Luke

As we have previously seen, Luke aspired to be a chef and was currently in college at the time of interview working to mobilise that aspiration for the future. What became evident during his interview was the role his mother and grandmother had played in shaping and paving out that aspiration. Arguably he now walks in the footsteps of previous generations. When I asked him about why he has chosen to pursue the career of being a chef, as we saw earlier, Luke's response was entwined with considerations of his nan and is mum. He explained how his nan and mum had encouraged and nurtured his passion for cooking, how he had realised that he was good at it so decided to explore it further.

During the interview he also shared with me that his mother runs a catering business. 'Um, my mam, runs a like, catering, buffet business and cakes and stuff from here. So she does it from home' (Luke interview transcript). It could be argued that the support and encouragement that Luke has received since his early formative years has enabled him to develop a passion for something he both enjoys and can see as a potential career option. He is able to see first-hand, his mother making a living, doing something she enjoys doing from the comfort of her own home. Luke was able to build upon this aspiration as he had the space and the opportunity to develop his skills at home. He was the only cohort member who I interviewed that was in this position. However, there was also one other young person who I was not able to interview who had gone into an apprenticeship with his uncle.

As for his future, Luke would like to work in a top restaurant or hotel with the hope of one day owning his own restaurant. For Luke, there have been barriers in this journey, including the opinion of his father. He notes his father's opinion of his chosen career choice. His dad is a mechanic working on HGVs in another valleys community and does not see cooking as being a job option for a man to pursue. Luke states:

Luke: With the cooking, my dad is like, oh why did you want to do that? Like, you don't need to be doing that its crap (pause) like when you were younger, you wanted to do this and this and I was like it's what I want to do its like (pause) my mum is like really supportive she knew I wanted to do it, but my dad is more like, (pause) like I said, its all about mentality, if you want to do it you could do it but (pause)

Me: Now that you have got this far, what does your dad say now?

Luke: He still calls me stupid, yeah. But I think he is like (pause) he does cope with it cos he knows its what I want to do but (pause) I think he is just kind of waiting for the 'I told you so' (Luke interview transcript).

So here we see a situation where aspiration is both supported and denigrated within the same family.

Kyle

Another one of the young people who has made reference to their parents in terms of their own employment was Kyle. During his interview Kyle was telling me about how he was currently working his notice with the army and only had four weeks left. He was not concerned about finding another job when he leaves as he is sure that his dad is going to help him out. He speaks about how he is currently a driver in the army but it's boring and he does not enjoy it, so he has decided to leave. I asked him why he had decided to join the army and he replied: 'I don't know it's hard to get a job (laughs) and I really wanted to go into the army, so I did it' (Kyle, Interview transcript). He talked about how he is bored in the army: 'it's alright, quite boring, nothing's happening we just sit in camp all the time I come home on the weekends' (Kyle, interview transcript). This suggests that his chosen career was not as he imagined it to be. As he talks about the money he earns in the army I sense that he does not feel that the job is good or the salary decent. He has recognised that there are other jobs he could be doing to earn more money and is prepared to do the qualifications he needs to change his career. '...it's umm, I get twenty one thousand a year, its not that good really, I'd probably earn triple that truck driving, double easy' (Kyle, interview transcript). At the time of the interview he didn't have any concerns around looking for work when he comes home to Brynhaul: 'my dad works for Eddie Stobart (a large road haulage company) so he can get me a job in with him, I just got to do my CVC which is like an extra qualification you need to drive trucks' (Kyle, Interview Transcription).

Sammy

One of the first interviews I managed to arrange with a cohort member was with a young person who I met one afternoon when she brought her three-month-old baby to the community centre to show the Communities First staff.

We got talking about her baby and she agreed to come back in a couple of days' time and be interviewed. During the subsequent interview, she talked about her experience of looking for work after leaving college and her employment which ended when her son was born. She has worked at a factory for a big high street fashion chain, like some of the other people who I have either interviewed or been given information about. She had a picker-packer role within the factory, getting the clothing orders ready to be dispatched. Unlike many of her peers, she was not an agency worker, she was working for the company full time. Her older brother and her auntie were also currently in employment at the factory.

Me: So what does your big brother do?

Sammy: Work in Peacocks.

Me: Did he get you the job there?

Sammy: Yeah him un my auntie were there, but now my auntie got a different job but he's still there. (laughs).

Me: Did you have to apply?

Sammy: No I still had to apply, yeah (pause). I knew like everyone on my shift" (Sammy, Interview transcript).

Matt

At the time of his interview Matt was a painter and decorator with a local housing company. Prior to that he had worked at the same factory as some of the other cohort members. He was agency employed. As the previous findings chapter illustrated, this was not an employment experience that he enjoyed. He talked of how he was enjoying his role with the housing company and his father had also got a job with them too. He described how he had supported and encouraged his father in taking a role with the housing company.

you know the first time I mentioned I joined the housing company, I said to him, you know why don't you come and just ask about it cos I was going

in for an induction, and he got down there, I was there dragging him in, he's dyslexic with reading and writing so I was like right, after my induction, stay here and we'll sort it out (pause) and then we went through like all the stuff we need to in the induction and he is loving it now he is, he's just on about it all the time, work's this and works that he just loves it. I think it's just nice for him to be out the house for him really (pause) (Matt, interview transcript).

I submit that this quote illustrates the importance of people they trust in encouragement into work. Although all participants made reference to employment with family members it is normally the younger generation who turn to the support of the generation above. It is interesting in this instance that the father is looking to the support of his son in exploring his employment opportunities.

Chelsea,

Chelsea, through her interview, talked about how she works for one of the bigger employers in the area, a high street fashion store retail warehouse. Her current position was with an agency as a picker-packer with her role ensuring that boxes for deliveries are packed and loaded onto lorries. Many other members of the cohort have, or do currently, work for this employer. She is contracted by an agency to work at the warehouse and her shifts are unpredictable. She shares her story about how she got into the job and also her thoughts on what the reality of gaining employment is like in current conditions. Although she did not note that her employment personally was directly related to someone she knows, with reference to gaining employment she states:

but um, as I said it's not about what you got any more, it's about who you know, so, I don't really see the point in GCSEs, cos some jobs will say you're too experienced for the job like. And anyone can lie on their CV can't they, cos how are they gunna check really. D'you know what I mean? Yeah. I haven't lied, and I got all my certificates and that, but (pause) you can see where I'm coming from though, just a load of shit like. It is about who you know (Chelsea, Interview Transcript).

Arguably, this quote suggests that Chelsea doesn't acknowledge education and qualifications as important in accessing her sort of employment, and gives more weight to the part played by 'who you know'. She stresses the importance of this in terms of accessing employment rather than what you may have achieved in school.

In her interview she continues to relate this to her own experience and talks about the importance of the role her friend played in her finding the agency which she now works with. She also then recognises the importance of the relationships made within the workplace. She believes this could result in changes to her employment status, from working for the agency to working for the actual company. The next chapter will address her reasons for not wanting to take this opportunity.

It is about who you know. Like I wouldn't have known about this agency or nothing if it weren't for my friend telling me like. Now because I have clicked with people in (pause) Peacocks, that they are trying to get me on with agency but they did ask me to um, go permanent there, but I said no (Chelsea, interview transcript).

I propose that these ties between friends and family within the context of employment are important, and potentially important in confirming the major role played in aspiration by a simple physical closeness to the community in which they have grown up (Phal 2007).

5.5 The future considered whilst rooted in community

The next part of the argument is that the majority of the young people who took part in this study expressed their belonging to place when considering their immediate futures. Belonging to a community impacts how they think about their futures, many of the young people expressed a desire to stay within the locality when considering employment and Higher Education.

5.5.1 a desire to stay local for work

One of the key issues that emerged in this data is one which has been written about in depth by Walkerdine et al (2012, p. 67). This is that many of the informants are finding it difficult to provide a reason to leave the community even if it could hold the possibility of better job prospects. Nearly all of the young people who are still living in Brynhaul said that they wouldn't move away for work and the majority listed family as a reason for staying. It seemed as though for many of the young people, a life away from Brynhaul wouldn't even be contemplated even if it could provide better

prospect for the future. Only one person who is currently doing an apprenticeship noted that in the future he would love to travel the world with work and believed this to be attainable. None of the other participants studying at university talked of a desire to travel the world.

The desire for proximity to home, the pull of the geographical location of a space with affective relationships was not only present amongst the young people seeking work. It was also evident amongst the participants who transitioned from school to university study.

This next section explores the particular findings of those young people who do not want to re-locate for work. This was another theme raised during the interviews. I recognised this as answer in part to the research question: 'What particular challenges do Young People from disadvantaged communities and unskilled households face in transitioning into employment?'

Many of the young people interviewed were either second or third generation inhabitants of the estate. For some of those who had only ever experienced living there, it was almost as though the thought of moving away for work was almost impossible to bear. A small number of young people talked about a time in which their parents or they themselves as children had briefly moved away from the community to neighbouring villages but had then come back to this place, back to a life on the estate. The notion of not wanting to move for work was evident in many of the interviews with the young people themselves, and it was also apparent in the conversations with the regeneration staff members, and the charity workers and project worker diaries.

Additionally, many of the cohort, when making reference to moving for work, commonly mentioned that this was not something they wanted to do because they would not want to leave family and friends behind. I had the sense that they are fearful of leaving the 'world' they knew. The background interviews have viewed this slightly differently and suggest that there is possibly the attitude of 'if you want me

to work then there should be a job for me near where I live'. (Recorded conversation with Adam & Charlie who work in the regeneration office). And that people believe that even the commute: one bus and one train into Cardiff is too far. In one interview, a participant recognised that she is the only person in her family to have moved away from the area she stated: 'And I'm the only, I've moved away un that's something I never thought I'd do' (Sophie, interview transcript).

I include a table below which illustrates where all of the young people I have been able to make contact with, were working at the time they were interviewed. It also provides the distance from the research site.

Table 5: Those working when interviewed: distance from Research site

Pseudonym	Where working	Full time/Part Time/Casual	Distance from research site
Chelsea	At a warehouse for an agency	Casual	About 3.5 miles
Josh	Agency with the Railway	Casual	Changes Daily
Matt	Housing company	Part time, hoping it will turn into a contract	About 2 miles
Kyle	Army	Full time	About 50 miles
Olivia	Fast food Restaurant	Full time	About 4 miles

Three cohort members who have moved away from the area and have been able to find employment. One young person went to Sunderland. As we have seen Kyle, another one of the cohort, lives away in England. She went to live with her boyfriend and straight away found work at a call centre; another young person is working in outdoor pursuits in England.

5.6 Studying in Higher Education Locally

Of the young people who have gone to university, most have gone to local universities and two still live in Brynhaul, as illustrated in the table below. As well as the research participants who engaged in the study by interview, I was also aware of two members

of the cohort, both from the same family who went to a local university whilst living at the family home. After numerous attempts of contact I was unable to meet these two young people to interview them. The one person who has travelled the furthest, five hours away by train, talked about how daunting and scary she found the move to be and said that to make herself actually go to take up her place at the university. That she had to stop herself from thinking about how far away it was: ‘So I still didn’t know where Hull was and it was only later in the day when I looked up Hull, I was like ‘wow, that’s quite far! (laughter) So I was like well I’ll apply, I might get an interview’ (Laura, Interview transcript). During the interview, she talked about how she spoke to her parents every day and that one of her fears that she cannot bear to think about is something happening to them whilst she is away.

This last section of this chapter addresses the findings around leaving the locality for university study. Much of the literature around the issue of working class and choice of university study recognises that students from lower socio-economic status backgrounds are less likely to attend an elite university (Crawford 2014). I present a table below which illustrates who out of the cohorts are studying at university, whether they are living at home or university during term time and the distance the university they attend is from the estate:

Table 6: Distance of university from research site

Young person at university	Lives at home or at University during term time	University Distance from research site	Interviewed/Not Interviewed
Sophie	Away	18 Miles	Interviewed
Laura	Away	263 Miles	Interviewed
Ben	Away	48 Miles	Interviewed
Tom	Away	65 Miles	Interviewed
LT	Home	3.5 Miles	Not interviewed
CT	Home	3.5 Miles	Not Interviewed

One of the participants in her interview summed up what she thought about people from the place she is from going to university when she stated 'It's not normal, it's not the norm to go to uni' (Sophie Interview transcription). Throughout her interview she talked about how she felt she had beaten the odds and that going to university was a big deal: 'it was a big thing for me to go to uni and I don't think that's right' (Sophie, interview transcription). She perceives that people from her socio-economic background are less likely to go to university. The university Sophie attends is a post 1992 university. She notes that one of the things that she finds most difficult about having gone away to university was leaving the community behind her and not knowing anybody she now lives with, now she has moved into the capital. She still comes home frequently to see family and friends. For Sophie this is a big pull on her from integrating fully in university life. She talks about how much she misses everyone and how she frequently drives home to the estate to see friends and family members.

I haven't just moved out, I moved away from people I seen every day and I thought I'd be awfully homesick and I'd hate it. I genuinely thought, my mother would make a joke by the 2nd year you'd be home and commuting. I can't even, like everyone, I come home for odd days and that but I won't sleep up here (Sophie, interview transcription).

The similarities here with the young people in the cohort who have bridged out further afield for work in that in both contexts, employment and higher education, the young people express value in being able to return to the locality, their community, arguably their safe place. What I think is particularly interesting about Sophie's quote above, is her refusal to sleep there. This is not something which she did expanded upon, nor did I at the time of the interview realise just how important that statement was and encourage her to narrate that further. I can only assume that for Sophie to sleep 'up here' is to realise what her mother had joked of would become true. Maybe she saw it as a sign of defeat, or giving in, maybe a backwards step in her own journey. I can only speculate at this, but it certainly is worth pondering.

As well as discussing the impact of the effect of leaving of leaving the community has had on her, she also recognises that her postcode has indeed aided her in carrying

out her decision to study at the university. She suggests that there are additional benefits for living at her post code which she would not be in receipt of had she have grown up somewhere else. I argue that this is another way in which being from this locality has created a support network around the young people who live there. With energy, and as though she couldn't believe it herself, she stated:

Sophie: like even in uni now, I get a grant for my postcode.

Me: How much?

Sophie: It's like £20 a week for my student card for food and I get £50 a year printing budget and then I had £500 of my accommodation paid. And that's all because of Bryn cos it's a disadvantaged area. (pause). Its mad. Like I understand there is all these schemes in place to help, to encourage people from these areas to go and do something, so why aint more people doing it (Sophie, interview transcription).

Other members of the cohorts who have gone away to university, mention family ties, just as some of the young people have done with regard to gaining or looking for employment. Ben who moved to another city in Wales to study at university tells his story of how he knew that he wanted to go to university but he wasn't totally sure where or what to study but just that he knew he wanted to go. His mother is a teacher in a secondary school and his father is a paramedic. According to the secondary data, all of the attendance statistics held for him are around 100% or 99% and there is no mention of him in the project worker diaries. He highlights two of the main reasons he chose to the university at which he is currently studying geography. First of all he notes a family tie to the place: 'my auntie went to Swansea when I think I was about 10 and we went down quite a bit, I just always really liked Swansea, there weren't any real reason' (Ben, interview transcript). I wonder how this family ties enabled Ben to see a strange place as familiar, something which may have aided moving to the area. Unlike Sophie he does not feel the need to come home as often. I submit that this is because he had experience of visiting this place with his family many times in the past, it feel more like home than it would have done had he have chosen to go somewhere else to study. His second reason for choosing this university was because of a friendship tie: 'One of my friends was supposed to come with me as well but he didn't want to in the end but it just happened I think Swansea, I didn't really want to go anywhere else' (Ben, interview transcript). This then enables a connection

between his current place of home Brynhaul and the new place of university, allowing the new place to seem more familiar.

Um, I think, I think he wanted to go to Swansea any way but like, being best friends we both said we wanted to do geography and we wanted to go to Swansea so yeh just sort of, we applied for everything together, we were supposed to be living together then, he stayed home (laughs) (Ben, Interview Transcript).

He also notes that the university he has chosen is close enough to home so that he can continue to come back to play rugby: 'Because in between Swansea and south wales I can carry on playing rugby back home, so in the end I just thought I can come back and play rugby' (Ben, interview transcript). He notes that he doesn't play for the university team because:

I didn't bother going for trials down there I just, really didn't want too, na it's just a bit too serious like, it was bit flat out, so, I didn't really fancy that and then I didn't really like any of the boys who were playing, now I do like, I have spoken to a few of them but, I weren't really a fan and like none of my friends wanted to go and play I didn't really want to go to trials on my own so, I just didn't bother with that (Ben, interview transcript).

I argue that again this highlights the importance a being able to remain committed to the support network which his locality has provided him with.

Another cohort member who has gone away to university is Laura, she has gone to study at a university in the north of England and is the furthest away from research site off all the young people who have gone on to university study. She shared with me the about how all of her extended family live on the estate that she has grown up in and how she had never imagined that she would live away:

Laura: All my siblings still live in Brynhaul. All my aunties, my uncles, my nan lived five doors up my nan who passed away, her house was five doors down. My sister lives in it. everyone has lived in the same house in my family since I was born. And I'm the only, I've moved away un that's something I never thought I'd do. Never, and if it weren't for the push I ad to go to university n to actually do something with my life I would still be up there. And I wouldn't have left. (pause) it will always be my home but I've actually, I've actually doing something with my life now. (Laura, Interview transcript).

I argue that the last part of the above quote depicts the strength of attachment to place. It is clear that for Laura, university provided her the reason to leave. She reflects upon Brynhaul as always being home. And yet, it is strikingly clear, that for Laura to 'actually do something with her life' she needed to leave. This brings us back to the idea of duality of place: the idea that this estate on a hill, this community where they have grown up in, has created for them a safety net and a secure base from which they can be able to step out of their comfort zone, knowing that what they leave behind remains the same, the familiarity is there when they need to return. But as well as the positive aspects, this locality, the community within, it has created a stronghold, a constraint which for some of the young people at times, ties them to this place and stops them from looking to see what else there is for them out in the world beyond the homes on the estate on a hill.

For Laura going to university was something she recalls wanting to do since she was in primary school. Initially when she had planned to go to university she had thought she would go to Cardiff university closer to home. She did not imagine that she would be moving away. When using the UCAS system to apply she chose Cardiff, Swansea and the university in England she is now studying at. She laughed as she told me that noted as she applied, she didn't even know where the university she now studies at was.

Since I was in about Year 6 I always had that like the, (pause) the thing of like I want to go there, I want to do this and I want to get to Uni. I didn't think I was going to be moving away but I was going to be in Cardiff doing whatever. I didn't even at that point even care, I was like I'm going to Uni. I didn't really understand Uni. But I was always like I wanted to go. So, yeh, I don't really know why (Laura, Interview transcript).

During her interview, Laura also talked about missing home, she alluded to the strength of the ties she had left behind and the emotional effect that this has had on her. It was evident throughout her interview that the decision to study at a university so far away from home had never been an easy decision for her.

I think I was prepared for like the worst scenario which I think was if I made no friends and I would be in Hull on my own, because I was preparing myself mentally and I cried like the first day and I cried about

something stupid like 3 weeks later because I had to do like the way something reminded me of what my mother did and it was stupid but because I contacted them all the time and the first time I came here I cried as I was surprised I said I was coming the day after but I came early and like missed a lecture the next day so I came up from Hull on the train and got the last bus to home and just hid in the doorway (Laura, interview transcript).

There are similarities in the way in which Sophie and Ben made their decision to go to university. Laura says that she doesn't really know where the desire to go to university came from but she shares a similar story to Ben but not as comprehensive. She made reference to a family member attending university and she believed that this may have played a role in her making this choice for her own future. I argue that this created a safety in what somebody else knows which made the ability to consider university study a viable and accessible option.

Yeah I was always aware of it. Again I don't really know how. I've got an older brother and sister but they didn't go to Uni but his, well my brother's wife did so I suppose I must have thought about it from her but yes, definitely, definitely from the beginning I would say (Laura, Interview transcript).

