BECOMING 'NEET':

an exploration of marginalised young people's trajectories and experiences

Submitted by

HEERA RAJAH

for the degree of Doctor of Education (EdD)

London Metropolitan University

2019

ABSTRACT

Young people who are 'Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)' have been an ongoing concern for successive UK governments; policies abound, but the number remains stubbornly high. Some studies indicate that young NEET people form a marginalised group with diverse issues. Hence, there is the need to understand the complexity of their situations. Therefore, this qualitative, in-depth study goes beyond the statistics and advances the knowledge about some of the varied factors that contribute to young people becoming NEET.

The participants were 18 young NEET people, aged 18-24. They were all living with their families except for one who had left home, aged 24. This study was located in London and therefore reveals the challenges the young people faced despite it being the capital city, with all the opportunities London is perceived to offer. At the time of the study, the participants were all NEET and were attending a self-development course offered by Possible, a charity working with NEET young people; four of its staff members who work with young people who are NEET were also interviewed. This qualitative study examines the issue of becoming NEET from the perspectives of an immensely diverse group of young NEET people (including new arrivals to the UK), thereby prioritising the voices and experiences of those within this NEET group.

Bourdieu's concepts consisting of capital, field and habitus formed the theoretical framework. The findings indicate that, for this diverse NEET group, 'family' and 'school' were major influences and, for some of them, 'family' referred to their wider, extended family. The study reveals how much family, school and social class intersect, leading to the conclusion that the common thread running through these factors is 'class'. Therefore, social class is a major determinant in young people's trajectories and explains why some of the young people are positioned unfavourably with regard to their life chances. Significantly, all of the participants had been continuously NEET since the age of 18, with 12 of them NEET since the age of 16, and with none of them having been in employment since the age of 16. This, therefore, depicts the continued long reach of family and school influences, mediated by social class: the enduring shadow cast into adulthood and on young people's life chances. However, this study also signifies hope: it reveals that young people can be encouraged to move out of the NEET category when they engage with staff that they feel care for them and can be trusted.

Despite being in the 18-24 age range, the key issues raised by the participants were related to school. Focusing solely on their concerns, they imply that well-resourced strategies are needed to help pupils of all abilities. In view of schools' limited resources, forming external partnerships seem relevant, as illustrated by the participants' praise for Possible's initiatives. Hence, some examples of potential partnerships for schools are noted in the concluding chapter.

Overall, this in-depth study will add to the knowledge about 18-24 year old young NEET people. This knowledge is intended to contribute to the current debates on education, training and employment and help with informing the interested parties: policymakers, schools, training providers and also charitable organisations working to meet the needs of young people classified as NEET.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Contents

List of Abbreviations

A-Level	Advanced Level
AS-Level	Advanced Subsidiary Level
BTEC	Business and Technology Education Council
CAB	Citizens' Advice Bureau
CV	curriculum vitae
DCMS	Department for Culture, Media and Sports
DfE	Department for Education
DCSF	Department for Children, Schools & Families
DfEE	Department for Education & Employment
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
EAL	English as an Additional Language
EMA	Education Maintenance Allowance
ESOL	English for Speakers of Other Languages
EU	European Union
FE	Further Education
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
HESA	Higher Education Statistics Agency
JSA	Jobseeker's Allowance
LEA	Local Education Authority
LSC	Learning Skills Council
OECD	Office of Economic Co-operation and Development
OFFA	Office for Fair Access
Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills
ONS	Office for National Statistics
PRU	Pupil Referral Unit
RPA	Raising of Participation Age
SEU	Social Exclusion Unit
SQA	Scottish Qualifications Authority
WP	Widening Participation

Chapter 1   Introducing the thesis

This thesis is about young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET), and therefore of much concern to policymakers. 'Popular images of NEET young people often evoke pejorative stereotypes of "hoodies" and "pramface" girls, destined for life on benefits […]. However, there is another perspective on such stories and it is necessary to look much deeper…' (Simmons et al, 2014:1); this study is an attempt to do that.

I begin this chapter by introducing the focus of this research: that is, young people, aged 18-24, who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) and the aims of the study. Then an explanation follows of the term 'NEET' and why the NEET 'problem' is a social justice issue. Next, I give my reasons for undertaking this study. The research aim and the research questions that drove the study are then presented. The fieldwork location is described next, followed by an outline of the methodological approach adopted and the theoretical framework drawn upon for data analysis. The thesis chapters are then outlined. The chapter closes with concluding comments.

1.1 Introduction

The study aims to understand the factors that impact on the post-16 transitions of some young people, leading them to become NEET. In 2012, when I started my fieldwork, the percentage and number of young people, aged 18-24, who were NEET in England in 2012 was as follows: the first quarter of 2012, 18% / 856,000; the second quarter of 2012, 18.1% / 875,000; the third quarter of 2012, 19% / 912,000; and the fourth quarter of 2012, 17.5% / 831,000 (DfE, 2012). The participants in my study were part of these statistics.

The young NEET people who participated in this qualitative study were at the time of their interviews aged 18-24: with 15 out of the 18 participants aged 20 to 24; two aged 19; and one aged 18 (turned 19 the next day).This research charts their accounts of their post-16 pathways, thereby providing in-depth data on the factors, pre- and post-16, that they reported as having impacted on their trajectories. These revealed to be the influences of 'family' and 'school', thereby depicting the effect of 'class' on young people's opportunities in life and explains why some young people are positioned unfavourably with regard to their life-chances. This led to 12, out of the 18 participants, remaining NEET continuously since leaving school at the age of

16 and all of them remaining NEET from the age of 18, with some of the 24 year olds having been in the NEET category for eight or more years since leaving school.

This study was started in 2012. The literature revealed that the NEET group has been of concern to policy makers and 'considered a problem about which something should be done' (Avis, 2014a:65). There has been research, although mainly on 16 -18 year olds who had been NEET or are at risk of becoming NEET, but were on a training programme at the time of the study and, therefore, no longer NEET (for example, Simmons and Thompson, 2011). Hence, in 2012, I started my study, focusing on 18-24 year- olds who were NEET at the time of my fieldwork, with 12 out of the 18 participants having been NEET since leaving school at 16 and all of them NEET since the age of 18, with 15 out of the 18 participants being aged 20 to 24. Furthermore, unlike the other studies, the participants in this study lived in London and therefore insight is gained into the challenges they faced despite London being the capital city of the UK, with all the opportunities it is perceived to offer. Moreover, London being a multi-cultural city ensured that the participants were of diverse ethnic backgrounds and they included new arrivals to the country. Interestingly, unlike previous studies, all the participants were living at home, except for one participant who left home, aged 24, and was homeless when I interviewed him. This study also includes usefully the views of the participants on being categorised as NEET and also those of the staff who work with the NEET group, thereby bringing a different dimension to the debates on the issue of the 'NEET' categorisation. This study attempts to understand the participants' situation through their own perspectives. Additionally, from 2015, young people's compulsory learning ceases at the age 18 (Education and Skills Act, 2008) and not age 16. Therefore, my study's focus on the 18-24 age group may prove helpful in understanding their post-18 lived experiences.

Thus, this study attempts to increase the understanding of the NEET group because, as articulated by Quinn et al. (2008:186), they are 'placed at the bottom of the hierarchy of social and economic concern' and therefore 'very little' (Quinn, 2010: Evid 1, House of Commons) is known about NEET young people. Moreover, four years on, a report (2014:7) by Impetus-PEF (a Foundation working with charities to help disadvantaged young people aged 11-24) noted the need for further insight into the NEET situation:

> Asking difficult questions about what leads young people to drop out of education and employment can lead to difficult answers; but we have to confront the truth about these knotty issues if we are to truly tackle Britain's NEET problem.

Therefore, this research seeks to explore the salient factors in the participants' lives that could have had influences in their NEET status: '[…] the analogy of the need "to peel away several layers of an onion" before getting to the core is apposite here' (Green and Hasluck, 2009:30).

1.2 The term 'NEET'

The term 'NEET' 'stands for young people, aged 16-24, who are not in education, employment or training (NEET)', (House of Commons Briefing Paper, 6 April 2016:3). When the Labour government came into power in 1997, it set itself the task of reducing social exclusion and increasing social mobility. To this end, the then Labour government set up a Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) in 1998 (Barber, 2008), with Policy Action Teams (PATs) based in No 10 (the UK Prime Minister's office). The PATs were civil servants from different government departments in order to ensure a joined-up effort, with the residents in deprived areas being consulted. The PATs aimed to increase post-16 participation in education and training so that young people were equipped for the new employment opportunities created by globalisation.

Subsequently, with regard to young people not engaging in post-16 options, the SEU produced a report called '*Bridging the Gap*' (SEU, 1999). The Report's purpose was summed up as being: 'to work with the other departments [in order] to assess how many 16-18 year olds are not in education, employment or training, analyse the reasons why and to produce proposals to reduce the numbers significantly' (ibid:2). Thus, the term 'NEET' is a construct of the Labour government's policy, arising from the *Bridging the Gap* Report (1999).

This Report highlighted the low-level of post-16 participation in their education, employment or training and also set out the measures to address this issue. This group of young people were prioritised in the youth policies of the then Labour government and, in that process, gave prominence to the term 'NEET'. The term now has international recognition and is used in reports by various bodies, including the EU (for example, *Eurydice and Cedefop* Report, 2015) and the OECD (for example, *OECD Education at a Glance*, 2012). The Oxford Dictionary includes the term, defining NEET as 'a young person who is no longer in the education system and who is not working or being trained for work'.

The concept of applying a label to a certain group of people has drawn criticism: the main criticism being that it fails to recognise the diversity of the group, and rather treats it as 'deficit category' (Thompson, 2011:15). In the United States of America, the young people in a similar situation are called the 'Disconnected Youth' (Gabe and Fernandes, 2009) and in Scotland they are described as the 'young people needing more choices and more chances' (SQA Research Report 2, 2013:3). The House of Commons Children, Schools and Families Committee (Eighth Report, 2010:9) considered views put forward about the term 'NEET', acknowledged that it 'is imperfect' however, decided that its use should be continued, 'in the absence of an appropriate alternative'. The arguments surrounding the categorisation of certain groups of young people have been highlighted in studies, including those by Yates and Payne (2006), Furlong (2006) and Thompson (2011), with my study presenting the NEET participants' views and also those views of some of the staff who work with them. This issue of categorisation is explored further in the next chapter (Literature Review), with the participants' views and those of Possible's staff on it being presented in Chapter 7, whilst the section below sets out why the 'NEET' 'problem' is a social justice issue.

1.3 The 'NEET' issue

'Those who are disadvantaged educationally are also disadvantaged economically and socially; equity and viability dictate that all should have the opportunity to succeed' (Kennedy Report, 1997:15).

Young people who are NEET may be said to be 'marginalised working class youth […] located at the periphery of the labour market' (Avis, 2014b:1-2). Moreover, they may be considered a marginalised, socially excluded group as they are 'often linked with a wider pattern of social disadvantage and powerlessness' (Raffe, 2003:8). Consequently, according to Coles (2002, 2010), those in the NEET group are more likely to be drawn into crime, teen pregnancies, drugs and alcohol abuse and ill-health.

The social exclusion of NEET young people is also borne out by the University and College Union's study which found that: '37%' of NEETs 'rarely leave their home'; '33%' suffer from depression; '40% feel that they are not part of society'; and 15% have mental health problems' (2013:4,7). Furthermore, the Prince's Trust (2013:7) found that NEETs are:

more than twice [as] likely to feel unable to cope as their peers; almost a third […] did not have someone to talk [to] about problems while they were growing up; [and] NEETs are least happy about their work/education circumstances, followed by money and emotional health (2013:7).

Thus, NEETs are a social justice issue because they are socially excluded individuals. David Miliband, the then (2007) Minister for Communities and Local Government, suggested that:

the person struggling with basic skills seems definitely socially excluded if they are also long term unemployed; the child in poverty seems to be more socially excluded if their housing is poor and their parents are suffering mental illness; the homeless person on drugs and without skills or family is definitely on the edge of society' (2007:7, cited in Furlong, 2013:31-32).

Hence, young NEET people have been identified by policymakers as of critical concern. In 2009, a decade after the *Bridging the Gap Report,* and the subsequent introduction of measures (such as the EMA, New Deal Training programme and Connexions' services) to reduce the number of NEETs, overall there were, for example, in April-June, 17.5% (812,000) young NEET people, aged 18-24 (DfE, 2016:8,9). Concerned by the continued increase in the number of NEETs, a further policy change was implemented through the RPA (Education and Skills Act, 2008) which raised the compulsory learning age to 17 from 2013 and 18 from 2015. However, in the same year, 2015, the House of Commons Briefing Paper (2015: No: 06705) reported that there were 922,000 young NEET people, aged 16-24, this being at a time when the UK GDP growth was '6.6% higher than pre-economic downturn' (ONS: 2015). It was the time, also, when the 17 year olds had to be in compulsory education and when the number of apprenticeships available was increased. Therefore, it may be deduced that there are underlying factors that are impeding the success of the policies introduced by the successive governments (1997-2015). The statistics set out above also beg the question as to whether the NEET figure would have been higher, if the compulsory learning age had not been raised.

It may be argued that one of the main concerns of the government in trying to deal with the NEET issue was to move the young people away from 'welfare dependency' in order to reduce the economic costs to the public finances. In 2015, Iain Duncan Smith, the then Minister for Welfare, Work and Pensions, wrote in a national newspaper, 'we were left with a culture of welfare dependency presided over by Labour. A corrosive culture that was even encouraged

by the state' (Daily Telegraph, 15 February 2015). In terms of costs, 'in 2011/12, £2.5 billion was spent on out of work benefits for the under-25s' (Cooke, 2013:3). Moreover, the total costs would have been higher as the above figure did not include other benefits paid such as housing benefits. Furthermore, Impetus-PEF noted (2014:4) the high and long-term costs of NEETs to the public finance purse:

> […] the lost taxes, additional public service costs and associated impacts such as youth crime and poor health will cost Britain in excess of £77 billion a year if we cannot solve this long term, structural problem.

This study's participants had left school in varying years, from 2004-2010. Therefore, they were in school when the last Labour government was in power and at a time when the various measures were introduced in the attempts to reduce the number of NEETs. These participants, whom I met in 2012, were all classified as NEET and therefore part of the NEET statistics for 2012 which recorded 883,000:18-24 year olds in England (DfE, 2016). This study set out to explore the reasons for this high number of NEETs. Is it because they feel a sense of alienation from the mainstream aspirations of education and employment? Does class play a role, leading them to perceive an aspirational route as being unattainable by them, or not for them? Are their negative experiences during their schooling the reason for their non-engagement with post-16 education? Had they not received relevant career guidance from the support services available post-16, a need that was highlighted by the *Bridging the Gap* Report (SEU, 1999) 15 years ago? This study attempted to seek answers to these questions.

The NEET issue is not a new 'problem'. It may also be said that, historically, the issue of a cohort of young people leaving school and not engaging in education, employment or training has prevailed (Tomlinson, 2005). Educational measures have attempted to address issues of exclusion and disadvantage but they appear not to have benefited the working class young people. The Robbins Report (1963), supported the expansion of Higher Education (HE), but this has continued to benefit mainly middle class students (Hayton and Paczuska, 2002, Reay et al, 2005, Jerrim, 2012, HESA, 2014), with little attention paid to this continued exclusion of the disadvantaged (Ross, 2003; Sutton Trust, 2014). Further measures have included placing responsibilities on individual educational organisations, for example, in 1995, the Commission on Racial Equality recommended that, 'Equality of Opportunity needs to be built into colleges' strategic plans, mission statements and charters, monitored systematically so that achievements can be identified' (Blythman and Orr, 2002, in Hayton and Paczuska, 2002:165-177). The

Dearing Report (1997) expressed concern about the under-representation of non-traditional students in Higher Education. Also, the widening participation policy (DfES, 2003) and, more recently, OFFA's (Office for Fair Access) (2014) call for equality of opportunity could be seen as articulating this concern. Moreover, the Kennedy Report stated that 'investment in further education is one of the most cost-effective ways of tackling the cumulative effects of learning failure' (1997:9) and had called on the government to increase further education and access funding. It also emphasised the need for higher education institutions to engage in outreach work in order to encourage the young to continue with their education. It could be said that this is something that the then Labour government had in mind in setting up Aimhigher which saw universities, schools and colleges working together on initiatives to increase the participation of the under-represented groups in higher education. At a global level, over the last decade, international bodies such as UNESCO, the European Commission and the European Council have promoted education as the key to social equity and cohesion and the need for equality of opportunity for education (Osborne, 2003).

Some analysts have argued that introducing the measures have had negative outcome in dealing with the NEET issue because of the limited attention paid to the socio-economic factors in the lives of the young people. As explained by Raffe (2003:2), educational policies alone are not sufficient to solve the NEET 'problem' and that the social justice issues surrounding the NEET group need to be addressed. Yates and Payne (2006), supporting this view, suggest that the classification (NEET) ignores their varying 'characteristics, risks and issues' (2006:342), and that the solution is to deal with these issues 'rather than […] focus on their NEET/EET status' (2006:343). Furthermore, they suggest that being NEET should not be seen as a 'problem', because sometimes there are acceptable reasons for opting out as argued by Watts and Bridges (2006) and Quinn et al. (2008). Furlong (2006) states that one of the reasons for seeing the NEET group as a 'problem' is because the emphasis is on reducing their numbers and Avis (2014a:69) suggests that it is because '[…] waged labour is seen as pivotal to the assimilation of young people into wider society'. I set out to understand the differing issues and my personal interest in undertaking this study is presented below.

1.4 My personal interest

My interest in educational policy, practice and social justice relating to young people has been influenced by my various employment roles in the educational field.

In 2003, I became a staff member of the Law Department of a post-1992 university. The university's strategy included a commitment to the 'Widening Participation' (WP) policy (DfES, 2003). This policy was introduced by the then Labour government in order to increase Higher Education participation by 50% (DfES, 2003). As part of the WP policy, the university accepted, for undergraduate degrees, those who did not possess the traditional educational qualifications (A-Levels) but who had undertaken the Access Course; therefore, many were mature students. Some were full-time and some were part-time students. A mantra, repeated so often by some of my students, consisted of 'if only': 'if only I had carried on studying after leaving school'; 'if only someone had told me how tough it is to get a job with only GCSEs' and so forth. Some of these students struggled to complete their courses and dropped out of the university. Therefore, I gained knowledge of the challenges faced by those returning to studies later, such as the particular demands and disciplines required by academic studies at university level: how it hampers many students, able but with non-traditional educational backgrounds, from completing and reaching their full potential. However, once achieved, I also realised how educational success could be empowering for them.

Additionally, an aspect of my post involved running the Clinical Legal Education programmes to enhance law students' potential employment in the legal sector. Many of the law students, particularly those recruited through widening participation policy, possess non-traditional pre-university academic qualifications. Such a non-traditional background has continuously been proven to be a barrier for entry into the legal profession (Milburn, 2009). Indeed, the Panel on Fair Access to the Professions (2009:19) noted that 'the typical professional grew up in a family with an income well above the average family's' and they go on to observe that though there has been a significant increase in the 'professional employment opportunities over the recent decades, the professions are becoming the preserve of those from a smaller and smaller part of the social spectrum' (2009:20).Therefore, observing the challenges faced by some of my law students, I was interested in the dynamics of political and socio-economic factors that govern educational success and dictate career progress, of not only the power of education, but also the challenges and inadequacies that beset it.

Moreover, my interest in young people's post-16 transitions was fostered through working on a mentoring project prior to my employment at the university. This involved the setting up of a mentoring programme for an international company's UK branch, as part of their corporate

social responsibility agenda. It was for what the company termed as 'disaffected school-pupils', that is, those pupils who were identified by the participating schools as being at risk of truanting and becoming 'NEET'. It made me wonder why there was such a degree of disillusionment amongst some of the young people with their schooling, leading them to become disaffected and, potentially, at risk of becoming 'NEET'. Additionally, a research project into pupil mobility that I undertook for a Local Education Authority (LEA) made me aware of the issues that were faced by some of the families on social welfare benefits who were moved around due to housing shortages. The children from such families would attend schools for a brief period of time, before being moved into another school, in another location, due to being re-housed when lower rental accommodation became available. The investigation I undertook was into the problems faced by the schools with high pupil mobility and therefore the assistance the schools required from the LEA to help them with the situation, but it was not about the effects on the pupils. Therefore, the research left unanswered in my mind questions relating to the influences of family and schooling on young people's educational attainments and also, about their consequent post-16 transitions.