There are two cohort members who I have been in communication with via Facebook private messaging and I have met their mum at their home address although I have never met them in person. Interviews were arranged on a number of occasions but they never actually took place. I know that both of these young women, at the point in which data was collected, were both studying at the local university and both had part time jobs in retail in the nearby town. I am unable to comment on why they made the decision to study at their local university.

5.7 Summary

This chapter has explored how locality presents a specific challenge with the young people manifesting in a marked desire to stay within the community. This chapter has illustrated how for the young people, the complexities of the relationships of those they are in community with can either support the transition into employment by providing the all-important 'who you know' to be able to gain employment, or the

confidence to seek employment opportunities. It is also evident that the affective ties to place and relationships with those within it, acts as a constraint in discouraging the possibility of moving away for work and study. For those who have moved away, the pull back to the community is so strong, it would seem that the young people never fully build their lives in the new context of a new situation. This in itself, one could argue acts as both a support and a constraint. One could take the view here that knowing that this support is available back within the locality is what enables them to travel away for work and university but also stops many of the young people from doing so.

In summary, this chapter has explored the findings within the spatial themes and argued that the community in which these young people live has impacted upon their post-schooling trajectories, thus proving their locality to be both a constraint and support. At times it is impacting as both positive and negative at the same time. The two key research questions these particular findings aimed to answer included:

- What particular challenges do Young People from disadvantaged communities and unskilled households face in transitioning into employment?
- How are these challenges actually experienced by young people in their everyday lives and concrete social situations -in families, peer-groups and neighbourhoods?

This chapter illustrates how for the young people, the complexities of the relationships of those they call community, can either support the transition into employment by providing the all-important 'who you know' to be able to gain employment, or the confidence to seek employment opportunities. It is also evident that the affective ties to place and relationships can act as a constraint in discouraging the possibility of moving away for work and study. For those who have moved away, the pull back to the community is so strong, it would seem that the young people never fully build their lives in the new context of a new situation.

This in itself, one could argue acts as both a support and a constraint. One could take the view here that knowing that this support is available back within the locality is

what enables them to travel away for work and university but also stops many of the young people from doing so.

Explored within this chapter is how these challenges are actually experienced by the young people who took part in the research in their everyday lives and concrete social situations. This chapter has provided insight to understanding how, for some young people in this disadvantaged community, there is a need for the support of affective relationships on the estate and also in gaining and maintaining employment. Drawing back to the roots and wings analogy, this illustrates the connectedness of the people who live within the community which is further expressed through a desire to stay local for work, or at least, be able to travel back from work or university frequently.

This still leaves questions unanswered around employment in terms of the barriers young people in this community face in transitioning to employment. This will be explored in the next chapter.

6 CHAPTER SIX: Everyday realities

6.1 Introduction

The previous chapter addressed an argument rooted in the support and contentions provided by communal beingness. This chapter focuses on the present realities of existence that the young people were facing during the time of interviewing, the findings that directly relate to where the young people are now and what they are doing for work and study.

The argument presented in this chapter is that all of the young people expressed a desire to work and there was a prevalence of agency work and casualised employment among the young people on the estate. The complexities of everyday existence faced by these young people are numerous and multi-dimensional, affected by salient social class, gender and travel ability, all of which impact upon employment availability and opportunity. All these elements need to be negotiated to navigate constantly changing realities. Thus I argue against the view that young people from disadvantaged communities don't have an aspiration to work (Shildrick et al 2012, p. 5).

I present here evidence that these young people do indeed want to work and I seek to illustrate the way in which the young people experience the world of work with the complexities and contentions they encounter. The data called upon in this chapter is that of the Biographical narrative interviews with the young people.

Carrying out the interviews with the young people has enabled me to gain a snapshot of insights into where the young people are and what they are doing with their lives at this time. I recognise that this may have changed for each of the participants as I have spent time writing up the findings. I am also able to look back and view the point of time at which the all of the secondary data was collected. I believe this to be both a weakness and strength of this research project, a weakness as it can only present the narratives of the young people as they were at that point in time. This is also a strength as it demonstrates how the lives of these young people, their realities of

existence are constantly changing. This chapter explores the part of the young people's stories around their realities of existence as they were at the time of interview with particular reference to employment or education and training, unlike chapter 4, which explored the temporality and Chapter 5, which explored space and place.

It is important to note here, that for some of the young people, circumstances seem to be continually changing this was evidenced by the difficulty not only in tracking down the young people, but also to keep up with what they were doing. For some of the young people, their current positioning changes regularly and did so during the time in which this study was taking place.

The tables below illustrates what is known about each member of the research cohort. It is important to note here, that, for 15 of these young people across the two year groups, this information was gained through interviews. For the rest of the young people, data has been gained by talking to their parents or through conversations with community workers.

Table illustrating G1 Cohort current Trajectory as this research was being carried out:

Table 7: Current trajectory of older cohort

Young Person	Current trajectory	Interviewed Yes/No	Young person	Current Trajectory	Interviewed Yes/No
Hannah	Her nan's carer and working voluntary for Kingdom Hall	Yes	IC	Not known	No
LT	USW and working part time in Argos	No	Sammy	At home with Baby	Yes
SP	Bar maid in social club	No	Kyle	Leaving the army	Yes
Ben	Swansea University	Yes	JH	Not Known	No
Chelsea	Peacocks working for agency	Yes	Josh	Railway Labour	Yes
DO	Working in trade centre Wales	No	KW	Not Known	No
KE	Not Known	No	AM	Not known	No
Sophie	Cardiff Met University	Yes	JS	Carpentry	No

BE	Not known	No	Matt	Working for housing company	Yes
CD	Not known	No	CK	NEET	No
SC	Not known	No	Liam	NEET	Yes
JD	Not Known	No			

Table illustrating G2 Cohort current Trajectory as this research was being carried out:

Table 8: Current trajectory of younger cohort

Young Person	Current trajectory	Interviewed Yes/No	Young person	Current Trajectory	Interviewed Yes/No
CA	Home with baby	No	CM	Not known	No
PP	Law At University South Wales	No	Laura	In University	Yes
Olivia	Management in McDonalds	Yes	RM	Not known	No
Alex	Aircraft maintenance apprenticeship with BA	Yes	JR	Not known	No
JR	Works for EDF energy in Sunderland	No	Luke	In college studying to become a chef	Yes
CT	University at USW & working part time in Greggs	No	LW	Not known	No
JB	In construction	No	Tom	University Bath Studying Politics	Yes
CT	University at USW & working part time in Argos	No	SW	Not Known	No
Willow	Carer for parent and at home with baby	Yes	GJ	Not known	No
CG	Not known	No	DS	Working part time in Sainsburys	No

6.2 The world of work

This section evidences how these young people want to work. First it explores the data around the 'wanting to work', with particular focus on how the young people view and make use of the benefit system, the type of employment and contracts

they find themselves in. It then looks at the reality of how the young mothers in this community view their positioning in relation to employment.

6.2.1 The desire and the difficulties of work

There was clear evidence that for some of the young people one of the drivers of looking for employment and being employed was to avoid the benefit system.

Sophie

Throughout the interviews, it was evident that there was a conscious avoidance of the benefit system by the young people. As this chapter section explores, the young people expressed their dread of needing to use it and how this in part fuels a desire to work in anything. I propose then that this, takes away from the notion of aspiration and pushes the young people towards looking for and engaging in work which could be perceived as more accessible, requiring less training and paying immediate money.

Sophie had chosen to study for her degree in a city university close to home and was living near the university away from her family home. In her interview, she narrated her conscious avoidance of the lives she had witnessed her siblings experiencing. She talked of how she wanted something different for her own life; how she imagined herself as it could have easily been had she not have left for university. In considering how an alternative past could have played out, she stated:

Sophie: I would have had kids. I would have been a single mother in a council house 100% (pause)

Me: that's not what you want for you?

Sophie: I couldn't, I think like, my sister had her first kid at 15, like, that could have easily been me, easily. (pause). And if it weren't for all the support I had, that's what stopped me from being that person (pause) (Sophie, interview transcript).

She attributes her current trajectory of university study to the support she received from the P&W project workers and other people who worked within the community regeneration office. It is clear that she perceives the support she was given as an alternate existence to that of others around her. Holding on to her aspiration of becoming a para-legal, she speaks of how she motivates herself in the present by

imagining her future. A future in which she makes the people she loves proud of her. I submit that for Sophie, this will be achieved by becoming something which was not expected of her.

Me: What do you hope for in your future?

Sophie: I really want, and I want to make I, I want to make my parents, I want to make my father proud I don't know why I'd mean a lot to me. It really does mean a lot to me. That's my drive. I don't want to be, I want to prove people wrong. It's really close to my heart all this. It think that's why, yeah. (pause) Brynhaul means a lot to me, if it weren't for some people who ave helped me over the years I probably (pause) I'd be in a dead end job or I'd probably be on benefits (Sophie, interview transcript).

It is evident here that gaining employment at the end of her university study was a way in which Sophie feels she can make her family proud and that this is a driver for her own achievements and accomplishments.

She also recognized that she is fearful of the benefit system. Sophie takes pride in the fact that she has never needed to be in receipt of it. Although, evidently this is not Sophie's only driver to gain employment, it does in indeed play a role. It needs to be noted here, that Sophie has succeeded at navigating part time employment, in various forms, as she has continued her educational trajectory into higher education, always financially supporting herself with part time work throughout her academic study. She uses the term 'dead end job' suggesting that she does not want to be stuck in a job which is low paid with no prospects.

My worst nightmare is to end up on benefits, I've never been on benefits and I never want to. I want to be able to get to my retirement and say I've never been on benefits. I love the fact that I've never had to sign on (pause) and I've, that is my, I don't wanna, I don't wanna, I don't ever want to be on benefits. Ever! (Sophie, interview transcript).

It appears here that the way in which Sophie prides herself on not making use of the benefit system, she considers that the ability to get to retirement age and not use the benefit system is an alternative existence to what she is witnessing in her family and her community. This evidences the struggle of working-class young people, those trapped in a cycle of low pay and no pay and raises questions of how Neoliberal, individualistic aspirational thinking, is to be encouraged and developed in the face of struggle and adversity?

If a young person sees the working class struggle and the poverty so rife in a disadvantaged community as a lived experience, surely it is better in terms of aspiration, to hedge your bets, to aspire to what you know works and is available. At least then, the risk of needing to rely on the state for support seems less like an eventual probability. Throughout Sophie's interview, she does not explicitly express her reasons for why she is so adverse to using the benefit system, but she does seem to associate it with wanting to achieve a different reality for her own life.

Ben

Other members of the cohort whose aspiration had focused on university study also expressed a negative positioning towards the benefit system. Studying and living at a university an hour away by car, Ben has never needed to use the benefit system and speaks with pride about how he has taken on work through his university study. He particularly highlights how he has been future thinking in gaining and sustaining part time employment whilst at university so that he could save and therefore, refrain from using the benefit system in the summer after completing his degree. In considering how difficult or not it will be to find work once his degree is completed, he makes reference to the social capital he feels he is lacking in the task of enabling gaining employment in his subject area.

Me: You said you'd like to stay near here, to keep your family and friends around but you would be willing to go further afield for work. Do you think it's hard to get jobs around here?

Ben: um, I haven't really looked, but I assume so, I assume it's going to be quite a difficult one cos, like, everyone I know is pretty much in construction, or something like that or they've gone to Cardiff, so I'm not really sure (pause)

Me: You feel there are only certain types of jobs round here?

Ben: Yeah. Well, not only but I think the majority is think you got , like most of it is who you know round here, yeah, I think that's mostly it. (pause) (Ben, interview transcript).

Evidently Ben's perception of the availability of work in and around his home town is directly linked in most cases to who you know who can give you work. I argued that this perception is also highly gendered as he considers the types of employment to

be accessed in and around the community as those which are construction based. During the interview, although not having used the benefit system himself, he does highlight how a friend of his who had done so in the past and he mentions the negative effect that this has had on him, providing insight to how his friend felt about being on benefits. He also notes of other friends hating the thought of being on the dole:

Me: Do you think people round here want to work?

Ben: Yeah, I know a lot of them, you know, like my mate with me, the boy who was going to uni with me, he said umm, like, I think when we left, he had a bit of a break down he said like, cos he didn't work for ages so he went on the dole un he said he hated it like, he just felt a bit stupid like so I know he hated it, and most people I know they hate the thought of being on the dole, its just stuff like that so I think yeah, I think people do want to work round here people I know anyway (pause) (Ben, interview transcript).

He uses 'round here', acknowledging that he views the dislike of being on the dole as an accepted understanding within the community. Nor is this conscious avoidance of the dole limited to those who had gone on to higher education.

Chelsea

Chelsea shares her experience of her current agency employment which will be explored later in this chapter, but during this part of her interview, she mentioned she did not enjoy the conditions of her employment. However it was also evident, that for her, the precarious positioning of her employment is still a better situation than receiving benefit.

Me: How do you feel about that?

Chelsea: Well, I hate it now cos obviously I've got no money, (pause) I don't want to go back on the dole I hate it (Chelsea, Interview transcript).

I submit that Chelsea between being in a job that she hates and a conscious avoidance of the dole, is trapped in a position which limits her aspirations and opportunities. It is easy to see how this situation becomes a state of survival rather than future thinking. Again this view supports that of Sophie, who as we have seen in this chapter, expressed a conscious avoidance of being on the dole. People who are unsure of what they want to do for employment, maintain that they would rather be in work than in

receipt of benefits. Evidently, this is not unique to those who have clear aspirations for their post education trajectories or those engaged in university study.

Liam

Liam was the only cohort member interviewed who at the time was considered to be NEET and as we have previously seen in chapter 4, has also documented as unsure of his aspiration while in school. He presented a narrative of having tried various different types of work after entering in and out of the labor market. He noted that he had been in receipt of benefit but does not talk with clarity about for how long or his feelings about it. As he talked about being on job seekers allowance, he was quick to explain that he should have instead have been DLA (Disability Living Allowance):

Like I said I was on job seekers allowance I didn't know nothing about DLA never heard but I was in the job centre and he was speaking to me and I don't know I just flipped and then they said, that I had, Mark, my worker, he said to me, look, you shouldn't be on this, you should be on DLA and then he phoned up got me an appointment, that was like a month later like a board meeting and even the board said we know you're? not well so we don't intend to get you working yet like but I want to work (Liam, Interview transcript).

It was apparent that Liam needed me to understand that his reason for currently being out of work was due to his mental health and anxiety rather than a lack of ability of willingness to work. There was a sense of vindication as he shared his struggle of mental health, in the acknowledgement of the professionals that he was indeed not fit for work and therefore should not be subjected to jobseekers allowance and the behaviours expected from one who was in receipt of it. In this way Liam echoes the voices of other participants around the topic of benefits and suggests that for these young people at least, there is a sense of shame attached to relying on the state for financial support.

I submit this evident avoidance of the benefits system on the part of so many of the young people embodies as a sense of unspoken shame, one which is to be avoided. I suggest therefore, that this sense of shame in itself raises questions around the 'aspirations' narrated and navigated by young people from disadvantaged communities. How early does an avoidance of the benefit system appear in the lives

of young people who have watched those around them using it struggle and suffer? Does this then play a role in how the young person considers and develops their aspiration from a young age? I suggest that the avoidance of the benefit system is inextricably linked with the formation and fluidity of aspiration as well as the employment undertaken by the young person. I put forward here, that avoiding benefits is another way in which the young people consider the availability of work around them; meaning that, as we saw in the second findings chapter, the young people are aware of the availability of work around them and their perception of that work, based on their individual and collective reality of growing up within the conditions of a community in deprivation, shape their aspiration.

This leads us on to the second part of the argument put forward in this chapter around the availability of work in the area.

6.2.2 Availability of work in the area

Along with the unwillingness to use the benefit system, another theme was the availability of work in the area and how that work was perceived. We saw previously that Chelsea was not sure of what she wanted to do for work once she left school and that she had gone to college still unsure of what she really wanted to do.

In her words she 'quit college in the end' (Chelsea, interview transcript). During her interview, she talked about the process of looking for work and how difficult she found that to be. She also considered how she still doesn't feel positive about her employment and despite feeling glad she is not to be using the benefit system, doesn't feel that her employment, the first she has gained since leaving college, is the type of employment that she wants to be in.

Two years? Well, I still ain't got a tidy job now. I was on the dole for about 2 years. Back when I was about 18, I'm 19 now, 20 in march. I'm not on the dole now, October last year, I started working in the Peacocks factory, but because it is agency, it's not guaranteed work. Like when I started in October there was work all the time, obviously because it was coming up to Christmas, but now, um, I've worked about three times. They are

ringing me back later to see if I've got a shift Monday, but I can't see it like (Chelsea, Interview Transcript).

The use of the term 'tidy' used here is local dialect for 'decent' or 'good'. Chelsea makes use of this term when considering her position of employment, stating that: 'I still ain't got a tidy job' (interview transcript). She used this statement before she began to share her narrative of her reality of looking for work after leaving college. She uses this statement within the context of agency work with no guarantee of when work will be available. I argue, that as she stresses here, the not knowing when she is working next is difficult, that she views a 'tidy job' as one where she has more structure and ability to plan. She unpacks this a little further later in her interview.¹⁰

In response to me asking what she meant by proper job, she said:

What? What I want? Well I don't really mind like. I don't mind a bit of retail, wouldn't mind an office like, pause, but I don't wanna be working in a factory. And its shift work in factories and no way will I be doing that. With agency, I can do 6 till 2 the whole week (pause) well they say well there's loads and loads of jobs out there but there's thousands and thousands of people without a job cos you're not the only one applying so you're probably not going to get it. (pause). (Chelsea interview transcript).

6.2.3 Agency work, casualized employment, precarity and broken promises

This section focuses on the five young people interviewed who were in work. The vast majority of the young people who were in employment found themselves in the situation of hourly or temporary contracts. In jobs with very little security, they often find themselves not knowing whether they would be working from one day to the next. There were also three members of the cohort who had at some time worked for an agency used by one of the biggest employers in the local area. The employment situation for many of these young people seemed anything but stable. The complexity of both, looking for work and the current realities of work, are delivered in the words

¹⁰ I must note here that she is not the only interviewee to use this kind of term in relation to employment. Tom noted in his interview how he perceived his parents' jobs and that after university he wanted a 'proper job'.

of the young people themselves. Five of the young people spoke during their interviews about working for an agency. Some of them had done so in the past and others were presently doing so at time of interview. Overall for all participants, working for an agency was a negative experience, though not without the occasional passing benefit.

Chelsea

Chelsea who worked for an agency in a factory of a big high street fashion chain understood the reality of precarious employment. Every time Chelsea described her current employment, she did so negatively with her frustration at her situation clearly evident. As she talked about having lots of work available over the Christmas period and since then less work, with little knowledge of when her next shift might be I asked her about her feelings towards this situation.

Me: How do you feel about that?

Chelsea: Well, I hate it now cos obviously I've got no money, (pause) I don't want to go back on the dole I hate it.

Me: Do you feel then that the fact that it is agency and it is casual contract, do you think it's got a, maybe like a larger effect on your life?

Chelsea: Yeah it does, cos you could have work all week, cos you got to work a week in hand as well, so you could have work all week then the next week then, nothing at all so then you're stuck without money then for the following week. So I'd rather a more, well, permanent job like. I have been looking, but I just can't seem to find one anywhere (pause). (Chelsea, Interview transcript).

The previous findings chapter addressed how Chelsea felt that taking the potential opportunity to work for the actual company at the warehouse, rather than the agency which the company uses and that how she felt that for her, this was not an option.

Now because I have clicked with people in (pause) Peacocks, they are trying to get me on with agency but they did ask me to um, go permanent there, but I said no. (pause) cos I don't want to be working in a factory for the rest of my life. Mmm. I'm only doing it now for some money till I find a (drops pen and laughs) oh God, I'll get it (picks up pen) I'm only doing it now to find a proper job like (Chelsea, Interview transcript).

Throughout Chelsea's interview and text messages back and forth in the weeks that followed, it became evident that she was not enjoying her current employment. I was intrigued by her use of the term 'proper job' so I questioned her further about this to gain an insight into what this term meant for her. Her response to my question of what a proper job means to her, has been previously illustrated. It was apparent that for Chelsea, a stable and guaranteed employment with set hours rather than shift work is what constitutes a proper job.

Josh

Josh worked in railway maintenance and his job was one of the more precarious examples of employment. After leaving school, he did a three months course in college on public services, which he believed was 'just a waste of time to be honest' (Josh, interview transcript). He has now been 'on the rails for the past two or three years' (Josh, interview Transcript). His role involves track maintenance and he works for a number of different agencies. He waits at the roundabout of the bottom of a slip road to a busy A-road early every morning to see if the bus will stop to pick him up for work that day. From day to day he does not know if he has work or who he will be working with if he does:

Josh: I got a job on an apprenticeship on the rails

Me: who was that with?

Josh: uh, ARC Academy (pause) so I done that for about three months now finished it, passed (pause) just on the rails then since for the last two or three years (pause) because there is no other jobs there really, but you need an A star in everything, so it was only a construction job I could really have. (pause)

Me: so what do you do in work?

Josh: Uh, just track work, maintenance work to the track, just like, anything they need to be repaired, renewed, just all the poxy jobs that machines can't do really (Josh, Interview Transcript).

Josh appears to view educational achievement as enabling one to have alternative options of employment. But I get the sense that he feels that his current situation of employment is all he feels capable of. He didn't seem to think that there would be any alternative to his current conditions of existence, I had the sense that he felt stuck and unable to change his situation.

Josh: one week it could be just be one day, and the next week it could be seven, so it it's unpredictable work, but you just got to, take it as it comes (pause).

Me: Your contract, is it casual?

Josh: Yes, it's a zero hour contract, so I could be working tomorrow, and for the next 13 days, but then I could have a day off un, not work for the next four or five months. (pause) So you don't know where you are. (pause) (Josh, Interview transcript).

Matt

Matt shared his story about the work he had engaged in since leaving school. One of the first positions he mentioned prior to his current employment, was in packing, at a large, high street brand warehouse; the same warehouse other members of the cohort have referenced and other families have worked at. It was not an employment position that he had enjoyed:

Me: What did you do there?

Matt: Just packing, I dunno how to explain it. It was bad. You go in, start at 6 in the morning they give you a piece of paper with numbers and letters on un they teach you how to work out what each thing is. Then you just walk off, get it, come back n just do that for 8 hours. By the first hour it was that tedious that you wanted to walk out. I didn't enjoy that one bit. Umm, (pause).

Me: Did you have work guaranteed there though?

Matt: No it was with an agency so it was only when they need me (pause). (Matt, interview transcript).

At the time of interview, he said that his current employment was with a local housing company, however as he narrated this in more detail, it was apparent that he was actually giving his time, working for free in the hope of gaining employment. Put in his words he was volunteering and if they liked you after six weeks they would take you on. His story of employment was one which clearly evidenced the precariousness of low paid, low skilled work with no security. It was one of working in different places and for different people which could end as abruptly as it started.

Me: how did you get into the job with Trivallis?

Matt: Uuhh, I've been there twice, the first time I literally just popped by? head through the door, to see what it was about and then had my induction a week later umm, n then, I quit that cos I found two weeks' employment, I thought it was a full time job but it was only two weeks then they let me off (pause) it was on site work it was, down in, I forgot now (pauses)

Me: building work?

Matt: Yeah. and then literally that ended n the next day I rang Trivallis back and I ended up starting back with them then two weeks ago. (pause). It's the best bit of work I've had so far, I haven't even been paid so far but it's the best bit of work I've done so far.

Me: You haven't been paid yet?

Matt: Na it's like a volunteering scheme, they take you on after a certain amount of time.

Me: So how long have you got to volunteer with them before they take you on?

Matt: Well, they tell you 6 months, but if they think you're ready, before the six (Matt, Interview transcript).

He was hoping to be employed for a job he was already doing! It was easy to see that Matt was hopeful and enjoyed what he was doing. But I couldn't help but wonder what this would mean for someone who had so openly talked about his lack of confidence during his interview if after two weeks, the housing company decided that they did not have a place for him.

Liam

Liam considered NEET during the interview and talked about his mental health openly and how it prevented him from working at the moment. He also talked of a similar job situation he'd previously. One in which he had volunteered with a company with the understanding at least on his part that there would be employment once the volunteering period was over. He talked candidly about how let down he had felt by the scheme he had engaged in.

I left school, oh no, when I was still in school they put me on a uhh (sighs) what's it called? Enterprise Wales for a year and they promised me a job after in un, like an apprenticeship uh, I stayed there for the year and they didn't give it to me afterwards... we'd go there every morning and then come home but they promised, afterwards we went to the office with them and they said oh we ain't got nothing for you so, (pause) so what was it exactly you were doing with them? It was like going round painting people's houses, taking all the wallpaper off the walls and like moving rubbish out of peoples gardens and stuff like that, like, like the grass cutting, done all that, they always promised everything but didn't do it un (pause) (Liam, Interview transcript).

Liam also mentioned that Matt had also been involved in this scheme at age fifteen. Other cohort members talked of people they knew who had gone into employment

with an understanding of what they would be doing to find out that they were indeed needed for something else. This largely specific to gender with the young men being engaged in these situations.

Out of the five young people who were in employment and not in education, only one of the young people was on a full time contract. She was working for a fast food restaurant chain and after trying to go to university twice, the first time to do midwifery and the second, adult nursing, she was now content in a career in the fast food restaurant in which she had started part time and had now become a manager.

6.2.4 Mum not working until the child starts school

This section has evidenced the willingness to work, the fear of the benefit system, the availability of work in the area with a focus on precarious conditions, agency work and casual contracts. This next section explores the barriers as they are perceived by the young people beginning with the experience of being a young mum.

Often within working class communities, the narrative of the mother not working until the child starts school is conceptualized as the mother not wanting to work. There is a stigma attached to the young mum as one who is happy to be in receipt of benefits (Yardley, 2008). Of the young people interviewed, two were young mothers. One to a three month old at the time of the interview and one in her third trimester of pregnancy. Neither pregnancies were planned and neither have a supportive father role. The previous findings chapter illustrated the important role of family support. This next section evidences their narratives of navigating employment and employability as they anticipate juggling work and mothering.

When I was able to have conversations with different staff at the community centre something which came up when talking about people in the community looking for work was the idea of a culture of mums not working until the child is of school age. Someone from DWP said that for the women in Brynhaul there is a culture of not working until the child starts school. She expressed the view that the women in the

area feel that they would be looked down on and judged for working before the child goes to school, like it makes you a bad mam for leaving your baby. She also suggests that most of the mams who do look for work when the child starts school believe that they will only be able to work if it fits around school hours and school holidays.

Sammy

In the previous chapter we saw how Sammy had gained employment after leaving school with Peacocks where her mum also works. At the time of interview her baby was three months old. The last time I met Sammy, her baby had just turned two and was in nursery half a day a week and she was pregnant with her second child. The first time I met with her she talked about how she planned on not going back to work until her baby went to school. She talked about how she considers herself now unable to work until her baby goes to school. She also discussed how when the baby does go to school she would need a job which would make her available for dropping off and picking the child up. She also talked about how she would need to stay in the area so that her family could help. She said that maybe her auntie would be able to help out with childcare if she did do a job which required her to work outside of school hours. As she was discussing these plans I got the feeling that they were being thought about on the spot and that she really didn't want to be in the situation where someone else would be looking after her child. As previously quoted, working whilst her son is still a baby was certainly not an option for her.

Me: So you don't plan on working until baby goes to school?

Sammy: No, unless, my mam and dad see work full time, my mam works in a shop, my dad is a bus driver. So it would be hard for me now, really. Unless like I talk nice to my auntie, but I don't want to leave him this soon, yet. He's still young (laughs) he's 3 months now. And then obviously just part time then cos I'll have to take him to school, n then like pick him up. If I, or if it was like a 9 till 5 job, at least then I'll have my auntie or brothers (Sammy, Interview Transcript).

I met with her again when her son was six months old and we just sat in the community centre chatting for a while. She realised I was pregnant so we were talking about that and she was telling me again about how she didn't know she was pregnant

until she was 30 weeks. She asked me about what time I would be taking off once the baby is born. She asked me if I would be taking a year. When I told her that I would be taking six months and she said, 'What, you're going to leave your baby with someone else when he is as little as him' (pointing at her son). There was something about her tone, coupled with her genuine shock and astonishment at the thought of someone choosing to leave their baby with other people made me feel really guilty about my own decision. Sammy's response in this situation was an insight into how she would feel if she was to leave her baby, judged by those around her for going to work and leaving a child so young. During this second meeting I could see how laid back she was and how she didn't worry much about the future, this is something I will come back to in the next findings chapter. She told me that when her son goes to school she would start work again. I met with her again the day her son started nursery not long after he turned two. She was pregnant again with a baby due in a few months. She said she now intends to not work until the new baby starts school.

Willow

Willow was in her third trimester of pregnancy with her baby due 6 days after mine. Like Sammy, we saw how important family support was to Willow as she had planned to stay living with her mother who she cared for, once the baby was born. It was evident that she would not be looking for work until her baby starts school. Unlike Sammy, she had not been in employment prior to finding out she was pregnant. She was engaged in a training program providing her with a Level One Health and Social Care qualification as well as placements provided throughout the course. One had been at a care home of the elderly which had taken her three buses to get to, the other had been in a bargain shop on the high street of the local town. As she talked about her engagement with the training company coming to an end she stated:

Willow: I had to finish it in June whether I'm 19 or not, they would have helped me find a job, but now they said there is no point in trying cos obviously nobody is going to take me on, nobody is going to take me on now at 29 weeks pregnant like, oh I doubt it very much. They just about took me on when I'm not pregnant (laughs) so, (pause).

Me: If you weren't pregnant, would you be looking for work now?

Willow: Yeah. They probably would have found me a job by now in B&M or something, yeah I would have stuck to B&M see (pause) but they

would have eventually took me on (pause) and progressed like (pause) but I couldn't (laughs) (Willow, Interview Transcript).

I have previously noted how the young people's journeys are continuously changing. Since being interviewed, Chelsea has had a baby boy. During her later interview she had talked of how she was working for the warehouse of a high street fashion chain through an agency. Although I was unable to meet her for another interview following her interview there were a number of text where she talked about how the agency was 'messaging her around'. Since having her baby, she has left work.

The narratives presented here, support the argument that young people from this disadvantaged community want to work. These young women are still expressing a desire to work once the baby goes to school, Sammy expressed a desire to explore the employment she had aspired to before working in the factory. Willow was a lot more unsure of what work she would go into when her baby goes to school. What these women both had in common was that there was no entertaining the thought of going to work before their babies were in school. And even then, they imagined limited employment around school times and needing the practical support of family to enable this.

6.3 Multi-dimensional complexities for entering work

This chapter has so far addressed that first part of the argument, evidencing that these young people do indeed want to work and detailed the sort of jobs that these young people in particular are undertaking. This section, provides evidence to build the second part of the argument of this chapter: that the complexities of every day existence faced by these young people are numerous and multi-dimensional, affected by salient social class, gender and travel ability which impacts on employment availability and opportunity. All of these need to be negotiated to navigate constantly changing realities. Throughout each of these sections, these barriers will be evidenced. The key themes evident during a thematic analysis of the data were the lack of self-confidence among the young people, the inability to travel, a class ceiling and a duty to family. The remainder of this chapter will explore these barriers.

Creating policies aimed at reducing poverty and 'raising aspiration' within disadvantaged communities while viewing the problem as just that: 'the disadvantaged community' itself, doesn't solve problems. It stops the individual situations from being seen for what they really are: individuals, with their own individual value sets, needs, hopes, fears, aspirations, barriers. Taking the view of 'community' or 'solving community problems' mitigates the importance of individual support and can function as a barrier to real change from taking place. A disadvantaged community is made up of many different types of people, different employment statuses, different types of poverty, different values, different levels of academic achievement. The Welsh government needs to do a better job of recognising this rather than just type casting everyone within a given place as one size fits all.

6.3.1 Lack of confidence

For many of these young people, those looking for work, those in employment and those in university, confidence appeared to be a major barrier. At times the young people verbalised a lack of confidence. Other times it was a sense expressed during the interview.

In relation to confidence in looking for work and what they feel they are able to do was something which was indirectly talked about by Josh in his interview. He stated:

Yeah, well I (pause) I applied for jobs but, this is the only thing I really got (pause) accepted for, (pause) do you know how many jobs you applied for? I don't know, probably about hundreds (Josh, Interview transcript).

It was interesting that when asked if he would go back to college to train for something else he replied that he didn't feel that for him, this was an option. I had the sense that he felt trapped in the situation that he is currently in. He talked about how he applied for hundreds of jobs before he gained his current employment and that he didn't think he was capable of re-entering a learning environment to improve his situation.

Umm, retail, construction, apprenticeships, (pause) uh, some of them were in Cardiff it was about a 25 mile radius so I just, I couldn't get anywhere without having qualifications and everything (pause) would you consider going back to college? Uh, it, it depends what for, if it meant getting something at the end of it then yes, but (pause) I can't sit in the classroom, so I can't do it (Josh, interview transcript)

Matt, recognises his own lack of confidence and how this presents barriers for him: 'when it comes to meeting new people, I'm not that confident, so give me like an hour or two and I'm alright I am' (Matt, interview transcript).

6.3.2 The (in)ability to travel

Looking back to chapter 4, we saw that the capacity to travel to work, to seek out opportunities, was a barrier experienced by many young people; we also saw how this problem was mitigated frequently by the project worker as noted in her diaries. This is a long-standing barrier for young people entering and remaining in the world of work. Along with the notion of not travelling too far away for work, something discussed in the last chapter, there was also the theme of looking locally for work due to not having a car and poor transport links in the area. A few young people noted the difficulties of using public transport from the area and how they often have to take a number of buses and incur considerable costs in doing so.

Luke

During his interview, Luke noted his reason for not seeking work further than his nearest big city:

Luke: Probably only go as far as Cardiff really. I wouldn't go any further than that cos then it gets difficult working your way round and that (pause)

Me: what do you mean?

Luke: Well like, I don't drive, it's like, well by the time I finish my course I probably will be, but if I don't it will be awkward to figure out what buses or trains I need to get to get to wherever. (pause) but if I do drive then I probably will look a bit further (pause) (Luke, Interview transcript).

Willow

Willow raised the difficulty of transport as she talked about her placement with the training providers she was with. Her placement was in a care home which was a considerable distance from the research site and required numerous bus changes. She had enjoyed her placement in the care home but the travelling was unsustainable. This resulted in her leaving the placement and then engaging in a retail placement which was not something she had trained for within the field of health and social care.

... but the only thing was, was with the elderly home I had to catch three buses, there was one to Ponty from here and then there was an hour to Aberdare on a bus and there is one from Aberdare then. (pause) and that was a lot (laughs) yeah, so, I stuck at it for a while (pause) and then I went to B&M's in town then cos it was closer (pause) (Willow, interview transcript).

Chelsea, working for an agency at one of the area's biggest employers, spoke of how expensive it is to use public transport and as she does not drive, how she relies on her mother to take her to and from work.

No my mother takes me, but sometimes I will use public transport. Which, that's all my money really cos it's like £3.45 for a single that it. so that's still like 19 odd pound a week being wasted on public transport (Chelsea, interview transcript).

6.3.3 A class ceiling

One interview in particular saw a young woman studying at university set her sights on becoming a legal assistant rather than a lawyer as 'people like me don't do things like that'. Although not many of the young people talked about this specifically, it was present in their interviews, the salient role class played in creating the understanding that 'young people like me' 'from round here' 'don't do certain things. This builds on the previous two findings chapters in looking at space and aspiration.

From the years of formal schooling when the young people imagined their futures, to the current realities experienced today, these young people are deeply affected by the class situation in the UK and their positioning within it. A positioning where their

values and the life they experience is at odds with Neoliberal rhetoric of 'working harder and aiming higher'.

Sophie

In this regard an interview which stood out to me was the one with Sophie. We sat for hours together in Costa Coffee shop and her drive and determination to succeed at what she was doing was obvious. She acknowledged how important the help she has received has been. Now a university student she has moved away from home but still comes home regularly. This interview particularly struck me because while she is clearly achieving the required grades academically, she still doesn't believe she is capable of being a lawyer. I wondered why.

Following her degree, Sophie said she wants to be a para-legal not a lawyer. She doesn't believe she is good enough nor does she believe she will receive the opportunity to be a lawyer; all in all it felt as though she had resigned herself to the next best thing.

6.4 Summary

In summary, this chapter has evidenced the argument that, not only is there a prevalence of casualised employment and agency work that the young people living on the estate were engaged in, but also that for many of the young people, this was a better option than not working. All of the young people who were interviewed expressed a desire to work. The complexities of every day existence faced by these young people are numerous and multi-dimensional, effected by salient social class, gender and travel ability which impacted on employment availability and opportunity. All of these need to be negotiated to navigate constantly changing realities. In relation to the research questions this chapter has further evidenced a response to understanding:

- What particular challenges do Young People from disadvantaged communities and unskilled households face in transitioning into employment?

- How are these challenges actually experienced by Young people in their everyday lives and concrete social situations in families, peer-groups and neighbourhoods?

Some of the barriers we saw being mitigated by the project workers in the school years are still apparent in early adulthood. But this time, this is often without the support of a more knowledgeable other or practical changes being made. In considering access to employment, the stories presented by these young people illustrate how it is not as simple as finding a job and starting work. The stories illustrate how there cannot be a one size fits all approach to implementing policy for young people and employment. The aspiration rhetoric as a driver for social mobility neglects an understanding of individual experiences. Just as the previous findings chapter evidenced the notion of aspiration as something which is fluid and changing in the lives of the young people, I propose that access to employment requires an understanding in the same light, as many of the young people experience a cycle of in and out of work.

It was evident that for many of the young people, being in need of the benefit system was viewed negatively and they felt a strong need to avoid it. This still leaves unanswered questions regarding how far their fear of needing to use the benefit system, could affect their future aspirations and how they choose employment opportunities. The stigma attached to and the difficulties of living on benefits struggling to get by, presents itself as a very real fear to these young people. How much of an impact does this then have on speedy transitions and false starts (MacDonald 2005:874)? Does this take away valuable breathing space financially afforded by a middle class positioning in which, potentially, young people are more able to take the time to plan and consider transitions and make more informed decisions?

This chapter has also addressed and evidenced the overwhelming narrative of casualised employment that these young people have experienced. I suggest that

there is room here to explore the link between avoiding benefits and precarious work further as a guide, perhaps, to understanding working class aspirations.

This chapter has also evidenced how the participants who are mothers do not intend working until the child starts school, citing child-care as barriers but also the understanding that it is their responsibility to mother, seeing mothering as a full time job which should take priority over seeking paid employment. This chapter has also noted a range of barriers in gaining employment in displaying the narratives that the young people understood as their understood realities. These barriers included a lack of confidence, the inability to travel and a class ceiling. This chapter has evidenced some of the day to day realities for this young people but it still leaves questions unanswered about the future thinking of these young people and how this then could impact on the present day reality. The next chapter presents considerations of the young people as they imagine their futures.

7 CHAPTER SEVEN: Hopes, Fears and Dreams for the future

7.1 Introduction

The previous three chapters explored the narratives of the journeys of these young people from a temporal perspective, a spatial understanding and an awareness of their day to day realities.

The argument embedded throughout this chapter concerns the difficulties of imagining the future in an aspiration form as well as the vitality of hope as a form of agency. This chapter evidences the argument that an imagined future is not easy to contemplate when living a day by day existence in a world of financial disadvantage and economic precarity. I argue that there is an inextricable link between hope and agency, that hope functions as a form of agency and therefore a form of capital. This inability to plan for the future evidenced by some of these young people, presents itself as a lack of hope. I argue that this then impacts decisions made in the present. The lack of this hope, this capacity to aspire, results in the young people's imagined futures lacking wider considerations and instead becoming more focused on the local in all its forms.

The theme of hope and agency and possible selves they could achieve, is narrated through the different trajectory pathways, highlighting the differences, both across and within the trajectories.