Furthermore, as part of my university's outreach work programme for London East Thames Gateway Aimhigher, some colleagues and I undertook projects with inner-city school pupils and staff. These interactions, such as talking to the staff (from schools and Aimhigher) and working with the pupils revealed to me the importance of providing careers guidance, if the pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds are to succeed in making informed decisions about their future studies, be it academic or vocational courses. As such, the awareness I developed through working with Aimhigher and the consequent interactions with inner city school staff and pupils made me despair at the social injustices that still exist. It led me to reflect on the availability of support mechanisms to guide young people from disadvantaged families and made me wish to investigate these further. I wanted to know more about how some of those from disadvantaged backgrounds, that Aimhigher did not reach, make sense of their post-16 options. What were their lived experiences after leaving school? Were their families able to guide them? What support did they receive from career service providers appointed to assist them?

Thus, my employment roles have exposed me to young people from varying economic, cultural and social backgrounds. My interactions with these students have stimulated in me an interest in their contrasting pre- and post-16 experiences and the influences exercised by family, wealth

and social class. They have made me realise how access to successful post-16 options is still a privilege and therefore available only to some. They also led me to wonder about the impetus that drives some to overcome these barriers, as demonstrated by those successful students at the university where I worked.

All the above experiences evoked in me a motivation to achieve a better understanding of the educational policies and the thinking underlying many of the educational measures. Therefore, there was a need to understand what makes some young people become 'NEET', the challenges faced by them and how they made sense of their post-16 trajectories. I see education as having the potential to be a great 'leveller', the tool to achieving social justice and, therefore, a sector that needs informed attention when enacting policies and strategic measures, something to which I hope this study will contribute. The research questions and methodology that guided my research are outlined below.

1.5 This study

This study was undertaken in East London, with the participants living in five of the six host boroughs for the Olympics 2012, an area described as the most deprived in England and Wales (Olympic Park Regeneration Framework, 2009). The labour market for the area is considered with further details in Chapter 3, section 3.5.3.

This research study seeks to further the understanding of the lived experiences of young people (aged 18-24) classified as NEET and living in London, the capital city. As noted by Finlay et al. (2009:854):

> Subsumed under the 'NEET' label are often very different groups of young people […] facing very different challenges, risks and transitions and with very different potential need for intervention.

Hence, the primary aim of the study was to explore the varied experiences and trajectories of a diverse group of young people, aged 18-24, who are NEET and as mentioned above, living in an area described as the most deprived in England and Wales (Olympic Park Regeneration Framework, 2009). In doing so, it addresses the issues of how some young people become NEET and how they make sense of their transitions.

The following research questions guided this study:

1) what influenced the young people's choices and pathways in education, employment and training?

2) what are the young people's experiences of career guidance services?

3) what are the perceptions of staff who work with the NEET group as regards why some young people become NEET?

4) how do the young people relate to the label 'NEET'?

The NEET young people who participated in my study were undertaking, or were in the process of completing, a 12- week self-development course delivered by Possible (a charity working with NEET young people), in London's East End. As it was not a training programme, the young people on the course were considered to be NEET. Descriptions of the course and further details of the fieldwork location are presented in Chapter 3.

This was a qualitative study, consisting of the following stages:

(a) non-participative observation / familiarisation process: attending some classes in order to become a familiar figure and earn the trust of the young NEET people;

(b) participative observation / familiarisation process: assisting in an 'application forms' session;

(c) focus groups: two were conducted, one with four men and one with four women;

(d) individual interviews: thirteen NEET young people were interviewed; and,

(e) individual interviews: four staff members who work with young NEET people were interviewed.

Epistemologically, an interpretivist approach (Creswell, 2013) was adopted, with in-depth attention to positionality and reflexivity. The rationale for this approach is provided in Chapter 3, together with the justification for the methods used to gather the data. The data were analysed using a 'constant comparative method' (Thomas, 2009:198: discussed in Chapter 3) and drew on Bourdieu's concepts of capital, field and habitus (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977: discussed in Chapter 2). Bourdieu's concepts were useful for this study in a number of ways. His notions of capital helped to explain the importance of resources (for example, parental expectations, career advice) which young people rely upon in navigating their trajectories in various social contexts of education, employment and training (or 'fields'). His concept of 'habitus' provided a way of understanding the young people's complex identities and how they are constructed in

relation to their experience of marginalisation. Hence, Bourdieu's key concepts have been used to analyse the rich data gathered in this study.

1.6 The structure of the thesis

This thesis consists of seven chapters in total, including this introductory chapter. Below, I set out the chapters that follow and their contents.

Chapter 2 discusses the literature relating to my field. Therefore, it includes the relevant policies enacted and also the studies undertaken regarding young NEET people. The literature is examined to identify the gap that my study may help to fill and what contributions my study might make. The chapter also sets out the theoretical framework using Bourdieu's key concepts that are drawn upon for the data analysis.

Chapter 3, 'Methodology', discusses the epistemological approach adopted and why it is a qualitative study. It explains the research methods used and the justification for them. It also considers my own positionality, highlighting reflexivity and ethical considerations in research. Moreover, the chapter outlines the way in which the data were analysed. It also reflects on the strengths and the shortcomings of the approach to the study.

Chapters 4, 5 and 6 draw on the data generated by the research. The data analysis is guided by Bourdieu's key concepts of capital, habitus and field. Chapter 4 examines the role of families in the lives of this study's participants and the extent to which they might have influenced their post-16 trajectories. Bourdieu's theory of capital is drawn upon to explain how young people's future pathways may be influenced by their families' backgrounds.

Chapter 5 looks at the participants' school experiences to see what impact they might have had on their post-16 transitions. It explores their academic achievements, their issues of school absenteeism, bullying, parent-teacher relationship and the interplay of capitals and habitus in the field of school.

Chapter 6 discusses the career guidance the participants reported receiving pre- and post-16. Drawing upon Bourdieu's theoretical concepts, this chapter seeks to highlight the importance of careers guidance in schools and argues the need to have it embedded in the curriculum so

that all pupils become aware of their post-16 options and also of the relevant qualifications and skills required for those options. As the young people participating in my study were aged 18 to 24, their experiences of Connexions and of Job Centres are also considered. The issue of locality and how this factor could have affected the participants' employment opportunities is also examined in depth.

Chapter 7 is the concluding chapter and draws together the research findings which reveal the salient factor to be 'class', woven through the influences of 'family' and 'school and therefore discussed in this chapter. This chapter also considers the views of the participants and staff on the issue of the categorisation of the NEET people. Additionally, the chapter reflects on this study's limitations, but also outlines the contribution it makes and considers the potential future research. The implications of the study are discussed within the context of the concerns raised by the participants. The findings could be of help to schools, voluntary sectors, non-voluntary sectors and policy makers, both in the UK and overseas.

The next chapter considers the relevant literature that has informed this study.

Chapter 2   Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter considers the literature and existing knowledge on issues that are relevant to my research relating to young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET). The literature review presented here has informed my study and helped to identify the 'gap' to situate my research.

This review starts with a discussion of the economic context and the effects of globalisation because this changed the labour market requirements. This affected, particularly, the young people who did not possess the matching skill-set, as highlighted by the Leitch Review (2006) and the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) Report (2005). Next, the Labour government's post-1997 policies to reduce the number of young NEET people are outlined. Research evidence is then drawn upon to consider the effectiveness of these policies, how categorising the NEETs as a homogenous group masks their individual needs and the main barriers to young people's successful post-16 transitions. Next, the theoretical framework for this study is presented, followed by an outline of the contributions this study makes, before the chapter closes with the conclusion.

2.2 The Economic Context

'The history of the NEET category highlights global, economic and social trends which affect young people as they leave school and begin to construct adult life' (Simmons and Thompson, 2011:5).

Due to economic changes, traditional jobs, for example, down the mines or in the factories that school-leavers could slip into (Willis, 1977), have diminished or disappeared. Whilst the loss of the mining jobs affected males, the loss of the factory jobs affected females as women had begun to be recruited for factory jobs during and after the First World War. Thus, 'the demise of the large scale industry in many parts of the UK has led to greater fragmentation of young people's experiences as collective transitions from school to factory or mine' (Simmons and Thompson, 2011:5).

An earlier study by Spielhofer et al. (2009) into increasing participation in post-16 education and training looked into the localities with a higher proportion of young NEET people. They discovered that in England the highest number of NEETs are where the manufacturing base had shrunk. This has resulted in 'a reduction in the number of related manual occupations that provided a clear post-16 destinations for school-leavers' (2009:45). Thus, 'in the new global economy, the stable Fordist model of manufacturing has given way to downsized industries that are shadows of their former selves' (Walkerdine et al, 2001:1).

However, Simmons (2008:430) notes that low-skilled jobs, such as 'clean[ing] offices' or 'wait[ing] on tables' that do not require participation in education or training are still available. Nevertheless, many of the low-skilled jobs are now being taken by graduates (ONS, 2012). As described by Walkerdine (2001:1), global changes have led the 'British economy to become dominated by the service sector, the technology and communications industries and a huge and powerful financial sector'. Furthermore, these changes have occurred at a tremendous speed, as recalled by Castells (2005:1), 'a technical revolution transformed the way we think, we produce, we consume, we trade'. Hence, school-leavers face a labour market that requires a level of knowledge and skills achieved through a more effective education in school, thereby enabling further and/or higher education and training; this was a point confirmed by the Leitch Review (2006) and the LSC Report (2005), as discussed below.

The Leitch Review (2006:13) considered the UK's skills needs for 2020 in order to achieve economic growth and noted that '4 million people will still lack functional literacy skills and that over 6 million people will lack functional numeracy skills' and also that the UK's post-16 participation in education was below the OECD average. Therefore, it advised upgrading the UK's skills' level and also observed that the NEET group will benefit from acquiring the skills and qualifications required by the globalised economy. This view was supported by the LSC Report (2005). It surveyed employers 'across all sectors of business activity' (2005:20) on the skills and the types of training required to make businesses competitive. Employer responses revealed that practical, technical and communication skills needed to be improved and that it would be better if young people could engage in education for a longer period as then they are 'more likely to be equipped with personal attributes that employers require' (2005:20). It follows, therefore, that those young people who did not possess the attributes and skills outlined in the above reports found themselves to be at the 'bottom of the heap' (Quinn et al: 2008:188). Indeed, three years after the Leitch Review and the LSC Report, in 2009 (DfE, 2016), almost

a million young people were NEET; significantly, this included all, but one, of this study's participants.

Thus, whilst the Leitch Review (2006) and LSC Report (2005) identified the skills required, the socio-economic issues affecting the young people were not addressed. Brown and Lauder (1999:53, in Ahier and Esland, 1999:31-61) examine critically the link between globalisation and education and state that 'tackling domestic income inequalities and opportunities have become more important'. They suggest that children from economically better-off families would be ahead in the competitive world because of their parents' ability to use their higher buying power to access extra educational resources. Brown and Lauder (1999:54, in Ahier and Esland, 1999:31-61) explain that in such a situation, to achieve social justice, the state needs to regulate the competition so that such inequalities are reduced.

Since the Leitch (2006) and LSC (2005) publications, there has been the global recession (2007 –2009), resulting in changes to organisational structures and also further decline in the UK's manufacturing jobs. Manufacturing jobs have also been moved abroad where labour costs are lower and so, as suggested by Avis (2007), creative skills need to be encouraged. There has been a rise in the tech industries leading to the government's 'Tech City' initiative in 2010, requiring graphic designers and artists. As such, further research would be useful to establish whether employers' needs remain the same as identified in the above mentioned Leitch Review (2006) and LSC Report (2005). Ironically, a point admitted by the Leitch Review (2006:13) itself was that, 'history tells us that no-one can predict with accuracy the future occupational skills'.

Thus, globalisation and technological innovations have wrought changes to society as a whole and, in particular, have affected the young people who traditionally moved from school to employment. Nayak (2006:816) captured the significance of these stark changes vividly in his description of the effects of globalisation:

> Future generations of young men, whose cultural worlds would once have been educationally shaped, through a prism of schooling, training schemes, modern apprenticeships and hard labour were now finding themselves viewed as unskilled, unemployable, redundant youth.

Hence, it is argued that the changing labour market brought on by globalisation, has contributed to the increased number of young people being NEET and therefore it is not solely down to the 2009 financial crisis.

2.4 The policy context

In 1997, the Labour government came into power with an emphasis on education. Pre-election, Tony Blair had stated '[…] education is social justice. Education is liberty. Education is opportunity' (1997, cited in Gillborn and Youdell, 2000:17). Post-election, 'the opening sentence in Labour's first White Paper (DfEE 1997) reasserted equality of opportunity as a policy concern' (ibid, 2000:26). Thus, in 1998, the government set up the Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) which examined the high rate of youth unemployment in the light of a growing global economy, as discussed above.

The SEU produced the *Bridging the Gap* Report (1999). The Report's recommendations that were implemented applied to the participants in my study as they left school (depending on their ages) between 2004 and 2010. Tony Blair's foreword to the Report stated that the 'the best defence against social exclusion is having a job and the best way to get a job is to have good education with the right training and experience' (1999:6).

Hence, the *Bridging the Gap* Report (SEU, 1999) stimulated policy responses to tackle what was perceived as the NEET 'problem'. The Report's main aim was to ensure that post-16, the young people continued in further education or in training, in order to equip themselves for a changing labour market caused by globalisation. To this end, it made the following four main suggestions:

➢ that by age 19 they have 'a clear outcome to aim for' (p.9);

➢ that varied 'pathways to "graduation" to suit the needs of all young people' be introduced (p.9);

➢ that financial incentives in the form of Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA) be offered 'to engage the most disadvantaged' (p.9); and,

➢ that a new 'multi-skill support service' be introduced which would prioritise those 'most at risk of underachievement and disaffection' (p.11).

A plethora of policies emanated from the Report. However, the Report and the policies that followed have attracted criticisms. This is particularly because the Report is seen as implying that unemployment is solely due to low educational qualifications, thereby ignoring 'that there are other deeper factors of inequality that contribute both to the rates of participation and levels of qualification achieved' (Colley and Hodkinson, 2001:349). Colley and Hodkinson (2001) also criticised the Report's stereotypical image of the young NEET people as being 'lazy, and feckless youth, staying in bed until the afternoon, then loafing about and engaging in petty crime' (2001:339) and that 'disadvantage is defined as deficit or disease, which deftly locates it within the individual' (ibid: 340). Similar criticisms were made earlier by Hodkinson et al. (1996:156), that 'inequalities will not be lessened by paying attention primarily to the young people themselves'.

Nevertheless, it is suggested that the *Bridging the Gap* Report was ground breaking. It led to the NEET 'term being formally established at a political level' (Pemberton, 2008:243). Thus, it is argued that this could be said to have kept the NEET issue alive. This, in turn, set in motion the then Labour government's youth related policies which reflect its attempts, over a 12-year period, to reduce the number of young NEET people. Significantly, the attention given to the NEET issue by then Labour government could be said to be acknowledged when its last policy strategy, the raising of the participation age in learning (RPA) (Education and Skills Act, 2008), was not repealed by the ideologically different governments (Coalition and Conservative) that followed.

Therefore, it is argued that the *Bridging the Gap* Report (SEU, 1999) may be viewed as the catalyst that led to the strategies being enacted. These were, at the time, thought of as assisting young NEET people by addressing the issues perceived as giving rise to social exclusion. As noted above, the policy strategies included the setting up of the Connexions service (DfEE, 0033/2000) and the EMA (DCSF, 2003). These were substantial measures to help the 'NEET' group and, therefore, it is pertinent to consider the effectiveness of these two measures.

2.5 Effectiveness of policy measures

Subsequent to the *Bridging the Gap* Report's (SEU, 1999) recommendations (outlined above), the Labour government rolled out the Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA) nationwide.

The coalition government (2010) abolished it, but it is being considered here as it was available for this study's participants.

Maguire and Rennison's (2005) study of the EMA examined its effectiveness in encouraging 16 year olds, from low income families, to remain in education. The evidence for their findings were four evaluation reports on the EMA piloted and consisted of 11, 000 samples of 16 year olds, followed up over two years. Their findings revealed that the EMA 'made a positive impact on preventing some young people entering the NEET group' (2005:187). They also found that those interested in pursuing courses not eligible for the EMA were not deterred. The study identified that 'one-half of EMA eligible young people […] who entered the NEET group at 16, occupied the same status two years later' (2005:193).The authors suggest that this could relate to reasons for their original disaffection with education. A point to note here is that this study covered only 16-19 year olds, whilst NEETs include up to 24 year olds (as my study does). Therefore, it is not known if the 'older' NEETs would have been attracted by financial incentives and therefore this is an area that lends itself to further investigation. Maguire and Rennison (2005:199) conclude that the EMA is a positive measure and that it 'together with other policy developments will be instrumental in encouraging young people to remain in post-16 education'. They suggested informing young people about the EMA before the age of 16 as not all knew about it. They also suggested that the Connexions Service (discussed below) might be able to 'address the shortfalls in the levels of the guidance and support' available to young people who are likely to become NEET (2005:199).

Connexions was set up in 2000 to provide a 'multi-skill support service' (*Bridging the Gap* Report, 1999:11) for young people. 'It was intended to be a holistic service providing advice and guidance in all areas of young people's lives' (Chadderton, 2015:85) through a Personal Adviser. The nature of the service provided for young people likely to become NEET has been described by Colley and Hodkinson (2001:351) as the Personal Adviser (PA) helping 'with all their problems, combining the roles of careers adviser, youth worker and probation officer, among others'. So, there was emphasis on supporting young NEET people, in order to encourage them to return to education, employment or training. Connexions, if invited, also visited schools to provide career guidance. However, a DfES study (2003) found that the careers guidance available in schools was not sufficient. This finding was supported by Archer et al's (2010) study which found that Connexions did not offer careers guidance tailored to the needs of young people. This could have been because 'Connexions' funding was tied primarily

to reducing numbers of young people classified as 'NEET' (Chadderton and Colley, 2012:334), thereby affecting its 'liaison work with schools' (ibid: 336). In its criticism of the role of the PA, Colley and Hodkinson (2001:351) explain that PAs did not have the power to question institutions nor, for example, agree with clients who may wish 'to drop out of a thoroughly unsatisfactory educational experience'. So, the support that PAs could provide was limited. Research (Coles et al, 2002, Hoggarth and Smith, 2004) notes that the relationship between the Connexions PA and the young people was pivotal in achieving a successful outcome and it follows that, in order to achieve this, there needs to be an understanding of individual needs. Thus, Colley and Hodkinson (2001) argue that in creating Connexions the fundamental structural inequalities in the lives of the NEETs were not considered. This argument was supported by Yates and Payne (2006:343) when they said that, whilst they were not suggesting 'that much good work is not being done by Connexions and other services', but that the work 'is not necessarily facilitated by the use of this category of negative conceptualising for classifying young people and targeting services'.

Thus, overall, a distinct characteristic of the educational strategies of then Labour government (also, of the governments that followed) has been the emphasis on qualifications that will produce a workforce equipped with skills for the 21st century globalised economy. Although the Labour government (1997) came in with an emphasis on education and social justice, it has been noted that the prime purpose was economic (Leathwood, 2004, Tomlinson, 2005, Archer, 2007). Avis (2007) has explained that this meant that the needs of the economy were prioritised over social justice. As such, it may be argued that ignoring the structural inequalities affected some of the young people who consequently became NEET, and that credence was given to the needs of the labour market, rather than the needs of the young people who faced individual barriers. Therefore, treating the NEET young people as a homogenous group 'may not be the best basis for the forming of policy and for setting policy targets' (Raffe, 2003:8). Thus, this categorisation of young people is a social justice issue and requires highlighting.

2.6 Categorisation

An issue, alluded to above, and also in Chapter 1, is the categorisation of the young people not in education, employment or training as 'NEET'. Yates and Payne's (2006) paper is a 'critical examination of the conceptualisation of the label NEET' (ibid: 332). It explains the injustice involved because the young people concerned are labelled as if they are a homogenous group,

thereby not recognising 'the risk factors that lead the young people to NEET outcomes' (2006:332). Yates and Payne (2006) examine the consequences of applying the 'NEET' label using the research evidence from the Connexions Impact Study (Hoggarth and Smith, 2004). That study involved 444 interviews with Connexions Personnel and 855 interviews with 12-23 year-olds, although two-thirds of the latter were aged 12-16. They consisted of 51% males and 49% females, classified as 88.6% whites, 3.4% Asian, 3.4% mixed or other categories.