This chapter aims to address in part, each of the research questions set out in the methodology (chapter 3) of this thesis:

- What particular challenges do Young People from disadvantaged communities and unskilled households face in transitioning into employment?
- How are these challenges actually experienced by young people in their everyday lives and concrete social situations: in families, peer-groups and neighbourhoods?
- How can uncovering real-life, close-up contextual factors allow us to understand these challenges?

- What aspirations do young people from disadvantaged communities express, and how can the empirical work to be undertaken inform the current policy-agenda on young people, poverty and aspirations?

During the interviews, many of the young people made reference to how they imagined their futures may look. I also asked each of the participants towards the end of their interview to tell me about their hopes, fears and dreams; for both their immediate and long-term futures. Some of the cohort gave more detailed responses to this than others, it appeared that for some this was hard to consider. The future is too difficult to contemplate when living a day-by-day existence, an experience and reality noted by most participants. Day-by-day existence is something this particular group of young people referenced not only in regard to their own lives, but also to the lives of other generations who had shared similar experiences, particular in terms of employment.

A temporary existence is something which I also had an overwhelming sense of, as I began exploring and spending time in the community as an ethnographer (written about in the second findings chapter number five). The concept of imagined futures is not a new one (Hardgrove et al 2015, Beckert 2013, Ball et al 1999). I submit that the data presented here based in empirical research, adds to the existing body of literature explored in the literature review (Chapter 2), by considering the impact and limitations of imagined futures when presented in the realm of the inter-sectionality of class, geographical place and gender.

Most of the young people partaking in this research found it difficult to put into words their hopes and dreams for the future and were hesitant in their responses. This inability or what Neoliberalism would deem a 'limited ability to plan for the future', I argue, is in part created by space, disadvantage, connections and the local availability of employment.

This fits in with the arguably deficit model of poverty and the working class that Welsh and central UK government places on communities of deprivation (Dicks 2014; Welsh Assembly Government 2006). I suggest that the agency young people have in

imagining, creating, and mobilising future plans, impacts upon the way in which decisions are made in the present. Therefore, this chapter will tell the story of an imagined future for each of the fifteen young people who were interviewed whilst presenting the findings embedded in the theme of ‘the future.’

Briefly however before we proceed, it should be noted here that within the theme of ‘future’ will be presented a number of sub themes. These sub themes include: not planning ahead and not thinking about the future, the desire to live somewhere nice and also the lack of mention around work in future thinking. It is for this reason that this chapter is presented under the following sub headings: a future planned out and why plan for and think about the future?

Out of the fifteen interviews carried out, all interviews discussed planning for the future in some way shape or form. I present below a table illustrating the positioning of each of the young people who were interviewed, to understand their vantage point when considering the future thinking of that young person (Bryant & Jeanne Ellard 2015).

Table 9: Known current positioning of participants at the time of interview

Current Position	Which participants	Total for each group
Studying at University	Sophie, Laura, Ben, TH	4
College/Apprenticeship	Luke, Alex	2
Employment	Chelsea, Josh, Matt, Kyle, CH	5
Young Parent	Sammy, Willow	2
NEET	Liam	1
Carer	Hannah	1

Literature presents the argument that for disadvantaged young people, future thinking can be washed out by day-to-day tasks such as finding a stable place to live and navigating convoluted public transport in order to attend job interviews (Foster and Spencer 2011 cited in Bryant & Jeanne Ellard 2015). This is certainly supported by the findings of this study.

What I propose here is that the future thinking of these young people is not impacted upon by practicalities alone, but by an affective dimension afforded through the ability or inability to hope. Hope which is affected by day by day experiences. This first section illustrates how each of the 15 young people imagined their futures, both immediate and long term. Through these imaginaries, the argument put forward in this chapter of an inability to plan for the future, this section explores the role of hope as a form of agency.

7.2 A future planned out

Here I present the fifteen young people as vignettes as they share their own thoughts and opinions on how they imagine their future and also how they would like it to look, if they could dream an imagined future. These will each be presented in groups of cases as structured in the above table. Throughout the interviews some of the young people made reference to their futures as they presented their own biographies as anecdotes. All but one of the interviews also demonstrated some clear thoughts and positioning when asked to consider the future. During the Biographical narrative interviews, most of the participants were asked: 'What are your hopes, fears and dreams for the future?' This section details the ways in which each of the young people answered this question beginning with Sophie and the others studying at university.

7.2.1 A vantage point gained through HE study

Sophie and I met in a local coffee shop. We sat in a crowded, noisy, comfy place where you felt lost in a crowd of people going about their day to day business. Lots of mums with their babies and toddlers and groups sat around us. This interview was the most seemingly relaxed of the interviews. Sophie had a way of telling her story in an engaging manner. I was captivated by her energy and enthusiasm for life and for the home town in which she had grown up. She spoke reflectively about the realities of her present situation living and studying at university in a nearby city. She shared her thoughts of the future, of how she hoped it would be:

Sophie: I just want to be comfy and I want to be in a city and I want to own my own house, I want to own it I don't want to be renting un, I want to own the house. (pause) (Sophie, Interview transcript).

When considering what she would like to imagine her future to be, Sophie used the word 'comfy'. I submit that 'the word 'comfy' here suggests that what she has known and observed around her is a reality far removed from 'comfy'. Rather her current life is one filled with the struggle and precariousness that comes with living in and being from a disadvantaged community. Throughout her interview she spoke of family financial hardships and the stigma she felt was attached to being from where she was from. She pays tribute to how difficult life is with a lack of finances. I suggest that the above quote is really important in enabling one to understand what university means to Sophie, that it suggests that for her university study and subsequent moving away from Brynhaul has afforded her the opportunity to hope to live in a more comfortable manner than the generations before her and those who surround her had often endured. This is noted in literature as significant in considering working class trajectories as young people often express a desire for 'normal' or traditional (Shildrick et al 2012). This also links with the psycho-social, with a positioning in which difficulties and uncertainties are often presented and the day to day existence can seem so uncertain, there is a safety in hoping for comfort and normality (Walkerdine & Jimenez 2012; Bryant and Ellen 2015).

As she considers her future Sophie also talks of owning her own house. She makes it clear that this is important to her as she does not want to be renting. I submit that in hoping to one day own her own home rather than rent, she is striving to be different, for life to be different to what it was in Brynhaul. Arguably, this thinking highlights a striving for social mobility. She talked during her interview, as we saw in the previous chapter, of how she aspired to become a para-legal. Her future career trajectory was something to which she had evidently given a great deal of consideration. When being presented with the task to narrate her hopes, fears and dreams for the future, she talked of comfort, home ownership and she also explained that she wants a career first and foremost and her reasons for this, she recognised that it will be her career which will afford her, her future hopes:

Sophie: I want a career first, I don't, I want, I want to, I want to be able to give my kids everything I (pause) I don't want them to grow up thinking like, oh I ain't going to be nothing like. I don't want that. (Sophie, Interview transcript).

I submit that Sophie's positioning here is one where she is wrestling with her own upbringing. By suggesting what she does not want for her children, I propose she is considering her own childhood. I submit that going to university to find that she is capable of academic study has for Sophie, provided hope in the form of agency. It has given her control in establishing her plans for the future, the direction she wants her life to take. Her passion for her roots, established in the community she has grown up in, and the relationships she still maintains, was evident all through her interview. As she considers her future, she talks reflexively about Brynhaul. She notes:

Sophie: Bryn¹¹ will always be close to my heart, Bryn will and I probably will end up there (pause) at some point again (pause) but, I want to, I want to be able to (pause) give everything, I don't want them to, if I have kids I don't want them to grow up with this stigma attached to them (Sophie, Interview transcript).

There is an almost inexplicable longing for Brynhaul and an acknowledgement that part of Sophie's self will always belong there. She notes the ties she still feels to place as she imagines her future, she recognises that her reality is she will probably end back there, returning to her roots. I submit that the above quote presents that for Sophie, if she does go back there, she hopes that, for her, things will be different, that she will not have the struggle that her parents and siblings endure. I argue that for Sophie, feeling held by the family support and the ability to return easily to Brynhaul, has made the transition to university study more comfortable and imaginable. As we saw in chapter Five, it has allowed her to stay rooted within the comfort of her family and community whilst she utilises her wings to explore a higher education trajectory.

Laura

Also studying at university, but a lot further away from home, Laura shared her dreams for the future. She was quick to provide a response to my question but did so

¹¹ Local, shortened name for the area used, I have reflected this in the pseudonym.

as though she was trying to use humour. As with other participants, I asked ‘what are your hopes, fears and dreams for your future?’ and throughout her interview there were times where Laura narrated how she hoped her future might pan out. It is evident that her experiences of the past are informing her future thinking.

Me: what would you like to do when you finish your degree?

Laura: Hopefully politics but I have also looked into like media as well.

Me: What do you mean by politics? What sort of job within that?

Laura: Hopefully one day an MP but (laughter)

Me: Why not?”

Laura: Yeah, I may as well aim high. I wanted to be an astronaut before so this is a bit lower down! (Laura, interview transcript).

In this moment, Laura acknowledges that she has high expectations of herself and does not seem intimidated by the future. Although she was laughing as she told me about wanting to be an MP one day, she was not joking and had considered how she might be able to achieve this. She had evidently put in thought and detail and was making a conscious decision to plan for the future as she was studying for her degree:

I know there isn’t normally an MP who is like 22 years old or female but um hopefully maybe work in the Council and working my way up to that or get a job in the BBC in Cardiff and just be like a researcher and stuff like that. Just getting my name out there a bit so I can build up to do something like that but I know it’s going to take a long time before I make any impact, but I hope I do one day (Laura, Interview transcript).

She recognises that in striving for an imagined future in which she becomes an MP, will present its challenges. The challenges she notes are around age and gender, she does not make any reference here to poverty, disadvantage or social class. I submit that, as she talks about how she hopes other areas of her life might be in the future, she indirectly talks of the struggle of being working class. Just as Sophie did so in her interview, Laura used the word comfortable in considering her hopes for the future:

I think that’s what I hope for as well, to live in like a stable home. That’s one I can feel comfortable with and not like ‘oh my God I haven’t got enough money for this’ and then I am hoping I can put enough money aside before I move to be a backup for the future and just putting money in rather than taking money out of it, yeah. These are all plans and my mam says anything can happen and change really quickly so I have looked at it that way too. But yeah (Laura, Interview transcript).

The use of the term comfort in both of these interviews is in relation to money. In having the ability to live in a way which is not constrained by financial concerns over the ability to afford what is needed for day to day life I argue that these young women have seen the generation before them struggle and both of these young women are hoping that a university degree will afford them a comfortable life. Neither participants voice these concerns under the label of a fear, but I submit that for both of these participants, the reality of a life of financial hardship and struggle is certainly a fear which they are voicing. At the end of the above quote, Laura notes how her mother says that anything can happen and change can come really quickly. The next section of this chapter will address this in more detail.

As Laura finished considering her hopes fears and dreams for the future, she stated that her dream job would be prime minister. She did this with a huge smile on her face and humour in her voice. I question her how much her humour was used to hide how much she would really like for this dream to come true. She had imagined what she would do if she had the positioning which would afford her so much power and privilege:

Dream job, would be Prime Minister (laughter). Um, I have always said that if I was Prime Minister I would try and find something that.. 10 Downing Street, I wouldn't actually live in it and I would try and do it so that people who were homeless could like live in what area I was supposed to live in to try to make a point like it doesn't matter (Laura, Interview transcript).

In suggesting how she would turn 10 Downing street into a place where homeless people could live she is highlighting the positive side she attaches to her aspirations: supporting others and being in community with others. I submit that by noting that she would "live in the area I was supposed to live in", she is suggesting that where one is from, their background should not cause limitations to their success or ability. I believe that throughout this part of her interview, where she imagines her future whilst considering her own trajectory which has given her the current vantage point she has, she is recognising her own social mobility, that which she hopes her university study has afforded her. Laura also did this.

Tom

Tom was studying at university in England when I met him for an interview. He was the first person in his family to engage in a Higher Education trajectory. We have seen in the previous findings chapters that he had an aspiration to go into politics whilst he was still in school. He had been future thinking about his career in his choice of university and subject of study. I wrote in the second findings chapter how Tom gave me a sense of struggle, struggle between belonging to a place and also his seeming desire to try and set himself apart from that. He attempted to position himself as different from his perception of what one would expect from the area. Towards the end of his interview, I posed the question 'what are your hopes, fears and dreams for the future?' to Tom, his response was:

Um, sort of, I don't have any dreams in the sense that, you know, it's a dream, it's sort of more, a hope you know, that is the dream really, to sort of get sort of everything that normal people want you know, a job that you not only like but pays well, um, housing ladder definitely, you know, get a house as soon as possible, because that's uh, you know that could be a potential stumbling block but just you know, live and also live in a community that's um, that's ok, you know, live in a you know, an ok area, you know I think sort of, I wouldn't want to live in an area round here that's anywhere different from Brynhaul because it's my home (Tom, Interview transcript).

Like many of his cohort, he talked of hopes, of a job he likes and that pays well; he expresses a desire to stay rooted to place once he has finished his study by acknowledging that he wants to return to Brynhaul. The rhetoric of raising aspiration, which hopes to see young people engage in university study, neglects the pull of place on the young people from a 'disadvantaged' community in how they consider their future.

The fear is, (pause) that you know, not getting on the housing ladder, I think definitely more of what I talked about earlier about, my family I think, and the fear is that you know, I sort of cant provide for my family as well and you know my grandparents as well, uh sort of I can't provide, if I can't sort of do something to help them so yeah that's the fears really un, I think the fears of the housing ladder, but I don't have any fears to do with getting a job I think, because I think, there's, there's gonna always be options you know and things you can do, so yeah, that's all really" (Tom, Interview transcript).

Tom's response to the question highlights many of the same thoughts as the other participants. Interestingly he noted that he did not have a dream, he considers that he has hopes, but not dreams. The first hope he mentioned is to get what 'normal people' want, that he would like get a job which is related to what he is currently studying and also to purchase his own home. 'Well, my hopes are definitely to uh, to get a job um, that is linked to the course that I'm doing um, that's definitely the hope' (Tom interview transcript).

He was one of the few participants whose first thought of the future was employment. As noted in previous findings chapters, Tom was away at university studying politics. Throughout the interview it was evident that Tom really wanted to believe that going away and studying at degree level would open doors for him and afford him the possibility of enjoying a career that he had worked hard for. I argue that Tom has more agency than some of the others. As well as the part of the interview, which was specifically about future thinking, Tom also considers his future at other times during the interview. Throughout his interview he talks about the consideration he has put into planning his degree program to undertake and his choice of university.

Ben

Ben, studying away at a Welsh university is in a more informed position than some of his peers. He was not the first generation in his family to go to university (Walkerdine & Jimenze 2012; Reay 2017). His father was a paramedic and his mother a secondary school teacher. He recognises that his family background enabled him to plan and consider his options for the future and to feel as though he was an actor in constructing his future (discussed in the second findings chapter).

When I posed the question to Ben about what his hopes, fears and dreams are for the future, he began with: 'Hopefully get my own house and not have to rent eventually' (Ben, Interview transcript). Despite Ben having a more privileged background with his parents professionals and living in the Brynhaul area but not on the estate itself, he still lists his first hope as having his own house and not having to

rent. For Ben, this importance of owning his own home is still centralised as it is in the earlier accounts of hope for the future. From narrating his hope of owning his own home, he pauses before considering his fear:

Yeah umm, (pause) umm, I'm not sure about fear really, um , (pause) probably not getting a job, like the job that is to do with geography just something that's wasted three years maybe I think that will be a bit gutting really. Yeah not, umm, I'm not really sure mostly just eventually get my own house, probably family after that like but I'm not sure, I'm not one hundred percent (ben, Interview transcript).

Again, just as we have seen in the previous narrations of hopes and fears from the other members of the cohort who have gone away to university, is the centrality of finding a job which is related to his higher education. He is able to articulate how important he feels it is to be able to hope for employment related to his academic study. This buys into the meritocratic view of education and social mobility more here. I also asked him about his plans for the immediate future. The hopes and plans he shared with me suggested a more comfortable background and acknowledges the social capital available to him which other members of his cohort cannot as easily draw upon. He was the only member of the cohort to talk of plans to travel:

Me: What about your immediate future?

Ben: I don't know, I think after uni I would like to go travelling or something, Australia, like brother's ex-girlfriend, she just done this thing like, all through the world, she said, yeah she said she just saved up all the money in work when she was in uni, she just said she just worked all the time and saved it all up she just went straight through three months, she just powered through loads of places and I know a lot of boys down in Australia now, so hopefully I can do that for like six months or something.

Me: How do you know guys down in Australia?

Ben: Just like my brothers friends and like friends from school, uh, friends from when I was younger, um, a lot of people emigrate out there so, just something like that hopefully really. (pause) (Ben, Interview Transcript).

I note here that Ben additionally, was the only cohort member engaged in university study, who when expressing his hopes, fears and dreams for the future, spoke in hopeful terms of his 'journey' and of where it might lead. He was also the only interviewed cohort member who did not speak about coming back to Brynhaul after completing his degree.

I argue that across these narrations of future hopes, fears and dreams held amongst these cohort members studying at university, there is a belief that going to university may afford them the ability to not struggle financially in the way they had endured and had seen their families and community endure, in Brynhaul. Meritocracy/still rooted home/centrality of home ownership and jobs relating to what they have studied were all mentioned. I submit that among these young people, there is hope and a form of agency which has been attributed to them by going to university.

7.2.2 The vantage point of FE

Next, we explore the hopes, fears and dreams narrated by those who are engaged in further education and/or apprenticeships during the time at which they were interviewed. Two of the young people from the cohorts that were interviewed had this positioning.

Alex

Alex who was at the time of interview undertaking an engineering apprenticeship that he had aspired to through his time in school, was the only participant who addressed his fears first. I posed the question to him in the same way as I had done the other participants with the participants having to consider all aspects of the question at the same time. He made reference to a fear as being afraid of what he had worked for. Previous findings chapters detailed how Alex had been driven in school, he had known very early what he's wanted to do after school had finished and he had chosen his GCSE subject choices with this fixed aim in mind. Throughout his formal Education was able to plan for, and work towards the goal of an apprenticeship in engineering. He was able to harness the support of the school and PWU in doing so. Although at this point of the interview he was vague on the details of how he would go about achieving the next step after his apprenticeship, he already had an idea of what he wanted to do. I got the sense that he was confident in his ability to make decisions and gain the information needed to inform those decisions.

Me: thinking about your future, what would be your hopes, fears and dreams?

Alex: Um, (pause) I think, fears would be not being able to get what I want sort of thing, you know what I mean? I want to try to get all my licence modules done as soon as I can, some of them look quite hard so I'm worried I might not be able to get some of them (pause) (Alex, Interview transcript).

The fear he narrated was directly related to his aspiration, what he has been working throughout his educational trajectory. Echoing the fears of the participants who had gone on to university study, Alex was talking of fears associated with an aspiration he was working towards. Unlike the participants attending university, in narrating his dreams for the future, Alex does not make reference to home ownership or where he lives. His response is centralised around gaining the qualification which would then allow him to do the job he has been working towards:

the dream would be to get my actual licence as soon as I have had enough experience (pause) and go pretty much straight away (laughs) the other thing I am tempted to do like some of the people in work is to get my licence and go contracting cos there is some people who have done it and have just gone everywhere (pause) they've done a couple of months in different countries moving round all the time (pause) I'd like to do that but I think I might want to just move abroad idea of moving abroad again (pause) it depends what it's like when I actually get there. (pause) (Alex, interview transcript).

Alex also dreams of travelling, just as Ben has, but with not as much clarity. I submit it is evident here that Alex's dreams directly linked to his future career suggest that he recognises that the hope he has in working towards his future career is providing him with agency, options and social capital. He talks of travel relating to his work, similar to Ben, he does not express an attachment to place as other participants have done. Alex's dad works in a factory and his mother does not work. Alex does not have the social capital available to him that Ben is able to draw from.

Luke

Luke was the second participant engaged in post compulsory education, something we saw in chapter 4. Throughout his education he has aspired to be a chef and has a passion for cooking. This passion for cooking is something which had developed throughout his teenage years as he enjoyed cooking with his nan and has observed his mother run a catering business from their home. Luke like Alex, knew in school

what he wanted to do after compulsory schooling. He knew he wanted to be a chef. He had the support of his mam and he was comfortable with seeking support and advice from his teachers in college. He has had an idea of what he would like to do since being a young child, even though he was not definite:

Luke: (pause) um, I don't know for definite, (pause) I would really like to move away and live somewhere that's like, nice and quiet, and like maybe England, I know that some places there are really nice, but maybe like live in the city for a bit and then as I get older move away from the city, (pause) but I don't really know for sure, like, (pause) (Luke, Interview Transcript).

Luke's initial response is unusual, he was the only participant who cited England as somewhere he might want to live in the future, and this could be considered an unusual choice for someone who is from a Welsh valleys context. At first, he appears to be more willing to imagine spreading his wings once he gains his qualification and seems less rooted to place than other members of the cohort. His fears and his hopes are almost at odds with each other. His initial hopes suggest a desire to live life away from Brynhaul but as he begins narrating his fears, as with so many of the other participants, he begins to highlight the centrality of home, of being around the familiar.

Me: you got any fears?

Luke: Um (pause) not really, it's like, just the kind of, moving away and not being around any family or anything (pause) that's about it really (pause) (Luke, Interview Transcript).

I submit that Luke is narrating this as a fear of moving away and not being near family, as he has every intention of moving away from research site to pursue his career and his dream of becoming a chef. He recognises that to achieve his dream he will need to leave Brynhaul and go to a city. As Luke shares his dream for the future, he talks of how he would like to have his own restaurant and again as the majority of the rest of the cohort have done, he makes reference to having a house:

Um. (pause) in about 30 years I would like to have my own restaurant and um, like live in a proper like, nice house, quite big, so if I just go to one side I can be away from everyone else (laughs) (Luke, interview transcript)

Luke talks of what sort of house he would like to live in, with a grin on his face. He notes that he would like it to be quite big so that he can be away from everyone else. This interview took place in the home on the estate which he shares with his mother and three younger siblings. We sat in his living room which was home to his double bed, upon which he sat whilst I sat on the settee next to him. I understood in that moment his dream of space.

Across all of the accounts illustrated so far, there has been a centrality of home presented by the young people as part of their hopes for the future. This is presented either around the ideas of what type of homes the young people aspire to or the location and importance of having some place as home.

7.2.3 Vantage Point of Work

This next section explores the hopes, dreams and fears of the future presented by the participants whose current vantage point was that of employment at the time of interview. Most of the young people in this category, were cautious when considering their future, often taking a pause as they collected their thoughts. All of the cohort who were in employment when interviewed were not as fluent in illustrating future hopes, fears and dreams as the those who had gone away to university.

Josh

Working on the rails, waiting for a bus to meet him at the side of a main road every morning, Josh, expressed his dislike of the world of work in which he has found himself. As we have seen in the previous findings chapter, he continuously made reference to the precariousness of his work throughout the interview. He expressed how he felt that this world of work was his only option and that he believed he is not capable of anything else. I asked him about his future, I asked him what his hopes, fears and dreams for the future might be. He said that if he could dream anything for his future it would be:

Josh: Probably own my own business, probably, (pause) probably just run a business and work for myself (pause) that's it really (pause)

Me: What sort of business?

Josh: uhh, and I'm not sure, anything that makes money (laughs) to be honest (pause) (Josh, Interview transcript).

Josh is honest about how money for him is a driver of his ambitions. This supports the idea of work being a transactional activity. It would appear that for Josh the driver for employment is financial gain, he is not able to be more specific about what he would like to do. Josh was not comfortable talking with me during the interview, at the end of the interview he told me he did not think that he had spoken to anyone as much as he did during the interview. Josh needed more encouraging to talk than some of the other participants. I asked him how he thinks his future might look without phrasing hopes and dreams at first and he responded:

Me: what is your future look like? (pause) what you want to do? (pause) Are you doing what you want to do?

Josh: No. I don't really know (pause) I'd just be happy with a job with a contract on it with a decent pay to be honest (pause) I don't know, (pause), It's like, (pause) I couldn't really be bothered what it was. (pause). (Josh Interview Transcript).

He did not mention anything about plans for a home, his focus was on his employment situation. He highlighted how he would be happy with a job with a contract and decent pay, it did not matter what that job was as long as there was security in it. I submit that the precariousness of Josh's employment, and the daily not knowing if this basic need is going to be met, has taken away his ability to think beyond his present situation. I later posted him the same questions that I had the other participants:

Me: If I asked you about your fears and hopes and dreams for the future, what do you think they would be?

Josh: I don't know pause it depends what you mean by fears, I don't know, (pause), you don't fear anything in the future really do you? You just take it step-by-step, cos if its worse, it could only get better anyway (pause) so if its better it can only get worse (pause) (Josh, Interview Transcript)

I argue that Josh's response to this question highlights how for someone who is experiencing the reality of precarious employment, it is difficult to consider life beyond the present moment. I wonder how much of his noted lack of fear is an artefact, a conditioning of day to day survival or perhaps the fear here, a fear of thinking about the future.

Matt

Matt's interview saw in some ways a more detailed response to the question. As we have seen in the previous findings chapters, Matt had had a couple of different jobs since leaving school that he had not enjoyed and he was currently working on a voluntary program as a painter decorator with a local housing company, which he believed would lead onto employment with them. When I asked him what his hopes, fears and dreams for the future were, he addressed the question with humour almost as a way to at first stop himself from actually considering the daunting prospect of future. Focusing first on an elite wealth, stating his dream as something which is unachievable as though there is no shame in suggesting a dream which is unattainable for the majority of society. He then continues to narrate his hopes which are similar to those presented by other cohort members:

(pause) my dream would have to be living in the 1%, that would be everyone's dream (laughs). My hope would be just to be financially stable n I hope everything goes alright, nothing out of the ordinary happens too much umm (pause) my fear would probably be loneliness more than anything. See I'm the kind of person who likes to be liked, if that makes sense? Like I mentioned earlier with school and that, I've been like that all my life. (pause). I think loneliness would be my biggest fear (Matt, interview transcript).

Just as the majority of the other participants have done, he cites his hope to be financially stable, suggesting that a life away from the struggle he has witnessed around him is something he hopes for. I submit that the above quote shows how his own biography is influencing his future thinking. He hopes that: 'nothing out of the ordinary happens too much', we have seen in previous findings chapters how Matt's mother died in the house when he was a child and that he had found her. I submit that his hope of nothing out of the ordinary happening is in direct relation to this. He then narrates his fears, with the first one voiced as loneliness which again I wonder how much losing his mother at a young age is allowing a fear of loneliness to tighten its grip. If the young people's hopes for the future are tied to past and present experiences, how much then do traumatic experiences overshadow and influence ideas of future self?

Kyle

Kyle, who at the time of interview was working his notice to leave the army he talked of his plans for the future as he was approaching another period of transition in his life. We have seen in previous findings chapters how Kyle had aspired to join the army during his time in school. I asked him about his future plans during the interview:

Kyle: I'm going to save up for my own house (pause) I just need to get a deposit, that's the hardest bit (pause)

Me: where would you buy?

Kyle: I wouldn't buy in Bryn, no. (pause) I don't know, I want a nice house in a nice place (laughs) (pause)

Sammy: I wouldn't buy in Bryn either (pause)

Me: How far way would you go?

Kyle: I'd probably go to the new estate¹² its nice there, so, (pause) (Kyle, Interview transcript).

Again the centrality of having a home or home ownership is evident as it is the first topic he discusses, although Kyle noted that he would not buy in the area, on the estate, instead he makes reference to a more affluent area of the locality. In narrating his hopes for the future he states that he hopes for a good job with good money but acknowledges his own recklessness with his and inability to think about his future effects his income:

Umm, (pause) a good job with good money, loads of money (laughs) I don't know, like the money I'm on now is not enough cos like half way through the month I blow it all (laughs) so I need more (laughs) I'm not very good with money, as soon as I get it, I just spend it (pause) Umm, I don't really have any, just getting a house really, and get a nice car (laughs)... I would rather buy a house first than a car cos the value of car just drops doesn't it but a house doesn't really drop (pause) (Kyle interview transcript).

In a similar way to Josh, Kyle does not note any fears for the future. He attributes this to his personality:

Me: do you have any fears for your future?

Kyle: No not really no. (pause) uh, yeah I don't think there's much, I'm chilled I don't really think about stuff like that (laughs) (pause) (Kyle, Interview transcript).

¹² The new estate that Kyle talks of in his interview is just over half a mile from the Brynhaul estate. It is a new build estate of privately owned large houses, across the main road from the Brynhaul estate.

As was narrated by so many of the young people the idea of not thinking too much about the future. I argue is in part a lack of perceived control and a way of protecting oneself from thinking about the future. This was prominent in the majority of interviews as the young people voiced their thinking of the future and will be explored in the next section of this chapter.

7.2.4 The vantage point of being a young parent

Willow was one of the young people who was more cautious about exploring these future thoughts and more nervous about talking about her ideas out loud. She was incredibly hesitant as she considered her response, sighed and laughed nervously before she spoke. In her third trimester of carrying her first child, initially, understandably her response was in relation to her unborn child's future.

Aww, (sighs) (laughs) I don't know, I don't know umm, my future, oh I don't know, my future would be for my baby to have everything that they wanted but it might be a possibility that it might not happen. But I'll try (pause) like, if they wanted, like when they are 17 if they wanted a car, I'd try and get it like, do you get what I mean? Yeah. But if it can't happen, it can't happen, but I would try, but (pause) (Willow, Interview transcript).

Here Willow is considering her baby's future rather than her own. She continues voicing her hopes and shares the idea of a 'nice house' a common hope for the future among the young people, along with a good job with good pay. I submit that she is hoping for a future free from struggle and feels that being well paid will enable that:

I don't know, I would like to have, I don't know, (pause) nice house (pause) future, I don't know, the future, (Pause) a car and stuff and a nice house and a nice garden (pause) and then a good job, a good paid job like (pause) (Willow, Interview transcript).

I wanted her to unpack her understanding of a 'good job' further to gain insight of Willow's understanding of employment and pay so I questioned her further about this:

Me: What do you think classes as a good paying job?
Willow: (pause) I don't know, I don't know really cos I haven't really had the time to have a job because it has always been school, college or ACT¹³ like, I have always been on like £50 a week at the most like, that's all I

¹³ ACT is the trading name for Associated Community Training Limited.

have had in my life so, (pause) I can't say which is good and which is bad but, enough to run a house, enough to have a car or to look after the baby (pause) enough for that like and then I would be done.

What was interesting in this interview was how Willow's vantage point allowed me to gain some understanding of what her hopes are for the next generation. Again the centrality of home in her account of what her hopes are for her unborn child was evident. I suggest that for these young people, home is important as it provides roots which allow for connection with others and support from others. Arguably this is important when economic positioning is precarious.

Me: What do you want for baby?

Willow: I don't know (pause) I don't know a nice garden, a nice bedroom, yeh, my mother's got, well my mother's got a lovely garden but (pause) it's like trees everywhere (laughs). (Willow, interview transcript).

Willow's considerations for her future appear limited, they seem to be based upon what she can see around her. Heavily pregnant with her first child, for her, everything is changing. Her previous ideas and how she might have imagined her life as a single person without the responsibility of a child now have to be radically reworked and re-imagined. She doesn't make any reference to acknowledging the words hope, fear or dreams. I think that the way she talks about work is interesting. Like so many of the other young people she makes reference to a car and a house and a 'good job' but with further questioning into what this means for her it is still difficult to paint a picture of what a 'good job' means.

Willow talks about how she has not ever really had experience of the world of work and does not present herself as having any idea about what she would like to do, or indeed feels able to do. She wants enough to 'get by' but doesn't really have any idea of how much money would allow her to do that. This is common across the cohort with many young people suggesting that they would like a 'comfortable' life, many of the accounts of the young people make reference to 'good job' or 'good pay'. In the instances of the young people in employment, this is in direct relation to the desire for a contract rather than precarious employment and for those in higher education,

this is to find a job in relation to their academic study which they believe will afford a more comfortable life.

I suggest that the way Willow considers her future here, suggests that for her employment is not important to her at the moment, her priority is the forthcoming baby, I suggest that it is not even possible for Willow to think about her future hopes in relation to employment, as we have seen in previous findings chapter, Willow has noted how she would need the support of family to be able to juggle parenting and employment and believed that even when baby goes to school she would be limited to school time hours.

Willow also talks about what she thinks her life might have looked like had she not have become pregnant when she did. As she explains the training program she was recently engaged in during which she worked in retail and her current situation she talks about what she feels her options in regards to employment could have been with her most recent employment in a high street bargain store:

Yeah. They probably would have found me a job by now in B&M or something, yeah I would have stuck to B&M see (pause) but they would have eventually took me on (pause) and progressed like (pause) but I couldn't (laughs) (Willow, interview transcript).

Willow is nostalgic as she shared the above quote, as though she considers this an opportunity missed. There are other times throughout her interview where Willow makes reference to thoughts of the future. When considering what will happen when the baby is born she said that she will continue to live with her mam as she does not want to move in with her boyfriend. I suggest that this is a way of managing her fear of a huge change from what she has always known. Willow she also talks in detail about being unable to imagine living anywhere other than Brynhaul. Thus the centrality of place and community which was evidenced and explored in the second findings chapter, plays a role in her imagined future.

Throughout Willow's interview there was a distinct lack of control for her in how she considered the future from her present vantage point. As she sat with me, her

vulnerability was evident as she noted that her body was changing beyond possible control. She acknowledged that the new baby will bring pressures which were at this point unimaginable and thus, old life her pre-baby life, was unattainable. I submit that for Willow, her agency is constrained by pregnancy both in her day to day existence and in terms of her considered future. The language she used during her interview also supported this, she did not call any of her thoughts for the future a hope, fear or dream. I suggest that she is viewing her future as something from the outside, removed from her control.

Sammy

The next imagined future presented here is that of Sammy. At the time of interview, Sammy was a first time mother to a three month old. Sammy's initial response to the hopes, fears and dreams question gave a similar response to the way in which Willow and other members of the cohort had responded. She didn't answer straight away, instead she paused to gather her thoughts and laughed nervously looking down to the floor. Her response was simple: '(pause) (laughs) (pause) I don't know to be honest. I haven't thought of all that' (Sammy, Interview transcript). I recognise that by asking questions in an interview setting that need to be answered does not enable a lot of time for thinking or reflection and had pre-tasks or timelines that were made before the interview been used, this may have generated more considered and reflexive responses. Though I note that all of the participants were interviewed in the same way but those participants who are young parents found this the most difficult to narrate. Sammy, like Willow, was better able to communicate her thoughts around what she wanted for her son's life, and his future. I submit that this means that her future and that of her son are entwined, one cannot exist without the other as her son has become her reason for being. When considering the future for her son she states:

That he does good in school, gets a job. That he's nothing like me in school. I used to go to school but like you know, used to play up. But I want the best for him like. I want him to actually do good un get a tidy job, you know. Hopefully go in the army with his uncle (laughs). I wish I'd done something like that mind. Joined the Navy. I'd love it. (laughs). I would. (Pause) (Sammy, Interview Transcript).

As considering how she would like to imagine the future looking for her son, she weaves in her own regrets of how she had done things differently. It is almost as though, in the above statement she is believing that she no longer has choices and options for her own future. I gained the sense of her feeling stuck, almost defeated and accepting of her life at present what it is and it. As previously noted, this term 'tidy job', used, in the local dialect, 'tidy' means the same as 'good' and has been used by the majority of the participants, as we have seen, many of the interviews are talking about 'good work' or 'good job' as a hope for the future. Once Sammy had shared with me her hopes for her sons future, I asked her again about her own:

Me: Any more thought on the fears, hopes, dreams? If you could do anything what would it be?

Sammy: Live away. Yeah. Take my family with me though. Win the lottery. I'd love that day to come. (laughs).

Me: Where would you want to live?

Sammy: Australia.

Me: So you wouldn't want to stay here in Brynhaul?

Sammy: No. if I could get out of here I would, (laughs) I'd like to go to Australia. Might get a tidy job over there. You never know (Sammy, interview Transcript).

Again there is a strong desire to stay within the community. Sammy acknowledges that she would like to live away but only if her family came with her. Her family is important to her, this quote suggests that money is the dream. Like Matt she jokes about an almost impossible access to wealth by winning the lottery, but for Sammy, but the dream is only worth having if elements of the present can be retained. The most important elements are her family. Chapter 5 presented the findings around place and space. We saw that Sammy, as she narrated the present, talked about how she could not imagine living anywhere other than Brynhaul. And yet as she contemplates her future, she verbalises an imagined possibility of moving to the other side of the world. The above quote ends with 'might get a tidy job over there you never know' (Sammy, Interview transcript). This was almost flippant, as if she thinks that that isn't going to happen there anyway. It is almost as though Sammy is acknowledging that the option of control is unavailable to her at this particular time and realising that a lack of agency is just the way it is for her.

I submit, that the two different accounts presented here by the two participants with the vantage point of young parents, both present an inability to consider their own future hopes and dreams as separate from that which they have for their children.

7.2.5 Vantage point of NEET

Only one of the participants was considered as NEET at the time of the interview. Throughout PAs interview, it was obvious that he found it difficult to consider his future as he very much lived on a day to day basis. He would continuously mention limitations around almost everything he talked about and he mentioned his mental health as a limiting factor as well. Liam is currently not in education, employment or training. Throughout his interview he noted training courses he'd engaged with previously. He occasionally spoke of his future employment, about wanting to work on the railway while simultaneously recognising that he has no idea how to get such a job nor any idea who to ask for advice. Liam lacks agency in determining his own future, as he was unsure of how to go about achieving a desire to work on the railway.

The second findings chapter evidenced Liam's feelings of being let down by training programs that he had understood would lead to employment. During the interview, I had a sense of hopelessness as he narrated perceived broken promises of work. It could be suggested that for Liam, a lack of agency is embedding a cycle of hopelessness. Nearer the end of the interview when I asked him what his hopes and dreams for the future would be inclusive of, he looked down at his mug of coffee held in both hands, and then looked around the community centre coffee shop in which we sat. I phrased this question differently for Liam, I did not ask him of his fears, I was concerned that as he had already shared with me his mental health conditions and his overwhelming anxiety, it felt inappropriate to subject him to have to consider his fears in that public space and to a relative stranger. He gave a long pause, a sigh before saying:

Me: I've asked everyone this question, your hopes, dreams for the future, what would it look like?

Liam: Uhh, (pause) what would I like to be like? Uhh, I'd like to pass my test and have a car, I've got a provisional but I haven't got a full, umm,

(pause) I would have a nice car, a nice home and a nice job and like go to work at like nine and come home at five and see my family and live with them like (Liam, Interview transcript).

As we have seen in so many of the previous accounts, Liam talks indirectly of a comfortable life by hoping that his future has provided him with the ability to have his own transport and a nice home and job. Again the centrality of the desire of having a nice home is narrated. Throughout his interview, Liam seemed almost passive, passive in his living arrangements, his employment situation. I suggest passivity as throughout the interview, when something has not happened the way he would have liked, he puts the blame on others. It was as though he did not take responsibility for himself within his situation and things happened to him rather than accepting responsibility for the direction his life takes. I suggest that for Liam this was directly related in his confidence and that it was this lack of confidence that transpired to a lack of agency. There were an awful lot of things going on in Liam's life, family fall outs, trying to get full custody of his young child, dealing with his mental health. It was easy to see how for Liam, the world around him felt hopeless and one big uphill battle. I suggest that for him this was all so overwhelming, that felt that he allowed himself to lack agency in his future plans, because it all just felt to big, too much to keep on top of. His hopes and dreams expressed as desires, that is those of a car, home and job, these desires can be dreams. This is particularly the case for marginalised communities where many people will not have a car, home or nice job.