The Yates and Payne (2006) paper is relevant because it highlights the problem posed by the creation of the NEET category. The authors indicate how the classification ignores their varying 'characteristics, risks and issues' (2006:342). The label masks individual problems, such as drug addiction, illustrated by one of their case studies (2006:337), which require addressing before the individuals can participate in education and training programmes. On the other hand, some are NEET for reasons that are not negative, for example, wishing 'to care for their very young children' (ibid: 342) or they are in 'transitional states (between school and further education)' (ibid: 342). Furthermore, the authors argue that the term characterises the young people as what they are not, a point supported by MacDonald (2008), leading them to be portrayed as a 'problem' group. Thus, the NEET group is set aside by its very definition (Yates and Payne, 2006). This could, for some of them, create a feeling of alienation and exclusion, which in turn damages confidence, thereby destroying any possibility of them attempting to improve themselves.

Yates and Payne (2006) suggest that the solution is to recognise the heterogeneity of the NEET group and to target 'support and interventions on areas where they may be most productive' (2006:329). This paper's one limitation is that, in the 'Connexions Impact Study', only 17% of the young interviewed were in the NEET category and their age range is not revealed. As the majority of those interviewed for the study were between the ages of 12 -16, it would have been useful to know the age breakdown for the NEETs themselves. However, its examination of the issue of categorisation remains useful and it is cited extensively in other literature relating to young NEET people. Importantly, it explains why the number of NEET young people has remained stubbornly high. The finding is also helpful to my study as it highlights the necessity to understand the different requirements of the young people. It also indicates the importance of conducting in-depth interviews to elicit their differing needs that impact on their life chances. According to Furlong and Cartmel (1999:220, in Aiher and Esland, 1999:219-235), individuals

have 'become more accountable for their labour market fate'. As such, the sense of belonging to a wasted, non-achieving category called NEETs can be seen as compounding the problem.

In a similar vein, Quinn et al. (2008) highlight the problem of alienation that categorisation creates. Their study consisted of 182 interviews with 114 young people in jobs without training (JWT), aged 16-21, based in South-West England. This study is relevant to NEETs because those in JWT suffer high turnover of jobs with some eventually entering the NEET group (Maguire and Rennison, 2005). Moreover, both groups share similarities, such as low levels of the literacy and numeracy skills, disadvantaged backgrounds and being labelled. The study reinforces that it is important to understand the needs of the young people. For example, with regard to training, Quinn et al. (2008) make the important point that learning could be in different forms: some of the JWTs interviewed were learning by undertaking activities of interest to them (animal caring, mechanics or IT). Thus, this study reveals how crucial it is to cater for individual differences in terms of potential, a point supported by Colley (2006:12) who advises that when considering measures to help NEETs, it is vital to think 'how the interventions can be geared towards young people's needs'. Quinn et al's (2008) study included only those up to the age of 21. However, the point about fostering different types of learning is revealing and indicates the need for different approaches towards encouraging young NEETs, by identifying their interests when devising their training.

Thus, categorisation could be said to lead to ignoring the underlying issues that affect young people's transitions. Bourdieu (1990a:28) explained that 'the logic of classificatory label is very exactly that of racism, which stigmatises its victims by imprisoning them in a negative sense'. At the heart of the arguments against categorisation (for example, Furlong, 2013, MacDonald, 2008, Quinn et al, 2008, Yates and Payne, 2006, Raffe, 2003) is the cry to delve deeper in order to understand why some young people become NEET. The next section is an attempt to achieve this understanding.

2.7 Factors affecting young people's transition

In undertaking this literature review, the themes of 'family' and 'school' emerged as influences in young people's lives, thereby affecting their post-16 trajectories. Additionally, the research studies also revealed that the 'family' and 'school' factors are intertwined with social class. As

such, literature relating to the roles played by family, school and social class in influencing the post-16 trajectories of young people is explored below.

2.7.1 The influence of family

Various studies (for example, Gorard et al, 1999, Ball et al, 1999, Bynner and Parson, 2002, Sparkes and Glennerster, 2002, Pemberton, 2008, Atherton et al, 2009, Heath et al, 2010) have recorded the influence of families in the lives of young people. Indeed, Furlong (2013:100) describes the family as providing the 'foundation for life', affecting their future 'life chances'. Family influence is seen as stemming not only from their parent(s), but also from their siblings (Heath et al. 2010, Archer et al. 2010, Atherton et al. 2009).

a) Parent(s)

Atherton et al's (2009) study involved participants in their first year of secondary school. The study involved 610 pupils of different backgrounds (socio-economic and ethnic) from two schools in deprived urban areas and one in a rural area. Data were generated through focus groups (consisting of 15-30 pupils) and by using a questionnaire. The research found 'that the pupils ranked their parents as being most influential', with their 'encouragement, backing and support' being crucial (2009:41). The pupils felt that their parents cared the most about their future careers. This research is useful as it is a large study and identifies aspects of parental role that are important to young people at the start of their secondary schooling. However, the participants consisted of those from both privileged and disadvantaged backgrounds. Therefore it is not clear if there was a relationship between social class and the reports of parental support. This distinction is important in order to understand the contrast in the findings between Atherton et al. (2009) and the earlier studies by Bynner and Parsons (2002) and Pemberton (2008), discussed below.

Bynner and Parsons (2002) used the 1970 Birth Cohort Study to analyse the reasons why some young people become NEET. They identified family circumstances, including parents' socio-economic and educational backgrounds and the degree of interest and support given to children amongst factors that influence some young people becoming NEET. The authors highlight the limited cultural capital in families of those who become NEET. Consequently, such young people lacked relevant knowledge and support not only in relation to education, but also in

order to prepare for job interviews. Bynner and Parsons (2002) also explored the pressures posed by requiring potential employees, not only to have relevant skills, but also the emotional intelligence and social skills to chart 'their way into and through the modern labour market' (2002:291). Bynner and Parsons also state (2002:300) that the NEETs suffer 'negative psychological effects', including 'loss of control over life and dissatisfaction with life' which was also found by, for example, Coles et al. (2002) and the Prince's Trust (2013). Bynner and Parsons' (2002) research informed my study by revealing the difficulties faced by some of the participants in handling job interviews and the importance of family support for their children's job or training searches.

Similarly, Pemberton (2008) found 'intergenerational influences' (2008:251) affecting the lives of young people. His study was conducted in Merseyside and consisted of 17 year-olds, with 11 female and 10 male NEETs. His study identified complex intergenerational influences including parents' education, social class, location and housing. Pemberton's study highlighted that family support was vital for young people and that they were less likely to enter education, employment, or training, where 'they do not have a stable family environment and positive parental support' (2008:257). Pemberton (2008) also suggests that parental education and interest in their children's education impacts on young people' trajectories, leading some to become NEET. Moreover, Ball et al's (1999:202) study explores the post-16 transitions of a small group of Year 11 pupils and note how their 'educational inheritance' prepares them differently for their transitions. Their findings emphasise the role of family when young people reach the transitional stage at the end of compulsory learning. They suggest that 'choices made by young people are for most part rooted, in one way or another, in families' (1999:215) and they describe how the cultural capital of middle class families guides their children to make informed choices about their future.

b) Siblings

Studies by Archer et al. (2010), Heath et al. (2010) and Atherton et al. (2009) were not about NEETs. However, it was useful to look at them to understand generally the role of older children with regard to guiding their younger siblings on career and educational options. These studies confirmed that family influence could also include the role played by siblings. Some participants in Atherton et al's (2009) study mentioned their siblings having a greater influence on them than their parents. Their findings also reveal that participants identified ambitions to

go to university and/or enter a profession, similar to their older brother or sister's; this depicts the siblings acting as role models and, therefore, their influences reaching beyond advisory roles.

Ball (2003) highlights that cultural, social and economic capitals (Bourdieu's conceptual tools) play a significant role in the education of young people. Families' possession of these capitals, or their absence, is reflected in how children progress in school and their subsequent post-16 trajectories. Therefore, the influential role of family leads on to an examination of the role of school as a factor that affects the transitions of young people at the end of their compulsory learning.

2.7.2 Influence of school

Research studies (Coles et al, 2002, Foskett et al, 2008, Spielhofer et al, 2009, Archer et al, 2010) indicate that young people's school experiences influence significantly the pathways that they adopt when leaving compulsory learning. For example, Foskett et al. (2008) conducted a study consisting of 24 schools, across nine local education authorities and used focus groups with Year 10, 11 and follow up of year 11 in year 12 to generate data. They also conducted face to face interviews with the head teacher, careers teacher and two year tutors. They found that the young people's experiences of both, the school's ethos and the school's personnel, do affect their decisions about their post-16 pathways. They identified four aspects of schooling that are influential: the school's leadership, whether the school had a sixth form, the school's ethos and values and the socio-economic status of the school's catchment area. They concluded that socio-economic status is a 'key underpinning influence', affecting the 'attitudes and values of parents and pupils' (2008:60) which in turn influenced the school's 'ethos and aspirations' (2008:60). They emphasise that the role of school is so important that it is an area that policy makers need to focus upon when considering interventions.

The aspects of schooling that affect young people's progression include academic attainment, school absenteeism, relationships with the staff and career guidance (Simmons and Thompson, 2011, Archer et al, 2010, Spielhofer et al, 2009, Pemberton, 2008). Spielhofer et al's (2009) study consisted of literature reviews, quantitative analysis of the Youth Cohort Study data, interviews with 39 professionals and 120 interviews with young people who were NEET or in JWT (aged 16 and 17). Specifically, Spielhofer et al. (2009) conducted 40 interviews with

young people, who were currently or previously NEET. They confirmed that the NEET group is not 'a homogenous group as reflected by the different segments of young people with distinct experiences' (2009:3). Some of the issues that Spielhofer et al. identified as affecting their participants' transitions at age 16 included school exclusion, learning difficulties and stress. Additionally, they found that young people need, 'better information, advice and guidance pre-16; more flexible […] start dates […] if [they] need to change directions; and appropriate pre- and post-16 provisions suitable for all the young people aged 16 and 17' (2009:6).

The findings of Spielhoffer et al. (2009) are informative. However, this study has limitations. The participants in the study were aged 16 or 17, and, as such, it excluded those who fit into other categories, for example, longer-term NEETs, up to the age of 24, who are included in my study. Furthermore, some of the interview findings were based jointly on NEET and JWT young people and it would have been useful if the possible differing needs of the two groups had been distinguished.

2.7.3 Socio-economic status

Gorard and Smith (2007) note that the influence of school experiences of young people are not as significant as that of the role played by their families. According to these authors young people from families of lower socio-economic status tend not to continue with their education and training after the age of 16. Similarly, Ball et al's (1999) study which explores the post-16 transitions of a small group of Year 11 pupils, notes how their 'educational inheritance' (1999:211) prepares them differently for participation. Ball's work, although not on NEETs and not recent, gave me an insight into how post-16 options are decided whilst still in school as I was exploring the post-16 transitions of young people who become NEET.

The participants in Ball et al's (1999) study were from a south-west London comprehensive secondary school and two Pupil Referral Units (PRU). The authors found that the pupils had decided on their post-16 pathways by year 11 and that their hopes for their future were very much influenced by their backgrounds. They illustrate the dichotomy vividly through the examples of working class 'Gabrielle' (ibid: 206) and middle class 'Kirsty' (ibid: 204). Kirsty is described as a 'classic A-Leveller' (Ball et al, 1999:204), with professional parents and expected to enter university, 'following a "well-trodden trajectory", through familiar territory towards a clear end point'. Ball et al (ibid) explains that Kirsty's family habitus is a '"world of

already realised ends – procedures to follow, paths to take" (Bourdieu, 1990; [53])'. On the other hand, Gabrielle's parents were alcoholics 'given to fighting' with the police being 'called by their neighbours, or by one of the children' (ibid: 206) and Gabrielle's secondary school education was limited. Ball et al. conclude that the different pathways and life choices selected by these young people are 'reproductive of social class divisions' (1999:95).

Sparkes and Glennerster (2002) highlight the importance of parental/family support and suggest that a solution is to have parental programmes, aimed at generating parental interest in children's education. However, this article was written in 2002, in the early days of Sure Start, with outcomes not yet assessed. Six years later, Barber (2008), concludes that those who benefited most from Sure Start were not those from the lower socio-economic groups. This could be due to low self- esteem, lack of knowledge, or for cultural reasons. Barber's (2008) comments imply that the parents who possessed cultural capital knew how to source the resources that would help their children and also, were able to do so with confidence. As Barber (2008) explains, middle class parents will access such services with ease, but not always 'the very young, the drug-using, the downtrodden and the crushed' (2008:280) who need them the most. Crompton (2009:5) attributes family support to class, explaining that 'class still exists, as a systematically structured, social and economic disadvantage, which is reproduced over generations' and that '[…] family plays a major role in the reproduction of class inequalities' (2009:7). The issue of social class and how it influences the progress of children and their future trajectories is captured vividly in Devine's (2004) study.

Devine's (2004) qualitative research, conducted in America and the UK, was 'to explore how middle class parents mobilise their resources to help children through the education system and into good jobs' (2004:11). Devine interviewed middle class parents in Manchester (UK) and in Boston (USA), a total of 86 parents with 116 children between them. The parents interviewed in both countries were ethnically a 'diverse group of men and women' (2004:13). The parental approach was similar in both countries and reflected how middle class parents utilised their economic, cultural and social resources to advance their children's educational pathways and career progression. Thus, the data gathered by Devine are useful for they reveal starkly the importance of Bourdieu's (1986) concept of capitals. Devine explains that the children whose parents do not have middle class resources do not enjoy culturally enriched lives (for example, with books, music and cultural activities). Indeed, for Bourdieu there was no clearer sign of 'class' than engaging in music and 'playing noble instruments' (Bourdieu, 1984:18-19).

Devine highlights how those who possess cultural, economic and social capitals 'enjoy these advantages and also the power that comes with them' (2004:5). This finding accords with Gilles' study (2005:842) which found 'the enduring relevance of class' and how 'parents with middle class resources drew on these capitals to advantage their children'. Devine also stresses that what is more important is that the 'middle classes are keen to hold on to their advantages and that they have the power, via the resources they command, to do so' (2004:5). It follows therefore that working class families, with limited resources, are not in an equivalent position to enhance their children's education, as has been highlighted by the work carried out in schools by Reay (2006). The diverse ethnicity of the participants in Devine's study reflects, to some extent, the ethnicity of the parents of the participants in my study. It helps to understand the participants' backgrounds and to put into context their lived experiences.

In contrast to the middle class participants in Devine's study, Archer et al's study (2010:1) draws on 'the experiences, identities and aspirations of 89' working class pupils in inner-city London schools. The participants in it are much younger than the age group of my study, but it is appropriate as it helps to throw some light on those of my participants who may have experienced similar feelings about school. Archer et al's (2010) research highlights their participants' disenchantment with education and explain how schools could better support such pupils. This accords with Foskett et al's (2008) views, considered above, that young people's school experiences affect their post-16 participation.

Archer et al's (2010) two year study explores the views of 14-16 year olds identified by their teachers as being likely to drop out of education, unlikely to engage in post-16 education and therefore considered as being at 'risk' (2010:7). Archer et al. (2010:81) found that 'structural inequalities' influence 'urban young people's aspirations'. They examine the role of class, gender and ethnicity 'in urban, young people's lives and their education' (2010:9) and explain how their 'engagement with the world are strongly inflected by identities and inequalities of race, gender and ethnicity' (2010:31). However they note that class appears to transcend gender and ethnicity, stating that, 'research consistently shows large differences in attainment by social class are much greater than those by ''race''/ethnicity or gender [DfES 2006]' (2010:11). This point is supported by Simmons and Thompson (2011) considered below.

Simmons and Thompson's (2011:1) research is 'an ethnographic study of 16-18 year olds' who had been NEET previously or likely to become NEET. As such, at the time of the research they

were not NEETs, but in training as they were 'attending work based learning programmes in the north of England'. The text draws on the experiences of young people and the practitioners who worked with them. The authors make the interesting point that it is difficult to define the UK's youth labour market because of the 'changing nature of industry and employment' (2011:54). They note that, despite changes in the employment and educational sectors, 'there is still widespread negativity towards school that Willis (1977) found in young working class people over thirty years ago'; additionally, that the kind of work or training sought tended to be 'traditional and reflect long established patterns of class and gender difference' (2011:58). It is not clear if this is something particular to the north or applies to all young people, but it is a point that may emerge in my study whose participants will be urban/London. If there is a similar pattern in my study, this may be one of the factors that will help to explain why the number of young NEET people remains stubbornly high. However, the authors found their study's participants to have 'aspirations for work or further education, and some […] to go on to higher education […] we found no evidence of fecklessness or ingrained dependency' (2011:172). It would have been useful to know how long the young people in this study had been NEET, how they viewed that period of being NEET and whether that experience had encouraged them to adopt a positive approach to work and in seeking further and/or higher education. Considering the issues of class, race and gender, the authors argue (2011:11) that the 'variation between [the] social classes is greater than variation between genders, or different ethnic groups', thereby confirming Archer et al's (2010) finding given above.

Simmons et al's (2014) study had participants aged from 15 -19, with one aged 20. They had been NEET at various points in their lives but not continuously NEET. It is an ethnographic study, following the participants who moved from being NEET into training or employment in northern England. It provides an insight into some of the experiences of the young people's lives. However, it differs from my study because the participants in my study are older (aged 18 – 24, with 15 of them aged above 20) and all of them were NEET at the time of the study, having been NEET continuously since the age of 18, with 12 of them since the age of 16, with none of them having been in employment since leaving school at 16. Moreover, the participants in my study were all living at home except for one who had left home, aged 24. Furthermore, my study is based in London and therefore shows the challenges faced by the participants, despite London being the capital with all the perceived opportunities it offers. The participants in my study also formed a very diverse group and included newly arrived immigrants. Hence,

there are some differences between the lived lives of the young people participating in the Simmons et al. (2014) study and my study.

The above studies, considered in the literature review, are relevant because they draw on the perspectives of those who were NEETs or are disaffected with school and, therefore, are likely to become NEETs. They also draw on Bourdieu's concepts in examining their data. Bourdieu's (1930 – 2002) contribution to class analysis and his concepts of 'capital', 'habitus' and 'field' form the theoretical framework for my study, as outlined below.

2.8 Theoretical framework

This section outlines the theoretical framework adopted for this study, gives an explanation for selecting it, defines and discusses the key theoretical concepts with relevant references to the literature reviewed above and also to this study. Some criticisms of the theoretical concepts are noted, followed by a discussion of how this study may add to the theorisations of young NEET people's trajectories.

Pierre Bourdieu's (1930 – 2002) conceptual framework and his key concepts of 'capital', 'habitus' and 'field' form the theoretical framework for this study. Bourdieu's conceptual framework has been adopted because the literature reviewed in this chapter, relating to NEET young people, shows that class plays a crucial role in the post-16 transitions of young people: 'to be born into a working class family is to have a significantly lower chance of success in an increasingly competitive educational and employment markets' (Simmons and Thompson, 2011:8). Bourdieu's contribution to class analysis has become influential and the interplay of Bourdieu's concepts of capitals, habitus and field will help with the data analysis in this study.

This study is about probing deeper to understand some of the factors that have led some young people, aged 18 - 24, to be continuously not in education, employment or training (NEET). The majority of the participants were working class and 15 out of the 18, were aged 20 or above. All of the participants had been NEET continuously since the age of 18, with 12 of them since the age of 16, when compulsory learning ended for them.

Bourdieu's concepts will be useful for this study in a number of ways. His notion of capitals will help to explain the significance of resources (for example, parental support / expectations,

knowledge, finance and social connections) which young people draw upon when navigating their trajectories in the fields of education, training and employment. Habitus provides a way of understanding young people's complex identities and how they are constructed in relation to their experiences of marginalisation. Hence, Bourdieu's key concepts will help to analyse and explain why some young people are positioned unfavourably, particularly with regard to their life chances.

Research on school pupils and their transitions (for example, Ball et al, 1999, Devine, 2004) draws on Bourdieu's concepts (capital, habitus and field) to explain how it is easier for middle class pupils to negotiate their post-16 pathways in order to achieve educational success and career progression, whilst some of their working class peers struggle to do so, signifying the crucial role played by social class. Bourdieu saw power as being distributed disproportionately in the world, thereby resulting in those who dominated society and those who struggled. Skeggs (2002:7) describes class to be '[…] part of a struggle over access to resources and ways of being' and that therefore '[…] it is primarily about inequality and exploitation' (2002:75). Specific to this study, the literature on NEET young people (for example, Thompson, 2011, Simmons and Thompson, 2011 and Simmons et al, 2014) has used Bourdieu to explain that 'whilst being NEET affects young people from all backgrounds, it has its most serious impact on young people from poor families with the least accumulation of dominant forms of cultural and social capital' (Simmons et al, 2014: 17).

Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) put forward the idea of cultural reproduction to illustrate how privileges and also disadvantages are handed down from one generation to the next. They explained that reproduction of social inequalities occurs through homes and the employment sector, but primarily by the education system, which Bourdieu viewed as being manipulated by society's powerful (that is, those who possess the capitals). He explained that they did so in order to culturally transform their own lives in order to favour and support their own interests, thereby maintaining the overall unequal structure of society: 'it's probably cultural inertia which still makes us see education in terms of the ideology of the school as a liberating force, […] even when the indications tend to be that it is one of the most effective means of perpetuating the existing social pattern' (Bourdieu, 1974:32).

Thus, Bourdieu was interested in how the inequalities in society are reproduced, resulting in the dominant classes retaining their power. Raffe (2003:8) states that young people who are

NEET are 'often linked to a wider pattern of social disadvantage and powerlessness'. Therefore Bourdieu's key concepts of capital, field and habitus are relevant to understand the trajectories of NEET young people.

A brief outline of Bourdieu's key conceptual tools is given below. These key concepts are inter-related but they are outlined separately for ease of explanation of individual terms and each is then discussed further in relation to the literature and this study.

a) Capital

'Capital' refers to assets that are economic, social and cultural and those who dominate in a field have power because they possess these capitals. The significance of possessing capital and the power it provides are articulated aptly by Colley and Hodkinson (2001:349):

> […] no matter how the education and employment field is altered or developed, those with most capital tend to find ways of gaining advantage for themselves and their children. This links directly back to the point that poverty and social inclusion are relative. As the gap between the rich and poor widens, the use of capitals to achieve success becomes important.

Therefore, as explained by Bourdieu and recognised in studies relating to NEETs (for example, Bynner and Parsons, 2002, Pemberton, 2008, Simmons and Thompson, 2011, Simmons et al, 2014), families that possess cultural, social and economic capitals are able to use their capitals to enhance their children's life-chances.

Bourdieu (1986) identified four types of capital: cultural, economic, social and symbolic. The literature reviewed relating to NEETs uses cultural, economic and social capitals to explain their roles in young people's trajectories. These are outlined in more detail below. In writing about the different types of capital, Bourdieu (1986:246) explained that 'the transmission of cultural capital is no doubt the best hidden form of hereditary transmission of capital and it therefore receives proportionately greater weight in the system of reproduction strategies'.

Cultural capital is the body of knowledge, skills and dispositions that a person has accumulated that gives the person a higher social status. According to Bourdieu (1986) cultural capital has three distinct forms: the embodied form which comprises cultivated perspectives, attitudes and

skills acquired through the socialisation process and remains with the individual; the objectified form which consists of the accumulation of cultural goods such as works of art and books, the appreciation of which requires cultural knowledge; and the institutionalised form that includes educational qualifications, the importance and level of value of which is measured according to the recognition afforded to it by the learning and/or employment sectors (1986). Bourdieu (1986:41) also suggests that acquiring cultural capital is a form of 'self-improvement' that can, generate economic capital in the form of employment. Furthermore, Bourdieu (1986) signifies that a person possessing cultural capital can use education to transform the cultural capital into economic and social capitals.

Social capital is described by Bourdieu (in Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992:119) as:

> the sum of resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to the individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition.

Hence, social capital consists of the benefits, or potential benefits, that are generated through links with powerful or important people and social networks. These connections can prove to be helpful not only to the individual but also to the individual's family and friends.

In this study, although the young people possessed social capital in terms of family and friends, for most of them it was not relevant to the field of employment they were seeking. Therefore, it was only when they engaged with Possible did they have the opportunity to understand the requirements of an employment field and therefore undertake work placements to improve their employability: 'a "having a feel for the game'' (Bourdieu, 1990) of constructing employable selves' (Bathmaker et al, 2013:740).

Bourdieu (1986) identified economic capital as being wealth that might have been inherited or earned. An individual may have economic capital but not necessarily cultural and/or social capitals, as was the case with two of the participants in this study. However, economic capital can help with acquiring cultural and social capitals. It is families' economic capital, as well as their cultural and social capitals, that help young people to undertake extra-curricular activities, to take a gap year, to travel and to go on holidays, none of which appear to have been available to most of the young people in this study.

Bourdieu, in addition, refers to symbolic capital which is acquired when the above-mentioned capitals are valued in that society, thereby conferring recognition, privilege and status which leads to power in that field (Bourdieu: 1986). It is therefore dependent on the possession of the other capitals. In the literature reviewed, Simmons and Thompson (2011) explain that because the staff on the E2E programme did not possess academic or teaching qualifications, they presented their 'symbolic capital in other forms'. They describe these as, 'engaging in caring, nurturing relationships with learners' and also using 'flexible approaches in teaching' thereby recognising the 'difficult lives of the young people'.

In summing up the role of capitals, the ownership of the capitals may be seen as facilitating an individual's position within a field. The studies in the literature review observe that the young people from families possessing dominant forms of cultural capital and social capital are advantaged and have clear strategies for their children's schooling. For example, Archer et al. (2010), whose study included participants at 'risk' of becoming NEET when they leave school, explain how parents with economic capital can move into an area that provides better schools. Nash (2002:275) observes how parents with cultural capital use their knowledge to enhance their children's life chances:

> cultural capital is inherited, invested in the educational system, as families adopt practices with the strategic function of reproducing the order of domination and subordination and generate a return in the form of knowledge which may be exchanged in the labour market for an elite occupation.

Therefore, it follows that parents' level of education, cultural tastes and aesthetic dispositions provide the cultural capital in a child's home, assisted by their wealth (economic capital) and also the parents' social connections (social capital). As my research questions include exploring the participants' accounts about the expectations of their parent(s) and the guidance offered by them, Bourdieu's (1986) theories relating to capitals are relevant. Thus, Bourdieu's concepts of cultural, economic and social capitals will help to explain the link between family, class and educational outcomes for the participants in this study. As stated by Bourdieu, those who possess the capitals are the ones who dominate in a field. The concept of field is discussed below.

b) Field

'Field' is described by Bourdieu as a 'network, or a configuration of the objective relations between positions' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992:97). An individual's position in the field will vary according to the type of capitals owned and their capitals' value in that field. Bourdieu describes the participants in the field as being players trying to achieve different aims. As such, although there are official rules, 'it is the state of the relations of force between players that defines the structure of the field' (Bourdieu, in Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992:99). Thus, 'field' is a hierarchical social system with 'people who are dominant and people who are dominated' (Bourdieu 1998:40). Those who dominate in a field are able to use its resources to benefit themselves, thereby contributing to the reproduction of social structures. The two main aspects of field are that those entering a field need to possess dispositions particular to it and that it is one in which struggles or conflicts occur to either conserve or challenge the distribution of capital.

Bourdieu's explanation of the power exercised by the dominant players in the field helps to explain the situation faced by three of the NEET young people in this study who had undertaken BTEC courses but were not able to find employment in the sectors relevant to their studies. Thompson (2011:18) states that 'the autonomy of the employer is considerable, at least in their dealings with the young people seeking training or employment'. The situations of these three participants could be described as one where the employers (as the dominant players) were seeking degree-holders and therefore their BTEC qualifications were not the credentials sought by them. As observed by Simmons et al. (2014:89), 'those with extensive reserves of social, economic and cultural capitals are better positioned to meet the increasingly selective demands of employers'. This reveals how the dominant players in the field determine who to consider for employment and what qualifications to value and accept (Colley, 2003).

One of the aspects relating to NEETs considered in this study is the issue of categorising the young people as 'NEET' (Yates and Payne, 2006) and the neo-liberal policy which attributes the responsibility for becoming NEET to the young NEET person. As such, Thompson's (2011) explanation, using Bourdieu's concept of 'field', is illuminating on this matter. Thompson (2011:19), using the concept of 'field', explains how the state's totalising assumption of power replaced 'one field position - the unemployed young person […] with entitlement to state

resources in the form of unemployment benefit […] with a different position - the NEET young person'. This positions the NEETs as completely without power and responsible for their own situation: 'a problem for the state has been transformed into a problem status for the individual' (ibid: 19). This displays the unequal power relations in the field and the power of the dominant to influence and transform the status of institutions and groups. This analysis resonates with that of Hodkinson et al (1996:3), who describe young people as facing a 'complex system of negotiation, bargaining and sometimes struggle, within what, following Bourdieu, we call the youth training field'. The authors note that 'the young people, their employers, their parents, their career officers and their training providers were all players in the field. They had resources of varying types and quality which produced 'unequal power relations' (ibid: 3). Hodkinson et al's (1996) explanation above accords with this study on young NEET people. The vocational training sector, the further education colleges, the voluntary organisations that work with young NEET people, the support services such as Connexions and the Job Centres, the young NEET people, their parents and the state/the policy makers are relevant to my study of the NEET group as key players with their varying degrees of power.

Field is inter-related with the concept of habitus: 'both the concepts of habitus and field are relational in the additional sense that they function fully in relation to one another' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992:19). The comfort and ease that individuals feel in a field will depend upon the capitals they possess as well as their habitus.

c) Habitus

Habitus is the internalised set of embodied dispositions, beliefs, values and attitudes that are acquired through the socialisation process. Bourdieu (1990b:55) stated that 'the habitus is an infinite capacity for generating products - thoughts, perceptions, expressions and actions - whose limits are set by the historically and socially situated conditions of its production…'.

Thus, habitus is embodied and it is reflected in ways 'of standing, speaking, walking, and thereby of feeling and thinking' (Bourdieu, 1990b:70). Therefore, habitus 'refers to something historical, it is linked to an individual's history' (Bourdieu, 1993:86). Habitus also evolves, in that, 'habitus can be practically transformed (always within definite boundaries) by the effect of social trajectory' (Bourdieu, 1990a:116). Hence, habitus can be transformed through an individual's choice or because of change of circumstances, especially when an individual enters

a field and a different form of behaviour or approach is required. In some such cases, the change may not be smooth: Bourdieu refers to such difficulties as 'hysteresis' (1990b:62). However, Bourdieu (1990a:108) explains that where habitus and field match / are congruent, the change required may be minimal and gradual:

> [….] one of the privileges of the dominant, who move in the world as fish in water, resides in the fact that they need not engage in rational computation in order to reach the goals that suit their interests. All they have to do is follow their dispositions which being adjusted to their positions 'naturally' generate practices adjusted to the situation.

Therefore, habitus encapsulates the individual's past and present and Bourdieu's concept of habitus helps to explain how classed dispositions are (re)structured through the socialisation process. According to Reay et al. (2005:27), habitus 'emphasises the enduring influence of a range of contexts' and they can be in different forms, including the familial, individual and institutional and cast a 'subtle, often indirect, but still pervasive influence on choices'.

Habitus therefore helps to illustrates how young people's transitions are constrained or enabled within social structures. As explained by Reay et al. (2005), 'habitus' embodies social norms in an individual acquired as a result of social processes and, as described by Nash (1999), 'habitus' acts as a guide and governs the behaviour of people, knowing what to do, how to behave appropriately and comfortably in specific situations. Thus 'when habitus encounters a social world of which it is the product, it is like a ''fish in water'': it does not feel the weight of the water and it takes the world about itself for granted' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992:127). The concept of habitus helps to explain some of the difficulties faced by the participants' parents in the field of school when trying to resolve bullying issues and by the participants in the field of employment. The concept also helps to illuminate the challenges faced by some of the participants who were new migrants to the UK and had to enter education, housing and employment fields with a habitus formed in a different environment. Reay (1995:360) argues that, 'prejudices and racial stereotypes ingrained in habitus of members of the dominant groups can affect the life chances of any group who are clearly different in some way'.

Habitus is not permanent but 'evolves' (Hodkinson et al, 1996:147) and is 'the product of the different fields in which a person has resided in and positions occupied' (Thompson, 2011:18). The 'evolving' aspect of habitus is helpful in understanding how the habitus of some of the participants had to change in order to meet the requirements of the self-development course

delivered by Possible (the dominant player). One of the requirements was that those young people with addiction issues (alcohol and drugs) had to undergo treatment and be addiction-free before participating in the field of the self-development programme offered by Possible. Therefore, in my study, the participants' habitus would have been formed in the family, but re-formed in various fields: for example, in school, Further Education College, local community and voluntary organisations, such as Possible.

In considering Bourdieu's key concepts, some of the criticisms of his theory were noted. The main ones, about social reproduction and habitus, are as outlined below.

Bourdieu and Passeron's (1977) idea of social reproduction suggests that each generation passes down to the next one their disadvantages. Brown (1995) is critical of the element of inevitability implied in Bourdieu's reproduction theory and he suggests that changes in the employment sector and education system mean that reproduction of inequality is not inevitable in all situations. As an example, this study reflects that whilst disadvantages are reproduced in most cases, it is also necessary to take into account the changes in the educational sector that may help to make reproduction less inevitable, for example, the BTEC qualification being available and being accepted as entry qualification for university. However, it needs to be noted that class based routes remain, with these new qualifications being taken by mainly working class young people, while their middle class peers continue with the more prestigious A –Level route favoured by the elite universities. Hence, it may be said that the principle of reproduction remains powerful in explaining how successive generations have maintained their privileges, or their disadvantages, and the struggles that ensue in attempting to reduce the disadvantages through education and employment, as reflected in this study.

A criticism of Bourdieu's concept of habitus is that it is deterministic. Jenkins (2002) argues that habitus implies dispositions that have been engrained from childhood, 'imprinted and encoded in socialising or learning process which commences during early childhood' (ibid: 76) and therefore that it does not permit room for agency. Similarly, Nash (1990:445) points out that Bourdieu's theory of practice 'negates the theory of action, blurs the concept of choice […]'. However, Reay (2004:437), referring to Bourdieu's work, 'The Weight of the World (1999)', states that 'there is a great deal of striving, resistance and action aimed at changing current circumstances as many of the poor and the dispossessed, interviewed by Bourdieu and his colleagues, search around for ways of changing and transforming their lives'. These efforts

of the poor described above can be said to be evident in this study, where the NEET young people made numerous attempts to seek employment after leaving school or FE Colleges, but were unsuccessful, resulting in sustained periods of being NEET. However, their later attempts to improve their situation led them to engage in the programme offered by Possible, which according to them, they sourced themselves. The participants' trajectory supports Reay et al's (2005) description of how choice is present in habitus but that it can also be limited and, in that sense, habitus can be reproductive or transformative.

Thus, Bourdieu's key concepts of capital, habitus and field formed the theoretical framework for this research study. Using Bourdieu's key concepts for this study has also helped to develop the existing conceptualisation of NEETs, as explored in Chapter 7, in the 'Contributions' section.

To conclude, overall, young people's habitus and ownership of capitals determine how they navigate the fields of education and employment. Applying Bourdieu's theoretical framework helps to analyse and to explain why some of the young people are positioned unfavourably, particularly with regard to their life chances.

2.9 CONCLUSION

Thus, my theoretical approach has been influenced by the use of Bourdieu's concept of capital in the studies reviewed which examine the experiences of young school pupils categorised as at 'risk' of becoming NEET, or young people who have been not in education employment or training (NEET).

As indicated in this chapter, this study drew upon the diverse range of literature reviewed in order to place the issue of NEETs in its socio-political context and in relation to the inequalities which impact on how young people negotiate their trajectories. The literature reviewed here is from varied sources for breadth of relevant information. Policy documents relating to the NEET group abound and as highlighted in this review, the *Bridging the Gap* Report (SEU, 1999) was the catalyst for this. However, as discussed in this review and also in Chapter 1, the statistics indicate that the number of NEETs remain steadfastly high. This literature review has examined critically why these policies alone have not provided the answer and has highlighted why social justice issues need to be addressed. This review also considers, in some detail, how the changed

labour market requirements have influenced the government's skills agenda. This was in the wake of globalisation:

> linking up valuable people and activities from all over the world, while switching off from the networks of power and wealth, people and territories described as irrelevant from the perspectives of dominant interests (Castells, 2005:1).

It can be seen from the above studies, that there does not appear to be published research that focuses, as my study aims to do, on NEETs solely in the 18-24 age group, living in London, the UK's capital city, and who have been continuously NEET since the age of 18, with 12 of them continuously NEET since the age of sixteen. Therefore, this study explores their lived experiences spanning a longer period of time, considering any particular factors that led to their longer-term NEET status and, importantly, attempting to understand the NEET situation from their perspectives. In doing so, it prioritises young people's voices and experiences. Moreover, the focus being on those above 18 could be illuminating as from 2015, the age of 18, became the age when compulsory learning ceased. Additionally, there does not appear to be a study based on the experiences of young NEET people aged 18-24, living in London, with all the opportunities that a capital city is perceived to offer and notably, in that part of London that was being regenerated for the 2012 Olympics. This study also helps to illustrate the importance of locality for some young people who feel marginalised from the rest of the city because of their backgrounds. Furthermore, being based in London, this study includes a more diverse range of young NEET people, including new arrivals to UK. In addition, this appears to be the only study that includes a charitable organisation working with the NEET group and the impact of their initiatives on the young NEET people.

According to MacInnes et al. (2009:11), 'while recession has made matters worse, rising unemployment amongst the young adults began several years ago' and, as noted by Chadderton and Colley (2012:331), the 'labour market was strongly polarised against lower-qualified youth'. The predominant view unearthed by this literature review is that, without interventions to address some of the social justice issues faced by the NEET group, this marginalised group will continue to exist, caught in a 'vicious cycle of disadvantage and powerlessness' (Raffe, 2003:8). As articulated by Quinn (2010: Evid 1, House of Commons), 'we actually do not know very much about what these young people think about education and training, work and their lives, and that is the position we need to work from'. Overall, my qualitative, in-depth study will contribute to knowledge about the varied experiences of young people, aged 18-24,

categorised as 'NEET'. The knowledge gained should contribute to the current debates on education, training and employment and help to inform interested parties, from policymakers to schools, training providers and charitable organisations working to meet the needs of young people classified as NEET.

I have identified above the gap that my study will fill and the contribution that it could make. In doing so, I have been guided and stimulated by what has gone before me, some of which I have tried to capture in this chapter. The next chapter explains how this study was undertaken.

Chapter 3   Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to convey how this research study was undertaken. The chapter begins with an outline of the aim and focus of the study in order to set it in context. This is followed by a discussion of the methodological approaches adopted and an explanation of my ontological and the epistemological assumptions which signify that this is a qualitative study. My positionality which reflects on the influence of my background, the subjectivity involved and the reflexivity required are also considered, followed by the research design, the pilot study and the obtaining of access. The methods (non-participant and participant observations, focus groups and semi-structured interviews) used and the rationale for selecting these research methods are explained next, followed by an outline of the ethical considerations. An account of the data analysis undertaken and the limitations to the methodological approach follow, before the chapter concludes.

3.2 Research Aim

The research question was: 'How do some young people become NEET and how do they make sense of these transitions?' Thus, the aim of this study was to explore, through the perspectives of a cross-section of the NEET group, their experiences and trajectories in order to understand the factors that contributed to them becoming NEET. The sub-questions are:

1) What influenced the young people's pathways in education, employment and training?
2) What are the young people's experiences of careers guidance services?
3) What are the perceptions of staff who work with NEET group about the factors that lead young people to become NEET?
4) How do young people relate to the label 'NEET'?

3.3 The Methodological Approach

Crotty (1998) states that the methodologies and methods used in research and the justifications for selecting them are vital issues, therefore an understanding of them need to be displayed in any research study. Hence, these are set out below, starting with the definition of a research paradigm.

Guba and Lincoln (1989:80) define a paradigm as 'a basic set of beliefs, a set of assumptions that we are willing to make which serve as touchstones in guiding our activities'. They also

explain that there are two main paradigms in social sciences: positivism and interpretivism (Guba and Lincoln, 1994:109). Both are philosophically opposed to each other.

In positivism, the 'core argument' is that 'the social world exists externally to the researcher, and that its properties can be measured directly through observation' (Gray, 2004:18). Thus, its emphasis is on objectivity and evidence, with the researcher's values seen as not affecting the study.

In contrast, interpretivism holds that 'observation' is not the only way to know the world. Therefore interpretivists seek 'culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social world' (Crotty, 1998:67). It involves the process of obtaining information to understand human behaviour and that meaning is constructed through the researcher's analysis of the data obtained. Therefore, it entails subjectivity.

There are three aspects to a paradigm. They are ontology, epistemology and methodology and Denzin and Lincoln (2011:12) describe them as asking the following:

> ontology (what kind of being is the human being? What is the nature of reality?), epistemology (what is the relationship between the enquirer and the known?) and methodology (how do we know the world or gain knowledge of it?).

The relevant interpretivist framework and the philosophical beliefs are explored below in the context of this research.

The aim of this research was to investigate the factors that played a role in some of the young people becoming NEET. According to Harre and Secord (1972, cited in Blaikie, 2007:104), part of the process of understanding the social behaviour involves collecting the 'actor's own statements about why he [sic] performed the acts in question' and that the statements are to be considered 'seriously', but 'not accepted uncritically'. The anticipated outcome of this study was not only to attempt to understand the NEET behaviour, but also, in the process, to reveal the underlying injustices. It was hoped that this would generate a critical debate amongst interested parties of the relevant issues, leading to appropriate measures to meet the concerns of the NEET group. Qualitative research methods that place the perspectives of the participants at its centre were selected.

Therefore, this qualitative study is an attempt not only provide a platform for the marginalised NEET group in order to articulate their concerns and fears, but also to give 'more authority to the subjects' voices' (Thomas, 1993:4). As my data collection and its interpretation will be

focused on the participants' responses, the interpretivist approach was selected. The ontological and epistemological assumptions will be explained below.

a) Ontological Position in Interpretivism

Ontological assumptions explain our beliefs about what constitutes the 'nature of social reality' (Blaike, 2007:13). In interpretivism, the belief is that 'multiple realities are constructed through our lived experiences and interactions with others' (Creswell, 2013:36). Thus, the ontological position is that there is not one reality, but a series of different constructions of it by individuals. Hence, reality /truth is subjective. It 'seeks insight rather than statistical analysis […] and questions whether a scientific approach can be used when dealing with human beings' (Bell, 1998:8). Thus, it consists of the process of obtaining information and the understanding of human actions/conduct, with meaning being constructed through the researcher's data analysis. Therefore, 'the ontological position is one which values people's knowledge, values and experiences as meaningful and worthy of exploration' (Seale, 2004:182). Hence, in the context of this study, as the NEET group is considered a marginalised, diverse group, it is important to elicit from the participants their individual perspectives on their trajectories that led them to their NEET status.

As the NEET group is made up of diverse, marginalised people, there will be a preconceived assumption that '[...] various forms of social oppression' (Thomas, 1993:34) contributed, to a certain extent, to them becoming NEET. However, it has also been noted that the data generated could show this to be a mistaken assumption and a crucial element of critical thinking is thinking flexibly. Thus, within the research context, this means being willing to change the beliefs and assumptions that are held: 'the need for flexibility, because the questions that are most interesting may not be revealed until considerable background data emerges' (Thomas, 1993:35).

b) Epistemological Position in Interpretivism

Crotty (1998) describes epistemology as a way of viewing the world and trying to understand it. Therefore, it requires knowing 'what counts as knowledge and how the knowledge claims are justified' (Creswell, 2013:20). The epistemological belief is that 'reality is co-constructed

between the researcher and the researched and shaped by individual experiences' (Creswell, 2013:36). Therefore, it recognises the involvement of personal interpretation and the findings could include the researcher's own viewpoints, that is, they are essentially subjective. Theory is emergent and is embedded in the data.

Thus, in the context of this study, my epistemological position is that knowledge is co-constructed by listening respectfully to the NEET young people's views of their lived world and the meanings they give to their own experiences. Fawcett and Hearn (2004) note that this approach places an emphasis on the relationship between the 'researcher-researched' and 'ways of seeking to overcome the "othering" process' (2004:207): this matter and other issues relating to my background are explored in the section below.

3.4 Positionality/Reflexivity

> Researchers "position themselves" in a qualitative research study. This means that researchers convey (i.e., in a method section, in an introduction, or in other places in a study) their background (e.g., work experiences, cultural experiences, history), how it informs their interpretation of the information in a study and what they have to gain from the study (Creswell, 2013:47).

As an interpretive approach has been adopted for this study, I needed to be critically aware that my positionality may affect the interview process in terms of how the participants may see me, the interpretation of the meanings of what the participants tell me and how I collected the data. Mosselson (2010:479) explains that the 'role of subjectivity and bringing in the researcher's positionality' strengthens not only 'the ethical integrity of the research' but also 'the research process and the analysis and interpretation of the data'.

As commented by Denzin and Lincoln (2000:19), 'there is no clear window into the inner life of an individual. Any gaze is always filtered through the lens of language, gender, social class and ethnicity'. Thus, this study's participants who are not in education, employment or training (NEET), will see me, not only as a British-Indian female, but also as being educated, in employment and middle class. In Chapter 1, I set out my personal interest in undertaking this study. As explained therein my academic discipline is law. Law, as a subject, is precise and the application of the rules and regulations entail a detached, objective, rigid approach, more akin to positivism. However, becoming familiar with and being influenced through my charitable

work, part of me has believed that it was necessary to delve deeper in order to obtain insight into sociological problems and that this is better achieved by talking to those affected. As argued by Harding (1998:151, cited in Seale, 2004:26), the perspectives of the marginalised 'provide distinctive problems to be explained [...]. It is valuable new questions that the thinking from this perspective can generate'. Hence, in the context of this study, by hearing from the NEET participants their own accounts of why all but six of them have been continuously NEET since leaving school and all since the age of 18, an understanding of their individual needs may be achieved and therefore how each might be helped. It could give insight into why some of the policies designed to help the NEET young people have not impacted and improved their lives. Essentially, my belief is that there is more to the social world than 'what can be seen, smelt or touched' (Gray, 2004:18, on positivism). Therefore, it follows that people interpret reality differently and consequently, there are 'multiple realities' (Creswell, 2013:36).

This belief, that there is no single reality, was further enhanced through my work experiences which focused mainly on those who are from disadvantaged backgrounds. These included: firstly, my employment with a new university that supported the Widening Participation policy and therefore the student population included mature students with non-traditional academic backgrounds, some of whom had been NEET; secondly, working on a LEA's 'pupil mobility' research project; thirdly, setting up a mentoring programme for disadvantaged school pupils; fourthly, long-term volunteering with a Citizens Advice Bureau; and, fifthly, volunteering with Aimhigher. I was keen to understand 'how people's lived experiences shape their world views […]. I wanted to talk to people, to hear what they say, how they say it' (Mosselson, 2010:480). My own assumptions, as outlined here, are what informed my thinking and influenced the development of my research methodology and methods.

A further influence on me has been the undertaking of the Doctorate in Education degree which introduced to me, amongst others, Pierre Bourdieu's theoretical concepts. These concepts provided the tools to contextualise social inequalities in an informed manner. For example, in the law department, for Clinical Legal Education (one of my responsibilities), I had to work with external lawyers, some of whom were from top city firms. Bourdieu's concept of habitus helps to explain how my middle class background made me feel at ease visiting these firms and interacting with the middle class lawyers: I could 'move in their world like a fish in water' (Bourdieu, 1990b:163). In contrast, most of my law students, coming from disadvantaged backgrounds, felt ill-at-ease in such situations, despite the provision of training and coaching

in the cultures and practices of the legal sector. I would not have had the understanding of the challenges that the students from disadvantaged backgrounds face in the world of professionals if I had not talked to them. Similarly, with the NEET young people, it is engaging with them that would give insight into their lived experiences.

However, this study was not expected to be free of challenges. Fawcett and Hearn (2004:202), in examining the issue of 'researching "others"', point out that researching areas with no 'direct experience of […] social divisions and oppressions' can be challenging. This was my situation as I had no experience of being NEET: my knowledge about it, gained through some voluntary work, was minimal and my lived experience of it absent. Mellor et al. (2014:136) explain that the anxiety felt about differences in the backgrounds of the researcher and the researched is due to the belief that 'if interviewed by a middle class researcher, differences in the power and privilege […] could inhibit (or even harm) marginalised groups' and, furthermore, that the 'middle-class researcher may be unable to adequately understand or represent others' lives'. However, it may be argued that critical reflexivity and delving further into the sociological factors could, to some extent, help with understanding 'others' lives' (ibid), as reflected in my own examples outlined here. Thus, for example, with my law related background, professional tensions arose within me when some participants began to tell me about their previous crime related activities. In my mind's eye, I visualised the victims who had suffered and viewed the wrongs of the acts as dictated by legal principles, thereby feeling troubled and torn. 'There are numerous points at which bias and intrusion of values can occur' (Bryman, 2016:35). However, reflecting further on these issues, I became aware that I owed it to these participants to not to consider their acts of crime from a legal point of view, but through the sociological lens. Thus, I was able to analyse why, for example, Gail (who told me casually and calmly about selling drugs to school pupils) became a drug dealer and explain this further in my writing by using Bourdieu's concept of habitus (her father and uncle had been drug dealers, until imprisoned), thereby presenting her story in a non-judgemental form; similarly, this was possible with the data from other participants who had engaged in criminal activities, including armed robbery. The process of data gathering and analysis in such cases were demanding in terms of trying not to think of the acts in the context of criminal law and it required much self-examination in order to avoid judging the participants or their accounts. However, this shows the 'messiness' in qualitative research and 'the importance of reflexivity' (Masselson, 2010:481) in order to 'understand and represent others' lives' (Mellor, 2014:136).

At times, listening to the participants' struggles, disappointments and disillusionments in the fields of school and employment moved me immensely: 'the researcher may develop […] sympathy for the people being studied' (Bryman, 2016:35); the immediate reaction in me then was to want the world to know about these issues and give prominence to their woes. In such situations, in an interpretivist approach, there is the danger of being selective of the data being presented, selecting aspects that would generate 'sympathy' (ibid, 2016:35) that I myself felt for the participants. However, I guarded against this by re-reading the data to make sure that I was analysing and providing a balance in presenting the accounts. Hence, for example, I balanced their accounts of their educational struggles due to limited learning support in school by viewing them in the context of school funding cuts, by being aware that their accounts were being given quite a few years after leaving school and that their teachers might have different accounts to offer; furthermore, whilst writing about the staff at Possible blaming families for young people becoming NEET, I analysed this as problematising those families without the dominant forms of capitals. However, I balanced that view by drawing attention to literature (for example, Bynner and Parsons: 2002; Prince's Trust: 2013) that appear to agree with the staff views. Additionally, with the participants' accounts of their enormous efforts in seeking employment, I explained their unsuccessful experiences within the context of globalisation and also the participants' habitus and social capital. Therefore, in an interpretivist approach, a balanced presentation of emotion-provoking data may be reached, but it needs the researcher to constantly guard against personal emotions influencing the selection and analysis of the data. Nevertheless, what data is selected and how it is reported is in the hands of the researcher and therefore subjective: as explained by Chadderton (2012:335-6) 'analysis of the data cannot be separated from the methodology. Research aims, questions, data generation, data analysis, interpretation and the subjectivity of the researcher herself are all inextricably related (Pillow: 2003a)'.

Crozier (2003:81) explains, that in terms of power relations, when there is a distinct difference between the social backgrounds of the researcher and the participants, 'the relationship between the researcher and the researched can be likened to that of the oppressor and oppressed' and 'runs the risk of reinforcing the hierarchical position'. The question is, whether a researcher could, whilst not belonging to or having the shared experience of the 'other', research the living world of the 'other', without misrepresenting it. Therefore in the context of this research, as an educated, employed, middle class researcher, the absence of shared experience was expected in dealing with a marginalised group whose living world differs from mine. For example, I was

shocked when 24 year old Bradley (a participant) told me that he had not visited central London until his grandparents took him, aged 20: he described the experience to me as 'how it is when people get into the plane to go abroad'. Bradley lived at the end of a tube line and could have easily travelled into central London; as other interviews followed, many others mentioned the same as Bradley. This laid bare to me the extent of marginalisation felt by some young people from a part of London which they saw as 'not for the likes of us' (Bourdieu, 1990b:17) and, in some cases, because of their families not having the dominant forms of capital to appreciate the value of such trips. Similarly, I was surprised that in 2012, there were young people who viewed universities with wonder, with some of the participants reacting with astonishment when I informed them that they could visit universities on their Open Days, even if they did not wish to study there. These examples illustrate how, given my middle class background, I was unprepared, to a certain extent, for some aspects of the data that emerged. However, these lived experiences of many of the participants formed part of the important data noted and analysed in the findings and importantly, despite the class differences between the participants and myself, the participants seemed at ease and talked unhesitatingly. Mellor et al's (2014:146-7) research into class matching between researcher and participant found that 'class experiences are intersected by positions such as ethnicity, age and gender, meaning that there is no one unitary class experience'. They also explained that some participants may not identify themselves in terms of class positions and additionally, they may not perceive working class researchers, being academics, as working class. Mellor et al. conclude:

> […] that our capacities for reflexivity, empathy, communication, curiosity, analysis and respect, together with skilful use of life experiences as a resource for rapport-building can, as Bourdieu suggests, "account for the unity of style which unites the practices and goods" of our own particular "class of agents" - qualitative social researchers (Bourdieu 1998:8).

Another factor that could be perceived as being distinct would be gender, when dealing with male research participants. However, Hammersley (1992) suggests that the researcher's gender should not pose a problem. In order to reduce a possible gender related 'otherness', being a female, I considered whether my research focus should be only on female NEETs. However, I recognised that 'otherness' could also arise even with female NEET participants, in terms of differences in ethnicity, religion and socio-economic backgrounds; as articulated by Archer (2002, in Mellor et al, 2014:138), 'identities are multiple and fluid, making it impractical […] to find a researcher that matches a participant at all levels'. Being a female, gender differences

were anticipated when interviewing male participants. However, no discomfort or challenges arose when interviewing the male participants and no discernible difference could be detected in this respect during the interview process. Being from an ethnic minority background myself, ethnic differences might have been perceived as being reduced when I interviewed young people from ethnic minority backgrounds. However, it must be added that I did not perceive any discomfort with those young people who were not from an ethnic minority background similar to mine. They all seemed to be comfortable and were open during the interviews, talking freely and beyond the arranged interview timings.

Troyna (1998:104) suggests that at times the researcher could become a 'cultural stranger' and that the 'background [could] impact' on how much the interviewees may wish 'to share'. However, Fawcett and Hearn (2004:216) conclude that direct experience cannot make the research more legitimate and the important factor is 'how the research […] is conducted, how participants are involved […], attention to ethical issues and the extent of critical reflexivity'. This stance is supported by Maynard and Purvis (1994:24) who observe that when analysing forms of oppressions in terms of class, ethnicity and gender, 'it cannot let its focus of research remain with experience alone [...] in order to be able to say something' on these subjects.

Thus, an important requirement in undertaking such inquiries is reflexivity. As outlined in Chapter 2, Bourdieu's key concepts form the theoretical framework for this study. Bourdieu (1990) explains that in social science, autobiography and reflexivity are important. Thus, 'research cannot be value free, but to ensure that the incursion of values […] is restrained, it is important to exhibit critical reflexivity about the parts played by such factors' (Bryman, 2016:38). Critical reflexivity assists to ensure that the research is proceeding ethically. 'Who we are and what we present of ourselves affect our interviewees' ability and willingness to tell various stories' (McDowell, 2001:94). Thus, it was recognised that this is an important aspect of research and therefore critical self-examination was undertaken at various stages of the research process. In order to do this, 'we must locate ourselves as researchers and as fallible, subjective people within the research process' (Holland and Ramazanoglu, 1994, in Maynard and Purvis (1994:126). As articulated by Crozier (2003:81), 'it is the researcher who sets the agenda, who defines the research problem and identifies the questions to be asked'. This meant my accepting that, as a researcher, I come to the research from a specific position and this may affect the way I undertake the research, the types of questions I ask and the findings I produce. Therefore, it was important to reflect constantly on my actions and approaches, particularly, on

the impact created due to differences. My awareness of this need has been articulated in my discussions in the earlier parts of this section, where I have explored issues of my professional background, hierarchical status as a researcher, as being educated and in employment.

Stanley and Wise (1993) have highlighted how issues surrounding the educational experience and achievement of both, the interviewer and interviewee, can affect the power relationship between them. I made sure that I asked questions in simple language so that the power balance on the issue of education was reduced (Maynard and Purvis 1994, Stanley and Wise 1993). Nevertheless, it was expected there would be the inevitable hierarchical barrier created by one being the researcher and the other the researched. McDowell (2001) tried to reduce 'otherness' by using her first interviews for conversations; similarly, my undertaking the familiarisation process/observations at the start, followed by the focus groups, before conducting individual interviews, helped towards earning the trust of the young people. Moreover, all the sessions were conducted at Possible's centre so that the participants were in familiar settings. The interviews were conducted successfully and rich data obtained: this may be considered as testimony to engaging in reflexivity and observing the ethical considerations, as discussed below (3.11).

3.5 Justification for a Qualitative study

My ontological view that there is no single reality and my epistemological view that knowledge is constructed by giving voice to the subject being studied meant an emphasis on engaging with the NEET young people and listening to their accounts about their lived experiences. Thus, to obtain the knowledge I am seeking, the qualitative approach needed to be adopted, rather than a quantitative approach.

The two approaches for generating data are: quantitative and qualitative. Coolican (2004:46) describes the quantitative approach as 'to measure on some numerical basis [….]. Whenever we count we quantify'. Therefore, in a quantitative study, the focus is more on the 'inputs, outputs, indicators, measures of performance of forcing complex processes into preconceived categories' (Duke, 2002:42). However, the numerical aspect was not the aim of this study, but instead it was to 'delve into parts […] which quantitative methods cannot reach' (ibid) as befitted an interpretivist approach.

Thus, in this research, there was a strong need 'to "get close" to the subjects being investigated' (Bryman, 2004:196) to obtain data that are '[…] "rich" and "deep'' […]' (ibid: 103). The knowledge gained was anticipated to generate a better understanding of the NEET situation which may help to introduce measures to help address the issues identified. Thus, there was 'an emphasis on social justice […] one of the primary features of qualitative research' (Creswell, 2013:4).

Therefore, considering the objective of this research, it was decided to undertake a qualitative study. Coolican (2004:46) describes a qualitative study as one which 'emphasises meanings, experiences (often verbally)', thereby 'capturing the individual's view' (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000:10) on lived experiences. The underlying feature of qualitative research 'is its express commitment to viewing events, actions, norms, values, from the perspectives of the people being studied' (Bryman, 2004:61). Therefore, as described by Evered and Louis (1981, cited in Bryman, 2004:3), it is an 'inquiry from inside' rather than an 'inquiry from outside' and produces data that are 'rich and multi-dimensional' with a focus 'on the lives and experiences' of the young NEET people (Hodkinson et al, 1996:2). Thus, I decided to focus on the NEET young people aged 18-24 and those who work with them. The research design is given below.

3.6 Research Design

This was a qualitative study consisting of the following stages:
1) Pilot study.
2) Familiarisation Process: observations.
3) Focus Groups (two).
4) Individual Interviews: (a) 13 young NEET people; (b) four staff members who work with the NEET group.

The pilot study undertaken is outlined below.

3.6.1 Pilot Study

Creswell (2013:165) describes a pilot study's main purpose as being 'to refine the interview questions and the procedures further'. There were two aspects to the pilot study undertaken. Firstly, individual interviews were undertaken with two staff members from two organisations that work with the NEET group. Secondly, once access to Possible, a charitable organisation

that works with young NEET people, had been negotiated for my fieldwork, I conducted a small focus group interview with some young NEET people there.

In the first aspect of the pilot study, as mentioned above, I interviewed two staff members from two London organisations that worked with young NEET people. The aims were: to test the interview schedule, to explore staff's perceptions on some of the factors in some young people becoming NEET and to get information about the other voluntary organisations that work with the NEETs which would help me to identify the organisations to contact for conducting my fieldwork. Thus, interviewing these two staff members helped to test the research instrument that I planned to use for interviewing staff in the full-scale study. It also gave me insight into some of the social justice issues relating to the NEET group, albeit from staff perspectives. Additionally, l learnt about another organisation that works with the NEET group which I thought I could approach for my full-scale study.

The second aspect of the pilot study was undertaken after access had been approved by Possible for my fieldwork. I conducted a focus group consisting of three young NEET people (a fourth participant being absent due to a family funeral).The participants had just completed Possible's 12-week self-development course. The information document and the interview schedules I was planning to use in the focus groups were trialled. A research question about what they thought of the title 'NEET', was then refined to include the use of props (media depiction of NEETs) as it transpired that 'NEET' was not a term they had heard. They spoke positively about their experiences of Possible's self-development course which prompted me to include a specific interview question on career guidance services accessed, pre- and post-compulsory schooling. They confirmed that it could be useful if I engaged in non-participant observations to earn the trust of the young people, with one participant telling me that if I had asked to speak to her at the beginning of her course, she would have wondered, 'what is she up to?' At the end, when I thanked the three young people for participating, one of them remarked 'it's alright, at least you didn't give us them forms to do, name, ethnic whatever, blah blah', and, to which the other participants nodded their heads in agreement. This appeared to reinforce what the Manager had hinted at (when negotiating access), that form filling was not popular and the young people may resist it.

The opportunity to conduct the pilot study was useful. The NEET group was unfamiliar to me. Therefore, the pilot gave me valuable guidance and, importantly, the confidence to conduct my fieldwork with a marginalised group.