7.2.6 Vantage point of Caring for someone

Hannah

In some ways, Hannah appeared to be so content, and doing exactly what she wanted to be doing. She talked of how she had aspired to pursue a career in acting and go to the royal college of music and drama in Cardiff. However, she acknowledged that she felt that being a Jehovah's, she did not feel that she could pursue a career in acting where she may be asked to play a character which was at odds with her faith:

How can I do that is you know it was like that really, and I'm like am I really giving glory to God if I'm pursuing something for myself, if I am pursuing

something that promotes pride, or promotes self-interest or promotes all these things that you shouldn't cultivate within yourself you know what I mean? (pause) and I was like I can't have both you know, I can't seek fame and seek my spirituality, so I decided not to do drama (Hannah, Interview transcript).

She instead had taken a college course in carpentry and began working voluntarily as a carpenter within the Jehovah's Witness community, working on projects alongside other family members such as renovating the buildings. Hannah had less hesitation when voicing her thoughts on the future than so many of the other young people conveyed. Throughout her interview she expressed that she felt that through her religion she had a calling placed on her life, and that she felt that she was doing what God wanted her to do. She was also a carer for her mother. During the interview, I asked her about what her plans for the future look like:

I don't plan very far ahead, do you know what I mean? Umm, I don't have a lot of money to do a lot, you know, my family doesn't have a lot of money to do a lot, my family relies on me, so I can't really up and make decisions without consulting them or thinking of them you know, and so my (sighs) my life's not really my own, do you know what I mean? It's like, and I'm ok with that, I, I enjoy it, living for other people do you know what I mean?

Her response to this question was not unusual, many of the young people expressed how they did not plan for the future and this will be explored further in the next section of this chapter. Hannah narrates in the above quote how her family rely on her and how she has to consider her family as she is making her own plans for the future. She draws upon recognising the fact that she is not herself a person whose future is to be considered in isolation and that it is her position as a carer for her mother that has heightened this awareness. I submit that she is stating that the Neo-liberal understanding of achievement through individualism is for her not an option. What she is presenting here, is that her roots to place and her relationships with her family take priority over her own desires and ambitions. In this sentence, she captures what I sensed so many of the young people were saying as their plans for the future pointed to the centrality of home and the 'not without my family' mentality. Towards the end of the interview, I asked her the same question I asked other participants,

Hannah articulately separated her response under each of the three headings beginning with her hope:

Me: So your future, if I asked you what you hope, fear and dream would be for your immediate future and long term?

Hannah: Ummm, my hope would be that I would be able to (pause) to do more, my hope would be that I could go to Chelmsford and do that build, my hope would be that I could pioneer more monthly or my hope that I have the ability and the means to give more than I am giving, or do more than I am doing, that's my hope, you know, like, I don't know what's going to happen next month, I could be homeless for all I know or, I could, anything could happen, but my hope would be all that I could do. (Hannah, interview transcript).

Her hope here is in direct relation to her current volunteering position in hoping that she would be able to do more of what she is already doing. Chelmsford is in relation to a build she had talked about previously in the interview which she hopes to attend with her dad and her brother who also volunteer. She also expresses her sense of time and its effect on events, her lack of control, when she recognises that anything could happen, that plans and ambitions were always tentative. Once she has illustrated her hopes, she begins to consider her fears:

Fear would be (pause) not being able to do that, like fear is failing in something that I love you know, and I love my religion, and failing at that, or failing at something I have dedicated my life to or something that is my reason of being scares the hell out of me, do you know what I mean? (pause) just you know, failing is my biggest fear in anything that I try. Sometimes, I don't, I'm afraid to try just in case I fail, that's a really big thing for me, you know, so failing would be my biggest fear, uh (pause) for the future (Hannah, Interview transcript).

She narrates a feeling of failure as her biggest fear and narrates the ways in which she thinks failure could be a possibility. Then Hannah addresses the dream aspect of my question, she takes more of a pause before she answers this:

My dream (pause) (sighs) I don't know I feel like I am doing what I am supposed to do, I am doing what I love to do you know? And I, I am content, I'm happy, I don't want money or dream, I don't want, I feel like my dream is now. You know? Like, if you'd asked me five years ago my dream, would be to have graduated university with top marks and to have gone to an agency to be in this this and that series, to be in that film, that would have been my dream. My dream now is to keep my family safe, my dream is to provide for them, to fulfil my spiritual responsibilities, obligations. (Hannah, interview transcription).

Hannah is the only participant who states that she is content. That she is happy with life as it is and that she is doing what she loves. She almost suggests that she is living the dream. Although I suggest that there are contentions here with the earlier quote where she talked about how her life is not really her own and that her family relies on her. She reminds us of what her dream was five years ago, her dream she is stating was her aspiration in school, to pursue a career in acting. She recognises that her dream has altered and she attributes that to her faith and her spiritual responsibilities as she understands them. Although, I did wonder if having mentioned them at this point of the interview when considering her future, if it was not something that part of her still longed for.

Against this however there was an overwhelming sense of positivity from Hannah, a confidence and a self-assuredness. The hope with which she spoke was almost tangible. She wrapped up considering her future dreams by stating:

My dream is to be the best person that I can be. That's my dream now. But I feel like, each day I'm working more and more towards it, so, (pause) yeah. That's it, (laughs) (Hannah, Interview transcript).

In each of the interviews carried out, I had the sense that considering the future seemed to be very difficult for some young people, some found it easier to discuss their hopes rather than their dreams. Across the interviews, dreams were often conditioned by circumstance. Throughout the majority of the interviews, the hope of a home was present. The young people who had followed a trajectory to university study, all expressed I hope of a future which was 'comfortable' and which it was anticipated that university would afford them.

There was a similar story narrated by the young people who went to FE. Hopes and dreams were often narrated across the cohort without the mention of specific plans to achieve them. What has stood out across most of the accounts was in inability to think about and plan for the future and this will be explored in the next section.

7.3 Why plan for and think about the future?

During the interviews, almost all of the young people spoke of not planning beyond the present day. During interviews many of the young people made reference to the fact that they don't think about or plan for the future. The next part of this chapter explores how each of the young person articulated this and provided a sense of a lack of agency in orchestrating their futures, coupled with an inability to make concrete plans enabling one to work towards a goal.

This section addresses the argument that many of the interviews appear to be portraying similarities in that many of the young people give a sense of not being able to plan their time, not knowing one week from the next what days and hours they are working. I view this idea of not being able to plan for the future as having two different aspects: firstly, the emotional unwillingness on the part of the young person to plan for the future and secondly, the inability of the young person to plan for the future due to being in a situation of precarious employment. This appeared to be something which resonated with many of the young people.

As the first part of this chapter illustrated, all of the young people were asked about their fears, hopes and dreams for the future and many of them found this difficult to answer. I got the overwhelming feeling that many of these young people really are just living one day at a time. I wrote previously about how during one of my initial visits to Brynhaul, I recorded in my field notes a description of the place as I saw it. I felt to be someone both an outsider and at the same time someone with family ties to the area, with a knowledge of its reputation and who lives only a few miles away. I recorded in my field notes my sense of Brynhaul as a temporary space as I first began spending time in the research site, I likened it to a campsite and focused on the temporality and how I had similar feelings in Brynhal to those that I recall of camping as a child. I detail this in chapter 1 (page 55).

It was only months later, as I was gaining the opportunity to meet with more of the individual young people in the interview situation that I began to realise the significance of this feeling of temporality which had coloured the way in which I viewed the space I was beginning to become familiar with. I realised that this temporality of existence was not only experienced in the structure of a society, the use of space and buildings, but also in the lives of the young people who lived within it. Some of them doing as the generations before them have done and some surrounded by the network of extended family built by both blood and friendship.

Space, place and community were explored in detail in the chapter 4, but now I want to focus on this idea of how both temporality and the imagined future are entwined. Something I hope to show through the collective narratives of the young people, particularly in relation to their thoughts on future plans. The standpoint of 'what is the point in planning for the future' echoed across the interviews and also across generations.

Kyle

When asked about his plans for the future, one of the interviewees responded with 'Umm, I don't really have any, just getting a house really, and getting a nice car' (Kyle, interview Transcript) This young person was a driver in the army and at the time of interview had four weeks remaining until he left the army. He was looking for future employment as a HGV driver, hoping to follow in the footsteps of his father. He had an idea of what he wanted to do next, but remained vague in articulating how he would go about becoming a HGV driver.

When he considered the future, he was evasive, he didn't like to plan too far ahead. In considering his future, he said 'I don't know (sighs) (pause) anything could happen, anything (pause) but, if it happens it happens doesn't it' (Kyle, Interview transcript). It seems that he leaves his future plans to fate, suggesting perhaps a lack of agency. I asked him directly if he plans for the future, his sister who was also interviewed for this study was in the room during this part of Kyle's interview and gave her response too:

Me: do you plan for the future much?

Kyle: No. I just wait until it comes and then (pause) just deal with it

Sammy: if you plan things and then it goes tits up

Kyle: I just don't plan nothing, just go with the flow (Kyle, Interview transcript).

I propose that this lack of future planning allows these young people to protect themselves from plans that do not succeed. This then enables the young person to retain hope which provides motivation. This was also evident during Willow's interview.

Willow

During her interview Willow, as she anticipated the arrival of her first child, also talked about how she takes each day as it comes and that she doesn't see the point in planning. I asked her if she plans much and she responded: 'No. (laughs). It happens if it happens. If I go out I go out (laughs) (pause)' (Willow interview transcript). She also believed that her pregnancy was making her life more day to day and immediate than previously and that prior to pregnancy she would find herself planning things more. I asked her if she know where the not planning comes from and she responded:

Probably being pregnant because I never used to be like this. No. I just used to say oh yeah I'll do that and then actually do it like but now I'm just, I don't know, if it happens it happens (laughs). But I prefer it like that because before, like, I was pregnant, I used to get stressed, I'd be like, I got to do this today, I'll do that tomorrow but now, I'm just like if it happens it happens. So (laughs). Baby comes when it comes (laughs) (Willow, Interview transcript).

I submit that with pregnancy being such an unknown time, in which the expectant mother has so little control, Willow has been forced to stop being concerned about her future. She has had to adapt as she does not know what to expect in the coming months. Again I submit here, that the perceived lack of thinking about the future is a way in which she is able to protect herself.

Sammy

The other participant classed as a young parent, Sammy, during her interview does not state that she does not plan for the future, but when I ask her what her plans are

for the future, she responded: 'Oh I don't know, (laughs). Not many plans, I got a kid. (laughs)' (Sammy, interview transcript). Although she is not directly saying she does not plan for the future, I submit that she is recognising that plans she might have had for herself, no longer come first, her future is her baby. The idea of not really planning for the future was not experienced by the young parents alone.

Ben

Studying for his degree, Ben was not sure of what he would do post degree. He had expressed ideas of the things he might like to do during his interview but he did not have a detailed plan:

Me: What's the plan for post degree?

Ben: Uh, not sure yet, my mother was asking me, I want to see what I get this year now, cos obviously I got to do my dissertation and my last few exams then, I think it all depends on what I get, like um, well I haven't really got much of a plan after my degree at all (pause) (Ben, interview transcript).

We have seen in previous chapters how Ben has expressed an interest in working in planning in the council and in teaching. I submit that even though he does not have concrete plans for the future, he has a willingness to be open to ideas. The above quote makes reference to his mother asking him about his future thinking, which suggests that his mother is using her capital as a teacher to encourage his agency.

Laura,

Also studying at university, Laura recognised a familiar consideration to future planning put forward by the generation before her. As she was narrating her hopes and dreams for the future, she concluded by saying: 'These are all plans and my mam says anything can happen and change really quickly so I have looked at it that way too' (Laura, interview transcript).

Josh

An interview with Josh highlighted just how his world of work provides a barrier to making plans for the future. Josh works for two different agencies on the railways. After leaving school, he did a three-month apprenticeship with a training academy. During the interview, he gave an insight into just how precarious his world of work is.

He doesn't know if he has work from one day to the next. He waits outside a pub located just off a main road to be picked up for work in the morning and he says that he doesn't know who he will be working with each day. What was incredibly apparent during the interview with Josh, was his refusal to worry about, think about or plan for the future. He took the attitude, in his words: 'what's the point, you could be dead tomorrow' (Josh, interview transcript). It seemed so defeated a positioning on life for a young man of his age. His attitude towards the future made a lot more sense when he was talking about his job. With reference to the precarity of his world of work he said:

the only reason I don't like it is because you know you could be out of work the week after... so you can't save up to get your mortgage or anything with this job. I want to move out as soon as possible but it's just not going to happen just not with this job (Josh, Interview transcript).

It is evident to see how for a person in Josh's shoes, it is hard enough to think about and plan for the next couple of weeks, let alone the distant future.

Luke

As we have seen previously Luke is in college studying to become a chef. In considering his plans for the future he states:

Luke: like, I don't really tend to plan things, I kind of sort of go along with whatever happens (pause)

RM: have you always been like that?

Luke: Yeah. And if someone says, oh we are going here, I'm like, alright. I just tend to go along with whatever is happening so, I do just tend to take it as it comes. (pause) (Luke, interview transcript).

He makes it clear that he does not plan and goes along with whatever happens. I submit that he has learnt to think this way. That life has taught him that circumstances can change quickly and he has adapted to be able to change when it does happen. It is easy to understand how planning for the future would be difficult when things change often or quickly. I submit that expectations being met encourages hope but if expectations are not met, it becomes more difficult to have hope in a future. I argue that by not maintaining expectations and instead adopting an attitude of 'I don't plan' or 'just go along with it', the young person retains their hope and therefore still

utilises hope as a form of agency. The end of the above quote also pays tribute to the importance of community and next work of family and friends.

As we saw in the last chapter, many of the young people who are in work are working for agencies and on zero-hour contracts. In such circumstances it is easy to see how these circumstances stop them planning for the future. It seemingly puts the control of not just their future employment, but the future of all other areas of their lives into the hands of their employer. However, an inability to contemplate the future does not begin with the transition to employment. Some of the young people make reference to this when considering their time in compulsory education. Maybe this lack of a clear future vision and post school trajectory, for some young people, acted against the intrinsic motivation needed to complete post compulsory study.

In her interview whilst recalling her memories of what her future plans were whilst she was still in school, Chelsea noted:

I didn't know what I wanted to do, no, that's why I stayed on, and obviously then looked into college and stuff like that, which I needed the grades for anyway though I had no choice but to stay on and carry on with my GCSE. And I went to college then and I quit college in the end (Chelsea, Interview transcript).

I argue that this research has evidenced how vital it is for young people to have a clear picture of what they would like life to look like in order to have the motivation and determination to overcome obstacles on the way to achieving an aspiration.

Hannah

Hannah provides us with insight of how she views her ability to think about and plan for the future as carer for her mother. She notes that she feels she has to put others first which means that her future becomes something far off as she experiences the day to day reality of caring for someone else:

Hannah: but I'm a carer and the environment is not the best, so that's kind of like an impasse at the moment, umm, (pause) I just take it as it is really (sighs) (Hannah, Interview Transcript).

Hannah expresses how much she enjoys doing what she is doing at the moment with her voluntary role and talks of how she would like to explore this further. She talks of how being a carer is limiting her future plans but she does not go into further detail about that; she did mention earlier in the interview that she is a carer for her mother.

Basically, I don't plan very far ahead, do you know what I mean? Umm, I don't have a lot of money to do a lot, you know, my family doesn't have a lot of money to do a lot, my family relies on me, so I can't really up and make decisions without consulting them or thinking of them you know, and so my (sighs) my life's not really my own (Hannah, Interview transcript).

Hannah explains that she does not plan very far ahead and presents her reasons around family finances and how her family rely on her. She had explained earlier in her interview how her carers allowance supports the family and the maintenance of her car to be able to provide family transport. She states that her life is not really her own. I submit that she is living a reality where she is desperately aware of her family's need for support and this affects her plans for the future and her present decisions.

I submit that the data utilised here, evidences the argument that the young people from this disadvantages community find difficulty in future planning for various reasons depending upon their vantage point. I argue that future thinking is important to the young people but it requires hope utilised as a form of agency to be able to either change their present situation or consider future plans. I also submit that for many of these young people, the project workers helped to shape the young person's thinking whilst in school by providing a supportive role, encouraging hope and cultivating agency.

7.4 Summary

In summary this chapter has evidenced the central argument that, an imagined future, an aspiration, is not easy to contemplate when living a day by day existence, in a world of financial disadvantage and economic precarity, as is the case for many of these young people.

I have argued that there is an inextricable link between hope and agency, that hope is indeed a form of agency and therefore a form of capital which at times is not available to be utilised. This inability to plan for the future evidenced by the young people presents itself as a lack of hope which then impacts upon future thinking. I argue that this then impacts upon the way in which decisions are made in the present. Literature e.g Crawford & Rossiter, 2006 cited in Noble-Carr et al, 2014 pp 392; Evans 2016) presents a narrative which tends to present the future thinking of young adults as often limited. Through the literature we are beginning to see more complex connections drawn between the role of habitus as a form of agency considered as hope. I believe that the findings in this chapter enable a greater understanding of the aspirations explored in chapter 4 and just how vital a role was played by the project worker in the lives of the young people who accessed them. It also adds to the understanding of place presented in chapter 5. A more in depth understanding is given to the situation of casual work that some of the young people find themselves in in chapter 6 and how this then impacts upon the future thinking of these young people who have grown up on the margins of society in the heart of a disadvantaged community. Overall, this chapter gives greater insight to the role of family and community when living a day to day existence in which the future is difficult to imagine.

I propose that this chapter evidences a need for discourse around aspiration, transition and future thinking. I argue that these elements require more exploration to understand how aspiration is lived and experienced, not just in future thinking in young adult hood but also through the trajectory of schooling development and transitions. The next chapter leads a discussion on all of the arguments presented in this thesis and their implication for future policy and academic research.

8 CHAPTER EIGHT: Discussion and Conclusion

8.1 Introduction

This concluding chapter summarises this thesis by providing a discussion around the findings presented in the previous four chapters in relation to the four different research questions initially presented by this thesis in chapter one. This chapter will also explore the issues in my findings which are significant but not reflected or anticipated in the research questions or the literature review. It also addresses the implications of the work for further research and for policy and practice.

Under the heading of 'Young people's access to employment in disadvantaged communities in Wales', the main goal of this research was to investigate how young people from unskilled households fared in gaining employment in the local contexts of poor work and job shortages, particularly in some of the disadvantaged communities in Wales. In this research, the voices of the young people have always been central and of paramount importance in enabling me to gain both understanding and insight to how they understand and experience their realities and positioning in relation to education, employment and community. The main aim of this research has been to try to get into the shoes of the young people, to understand how conditions are lived and experienced by them as they move through the early formative years, right through to the time in which they transition into employment. As it was detailed in chapter three, this research has utilised both empirical research and secondary data to enable this aim to be achieved. The research questions underpinning this research were:

- What aspirations do young people from disadvantaged communities express, and how can the empirical work undertaken inform the current policy-agenda on young people, poverty and aspirations?
- What particular challenges do young people from disadvantaged communities and unskilled households face in transitioning into employment?
- How are these challenges actually experienced by young people in their

everyday lives and concrete social situations: in families, peer-groups and neighbourhoods?

- How can accessing real-life, close-up contextual factors allow us to understand these challenges?

Running through this thesis has been the argument that, in this political age of individualism, working class communities have been made to appear lacking. Welsh and Central Government policy adhering to the precepts of Social Capital accounts of community, have promoted a deficit view of communities within ex-industrial localities.

The same communities which once were the bed rock of hard work; the economic pillars on which the rest of the economy was built. This has all been stripped away, leaving behind a working class population who are told that it is their fault that they don't have jobs, their fault that their children's educational capacity and attainment is substandard and their fault that they don't aspire to more.

The reductionist policies, born though the previous two decades, notably associated with 'Communities First' has heightened the discourse around 'disadvantaged communities' who bear the stereotypes of a leeching working class, seemingly unable to work even if they could find it, unable to really imagine a future beyond where they are even if they dream it and are unable to achieve grades needed for the future whilst in school, because their parents do not value education enough.

I have argued that that decades of individualisation has stripped away any positive view of 'working class community' all the while suggesting that the people who find themselves in this situation, at the centre of these government policies, should make use of social capital to further their life course trajectories. I have argued that the overall deficit view, is a class issue that so strikingly blames the people. In doing so, this deficit view denies the importance of the community in providing a much-

needed support network. It appears then that this makes the aspiration to stay physically near to those that they love, is an aspiration which in terms of meritocracy and neoliberalism rhetoric is seemingly redundant.