3.6.2 Access

As this was an investigation into a marginalised group, in order to determine the research methods that would be feasible, guidance on accessibility and on the sensitivities of the client group were obtained from the two staff members interviewed in the pilot study. Following on, charitable organisations, not government bodies, were selected to approach for access. This was due to Troyna's (1998) suggestion that in government institutions, the participants could feel forced to attend and could also give particular responses as coached/instructed by their superiors, thereby creating uncertainty with regard to the accuracy of the responses. As such, initially, three charitable organisations working with young NEET people were contacted for access.

The organisations selected had online contact forms for online completion and submission. This was challenging because it entailed explaining my proposed research briefly, whilst also ensuring that it was comprehensive enough to elicit a positive response. In the event, one did not respond at all, and one a few days later. But one, called Possible, responded by return and their potential offer of access was accepted as I thought that their immediate response could mean an efficient organisation. Possible runs UK-wide 12 week self-development courses for people between the ages of 16-25 who were unemployed and most of whom were NEET.

I then attended a meeting with two of Possible's senior management staff, to present my proposed study. Subsequently, they expressed interest and introduced me to a staff member who was to arrange my fieldwork at one of their centres. Creswell (2013:171) warns that '[…] getting people from a site to respond' is part of an 'important access challenges'. This proved to be the case, as due to staff changes, it was a further five months before there was progress and only after several phone calls and finally contacting a senior staff at the headquarters. The senior staff, recognising the 5-month delay, acted promptly and the centres responded swiftly.

I selected the centre I could reach by train from my work and I met with the centre's Programme Manager, this being the person who is 'in authority (the gatekeeper)' (Creswell, 2009:90) and

who 'leads the researcher to the other participants' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995, cited in Creswell, 2013:154). I explained my research to her, my role and the activities I wished to undertake. This was in order to obtain her authorisation and co-operation for me to undertake the fieldwork and, prior to that, to conduct the pilot study (described above). I recalled Flick's warning that a 'research project is an intrusion into the life of an institution and inherently unsettling for it' (2006:116); therefore, I was anxious. However, the Manager was welcoming and, once she understood my study's aims, she granted access and we discussed my plans for the fieldwork. Guided by my reading of McDowell (2001), about gaining the trust of research participants, I thought it would be important to undertake a familiarisation process involving some observations and the Manager, knowing the NEET group, agreed to it. This was so that I would become a familiar face, thereby making it easier to get participants for the focus groups and the individual interviews. She also agreed to my request to undertake a small pilot study with some young NEET people (discussed above: 3.5.1).

I was also introduced to Possible's staff. The staff were receptive to my study once I explained its purpose. The receptionist gave me a 'Visitor's Pass' each time I attended so that I had access to Possible's office and other parts of the building such as the canteen whilst I was there.

3.6.3 Fieldwork Location

The study was undertaken with Possible, a national, charitable organisation. It has various initiatives for disadvantaged groups, one of them being a 12-week self-development course in various UK centres for young people aged 16 – 25 who are NEET. The course is publicised at various centres including job centres, youth centres, FE Colleges, schools, prisons, homeless shelters and online.

Possible's self-development course includes: CV writing and interview practices; work placement; a week's residential; community work; fund-raising; presentations; employers' workshops; personal assessment and writing up a project. After completing the course, young people continue to receive staff support including advice and guidance, assistance with job applications and references.

As I worked full-time and in London, I selected Possible's centre in London which I could reach by train. At the centre, Possible had an office on one of the upper floors. It also had access to class rooms and interview rooms which I was able to use for interviewing the participants.

The fieldwork was carried out in 2012, the year of the Olympics being held in London. The participants in this study lived in five of the 6 Olympics' host boroughs which were said then to be the 'boroughs [that] hold 18% of London's population but 62% of the area's highest deprivation' (Newham's Legacy Story, 2014:5). In the context of the Olympics being sited in east London, the Department for Culture, Media and Sports (DCMS, 2008:3) expressed, as one of their objectives, 'to transform the heart of East London, an area of traditionally high unemployment' and stated that they were '[…] committed to ensuring that 20,000 workless Londoners from the five host boroughs have permanent jobs by 2012'. The DCMS (ibid) also noted the need for the 'regeneration of East London where unemployment is almost the national average at close to 10% and 22% of the working age residents have no qualifications'. Apart from the local borough councils, the major employers in east London include the health, higher education, finance and legal sectors: the NHS with four hospitals (East London Foundation NHS Trust), three universities in east London (UCAS), some international and local law firms (The Law Society) and banks (British Bankers Association). A major factory work provider was Ford UK which had a factory in Dagenham. However, in 2002 it stopped car production in its Dagenham plant after 70 years of car manufacturing and in 2012 it shut its stamping plant, thereby closing down its factory work in Dagenham (BBC Business: 2002, 2012), but the Tate and Lyle Sugar refinery and the Loders & Nucoline plant have remained in business. The East London Trades Guild survey (2013) indicates 200 small businesses, employing 1200 people, however, this may not be reflective of all the small businesses as some may not have responded to the survey.

Low skilled jobs such as in catering and cleaning services tended to employ graduates and undergraduates (ONS, 2012) and this appears to have continued. As reported by Pell (2016), based on the graduates 2014-15 final destinations surveys, 'thousands of graduates are working in jobs that don't require any qualifications […] including lollipop ladies, factory workers and hospital porters'. Some were also in ' "elementary jobs" ' such as being retail assistants, security guards […] in the first 6 months after graduating'. The Westfield Shopping Centre, in Stratford, opened on 13th September 2011, but the participants reported being unsuccessful in obtaining employment in the retail sectors, as noted in Chapter 6. According to ONS (2012:1),

'nearly half of employed recent graduates were working in non-graduate roles' and 'recently recruited graduates were more likely to work in lower skilled jobs than a decade ago'. The Olympics was expected to bring jobs to the local residents. LOCOG, the Olympics organiser, set up in 2005, employed 'in the summer of 2012, approximately 9000 employees, 70,000 volunteers and indirectly, over 150,000 contractors' (Wood, 2013). According to Donovan (BBC, 9th August 2012), by the time the initiatives were launched, delayed and then started, the projects had begun and the non-residents of the area took up the various employment opportunities that came up: the 'delays meant […] the contracts had been granted for work relating to the Olympics' (Donovan, BBC, 9th August 2012). This was a loss for many of the residents including the participants in this study who had left school, depending on their ages, between 2004 and 2010; as commented by Professor Power (LSE blog, 15 August 2012) 'thousands of jobs were created on and around the Olympics site between 2005 and 2012, but these bypassed the local population'.

The recruitment of the young NEET people, aged 18 – 24, who participated in this study and the numbers that participated are considered below.

3.6.4 Participants

The young NEET people recruited were aged 18-24. They were attending Possible's self-development course and were at different stages of the course, with some just starting, some halfway through and some others about to complete. The timings of the interviews meant that some had completed by the time I saw them.

The NEET participants were recruited using various methods: through announcements made in classrooms when I was introduced during my observations; during informal chats with some of the young people during their breaks and through snowballing. Seale (2004:188) suggests starting 'with a target number of interviewees […] who have the required characteristics'. However, I felt that it would not be possible to set a target number as the NEET group is a marginalised group and considered to be hard to reach.

Therefore, as it was a vulnerable group and as engaging in the research was voluntary, I did not know how many would volunteer. However, there was interest and the drop-out rate was less than anticipated, as explained below. In fact, there was interest in participating because

whenever I thanked the participants at the end of the interviews, they would respond positively with, for example, 'I must thank you for listening. Really […]' (Adam); 'It's fine. Sad it finish now' (Reena). They seemed to be genuinely appreciative of the interest shown in them and their experiences. A total of 18 young NEET people took part in the study, at different stages as explained below.

Focus Groups: two separate sessions were conducted. One was specifically for females and one for males. This was to allow uninhibited discussion of issues, for example, gender related or cultural issues, if any. The female focus group consisted of four participants and the male focus group of four males (a fifth male failing to attend). Three male participants from the focus group volunteered to participate in the individual interviews, but none of the female participants.

Individual interviews: 17 young people volunteered initially. However, four withdrew with the following reason given by each: not wishing to talk about family; giving birth prematurely; obtaining work experience; and, moving house. The remaining 13 participated. In terms of gender, there were six females and seven males. Furthermore, although I did not specify at the outset the ethnic backgrounds of the participants I was seeking, the participants were all British, from diverse ethnicities: Bangladeshi, Indian, Pakistani, African, African-Caribbean, English, Hungarian, Latvian and mixed race (Scottish and Maltese). The participants' experiences (as told by them) were varied and these included drug-dealing, homelessness, imprisonment, self-harming, alcoholism and drug-taking, reflecting some of the NEET backgrounds cited in previous studies (Chapter 2).

Staff interviews: four of Possible's staff who work with NEET young people were interviewed individually. I had planned to interview at least three staff members but a fourth staff member also expressed interest in participating.

3.6.5 Obtaining background data

In order to obtain background data on the participants, the initial intention had been to use a questionnaire. In obtaining background data relating to gender and ethnicity it was thought necessary to be sensitive and careful, for, as illustrated by Maylor's (2009) study, there could be inherent tensions with regard to identity and ethnic category. Therefore, the original aim

was to ask each participant to complete a questionnaire as they would be familiar with the official categorisations (for example, used by Job Centres) of gender and ethnicity.

However, Possible's Manager said that I could attempt to use a questionnaire but to be prepared for the young people to moan or even to resist. She explained that the young people did not like filling in forms generally, due to having to do it for various official purposes, particularly at their Job Centres. However, most of them will talk, she said, but left it to me to decide. I appreciated receiving this insight and decided to gather the background information orally. Furthermore, it was considered that this would be a better approach in view of the pilot study participants' negative views about completing forms (outlined in 3.5.1). Hence, the data relating to ethnicity, gender, parent(s)' occupations were gathered at the start of the individual interviews. I had a sheet with these titles/topic headings written down and placed on the desk in front of us. Inevitably, as I wrote down their names they would use the time to look at the sheet and start to give me the information without being asked. I would say to each participant initially that I would like to start with the information about them on the sheet and that I would write down their responses so that I could cross-check with them there and then the spellings of their names and home locality. I also told them that if there was anything they did not wish to tell me they need not do so.

I had included 'class' on the sheet of paper, but decided that I would not pursue it if they missed it out. This is because I thought that ascertaining class by asking the participants directly would be problematic as I felt that this may not sit well with the sensitivities of a marginalised group. However, all but two read out 'Class', indicated theirs and moved on to the next question, with two of them making interesting comments: 'not working, but working class' (Adam); Charlie (working class), adding that, even if the working class acquired wealth, they will still be considered working class, citing David Beckham as an example. Two participants (Sukhor and Hamid) described themselves as middle class because of their parents' economic capital. Two participants read out 'class', one shrugged her shoulders and went to the next question quickly and another responded with 'I don't know' and moved on, neither seeking either a clarification or an explanation. Both of them were from former Eastern European countries. In relation to these two participants, I noted their class positions from their parents' occupations.

The table given in Appendix 1 gives further information about the participants, including a synopsis of the participants' personal background data: the information presented there is as reported by the participants.

3.7 Research Methods Used and Justifications for the Selected Research Methods

As outlined above, a qualitative study was undertaken. The study was conducted using multiple qualitative research methods of observations (non-participant and participant), focus groups and face-to-face individual interviews. Thus, the research methods selected were determined, not only because of their appropriateness to the research question, but also with regard to their practicalities, in terms of access, the sensitivities of the client group and also the time available to me in view of my full-time employment. The justification for the selected research methods are explained and explored below.

3.7.1 Observations: familiarisation process

a) Non-participant observation: the justification for using this method is that it is limited in its intrusiveness, 'the researcher is an outsider of the group under study, watching and taking notes from a distance' (Creswell, 2013:163). So the group's activities will be undertaken as if the researcher was absent. Therefore, following McDowell's (2001) advice and it being further confirmed by the pilot study, I realised the importance of gaining the young people's trust. Hence, I commenced with non-participant observation, as part of the familiarisation process. I did this by attending a morning class being held to brief the new cohort of NEET young people about their course syllabus, activities involved and time-table. This was useful to me as I gained insight into 12-week self-development course run by Possible. On another morning, I attended an employer presentation on skills. The process on both occasions involved me sitting in the above-mentioned sessions. I was introduced as an independent researcher, concerned with their situation and that I was starting off by attending the two sessions to find out more about the course and activities. I sat with the audience of young people, listening to the presentation. Note-taking was not undertaken. After the session, I had lunch in the canteen which the young people used. Although, the issues I was investigating would not be fully addressed by this method, the justification was that my presence at some of the sessions and being seen around the place would help me to become an accepted, familiar figure. This, in turn, could ease the conducting of the focus groups and individual interviews that I planned to undertake later on.

Although this was a non-participant observation, this method is being included within this section because, although I did not record anything then, nor talk to the young people, I made notes on completing the observations. I learnt about the programme's activities during the first observation. I had also noted in my field-notes that some young people had asked about coming in at a later time sometimes because of having to sign on at their Job Centre. This informed me to enquire further about their Job Centre experiences during the individual interviews.

b) Participant observation: this occurred after the above-mentioned two observations. I attended a session on completing application forms. By now, it appeared that I was becoming a familiar face as some young people greeted me by my name when they saw me. Thus, I felt that I was beginning to be accepted. I was a participant observer in the session on completing application forms by assisting to give out forms, stationery, by helping one person to complete her form and by engaging in social conversations during the break time. I was keen to undertake this so that I would have the opportunity to talk socially to some of the young people and be seen as a friendly, helpful and familiar figure. During the break, the young person sitting next to me offered me a sweet. So that started a conversation with her: in my post-session notes, I have noted that she told me that she loved coming to Possible, would find job interviews 'scary' and Possible's interview practice sessions will be helpful. I wanted to ask if this meant she had never applied for employment, but I hesitated because I was not sure if that might be intrusive at this stage. So, I listened and did not ask any questions, this being a social conversation during break time. She also said that her mother, a single parent has had 'no luck' getting jobs. She went on to say 'not that there are many jobs where I live anyhow'. This prompted me to ask participants later on, during interviews, about where they lived and the social and employment opportunities in their locations (considered in Chapter 6). However, due to the time restraints of my full-time employment, the participant observation could not be repeated: therefore, I was only a 'semi-immersed' participant observer (Wisker, 2001:183).

Nevertheless, the familiarisation process involving observations proved valuable in earning the trust of the young people as they came to view me as being interested in them. I also gained insight into Possible's course and related activities. I observed that Possible's staff were highly respected by the young people (confirmed during interviews) and I feel that my being seen to be included by the staff in their sessions added to me being trusted. Hence, these attempts at familiarisation, helped to ease the conducting of the focus group sessions that I undertook, as discussed below.

3.7.2 Focus Groups

Two focus group sessions were conducted: one with four females and one with four males (the fifth did not turn up). Participants' background details are given in Appendix 1. Using focus groups was justified for the reasons outlined below.

I was not sure how many young NEET people would volunteer to be interviewed individually if I sought to undertake the interviews straight after a few observation sessions. I felt that they might be more willing to speak to me in a group situation. Additionally, if the participants in the group were to get on and be engaged, it could produce a lot of data (Morgan 1997).This could include new data not thought of prior to somebody mentioning something to stimulate the new point or idea. Following the thoughts expressed by Jowett and O'Toole (2008), I felt that I could not ignore using focus groups if they could be arranged, as focus groups would put the 'researched' in a stronger position than me, the researcher. As Jowett and O'Toole (2008:455) suggest 'this method allows the potential for the disruption of power relationships within the research contexts'. Furthermore, I felt that as it is a marginalised group, I needed to find out more about the group and test out some research questions (for example, about the 'NEET' label) that lend themselves to group discussions. More specifically to this study, the justification for using this method is that focus groups allow close scrutiny and lengthy discussions of the issues relevant to the research aims. Furthermore, focus groups assist with designing appropriate questions for individual interviews and also with obtaining the views of a wider section than achieved by individual interviews.

However there are also some disadvantages in using focus groups. It works well if the group dynamics are equal, with all feeling comfortable with each other. Otherwise, there might be views only from a few. The researcher, though playing a background role, would have to step in skilfully if the discussion begins to drift on to issues not relevant to the study. There is also the danger of one person dominating (Robson, 2002) as so happened in the female focus group: when I asked if they would like to participate in individual interviews, one of them said, 'No'. I asked why and the same person answered that she had said all there is to say, to which the others nodded their heads in agreement. However, with the male focus group, there was no dominant figure and, when I asked, all the participants expressed interest in being interviewed individually.

The focus group sessions were semi-structured in order to achieve focus on the relevant issues. The topics discussed included the use of the label NEET; the EMA and its planned withdrawal; on career guidance provisions in school and Possible's course. As mentioned above, due to confidentiality, personal questions could not be asked; thus, bullying was an issue alluded to by one of the participants but it could not be discussed further. The focus groups were gender based to encourage the participants to speak freely, taking into consideration that, for some, issues could be gender related.

3.7.3 Individual interviews

Face-to-face, individual interviews were undertaken with the young people and, also, with a few of the staff at Possible. There were thirteen participants: six females and seven males. Three of the male participants had attended the focus group session (as described above). The table in Appendix 1 provides the relevant information on the individual interview participants. Their personal details were given by the interviewees themselves, with the exception of their social class. This was indicated freely by all, but two of the participants and therefore for these two it was deduced from parental occupations and the data collected. The justification for conducting individual interviews is presented below.

Thirteen young NEET people were interviewed individually. This is because despite the focus group sessions, there were unexplored topics which were crucial to the aim and focus of the study and alluded to in the focus groups: this included, for example, matters relating to the participants' families (Chapter 4); their school experiences, particularly bullying suffered by some (Chapter 5); career guidance and employment opportunities (Chapter 6). As these topics are personal to the individual, they could not be asked nor discussed in focus groups. A further advantage of conducting individual interviews is that they enable the shy or less confident of the participants to voice their views. They also give an opportunity to those who for cultural reasons may not have wished to articulate their concerns in a group situation. Thus individual interviews were conducted 'because thoughts, feelings, beliefs […] are involved, [and] the researcher needs to understand the deeper perspectives that can be captured through face-to-face interaction' (Marshall and Rossman, 2006:53).

3.8 The Interview Process

The interview schedules are provided as Appendices 3, 6 and 7.

The interviews were semi-structured to provide focus and guidance and to enable the participants to explain the factors that influenced their becoming NEET. Lincoln and Guba (1985:273) comment that semi-structured interviews facilitate flexibility by 'allowing the respondent to move back and forth in time, to reconstruct the past, interpret the present and predict the future'. That sat well with this study as it involved the participants talking about their past, their present and also about their future plans.

Forsey (2008, cited in Walford, 2008:59) states that interview questions 'should allow us to locate the biography of the individual [...], consequently [linking] aspects of their personal story to the issues we are seeking to describe and analyse […]'. I had a short list of open-ended questions (Appendix 8). Bryman (2004:67) explains that an open approach enables 'access to unexpectedly important topics which may not have been visible […] had they foreclosed the domain of study'. Care was taken to word the questions sensitively, with attention being paid to the possible cultural, gender and class sensitivities of the interviewees. The questions were designed after considering the aim of my research, the relevant literature, the pilot study and discussions with my supervisors. The questions were aimed at delving into the participants' experiences to understand factors that led them to become NEET. The privacy of the young people was respected at all times: for example, Ailah mentioned about going to live in a safe house but did not wish to discuss it and therefore I did not pursue it any further.

The interviews were taped, rather than written down, because 'taking notes [...] keeps the researcher more focused on the pen and paper, than on those being interviewed' (Forsey, 2008, cited in Walford, 2008:65). Taping made it less distracting, encouraged a flow of responses, thereby allowing me to concentrate fully on the answers. Taping was also selected because it would be verbatim and provide accurate information as the data can be cross-checked during the analysis. The interviews were followed up promptly with reflection, so that clarifications could be sought if necessary. 'Much of the skill of interview based research lies in what sense we make of the interview after the subject has gone' (Holland and Ramazanoglu, 1994, in Maynard and Purvis, 1994:126).

During the interview process, it was borne in mind that, at times, depending on the nature of what is being discussed, the interviewee might get carried away, and divert from the focus of the information required. This was the case with three of the participants (Adam, Martin, Gary)

who discussed matters not central to the study. At such times, I exercised patience and tried to conclude the drift in a sensitive manner in order to refocus on the data that were needed. Also, I recognised that if distress was displayed by an interviewee, it would be appropriate to ask the interviewee if she or he would like to have a break, or postpone the task: this occurred with two of the participants (Ailah and Charlie), but they wished to continue with their interviews.