I made use of the Roots and Wings analogy, to illustrate the ways in which the young peoples' growing roots and wings are affected by what the young person sees and experience around them from the early formative years through to the 'all important' transition to employment. I argued that hope is a form of agency, a way in which wings are utilised. But very few of the cohort that formed the basis of the interviews and field work have hope in future plans. How can they with the sheer uncertainty of day to day existence where you need to be focusing on your roots?

I argue that one of the reasons that 'social class massively divides girls and young women in terms of their educational attainment and life trajectories' (Walkerdine 1989) is that dreams of staying close to family, of being able to do a job which pays to live rather than 'live to work' is no longer seen as an acceptable aspiration and therefore the support of government in providing local employment just does not really exist.

Instead, the aspiration rhetoric for some, has translated into 'left behind', 'work-shy', 'less valuable'. Working class jobs just don't fit the rationale of aspiration and yet they are still important and needed. Somehow, in the push for 'aspiration', networks of communal beingness have been rendered unimportant to the individual strive for 'more' and yet social class is not at all present in the policy documents. It's the ghost part of the deficit model of community and all of the interventions it seemingly requires.

The next section of this chapter describes in summary form a response to each of the presented research questions before considering findings that are significant but not reflected in the research questions.

8.2 First Research Question

What aspirations do young people from disadvantaged communities express, and how can the empirical work undertaken inform the current policy-agenda on young people, poverty and aspirations?

The evidence presented in chapter 4, enabled a temporal account of how the young people in this study were able to express aspirations from a young age and that these changed throughout their time in the formal education system. It was evident that the young people within the disadvantaged community of this research expressed aspirations which changed throughout their lifetime. The majority of the young people were able to recall a childhood aspirations which differed from the ones that were documented by the P&W when the young people were around sixteen years of age. Some of the young people also noted that during the childhood years, they had many ideas of what they might want to be when they grow up. Arguably, many of the younger aspirations presented were aiming high and would be expected to be seen among the middle class. This then supports the idea that young people from working class backgrounds, in particular this disadvantaged community either sub-consciously or consciously have learnt as they grow older, to understand their positioning, the expectations put upon them and also the likelihood of achieving certain aspirations.

8.2.1 There is no lack of aspiration

Chapter four presented an argument as a direct response to the first research question. Tackling the first part of the question 'What aspirations do young people from disadvantaged communities express', the overall argument presented in the chapter is one which submits that young people from disadvantaged communities do indeed have aspirations. They have childhood dreams of what their post school trajectories may look like, but many of the young people learn that they will not

achieve them. This argument provides weighting to the notion of the transition to employment being something which begins prior to the end of compulsory schooling, arguably instead taking place in the early formative years in line with the construction of habitus. This data evidences that for the minority of the young people who do achieve what at times is a somewhat altered and re-evaluated aspiration, the role of the project workers in providing tailored support to the young people as individuals was indeed vital. The spreadsheets provided by P&W recorded the aspirations desired by the young people as they were in year 11 in school. Across the two cohorts, these were wide ranging and, for many of the young people, they were also broad rather than containing specific focus or career plan.

The analysis of the data presented in chapter four, also discussed the intersectionality of class and gender within aspiration formation. The young people who took part in this study, and the ones who I had data about, who I was not able to interview, had aspirations. There are only seven young people who were documented as 'not sure' from a cohort of forty three and as chapter 4 evidenced, the aspirations expressed were wide ranging. The intersectionality of class and gender is still an influencing factor in the formation of aspiration and the type of employment pursued. As literature around aspiration would expect, there were some aspirations which were clearly similar to what the young people were able to see around them and therefore considered viable employment options. Chapter 4 also addressed similar perceptions recorded during ethnographic study with the younger teenagers who lived on the estate, with their conceptions of post school options still being largely gendered with certain options such as labourer and brickie being respectable options for the working class men on the estate. I also highlighted in chapter 4, how the male responses in the above table are more often specific with clear employment opportunities and job roles being named. The female responses on the whole are much more vague and presented as general areas or sectors of work.

Mann et al (2020) presented the argument that aspirations were formulated as young as age seven (see chapter two). This study has found that this is only part of the story. This research has illustrated that aspirations are formulated at an early age, around the time of primary schooling, however, proposed also is that these aspirations are not fixed. The early aspirations continue to change throughout childhood, teenage years and beyond. Instead, chapter four evidenced how the narrative of aspiration, as recalled by the young people's earliest memories, showed how aspiration itself could be seen as a fluid concept continually changing, moulded and shaped. This builds on previous literature which presents aspirations as shaped by what the young people see lived out around them, the opportunities they perceive are available to them. This study has found that another crucial factor in aspiration formation and mapping out was also the positioning of a more knowledgeable other. The project worker was able to bridge the barriers and provide really, practical and progressive support which enabled the young people they work with to succeed in attaining their aspiration. However, this was not always the case. There are young people who received support, re-took exams and were still unable to get into a university of choice. There are also other students whose support needs were just so complex that much of the project workers time was spent getting them to school with little time for much else. I propose that for further research and policy, the cruciality of the role of the project worker could be explored further. What was evident in the analysis provided during this study, was that different young people required different levels of support from the project worker for different reasons, then of course, there were those young people who did not access them at all.

In chapter four, I presented four different types of access and involvement with the project worker namely: those young people where there was no mention of them in the project worker diaries; project worker sought contact with the young person in relation to post school aspiration; support for academic related issues including travel and support for academic and pastoral support and guidance.

Chapter two detailed how I mapped out information obtained on each of the individual young people by P&W into a timeline for each of the young people. I cannot stress enough how for so many of these young people, the project worker played an invaluable role. She was able to mitigate barriers, provide alternatives, stand as an advocate and teach hope, this will be explored later in this chapter. This was important, as chapter four illustrated, there were cases the young people would not have been attending school had it not have been for the project worker going to their homes and taking them there. The project workers positioning as informal within the institutional environment of school meant that they were able to discuss with the teachers the needs of the young people and then with the school agree on a best course of action when necessary. There are undoubtedly young people in this cohort who would not have continued to re-take exams to try and get a grade needed without the project worker.

I argued that as positive as this positioning was however, there were also young people in this cohort who would have not considered going to university if it were not for the support and guidance of the project worker, providing the hand holding needed through the different steps involved.

I argue that the project worker was able to forge a relationship of trust with the young person and this happened even though there were occasions when the project worker could have been better resourced and equipped.

8.2.2 Recommendations for Future Research, Policy and Practice

One of the unexpected findings that came up which warrants further research is the cruciality of the school years 9 and 10 in terms of the young person's aspiration. This finding was outside of my research questions but two of the participants made note

of this being a period of time where for them, things changed academically and they started to not perform as well in school and at this point they also realized the unlikelihood of attaining their aspiration. There was not the scope to explore this further in this thesis. I propose that further academic study could explore this in further detail to gain more in depth understanding of the complexities of the sociological and psychological considerations with regard to aspiration in these school years. What is it specifically about these school years that has such a bearing on aspiration?

As a recommendation for future government policy, I recommend using the role of informal project workers within the formal educational setting, as a strategy for the support of young people in considering, and prepare their aspirations for future employment and post compulsory education journey. The benefits of this are that young people will be better supported in considering their future options and making decisions on their future by having the advice and support of a more knowledgeable other in an informal capacity within a formal context. The project worker this study talks of was local to the area and therefore aware of local issues and family connections.

Ultimately, the discourse around aspiration has to be changed. It is just not good enough to continue to enable the classist view of working class aspirations as always needing to be raised. Instead we need to explore further the understanding that young people's aspirations are indeed fluid. There needs to be a discussion within the policy context, around how can the young person be supported in attaining their aspiration. It also needs to be noted that this thesis raises the question of aspiration becoming about a means of survival. With so many young people in this study presenting a drive to stay away from using the benefit system (this will be addressed in another section of this chapter). I propose that future research could address the question: How much of a bearing does this desire to stay away from benefits have on aspirations held and aspirations worked towards? How does this shape young

people's thinking in terms of their future aspirations? If the young people are in fear of needing to use the benefit system, does this then, in part, take away the ability to dream about the future, or imagine differently to what is already known and understood by the young person as a way of minimizing the risk of needing to rely on the system for money? In these instances, if this were the case, it could be argued that aspiration itself becomes about survival, a balance between what is real and what is achievable. I come back to the avoidance of the benefit system in more detail later on in this chapter.

It has been noted that the middle class parenting style is one of organization and structure compared to working class parenting styles, which view the child's development as unfolding spontaneously (Wilson and Worsley 2021); with the parents endorsing the child to be free to organize their own activities. Is there a comparison to be drawn between parenting style differences of the middle class and the working class, and therefore the conversations engaged in around future thinking and aspiration at home? This is embedded within Bourdieu's theory of reproduction. Maybe then, if this is understood of parenting styles, and therefore ultimately the development of both habitus and capital of the child in in the early formative years, should the same understanding be extended to aspiration? It is not that young people from disadvantaged communities lack aspiration, rather that they are indeed formulated differently?

Aspiration is often looked at as 'a point in time' or a life stage of transition or emerging adult hood. It strikes me that it is seemingly always focused on the teenage years and young adult hood, but I propose that this thesis poses the question of how aspiration should be considered as a fluid and constant topic, not an entity which stands alone, nor one linked only to educational attainment. I argue that more work needs to be done to consider how aspiration could be understood as a developmental process. Bringing together the work of Bourdieu in understanding aspiration as part of habitus formation effected by what is experienced and

understood, but also as a socio-psychological understanding of how then the view of early formative development shapes aspiration. I argue that the narrative around aspiration should be broadened and become less obsessed simply with academic attainment. A deficit view of aspiration can only be expressed by the middle-classes who monitor what is perceived as an acceptable aspiration, or one worthy of being raised to when they are considered in a system which is orientated toward the middle class. Instead, I argue that rather than a deficit narrative of working class aspiration, there needs to be a narrative which supports all aspirations as equally valid.

8.2.3 Most of the aspirations were respectable or aiming high.

Many of the young people's aspirations were respectable or aiming high. In recalling their primary school years, many of the children were aspiring to a wide range of different professions such as teacher, doctor, vet, astronaut etc. Not one of the young people recalled aspiring to working in a shop, or other low paid jobs in childhood. There was more than one occurrence of astronaut being listed as a job that the young person aspires to as a child. This meant that something at some point changes for these young people, and that aspiration is not as simple as having a future plan to work towards.

8.2.4 Fluidity of aspiration.

Literature notes that aspiration is affected by what the young people see around them (Jones 2005). I propose that that this is not always the case. Chapter 4 evidenced the young people's stories of their own aspirations, and used comparatives between the aspiration they recall holding in primary school, the aspiration recorded as they were leaving secondary school and their aspiration for the future now, at the time of the interviews. Most of the young people had a different recalled aspiration whilst they were in primary school compared to when they were coming to the end of secondary school. Many of the young people also

recalled wanting to be lots of different things when they grow up, in their childhood view of aspiration.

The young people often could not voice why their aspirations had changed, it was often something that they accepted just happens as you grow up. In chapter 4, we saw how Matt wanted to be an astronaut, he recalled that it was something that he really wanted to do. For him the realization that this was an unattainable aspiration came whilst he was at secondary school when one of his teachers had asked him what his post school plans were. I wrote in that chapter about how he felt at the realization that that aspiration would not be attainable. He referenced the reactions of his teacher as one of the reasons he felt he needed to change his aspiration and also how he recognized that that wasn't not the sort of thing that people he was growing up with aspired to do as another reason that he realized that his aspiration was unattainable.

Laura who had traveled the furthest away to university aspired to go into politics and be an MP. In her interview she made reference to what affected her aspirations. She recognized that this would not be easy to achieve but she still hoped it would one day become a reality even while acknowledging her gender and class origins would likely make this difficult. Throughout these chapters, the words 'not from round here', and 'not people like me' have frequently been used in relation to the young people's discussions around aspirations. I suggest then that these four findings chapters have illustrated that social ties, roots and relationships with others are have a biggest impact upon aspiration consideration. I submit that an implication for further research, is to explore the role of poverty and class in aspiration formation, specifically in these contexts.

I conclude then, that aspiration understood as part of habitus is shaped as habitus is shaped in the early formative years. It is informed through what is understood and

experienced and this then changes with time as the children grow and their range of experiences expands. It is linked to spatial, educational and psychological affects. The next chapter section discusses the next research question: “What particular challenges do young people from disadvantaged communities and unskilled households face in transitioning to employment?”

8.3 Second Research Question

What particular challenges do young people from disadvantaged communities and unskilled households face in transitioning into employment?

This next section discusses the particular challenges young people from this disadvantaged community face in transitioning into employment. An expected finding, which has already been touched upon in relation to aspiration previously, was the challenge of avoiding the benefit system. I argue that more research needs to be undertaken to explore the significance of this further. I question whether this evident fear of needing to use the benefit system, not only impacts upon young people considering aspirations for the future but it also has the potential to impact upon the working class’s speedy transition into work, comparative to middle class counterparts (Shildrick et al 2012). I submit that in understanding this, we might better understand the reasons for why speedy transitions are made. This could also help explain the prevalence of casualised and precarious work. This is addressed further in the next chapter section.

Returning to the roots and wings analogy utilised throughout this thesis, another particular challenge which has presented itself was the centrality of home. This presented challenges for young people in transitioning to employment. Largely this was because secure work with decent contracts was not perceived to be available within the area. Notably, some of the biggest employers in the area used agency staff on a casual basis. For some of the young people who felt grounded to place, and aspired to stay local, this ultimately limited the work available to them. The roots established within the community between networks of family and friends, were also a contributing factor to the young person finding work (chapter six). It was for this

reason that I presented the roots developed by the young person whilst growing up in a disadvantaged community as both a safety net and a constraint. An aspiration to stay local, therefore, needs to be recognised as valid and important.

A lack of ability and at times the lack of willingness to travel was presented by the young people. They talked of how they would not look far beyond the locality for work as the public transport system was not only expensive but also not straight forward to use. For example there is not a direct bus link to the nearest big city.

A finding which was not expected was the use of the terms 'normal' and 'comfy' on the part of the young people as they considered their futures. Although this is not a new finding within the sociological literature (Bryant and Ellen 2015), it does again strengthen the argument that aspirations and subsequent labour market entry are more detailed and complex than a simple transition which comes with age and the conclusion the compulsory schooling. I believe this shines further light upon the psycho-social affects of aspiration formation, especially as a way of understanding just how multi-faceted aspiration is and suggesting that both sociological literature and Welsh Government policy need to have more focus in understanding the emotional toll experienced by young people of working class backgrounds.

Another finding in relation to this research question, was within the context of finding and gaining employment there were the attitudes of 'who you know' and 'nothing round here'. The spatial account in chapter 5 detailed the narratives around the impact of place and the bearing it has on the lives of the young people. It was evident that for many of the young people there was a view that there was not much employment locally with contracts and salaries. Many of the young people believed that getting a job was not about academic achievement, but instead about who you know who would be able to get you into work. This then also linked with the challenge which was voiced by the majority of the young people which were

interviewed was the challenge of staying grounded by their roots the locality and the relationships within it, whilst also gaining employment. Many of the young people voiced a desire to stay local and did not want to move away. Although for those who had moved away, this became more bearable by being able to travel home, to the place where they feel most rooted.

Being a parent presented its own particular challenges. As we have seen throughout the findings chapters, there were young people in the cohort who were mothers. The young people in the study who were mothers, voiced their concerns around not working until the baby starts school, and suggested that even then this would be difficult during the holidays and outside of school hours. So in reality they would be looking for local work between 9.30am and 2.30pm to fit in with the school run. This presents a huge barrier to employment for these young people. The young people as illustrated in chapter 5, took the view of 'its my child my responsibility' when it comes to child care arrangements although, family support on the estate was noted as a way in which they could be supported into employment with family providing childcare.

Public transport was also a challenge to employment noted during the study with considerations of the cost of public transport and the lack of it from the estate. The young people would need to change at the local town to get to the nearest big city. As Chelsea noted, it would not have been worth her travelling to her minimum wage job for what it would cost her in public transport and finances so instead she relied on her mother and friends to enable her to get to and from work the majority of the time.

8.3.1 Avoidance of the benefit system

The argument presented in chapter 6 is that, all of the young people expressed a desire to work and there was a prevalence of agency work and casualised employment among the young people on the estate. The complexities of every day

existence faced by these young people are numerous and multi-dimensional, effected by salient social class, gender and travel ability which impacted on employment availability and opportunity. All of these need to be negotiated to navigate constantly changing realities. This argument is advanced against the argument that young people from disadvantaged communities don't want to work. Against the rhetoric which depicts these young people and others like them as idle, lazy and work shy. As a counter argument to this narrative, I presented here findings which evidence that these young people do indeed want to work and illustrate the way in which the young people experience the world of work with the complexities and contentions they encounter.

Chapter 6 illustrated the everyday realities experienced by the young people who took part in this study through the lens of employment. I had not anticipated the resentment and fear that was presented by the young people about the benefit system, and how much this featured in their narratives even though it was something I did not ask about. The young people expressed their dread of needing to use it and how this in part fuels a desire to work in anything. Sophie's narrative as she considered how different her life would be had she not have entered higher education mentioned first that she felt she would have undoubtedly have at a baby and be living in a council house. She stated this as though she felt it would be what is expected of her as a norm of being from where she was from.

A conscious avoidance of the benefit system, I submit evidences the struggle of working-class young people, those trapped in a cycle of low pay and no pay, to those without the potential security of employment. Is it better for someone to be engaged in any work what ever, it is than to be in receipt of government support? Chapter 6 illustrated the psychological effect using the benefit system had on the young people and how they stated a conscious avoidance of it. Some of the young people gave a very strong reaction to how much they hated the benefit system and would avoid as far as possible. Sophie clearly painted a picture of this in her interview as she stated

that her worst nightmare would be to end up on benefits and that she wanted to be able to get to the day she retires and say that she had never used the benefit system.

I propose that this must bear on the young person's aspirations as they consider what they would like to do upon leaving school. It will also impact upon the employment opportunities they engage with. A finding I had not expected, I wonder just how much weighting the avoidance of benefits carries and suggest that this is a factor which should be considered in future research addressing narratives of aspiration.

I recommend that a question for further social science research to explore is: do young people feel forced to make decisions about their employment out of a fear of needing to use the benefit system.

8.4 Third Research Question

How are these challenges actually experienced by young people in their everyday lives and concrete social situations: in families, peer-groups and neighbourhoods?

The next question this thesis posed was, how are these challenges actually experienced by young people in their everyday lives and concrete social situations? Chapter 5 was a spatial chapter which discusses the key themes around the area of challenges within the context of space, place, community and belonging. The argument presented in this chapter is that community has provided a central role throughout the lives of these young people in a number of ways; impacting on their past experiences, present circumstances and also in considering their futures. Community and belonging impacted upon their past experiences of otherness, stigma and identity. Their present circumstances as these young people place value on the need for support of family and friends. Belonging to this community impacts upon how they think about their futures as many of the young people expressed a desire to stay within the locality when considering employment and Higher Education.

An aspiration to stay local was evident amongst the majority of young people, including those who had left the area for work or university study. It was apparent that for some of the young people, knowing that they could return home supported them in their distance from the community. I argue that this in itself needs to be recognised as an important aspiration. Staying local needs to be seen as valuable. An aspiration to stay local was evident amongst the majority of young people, including those who had left the area for work or university study. It was apparent that for some of the young people, knowing that they could return home supported them in their distance from the community. I argue that this in itself needs to be recognised as an important aspiration. Locality being seen as valuable should also be supported by government in creating job opportunities which provide secure reliable employment. I argue that the desire to stay local can be understood and experienced as roots entwining together to create support and safety net. The foundations upon future aspirations and plans are built.