The importance of adopting a non-hierarchical, inclusive manner to conduct the interviews was recognised. I drew on the interview techniques learnt in my academic career, research projects undertaken, through voluntary work at the Citizens Advice Bureau as an adviser and also in conducting the pilot for this study. Additionally, it was borne in mind that inherent differences could make this a challenging task. I made a point of dressing casually and clarified, before each interview, that I was not a staff member with Possible. I assured them that they could talk freely and everything they said would be treated as confidential. However, I was aware that there would be the inevitable hierarchical barrier created, with one being the researcher and the other the researched. Moreover, my profile would be perceived to be one of being educated, in employment and middle class, whilst the NEETs are considered to be a marginalised group, 'caught in a vicious cycle of disadvantage and powerlessness' (Raffe, 2003:8). Therefore, it could be said that my researcher profile was 'radically different' (Troyna, 1998:94) from the participants. To this end, the observation sessions were helpful as the familiarisation process achieved trust, thereby creating an easier atmosphere to conduct the focus group and individual interviews. Furthermore, there was also this unexpected feeling of 'oneness' and not 'other' that seemed to have been created when I explained that the research was part of my studies. There was interest in me being a mature student and most of them then told me how they, too, were planning to become students in September. The trust that was achieved is reflected in the way the participants opened up and spoke freely, often sharing emotional accounts of their lives. In a way the participants appear also to have accepted that some of their experiences might be new to me: for example, when Bernard (24, English), who lived close to a tube station, mentioned that he had not been to central London until the age of 20, my face must have registered disbelief, because he looked at me, smiled and explained, 'you see, it is like how it is for people when they get into a plane and go somewhere for the first time'. Thus, the interviews ran smoothly and I was able to collect rich data. I also interviewed some of the staff at Possible, as outlined below.

3.9 Staff Interviews

Four of Possible's staff members gave their time generously to be interviewed individually. This enabled a broader discussion about the issues involved and this had the added benefit of another perspective. The staff participants (pseudonyms used) were: Maria (age not disclosed); Amy (aged 25); Simon (aged 56); and, Jack (aged 28). Their roles and status are not being disclosed in order to protect their identity, except to say that all of them work with young NEET people. It was useful to interview the staff as they work closely with young people and so were able to provide their own perspectives on some of the issues relating to the NEET group. The questions they were asked included:

a) What are the factors that play a role in some young people becoming NEET?
b) Do you think schools and teachers play a role?
c) What do you think of the label 'NEET'?

3.10 Data Analysis

I transcribed the interviews myself so that nothing would be lost, as every emphasis or pause conveys a meaning: for example, a participant raising her voice to express her anger about her teachers. Doing the transcribing made me familiar with the data; often I could remember the settings and I could picture each participant as I heard her or his voice. 'Analysis involves the process of breaking down the data into smaller units to reveal their characteristic elements and structure' (Dey, 1993:30, cited in Gray, 2004:327). It was decided to use the 'constant comparative method' (Thomas, 2009:198) to conduct the data analysis. It was not an easy or a quick process.

This required reading the data repeatedly to elicit recurring ideas, beliefs, noting down contradictions separately and identifying salient themes that would produce the 'meanings that are being constructed by the participants' (Thomas, 2009:198). It was noted that the staff perceptions on family support for the NEETs contrasted with those given by the participants and attention was paid to the differences.

The themes with similar characteristics were grouped together, for example, what constitutes a family: data regarding support from immediate family or siblings and data indicating support from extended family members; family support and the bullying issues faced by the participants

in their schools (Chapters 4 and 5). Further categories were constructed for new themes, for example, career guidance provisions and employment (Chapter 6).

Analysing data leads to interpretations: Ely et al. (1997:225, cited in Thompson and Walker, 2010:202), describe interpretation to be 'thinking within the theoretical frames and holding conversations with the theory and the findings of other research in the literature'. Bourdieu's concepts of capital, habitus and field formed the theoretical framework for my study and it was the constant guide when relationships between the themes were looked for and networks built to reveal linkages. Thus, for example, Bourdieu's concepts of cultural, economic and social capitals helped to explain the link between family, class and educational outcomes of the participants since 'economic, cultural and social resources are heavily intertwined and, indeed, mutually constitutive of each other' (Devine, 2004:210). Thus, as highlighted by Ball (2003), families' possession of these capitals (Bourdieu's conceptual tools) or their absence is reflected in children's educational attainment which leads on to the role of schools. The aspect of looking for relationships between themes and building links was time consuming and challenging as it required in-depth reflection.

Bourdieu's concept of field helped to explain the situation that the participants faced on leaving school. They entered a globalised world where the powerful, such as the employers, the job centres, the educational and training institutions dominated, thereby making it a struggle for the young people to navigate their way to finding a meaningful role. Field is inter-related with Bourdieu's concept of habitus and, for the participants, it is knowing how to behave and being comfortable in specific situations and it 'is a product of the different fields in which a person has resided and the positions they have occupied' (Thompson, 2011:18). Thus, for my study's participants, it was formed in their homes and reformed by schools, FE colleges and, when I met them, by Possible. In contrast, for the middle class young people, the family habitus 'is a world of already realised ends - procedures to follow, paths to take' (Bourdieu, 1990b:53). Hence, Bourdieu's theoretical framework was useful in analysing the data to understand why the young people in my study were positioned unfavourably.

In addition, the literature review (Chapter 2) proved an invaluable aid in identifying and understanding the data. For example, Walkerdine et al's (2002) explanation of why or how some working class people succeed, against all the odds, was valuable in helping to identify similar aspects that I came across in the process of breaking down the data. Each theme was

supported with relevant evidence (quotations from the data). In undertaking the analysis, the data appeared overwhelming. However, using Bourdieu's theoretical framework, drawing upon the literature review and focusing on the research questions helped to deconstruct the data and identify emerging themes and categories. As stated by Gray (2004:327), 'descriptions can lay the basis for analysis, but we need to go beyond description, we want to interpret, to understand and to explain'. The chapters (4, 5 and 6) that follow reflect the attempt to undertake this detailed analytical process.

3.11 Ethical Considerations

Creswell (2013:57) states that:

> ethical issues in qualitative research can be described as occurring prior to conducting the study, at the beginning of the study, during data collection, in data analysis, in reporting the data and in publishing the study.

Thus, the ethical issues that could arise in this study were considered and measures were taken as outlined below.

This research was underpinned by guidelines on ethical practice provided by my University's Research Committee (2011), the British Educational Research Association (2004) and the British Sociological Association (2004). The research methods considered were implemented ethically.

Access was negotiated by writing to the designated authority at the organisation, giving a clear explanation of the research plan and obtaining consent. Protocol was observed by consulting staff members and consent was obtained from the Programme Manager, who was the gate-keeper, to undertake the observations/familiarisation process. Explicit permission from all the participants was obtained for all the sessions with them and for the use of quotations. I accepted that not all the young NEET people undertaking Possible's course would wish to participate, thus, for example, when the female focus group participants were not interested in being interviewed individually, I did not pursue the matter with them. Also, not all the staff members were always available to assist with my queries due to their various commitments and this was respected. At the start of the focus groups and the one-to-one interviews, participants were informed of the nature of the research, the reason for their participation, their right to withdraw at any given time and they were given consent forms to sign. Confidentiality was maintained

and the participants were assured of this in writing in the letter of information. As regards focus groups, it was made clear that, whilst confidentiality would be maintained by the researcher, it could not be guaranteed that all of the participants who were present would maintain it.

It was recognised that ethical dilemmas could arise. As an example, participants may have wished to share issues that may put me, the researcher, in a difficult position, especially if the issues related to the organisation or its staff. As such, McDowell's (2001) advice to inform participants to seek help with such issues was borne in mind. However, such dilemmas did not arise whilst conducting this study.

Furthermore, as evident from other youth studies (Willis,1997; McDowell, 2001; Archer et al, 2010), it was anticipated that participants could miss or be late for appointments, or that they may interrupt a session by taking phone calls (as three of the participants did) and therefore patience was exercised at all such times. These studies also indicated that some young people may not wish to offer detailed answers: therefore, this was expected and respected when it occurred with two of the participants.

The name of the organisation, the names of the participants and the staff were anonymised. As pointed out by Denzin (1989:83), 'the lives and stories that we hear and study, are given to us under a promise, that promise being that we protect those who have shared with us'. The Data Protection Act (1998) was observed for all participants in relation to the storage and use of personal data.

Thus, ethical issues were considered from the outset and at all stages of the study.

3.12 Strengths and Limitations

Importantly, contact was made and the perspectives of young NEET people were obtained. It was a marginalised group. However, trust was established, the barriers were surmounted and rich data about their lives were obtained. Contrary to media stereo-typing, the young people who participated were polite, respectful and displayed a sincere interest in putting forward their views and explanations. Their views provided insight into their lived experiences and helped to understand better how these experiences would have impacted on their post-16 transitions.

It was not possible to stipulate the make-up and composition of the group participating as engagement with the interviews was voluntary. Nevertheless, as befitting the diversity of the group, the participants may be said to reflect the diverse needs and characteristics of the NEET group described in previous studies (Chapter 2). Furthermore, as indicated in Appendix 1, the group was fairly balanced in terms of gender and ethnicity.

On the other hand it is also recognised that this is a small research study. Another alternative would have been to arrange to interview NEETs, using an identical research format, in three different boroughs. However, this would not have been a feasible option, given the distances to travel in view of my full-time employment and elderly care responsibilities. Nevertheless, the data from the NEETs were enhanced by the additional interviewing of four staff members who work professionally with the NEET group and were interviewed for their perspectives on the issue.

3.13 Conclusion

This was a challenging study to undertake in terms of my positionality. Initially, there was a hidden tension within myself as issues relating to the matter of the 'other' were expected to surface, as discussed in the section on 'Positionality'. However, the cooperation of Possible's staff and the initial familiarisation / observation sessions helped tremendously. My previous involvement with Aimhigher meant that I was familiar with some of the inner-city schools' challenges and this made the interviews easier because the participants felt that I understood some of the issues. Working in a university that engaged in widening participation and my voluntary work with Citizens Advice Bureau had trained me to interview marginalised groups in order to elicit information. Moreover, by seeking the perspectives of the participants and making their views central, convinced them that this would be an opportunity for them to be heard and their views noted. Nevertheless, until all fieldwork was completed, uncertainty ruled. However, from the point of social justice and allied social responsibility, it was felt that this research needed to be undertaken.

The next three chapters set out the data that was generated using the methodological approach outlined in this chapter.

Chapter 4　　Family Influence

4.1 Introduction

'The family plays a decisive role in the maintenance of the social order […]. It is one of the key sites of the accumulation of capital in its different forms, and its transmissions between generations' (Bourdieu, 2007:69).

This chapter explores the role of 'family' in the lives of the participants and to what extent 'family' might have influenced their post-16 trajectories. This was one of the themes that emerged in the literature (Chapter 2). It was decided to delve deeper into it as it was a topic raised by the Manager at my fieldwork location when I met her to negotiate access; 'you will find it's all to do with family', she remarked in the context of my research. Subsequently the participants talked about their families, although most of them were 'older' (aged 18-24) than the participants in the studies I had reviewed. Moreover and significantly, all the participants were living at home except for one who had been, but became 'homeless' two days before I interviewed him when he left home for personal reasons. This chapter begins by considering who constitutes a 'family' in the context of this study. It then discusses the impact of family related events that some of the participants reported as turning points in their lives. Next, there is an examination of the form of support the participants' families gave or were able to give with school bullying issues, education, extra-curricular activities and post-16 options. The views of the staff who work with NEET groups are also analysed.

4.2 The 'family' and their influences

4.2.1 The Family

In considering family influence, it is useful to clarify who constituted the 'family' for the participants. Research studies (Chapter 2, 2.7.1) have found that some young people rely on advice not only from their parent(s) but also from their siblings. However, the data in my study indicates that, for some of the participants, their 'family' constituted not only their parents and/or siblings, but also their extended family members: an uncle, aunts, a cousin and grandparents, who all appear to play active, supportive roles in their lives. So, in this study, the term 'family' could be the immediate family (parent(s) and/or sibling(s)) or also extended family members (as mentioned above).

4.2.2 Family Influences

As discussed in Chapter 2 (2.7.1), previous research has highlighted the role of families and their influence on young people's post-16 trajectories. Their importance lies in not only helping the young to decide on their post-16 trajectories, but also in helping them navigate the fields of education, employment and training by equipping them with the 'life-skills and resilience that will help them to cope with the changes they must negotiate in the external environment' (Furlong, 2013:100). In exploring these influences, different aspects were discussed, including family-related situations that some participants reported as having had a long-term impact on their lives. These are considered below.

4.3 Family situations that proved to be turning points

This section is about family situations that some of the participants perceived as changing their lives and life chances forever. During the school years, children are dependent on their families and their lives are intertwined with the fate of their parents; the accounts given by Ailah (20, female, British-Bangladeshi, working class) and Adam (24, British-mixed race, no GCSEs, homeless) illustrate this impact clearly. Ailah reported that her education suffered by her having to leave home and go to a 'safe house'. She did not wish to discuss the reason for this, so it is not possible to analyse the role of her family in this matter. However, as Ailah herself recalled, the displacement and entering an unknown field led to her suffering from depression and self-harming which affected her studies; this was significant because she said that she was expected to get 9 GCSEs at top grades instead of the 5 GCSEs she obtained. In Adam's case, he reported that the turning point was when:

> […] we ended up getting evicted from our house because my dad was an excessive gambler. We didn't know, but he was taking the rent money from my mum, going down to the bookies and spending it all. My father's gambling had a major effect […] we all split up […] if my family were together and given me a bit of support, I reckon I could have been in University now. [Instead], I ended up in a criminal life-style.

It is apparent that Adam's life chances were impacted by his family's situation over which he had no control. Household income, car ownership and housing are some of the factors that reflect a family's economic capital (Bourdieu, 1986). Thus, Adam's father's gambling drained the family's economic capital resulting in a long-term impact on the family through loss of their family home and the family having to be housed separately. Thomson et al. (2002:338)

explain how children and young people are 'particularly vulnerable' as a result of their parents' actions, having 'little control over the decisions and actions of their parents' (ibid: 340). This is because they do not have a choice in what happens to them. Such intervening factors have been described by Giddens (1991, cited in Thomson et al., 2002:338) as a 'fateful moment' that results from 'the intervention of events beyond an individual's control'. Thus, Adam and Ailah did not have a choice about the events in their lives which affected them negatively by disrupting their studies and consequently, their post-16 trajectories.

However, in some critical family situations, family support could achieve positive outcomes. This proved to be the case with two of the participants, Martin (20, British-African-Caribbean, no GCSEs, criminal record, working-class) and Gail (20, British-Latvian, 1 GCSE, working class). The circumstances affecting them were due to their own actions. However, the situations proved to be turning points for them because of the support from their families. Thus, whilst expressing regret over his criminality, Martin said that he turned over a new leaf because of distress caused to his mother. As he described, 'never, again. How my mum was crying when I was sentenced' (at 17, released when almost 21). So Martin's mother's presence in the court and her support, that is, the emotional capital (Reay, 2004) that she invested in Martin despite his criminal acts, made Martin resolve to 'never again' commit crime. As Thomson et al. (2002:337) describe, some moments can be '"epiphanies"' that 'leave marks on people's lives'. Similarly, Gail's sister's warning with regard to her drug-dealing proved 'fortuitous' (ibid: 349), for as Gail explained:

> My sister took me in the car with the drugs to a police station and she said she will go in and hand me in and the drugs, unless I promise not to touch them. So, that is when I stopped.

Thus, for Adam and Ailah, the reported family situations resulted in adverse consequences. However, for Gail and Martin, the emotional capital (Reay, 2004) vested by their families in the form of supportive actions they took was a positive influence in their lives; the involvement of Gail's sister and Martin's mother reflect Reay's (2004:59) argument that 'women engage in emotional labour […] responding to other's emotional states and also, acting to alleviate distress'. According to Giddens (1991, cited in Thomson et al, 2002:337), these events within some families may be interpreted as 'cross-roads' in the lives of the young people and therefore an aspect that needed to be explored here, in this study, in trying to understand the influence of

the families. Family support was also highlighted by the participants with regard to the bullying issues that they reported they faced in school and therefore it is considered below.

4.4 Family support and bullying issues

Most of the participants reported being bullied in school and mentioned the unflinching support from their families in such situations. They explained how the parents informed their teachers about the bullying, but to no avail. For example, Adam said that at times the bullying made him suicidal and his parents, understanding his distress, 'went into school on various occasions and saw the teacher'. This was also the case with Charlie (22, English, 7 GCSEs, working class), who explained, 'when I tried to tell the teachers they did nothing, […] my mum was always having rows with the Head about it'. If what Charlie reported about his mother having 'rows with the Head' is accurate, then the confrontational nature of the language used by his mother, resulting in negative outcomes, may be seen as supporting Bourdieu's (1994:55) emphasis on the importance of linguistic skills which gives authority and dominance in a field:

> The competence adequate to produce sentences that are likely to be understood may be quite inadequate to produce sentences that might be listened to.

Therefore, the parents intervened and attempted to get the school to resolve the bullying, but, as described above, they were not successful, leading to confrontations with the school. Gillies' study found that the working class parents' 'involvement with teachers was characterised by humiliation and/or conflict' (2005:846). The issue of bullying is considered in detail in Chapter 5, but in terms of the parents' support being considered here, the reported lack of action by the schools reflect the powerlessness of the parents. The parent–teacher relations, described above, may be seen in Bourdieusian terms as the parents' capital and habitus being dominated by those of the teachers in the field of the school. The teachers' habitus, displayed in the field of school, would have been moulded and constrained by their professional training and the institutional practices of their work place. Thus, the parents were not able to negotiate successfully in the field of school as their capitals and habitus did not match those of the teachers. The school's institutional practices and the teachers' professional habitus showed that they are the 'dominant […] forces' (Bourdieu, 1998:40) in the field of school, resulting in the parents not being able to negotiate successfully on the bullying problem. Similar to Adam's and Charlie's situations, Martin mentioned that his family saw his teachers about him being bullied, 'every time. My mum, my uncle […] but nothing was done'. In the examples cited, Charlie's mother withdrew

him from school temporarily but she collected school work for him to do at home. Adam and Martin fought back after a few years; Adam recalled being suspended for a few days, but Martin reported that he was sent to a Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) because he carried a knife to his school for 'protection'. Both left school without any GCSE qualifications and engaged in crime.

In the examples cited, the parents were very supportive of their children, but they appear not to have succeeded with the schools. Gillies (2005:846) explains that for some working class parents, school visits are only to 'account for a problem' or 'to challenge a perceived injustice'. So the situations are usually fraught, with the parents feeling 'misunderstood and devalued by the teachers' and this in turn led the parents to 'adopt confrontational or provocative measures' (ibid). Bernard's (24, English, no GCSEs, working class) mother and grandmother kept him at home due to bullying:

> my mum and nan said to the Headmaster, they will not send me to school. They [the school] said "we want Bernard back". But my nan said, "only if the bullying is sorted out".

In Gillies' (2005:846) study, a mother 'risked a prison sentence for supporting her son in truanting' because her numerous complaints 'about bullying incidents were not acted upon by the school'. Similarly, one of the participants, Nadia (21, British-African, 2 GCSEs, working class), said that when she 'bunked off school' due to bullying, her mother was threatened with court action.

Hence, with regard to the bullying issue, the participants' accounts indicate that their families were supportive and tried, through dialogue with the schools concerned, to resolve the problem. However, it would appear that their families were not successful in convincing the schools of the need to resolve the bullying issues. As Walkerdine et al. (2001:126) explain, '"Fighting" for your child is something that middle class parents are far more emotionally and materially equipped and discursively positioned to do'. The participants saw the lack of action to stop the bullying as the teachers not caring, but they felt that their families tried hard to improve their school lives. Gillies (2005) points out that most working class parents want the best for their children, but they do not always possess the dominant forms of cultural capital in terms of knowledge and language skills of the middle classes in order to negotiate confidently with the professionals. Similarly, Ranson et al. (2004:262) state that 'what people say to each other and, how they address each other reveal the different statuses that are embodied in the relationship between them'. Ultimately, it is class that influences 'the nature and experience of parental

involvement in education' (Gillies, 2005:846). As explained by Ranson et al. (2004:272), 'parents with the greatest accumulation of cultural capitals in the more advantaged class fractions were able to use it to their advantage, telephoning the schools, using their contacts, to ensure the school acted upon and accommodated their wishes'.