There are also challenges in transitioning to employment around gender, many of the female participants expressed that there were more employment opportunities for men that do not require higher levels of education and training. Chapter four and chapter five evidenced the still significant role of gender in the how the young person considers and thinks about work opportunities. It was evident not only amongst the cohort but also between the younger teenagers that certain jobs such as labourer was a masculine role where as caring jobs were more feminine roles. This no doubt impacts upon the type of work young people are applying for, and also the type of work young people are supporting each other into or are themselves supported into by family or friends.

It was evidenced throughout the interviews, that these challenges were often experienced as a lack of future thinking. Or an inability to think about the future at all. The participants voiced how they would refuse to worry about the future or think

too far ahead. I argue that this could be viewed as being a result of hardship, of plans not working out, as the result of uncertainty or survival.

8.4.1 Precarity of employment traps?

One of the ways the findings chapters of this thesis have enabled an understanding of the close-up contextual factors allow for an understanding of how the challenges young people in a disadvantaged community face in accessing employment, is by gaining insight to how the young people feel about their own situation of precarious, casual employment. This is unpacked in this chapter section.

Supporting each other into work is not a new finding, but it does add to the literature throughout the decades which has explored the ideas of weak and strong ties (Granovetter, 1973) and suggests that even with an arguably deficit view of community, relationships within communities are still important in gaining employment. This is also going to further impact upon aspiration and how these young people imagine their future employment positions whilst they are still at school. Chapter 6 illustrated the young people's narratives around employment. Chelsea narrated her story of how she experiences casual employment and doesn't know when she will be working next. She talked of how much she disliked the uncertainty of her situation and hoped that one day she would have a 'proper job'. In considering further her comment of 'proper job' she talked of how she did not want to be doing shift work in a factory with no guarantee of when she would be working for the rest of her life. Though she does not mind what she does.

Chelsea's story was one of instability and a longing for a change of situation and she was not alone in the cohort to be thinking this way. I question how Chelsea's precarious employment does not enable her to feel fully adult. And believe this raises questions around how precarious employment and casual contracts impacts upon

mental health. She also talks of how she would be happy to do many different types of jobs, though she is not actively pursuing an alternative position. I believe this also raises questions for further research around the impact of casual employment in looking for other work. Although this is something that I am not able to comment on, I propose that this is an area for further sociological research.

Josh was working on the rails doing track maintenance for an agency, he had similar experiences to Chelsea and talked of how he could not imagine being able to do anything else. He made reference to needing an education to get work, an education that he didn't feel he had. This led to an overall feeling of feeling trapped in doing what he was doing and believed that he was not capable of anything else. I think that this is questions around whether young people in Josh's situation really did feel not qualified enough or whether the precarious situation they have found themselves in, impacted upon their confidence in looking for and applying for alternative employment.

Stories like that narrated by Matt in chapter 4, also told of a quickly changing situation in terms of employment. Having been engaged in casual work, he would move from job to job without working for an employer for a length of time. I believe that this then raises questions for further research around how the employability of the young person is viewed by future employers with so many short term changes on a cv. Thus, leading to the question: does casual employment actually trap young people in their situation or limit their future options.

There was also a positive side to casual contracts. Particularly the participants engaged in university, could present the benefits to being in engaging in casual employment as they were able to make the work fit with their academic study and travel to and from university. Arguably, this has enabled the participants to be more self-reliant during their HE journey.

To summarise this chapter section, literature has already documented that young people from poorer backgrounds often make the speedier transitions to employment (MacDonald et al 2007). This study adds to that literature some understanding of why this may be the case in some instances with a present fearful avoidance of the benefit system and also a potential to become trapped in a cycle of precarious, casualised work could provide an understanding of this idea of speedy transitions (MacDonald et al 2007). I recommend that for future policy and practice that by drawing on the role of an informal youth work position within the secondary school, there may be the possibility to mitigate these speedy transitions for some of the young people as the youth worker in a school. As the project worker diaries from P&W have illustrated the project workers were able to support the young people into their post compulsory education choices by really knowing the young person and understanding them, providing them with information and signposting them to relevant people and places.

8.5 Fourth Research Question

How can accessing real-life, close-up contextual factors allow us to understand these challenges?

By exploring the young people's narratives, their transitions in their own words, we are better able to gain insight to the challenges as they see them and gain some understanding of the impact. Two of the young people had been through the traumatic experience of losing a parent, it is easy to see how for these two young people, the future can seem uncertain. I argue here that future thinking, specifically hope as a form of agency is a contextual factor which greatly impacts upon the day to day existence of the young people, both in their present circumstance and their future thinking.

The work of the project worker was also able to access real life, close up contextual factors which were impacting on the young people and presenting challenges through building up relationships with the young people. The tailored support offered to the young people who accessed which was detailed in the project worker diaries, highlighted how important a role the project workers played in fostering hope in the young person by enabling them to envisage their next steps and make positive choices to enable them to work towards their aspirations. As a model, this informal approach of positioning a project worker acting as an advocate and providing brokerage for the young person, arguably has enabled the young people to utilise the support they were given and translate that into hope and therefore agency of future thinking. It was apparent in comparing the project worker diaries and the interview transcripts, that the amount and type of guidance these young people received varied greatly across the cohort as seen in chapter four. The project workers encouragement was important in the young people retaking GCSEs, attending college open days and ultimately thinking about their futures beyond the school gates. I propose that future sociological and psychosocial research needs to explore this further. Policy needs to consider the positive response of the young people to the project worker in future interactions.

Policy could also address how a programme like this could be extended beyond the school years and maintained into the FE and HE sector (like it is with care children) to support in seeking the advice and taking the steps needed to achieve an aspiration. It's all well and good saying working class aspirations need to be raised but I argue that working class aspirations need to be supported and practically formulated first, with support put in place which aids the mitigation of barriers as and when they are experienced.

Chapter 7, illustrated the findings which were orientated towards the future. What was evident in the chapter was that there was a lack of future thinking amongst the young people with a strong desire to 'live for today'. We have read about Josh who

waits at the roundabout at the bottom of a slip road to a busy A-road early every morning, to see if the bus will stop to pick him up for work that day. From day to day he does not know if he has work or who he will be working with if he does. With so much uncertainty in his employment situation, his way of making money to ensure his needs are met it is easy to understand his unwillingness or inability to plan for the future.

8.5.1 A lack of future planning

The argument embedded throughout chapter 7 is one which states the difficulties of imagining the future and the vitality of hope as a form of agency. This chapter evidenced the argument that an imagined future is not easy to contemplate when living a day by day existence, in a world of financial disadvantage and economic precarity as is the case for many of these young people. I argue that there is an inextricable link between hope and agency, that hope is indeed a form of agency and therefore a form of capital which at times is not available to be utilised. This inability to plan for the future evidenced by the young people presents itself as a lack of hope. I argue that this then impacts upon the way in which decisions are made in the present as a direct result of tangible agency within aspiration. The utilisation of hope as agency, or the lack of this, resulted in the young people's imagined futures lacking consideration around work and were focussed on where they would live.

I propose that there is a learnt behaviour to not to worry about future, and submit that this is for self-preservation. The young people in this study as we saw in chapter 7, talked of the times when they had lost hope, or things had not gone to plan are squashed too many times you stop hoping for certain things which could explain the centrality of home, a future which is uncertain or unstable will surely anchor ones roots more firmly to what is already known and understood.

The analysis presented suggests that the project workers enabled hope as agency whilst working with the young people in school. They enabled hope by providing opportunities, supporting and encouraging the young people. Arguably this would have encouraged the young people to believe in themselves and have confidence in making post compulsory plans. The project worker had the capacity to encourage hope, teach hope and enable hope. I question how this could be continued through a transition period and whether a government policy of mentoring could support some of the most vulnerable young people in their transitions. I conclude this section by suggesting that hope should indeed be seen as a form of social capital and one which enables agency in planning for the future and decision making.

8.5.2 University students looking forward to jobs which they have worked for

All of the participants who were engaged in university study stated that once they had completed their degrees, they wanted to go into employment that their education has afforded them. They wanted to have jobs which were related to the subjects they have studied. I submit that the participants believed that university study would afford them the security of a full time job, doing something they enjoy. They have seemingly engaged with the meritocratic view of education in which education itself is seen as step up, regardless of where ultimately the students end up employed. This could be followed up with further research.

8.6 A metaphor of 'roots and wings' connected with Bourdieu's concept of Habitus

The metaphor of 'roots and wings' has been utilised throughout this thesis as a way of understanding the young people's connectedness and rootedness to their home communities and families. It has also been useful in understanding the future thinking of the young people in terms of aspiration, hopes, fears, dreams and

realities. This section explores how the roots and wings metaphor connects with Bourdieu's concept of Habitus. In chapter 1 (pages 8 and 9) I presented a description of how a roots and wings metaphor can help to visualise the inter-connectedness of affective relationships within working class communities.

It is recognized that within Bourdieu's conceptualisation of habitus the understanding of this concept needs to be understood as active in the way that it relates to the field (Bourdieu 1990 cited in Reay 2004, p. 432). In a similar way, I argue that the wings within the metaphor of roots and wings are fluid and changing in relation to the growth, development and strengthening of the roots. Reay writes about Bourdieu's meaning of habitus considered as a multi-layered concept with four different aspects (Reay 2004, p. 432). One of these is to consider habitus as 'a compilation of collective and individual trajectories' (Reay 2004, p. 434), that is, a dualism in which the creation of habitus is underpinned by both individuality and 'the whole collective history of family and class that the individual is a member of' (Reay 2004, p. 434). I argue that the within the roots and wings metaphor, the roots, which I liken to habitus, are formed with the same considerations in a similar manner. That is, the interplay of collective history, which was so apparent within the narratives of the young people, tells of the salient narrative of class threaded through their biographical accounts of their own personal past experiences but also their accounts of experience of being from Brynhaul. It is these accounts which depicted roots growing down deep, entwining with each other for support, communality and belonging that I am likening to the fluid formation of habitus.

The notion of habitus is thus embedded within both roots and wings. To refer back to the work of Reay (2004) again, she suggests that the habitus holds a complex interplay, one between both past and present. Both the product of early childhood experience and socialization within the family, habitus is also continuously being restructured with the engagement with the outside world. I argue that these pieces of information, married together with the collective understandings and individual

trajectories, not only impact upon the ways in which the roots grow but also the development of the wings. The wings each individual young person grows, are shaped by all of these factors, as they inform the individual of the options and opportunities available to them.

Kuhn's (1995) work illustrates the importance of understanding social class as something which encompasses a person's whole being, is tied in with emotions and values, thus entailing a deep embodiment (Sayer 2005, p. 22), which lies not only in how one articulates or presents oneself but is at the core of who a person is. Sayer (2005) notes the relationship between the dispositions of class, habitus and emotion. Sayer's thesis has recognized community as an affective beingness (chapter 5) and thus, in that light, the roots within the metaphor are understood as being entwined and embedded by emotion, emotional connections with others and with place. Sayer presents habitus as referring 'to those deeply engrained dispositions which are the products of socialization, particularly in early life, and which orient individuals at a subconscious level to the world around them' (Sayer 2005, p. 23-24).

Understood in this way, I suggest that habitus, as an internalized structure, is reinforced by the roots and the framing of the wings. The roots can also be illustrated as existing within the wider field of socialization, in which habitus is positioned. Therefore, I draw similarities between Bourdieu's concept of Habitus, and the roots and wings metaphor and present this metaphor as one which is sensitive to the work of Bourdieu and enables the illustration of the way in which the young people are both classifying their desire to stay local and vocalizing a need for the support of others around them, from their immediate community and extended family, whilst also illustrating how these roots play a role in shaping and forming the wings and the extent of their utilization. I also want to note here that in the same way that habitus has the ability to be modified (Sayer 2005, p. 25), the wings within the metaphor also have the same fluid capabilities. The metaphor also engages not only with Bourdieu's conceptualization of habitus, but also the Field and cultural capital. Grenfell and

James (1998) also note the importance of the particular conditions of habitus production in noting that: 'habitus makes possible the free production of all the thoughts, perceptions and actions inherent in the particular conditions of its production—and only those' (Bourdieu quoted by Harker, 1992, p.16 cited in Grenvell and James 1998, p. 15). This supports the idea that the wings within the metaphor can be fluid, but also that they fully rely on what is known, experienced and understood by both themselves as individuals, collectively as a community of place and also both in terms of present experience and the inheritance of the past (Reay 2004).

In 'The Weight of the World' (1999), Bourdieu writes about the contradictions of inheritance. He notes that the family 'is necessarily a mix of the contradictions and double binds that arise from the disjunction between the dispositions of the inheritor and the destiny contained within the inheritance itself' (Bourdieu 199, pp. 507-508). This positioning sits alongside the idea of the wings of each of the young people being shaped by what is already known, understood and experienced by the young person, in other words the destiny contained within the inheritance as what is known is often what is passed on by others including family members, teachers, community workers and peers.

The wings and roots metaphor allows for an understanding of how the small scale every day interactions which take place within the roots to have a bearing on how the young people in this study have made their choices and imagined their futures. That, together with how they have voiced their hopes fears and dreams for the future. It is recognized within the work of Grenfell and James (1998, p. 69) that habitus affords the affords the voicing of hopes and dreams within small-scale interactions. With regards to this they note:

habitus allows structure to be viewed as occurring within small scale interactions and activity within large scale settings. As such it is a powerful analytical tool for revealing the power dynamics of everyday interaction.

In recognizing the importance of the power dynamics of every day interactions, we are able to further understand the role of habitus in both creating and being created by the field of affective communities. The field in which the roots of these young people are so deeply, complexly and affectively embedded.

8.7 The implications of this thesis's insights for future government policy

This next section highlights the implications of the insights put forward by this thesis for future government policy and recognition. Presented here are proposals for how the findings from this thesis can inform government policy. I first begin by referring to the notion of affective communities which was first discussed in chapter one (page 16). I noted there how, in light of the Covid-19 global pandemic, the Welsh First Minister, in setting out his plans for the next term in government, acknowledged the importance of community in the face of adversity. He stated how the next programme for government was to be built upon the principle that people in Wales look after each other.

Whilst it is encouraging to observe how communal beingness is translated as community support of each other by Welsh government, I propose that there are considerations which should be taken into account in the future planning of social and economic policy development. I propose that in the context of future community-based policy, the lens through which community is viewed needs to change. I argue that the understanding of 'community' across policy needs to be changed from a negative rhetoric of challenging, deprivation to one of empowerment. This then should form the basis for all future policies aimed at young people, upskilling, community, education and employment. This would mean that

instead of a deficit model which we saw with the Communities First programme (see chapter two, page 21), which situated the burdens of inequality squarely on the shoulders of the people who live within these communities being drawn into a programme which was to address deep rooted social and economic problems. We need a politics of hope, one which provides real tangible opportunities for social cohesion and fair and secure employment for the people who live in disadvantaged communities. A politics of hope would shift the narrative and discourse and give recognition to the silent, salient existence of complicated, misunderstood and under-recognized positioning of social class within future policies. Arguably, Communities First ended up reproducing a deficit discourse, one in which working class people who did not aspire to Higher Education or did not possess the ambition to move away from their home town for work were seen as lacking. I am hopeful that under the current government, their interest in class along with the apparent need for community, evidenced through a global pandemic, the deficit view of community will be challenged. This could be developed at government level by gaining further recognition of the importance of community as a safety net and recognizing the values of staying local in government policy. There is also the need for government policy to recognise the support needed from family by young parents to be able to navigate employment opportunities, particularly when in employment which is outside of a 9am to 5pm working week making childcare more difficult.

I also recommend that more consideration needs to be given in the planning and location of social housing. This research has evidenced how some of the barriers and struggles these young people faced were due to the geographical location in which they live. The young people cited how expensive it is to use public transport for employment. With the estate being situated on the side of a mountain some distance up hill from the nearest town there were difficulties for the young people in accessing wider communities. I suggest that this needs to be considered in future government policy around planning to help mitigate further barriers to those in communities which are considered as disadvantaged.

For this challenge to take place, I propose that a desire to stay local needs to be valued. Along with this, the role of extended family and 'friends like family' need to be better understood as a form of support for people to engage in employment and also in hoping for the future. Economic opportunities need to change so that communities really can be affective communities.

For this then to be realised, there is a need for the further development of policy to meet a need for jobs which are more stable than casualized or agency employment. As this study has evidenced, the majority of the young people in this study who were in work, were indeed in roles which lacked stability. This raises questions about what else can be done to support local businesses at a grass root level.

As this chapter has previously explored, working class aspiration is a complicated, fluid concept developed through more than factors limited to an educational setting. However, as this thesis has presented the formal educational setting, particularly secondary schooling and the teaching and careers advice within it, has the potential to have a detrimental impact upon how a young person develops and pursues education. This research has found that by using a model of positioning an informal youth worker in the school. I propose that as part of this Welsh government's economic and social policy, it would be advantageous for such a role to be maintained within the secondary school setting. The focus here would be within the capacity to engage with and encourage young people in pursuing careers which they may feel are out of reach. Although it financially would not be viable to position a job role in every school for this position, there could be the option of training a member of staff to take up this role.

My final consideration with regard to Welsh government policy is in relation to the role of hope in understanding how young people from disadvantaged communities both seek and access opportunities and engage in future thinking. Hope is important,

without hope, as this study has proposed, the future can seem imaginable. I suggest that it would be beneficial to have a way of teaching hope to young people in schools in a similar way in which mindfulness is explored, thus enabling the capacity for young people to build resilience.

8.8 Final considerations on the role of the project workers

In understanding the young people's narratives of their own histories, present situations and future plans, I was able to see the crucial role the project worker played. The young people talked fondly of their memories of the project workers, there was nothing negative mentioned as they recalled their contact with them. There are young people in this study who attribute their current positioning to the support they received from the project workers. It is my understanding, that not only did the project workers provide a great deal of support in the young people's academic journey, but also in their home lives, personal situations and post school imaginaries.

8.9 Concluding thoughts on the participants

I detailed in chapter three in considering the methods of this study, the complexities of this research. One of which being how much things change so very quickly for the young people. All of the findings presented in this thesis are done so using the information I had on the young people up to and including the time I withdrew from the research site and focused on writing. However I've learnt subsequently that some of the trajectories of these young people have changed considerably as I have been writing this thesis, and undoubtedly continue to. This highlights the importance of the journey for these young people should not be seen as fixed, linear, straight forward. But rather I recommend that transition from school to employment is viewed instead as a journey travelled, one with its twists and turns as these young people continue to exist in sociality, a co-existence with others. Within those twists

and turns are also the complexities of every day existence, unpredictability and the struggle of being working class. This leads on to my final chapter section which reflects upon social class.

8.10 Salient, Silent Social Class

When I began this PhD, I didn't have the understanding of the effects of social class that I do now. I was not aware of just how complex a role class plays in infiltrating almost every area of one's existence. I did not realise at the start of my studentship that class was the narrative which underpinned and tied together the narratives of all of the participants.

8.11 Summary

In conclusion, this chapter has provided a response to each of the four research questions presented at the start of this thesis. It is responded with the narratives of the young people who took part in the study. The findings of the study have been discussed with recommendations made for further academic research, empirical study and Welsh government policy and practice.

This thesis has explored aspiration, the role of space and place, spatiality, communal being ness and the role of future thinking. My final thoughts as I conclude this thesis, is to come back to the analogy of roots and wings which illustrates how working class young people's roots grow deep and entwined with others in a community of support, a network of family and friends. The young people in this situation are less likely to grow wings which will carry them further afield, pursuing a work life further away from where they live. This then pulls into question the value of sociality, community and being able to work in secure employment close to the invaluable support networks of family and friends.

The thesis concludes that the policy which understands working class aspiration as a deficit to be filled, is misplaced. Rather emphasis should be placed on the support for a politics of hope and possibility.

Appendix One: Consent Form



Young People's Access to Employment in Disadvantaged Communities in Wales

Consent Form

(Narrative Biographical Interviews)

Name of Researcher: Rhiannon Stevens

	Please Initial
1. I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet for the above project. I have been able to ask questions about the project.	
2. I understand that I am choosing to take part in this research and that I can drop out at any time.	
3. I agree to take part in the study.	
4. I am happy for records already held by the PWU provided by the school, on my attendance, achievement and teacher predictions at school, to be accessed for this research.	

Name of Participant	Date	Signature

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