Furthermore, the parents who supported their children missing school, allowed it thinking that it would be best for their children. Therefore, the support offered in this instance had a negative effect on their children's studies and consequently their life chances. As Irwin and Elley (2011:481) explain 'all parents want to do the best by their children' but the outcomes vary 'depending upon where people are positioned within an unequal society'. Bernard said his family did 'not know better' (below) and this might have been the position of other parents who supported their children's absenteeism:

> Obviously, teachers should have done more, if explained [to me} how useful [it is] to have GCSEs, I might have stayed on. Teachers did not, and nan, mum, [did] not advise - they probably [did] not know better. Now I think of all the things I could have done. Wish [I]had taken my GCSEs and all that. Terrible I did not do GCSEs I think. My classmates passed all that.

It was also pertinent to explore the support provided by the participants' families with regard to their school studies and this is considered below.

4.6 Family support with the young people's school studies

The responses from the participants about the help they received with their school studies were varied, as illustrated by the examples below.

Sukhor, (male, British-Bangladeshi, university 'drop-out', middle class), described his parents' support as '100%' whilst at school and also that his school 'attendance was pretty faultless, my parents were strict, not taking me out of from school. Punctuality also, my parents made sure'. Sukhor said that his father had been in the Army. So it may be said that discipline was a feature of the family habitus as Sukhor's descriptions suggest that his parents instilled in him a sense of discipline to his school attendance and studies; as argued by Reay (2004:58), 'it is from the family that the children derive modes of thinking, types of dispositions, sets of meaning and qualities of style'. Similarly, Reena (19, British-Indian, 8 GCSEs, working class, with a conditional university place), when newly arrived in the UK, had to enter Year 10 despite her

English language weakness. However, Reena had social capital as her aunt and cousin (a pharmacist) advised and guided her. She said:

> When I first came here, we stayed at my dad's sister's house for a year. She helped us **a lot** (emphasises). She had her children here, my cousins born here, so [they] know the system. My cousin helped me a lot. She is a pharmacist.

Reena also said that to help with her GCSE work, her reltions introduced her to her local library resources. She explained, '[…] I done all my work there. You know when I came here I didn't have a computer, or laptop at home, so used to go there to do my school work'. The resources in the library may be seen as a form of objectified capital that was available to Reena and helped her to progress in her study.

Thus, in Reena's case, she had extended family members with appropriate cultural and social capital to advise her. Reena also received guidance form her cousin, a pharmacist, for her interest in studying pharmacy, thereby illustrating that where families understand the value of academic attainment in school, as with Sukhor and Reena, the children become interested in higher education:

> Families, are universally acknowledged as key determinant of educational performance in primary and secondary schools, and by extension, in higher education, too (Gorard et al, 1999:517).

Reena also explained that, on arriving from India, her parents assisted her to improve her English language. Her parents (restaurant workers) made financial sacrifices, what Devine describes as 'deferred gratification' (2004:118), using their limited economic capital to pay for a few private English lessons. Reena talked about 'a tutor, for just a month, wish [it was] for a year, but too expensive. But my parents used to pay when possible and I am so glad they were so supportive'.

However, this was still not sufficient and consequently Reena did not obtain a Grade 'C' for her GCSE English, a requirement for higher studies and employment. At the time I interviewed Reena, she had completed her BTEC and obtained a conditional place at university to study pharmacy, subject to Grade C in GCSE English re-sit. Thus, Reena's situation paints a different picture from those of middle class children with parental economic capital to provide continued private tutoring, as indicated by the research studies (Chapter 2:2.7.1).

On the other hand, for Gail, it was her sister who provided her with educational support and she gave an emphatic 'NO' when asked if her mother was involved:

> NO! Not, at all. Never, asked. The only time she asked was when her benefits got cut off because I didn't arrive in school. My father, never. Me and my father never talk. My father is in prison for drugs […], my sister advises.

Archer et al's (2010:24) study confirms that the pupils' school attendance and their ability to engage with their education are affected by challenging home-lives, with teachers reporting that pupils often have to 'fend for themselves' after school. This is reflected in Gail's accounts of 'living on the street' and Charlie (male) coming home to an empty house and looking after himself as his mother worked late. The families' limited economic capital also meant that they were 'chained' (Bourdieu 1999:12) to a place and unable to move house to be near schools with after-school activities which would have meant, for example, Charlie not having to be alone at home. Thus, for Gail, street life lured her into drugs (dealing and taking). However, although her mother was not able to help, her sibling did, and, as illustrated above, was instrumental in her ceasing her drug dealing activity, aged 17. Gail's accounts indicate that her sibling provided the family support, similar to the findings of Atherton et al. (2009) and Heath et al. (2010). Gail reported her sister also 'got involved' by helping her during her schooling, seeking her school's help for her English lessons and encouraging her academically; Gail said that she is aiming to go to university 'because my sister advised that, and, I think she is right, because I can choose another career or job with a degree'.

Similarly, Gary said that he received advice from his 'older sister, she helped me. When she went to uni, I was older, in College, but she advise me'. However, for example, Charlie did not get help with his studies from his mother. He said that when he stayed at home (due to bullying), his mother 'collected work from school and gave it to me' but 'she did not look at anything. I just did the work myself, some I got wrong, or just did not know'. The fact that Charlie's mother took the trouble to collect work from school may be seen as indicative of her doing what she could for Charlie's studies, that she had cultural capital to appreciate the importance of Charlie doing his school work. However, as explained by Charlie, she did not possess the institutionalised form of cultural capital (educational qualifications) and therefore she did not have the appropriate knowledge and/or confidence to tutor Charlie herself, nor the economic capital to provide private tutoring.

Furthermore, in terms of being involved with their school education, most of the participants reported that their parent(s) attended Parents' Evenings. As an example, Reena said that her parents attended the Parents' Evenings, but because they were held at the same time as her brother's, each parent attended one: 'my Dad used to come to my Parents' Evenings, […] one time when my brother and I did not have [them]together, so my mum and dad came'.

Similarly, Martin said that his mother, a single parent, attended his Parents' Evenings. Her support extended also to when he completed Possible's programme:

> She came to my presentation and she was so happy. She was crying and said "well done". She saw me complete something for the first time and get a certificate'.

In contrast to Martin's case, when Adam was asked if his parents had attended Possible's Award day, Adam responded: 'No. My mum forgot about it. My dad was too busy. It would have been nice to have some sort of family [….] I invited all my family, but no-one came'. This could have been because his father could not afford to take time off from work and his sister might have had child-care issues as Adam reported that she had young children, for his family had been supportive previously in approaching the school when he was being bullied and post-16, Adam's father had advised him on jobs in the hospital where he worked as a porter.

Another participant, Nadia, explained that her parents:

> Not help with school work and just sometimes attended Parents' Evenings when the school called them and made them come. You see, mum could not speak English and dad used to be out drinking'.

Thus, Nadia's parents not possessing the dominant form of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986) affected her academic progress because they were not able to assist her with her studies or have an understanding of the school subjects even though Nadia's mother wanted her to study further, thereby going against their cultural expectations and even defying her husband's wishes for his daughters. As Nadia expressed:

> My mum wants me to get married and have children, but she wants me to get qualifications and get a job before getting married. She is really good, because most Somalian mums, are not like that- they just want you to get married, like my dad, religious and says "when are my girls getting married" and my mum says "not till they have qualification and job […]", not follow religion.

However, the support for Nadia may be seen as limited as her mother did not attend Parents' Evenings which Nadia reported was due to her weak English language skills. Furthermore, as Nadia reported, her mother being unemployed and her father spending on alcohol meant that there was no economic capital to provide resources such as private tutoring for her (Devine, 2004). It is also clear that there is a link between the parents' level of resources (capitals) and the routes that young people take at 16. Ball et al. (2000:144) state that middle-class parents have 'clear aspirations […], are pro-active and interventionary in choice-making at 16 and beyond' but that the working class parents 'cede decision-making to their children, while expressing concerns or giving their backing to their choices'. This accords with my findings, as discussed in this chapter. Nadia's mother's difficulty with speaking English also meant that she did not have the confidence that comes with dominant forms of capitals and habitus to enter the field of the school to meet the teachers during Parents' Evenings.

It should also be noted that Nadia's mother's reluctance and sense of embarrassment to attend her daughter's Parents' Evening due to her language problems might be the case with many immigrant families. Despite the cultural capital they might have acquired in their native countries, their weak English language skills give them less legitimacy in the new field, making them too embarrassed to visit their children's schools. Moreover, the reluctance to enter the field of school also means that these families are unable to acquire social capital by talking to other families, or the teachers to gain an understanding of the UK education system including examination requirements. This is in stark contrast to the middle classes, who are able to 'move in their world as fish in water' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992:127) and the 'practical mastery' (Bourdieu, 1990b:75) they have over their situations. So, in Nadia's case and also, with other parents in similar situations, it cannot be read as a lack of interest for their children's progress. Reay (1996:586) illustrates this point with an example from her study about a working class mother's reluctance to engage with teachers about her child's studies and explains that habitus incorporates a 'sense of one's place' (Bourdieu, 1984:471). My study also captures this issue of the inhibitions created by not possessing the dominant forms of capitals and habitus: in the cases of bullying, the parents did not succeed in getting their teachers to take effective action and so withdrew their children from school rather than appeal to the Principal, or the governors, or even the LEA about the problem. Moreover, in Hamid's case (19, male, British Pakistani, no GCSEs), when the school advised him to take the BTEC course, instead of GCSEs, his parents, who had economic capital but not the dominant forms of cultural capital, responded

by telling him 'to listen to the teachers'. When Nadia was sent to the Pupil Referral Unit, her mother felt that 'would be best' for her. Thus, as Reay, (1996:586) explains,

> some of these families' ambivalent, self-deprecating attitude', their reluctance to approach the school staff reveal that 'working class families have a different sense of their place to that of middle-class.

Thus, the participants found their families (immediate and/or extended) to be supportive and interested in them doing well in their school and post-16. Overall, it may, therefore, be inferred that ambition for their children is not the preserve of only the middle class families. As Devine (2004:93) found in her study, 'there was "no poverty of aspirations" […] among the lower middle-class and working-class families'. However, the participants' accounts about their supportive families were in direct contrast to those of Possible's staff, considered below.

4.7 Staff's perceptions on family support for NEET young people

Interviews were conducted with four staff members who work with young NEET people and therefore had first-hand knowledge about the barriers faced by them. Their accounts are based on all the NEET young people that they work with and not specifically about this study's participants.

The staff were interviewed for their perspectives on why some young people become NEET and not about the young people's families. Nevertheless, a common theme that emerged was the importance of family support and how this was absent in the lives of many of those who became NEET, as illustrated by their views below.

Maria stated that many of the young people she works with are 'not motivated' because of their 'family background'. She commented on single-parent families and the absence of a role model and the lack of family guidance. She added that:

> it is a case of someone taking time out to listen to them […] I have one young lady saying that her parents did not care whether she went to school or not.

This emphasis on 'family' was further supported by Jack who articulated that 'what you see as a child growing up, inadvertently, becomes the "you"', thereby implying a family's powerful influence on their children.

Furthermore, Simon reiterated that he 'truthfully, honestly' believed that lack of family support was the reason, highlighting single family households due to family breakdowns:

> […] it is not that the education system has failed them […] that any government has failed them. What has failed them is the breakdown in families. It has to be things they have brought with them into the school. Everything stems from the home, you know. All starts with the family…

Simon's explanation may be interpreted as pathologising single-parent families.

Similarly, Amy stressed that what a young person becomes is dependent on '[…] who your parents are […]'. She explained her mother was from an English middle-class family and her father held a university degree from the Caribbean, but due to her father's difficulties in getting employment in the UK, she 'grew up in a council estate'. However, Amy said that she did spend much time with her mother's middle class extended family. She was ambitious, worked hard and went to university because she had very supportive parents:

> […] my mum and dad really pushed us, to do everything. They both worked, so, after school we [did] not go home and be alone, be feral kids, [instead] we went to after-school clubs […] they would push us to do anything and everything, during weekends they took us to museums and stuff like that.

In Bourdieusian terms, Amy's trajectory reflects social reproduction. She had access to resources and the extra-curricular activities mentioned because her middle-class parents possessed the dominant forms of capitals. As such, Amy had the habitus to successfully navigate the fields of university and employment. Amy used her upbringing as an example to illustrate the kind of family support that she found missing in the lives of the young NEET people, without noting how the socio-economic inequalities make it difficult for the young NEET people's families to provide similar valuable support. Overall, the above statements from the staff appear to indicate that negative aspects of family life, such as uncaring parents and family breakdowns, are features of the lives of those who become NEET. It could be argued that they are engaging in a popular deficit discourse generated by media and government policies which pay scant heed to socio-economic factors. As Hayton (1999:56) states:

> discussions about 'problematic families' tend to focus on single parents and benefit dependency, lack of parenting skills and inadequate care and concern among parents for their children's education.

The research studies, cited in the beginning of this chapter (and in Chapter 2) also indicate that that the degree of interest shown and the support given to children are amongst factors to be considered in trying to understand why some young people become NEET. For example, Pemberton (2008:257) emphasises 'stable environment and positive parental support', a point supported by Furlong (2013). Moreover, the Prince's Trust's key finding is that 'young people who did not grow up in a supportive family environment are twice as likely to be not in education, employment or training' (2013:7).

Notably, there is a contrast between the reasons given by the participants to describe their supportive families and the staff's perceptions which match the research findings cited above. It may be questioned if this difference in views is due to the young people being young and therefore not having reached the stage in life of reflecting on their upbringing. However, it could also be because they appreciate their families' efforts in difficult circumstances, or are being protective of their families, or they feel duty bound not to criticise their home lives whilst still living at home, or it could be just that they have very supportive families who do their best, despite challenging demands on their limited resources.

Furthermore, the staff in citing families as a factor, also mentioned single-parent families in particular, although this was not cited as a problem by those NEET participants in the study who are from single-parent families. Moreover, taking ethnicity and culture into consideration, four of the NEET young people in the study were British of African origin and of African-Caribbean origin. To them, their single parent families are not deficit models as this feature of their home life was not raised by any of them. Reynolds (2005:16-17) explains that for them:

> […] the concept of family primarily means relationships created by 'blood' rather than conjugal ties. Children are socialised to think in terms of obligations to mothers, siblings […] as more important than obligation to outsiders such as spouses […]. This, marks them out as an alternative to European/western model.

Moreover, the participants consisted of both, those who were from two-parent families and some from single-parent families, but they all became NEET despite their parents' status. Therefore, it is argued that single parent families cannot be cited as a factor per se, for single parent families could have extended family members providing the stability and the support required, as illustrated by this study (for example, with Bernard and Martin).

It is also argued that singling out families leads to masking other contributory factors which should be identified. For example, as mentioned above, the class of a family can affect the advice and guidance their children with regard to their post-16 trajectories, as considered below.

4.8 Families' influence on their children's post-16 trajectories
The quality of careers guidance from school was an issue that was discussed during the focus group sessions and the individual interviews. Chapter 6 focuses on the problematic area of careers education provisions in schools, as reported by the participants.

Here I focus on the career advice that the participants received from their families; in this respect, recent studies (for example, Atherton et al, 2009, Heath et al, 2010) found that young people often rely on this in making their life choices. Ball et al. (1999), Archer et al. (2010) and Thompson (2011) observe that the young from families possessing dominant forms of cultural and social capital are advantaged and have clear strategies for their children. My study reveals that in some cases, even if the families are not middle class, having siblings or an extended family member with professional knowledge can prove to be valuable social capital; for example, Reena (working class) having a cousin who is a pharmacist.

However, those children, whose families possess neither the relevant knowledge (cultural capital) required, nor the professional networks (social capital) to support their career planning, are at a disadvantage. This was the case with most of the participants. Ball et al. (1999:212) explain how post-16 'stayers on' from such families face difficulties and are likely to drop out of further/higher learning. This appears to have been the case with Sukhor who, despite his mother's encouragement to go to university, dropped out during his first year at university. His mother, who had not attended university, was unable to offer the form of support he required and therefore he relied on his non-university friends who advised Sukhor to leave university. Similarly, Nadia and Sarika did not complete their BTEC courses, nor did Sarah complete her A–Levels.

Arguably, the parents' cultural and social capitals affect their children's life chances. Gary (22, African-Caribbean, BTEC, working class) talking about his career intentions said 'I did discuss

with my mother […] my mum supports me in everything I do' but that ultimately it was up to Gary to decide. Similarly, Sarika (18, female, British/Hungarian, 5 GCSEs, working class) said that her parents left it to her when she expressed interest in doing a Child Care course 'they said if that is what I want to do, then do it, if it makes me happy', but she found the course to be un-challenging and so dropped out. She had good GCSEs, but her parents were not able to guide her towards a more challenging option. Devine (2004) explains that usually non-middle class parents intervene less and tend to leave it to their children to decide due to their own lack of knowledge and confidence. But it could also be that they want the child to be happy and not be striving at all costs. Adam said 'my dad wanted me to work in the hospital like him (a porter). But I didn't want to. I should have […] but I thought get something better'. Clearly, Adam's father was unable to provide any further information that would have guided Adam, who has regrets now.

Thus, amongst most of the participants, the family support appears to be in the form of not putting any pressure on them to follow particular post-16 options. Research by Foskett and Hesketh (1997) found that parents might exclude certain institutions but will leave it to their children to choose whichever from the ones they approve. This view is supported by Ball et al. (2000:144) who found that 'most of the young people operate within a ''framed field of reference'' (Foskett and Hesketh, 1997), loose or tight, established by their parents' [and] among 'middle-class respondents, tightness of frame was the norm'. This was evident with two participants, Sukhor and Hamid, who described themselves as middle class because their families had economic capital. Sukhor was advised to go to 'Sixth Form School' rather than 'College' to do his A-Levels; and Hamid's aunt advised him to do a 'Security Guard' training course, although he had an interest in retail. Thus, it would appear that families do influence their children's post-16 options, but the form that influence takes could depend on the social class of the parents. Devine (2004:95) comments that the middle class parents 'assumed and expected that their children would do well in school and they held high occupational aspirations for them'. In contrast, all but two of the participants in my study were from the lower socio-economic group. The 'family' influence on children's post-16 options needs also to be seen in terms of families possessing cultural, economic and social capitals. These, in turn, provide such families with the requisite knowledge and also the professional contacts for guidance on career routes for their children. As explained by Reay and Lucey (2004:41), 'a range of exclusive and exclusionary practices provide their children with real as opposed to illusory choices'.

Hence, in contrast to those who attend elite institutions and enter privileged careers as a matter of course, all, but two, of the participants were from economically disadvantaged families, with all of them without the dominant forms of cultural and social capitals: 'working-class parents manifest a more limited sense of efficacy in influencing their children's educational future' (Irwin and Elley, 2011:493). This placed the participants at a disadvantage when it came to considering their post-16 pathways. The post-16 options of young people are also enhanced by extra-curricular activities and, therefore, family support for such activities is explored below.

4.9 Family's support for extra-curricular activities

Allied closely to the supporting aspects of schooling and career development, discussed above, is the family support provided for their children's extra-curricular activities. These activities are important as they help to extend the children's knowledge and skills (cultural capital), their social network (social capital) and also help to develop personal attributes (habitus) through the socialisation process, all of which will advantage the children in the fields of further/higher education and employment. Therefore, it was thought apt to consider how a family's class and resources may affect support for extra-curricular activities. Thus, the participants were asked about their school holidays, their school-trips and about engaging in regular extra-curricular activities.

Their responses on these topics reflected the crucial role played by their families' economic capital. The data analysis indicates a distinct contrast between, for example, Martin, Gary and Bernard, whose families did not have economic capital, and Sukhor and Hamid, the only two participants whose families had economic capital. Sukhor, on being asked about school trips, remarked that he had been on 'Lots, enjoyed too much' (including trips to Europe) and that his after-school activities consisted of 'mainly of sports, football club and gym'. Similarly, Hamid said that he 'had been to museums and all that' on school trips and, during the holidays, had trips to Chessington and had gone abroad to visit relations.

On the other hand, Martin (whose mother had two jobs) said that he went to the Sports Centre during the holidays, but only when he was young because then 'it was free, now [I] must pay'. Another participant, Gary, said that he had not been on school trips and Bernard said that he had been to Southend (seaside) with his siblings when young, but 'when I was older, I would

have liked to have gone to theme parks, Chessington, Thorpe Park and all that, new things'. Similarly, Nadia's heart-felt explanation was that, during her holidays, she

> […] stayed at home. Went to the park, sometimes […]. But now, my younger siblings, I don't want them to go through what I went through. So when I get money (JSA) I take them to the cinema […] or treat them to eat, or to the zoo. Now I am older I know how I used to feel, so I tend to give them things that I never used to have.

Furthermore, although all the participants lived in London with their families, the families not possessing the dominant forms of cultural capital and having limited economic capital meant that even a trip to central London was not undertaken until the participants were much older. Gail said that she visited museums only after leaving school. Martin stated that he travelled to central London when he was 16, a trip funded by his Pupil Referral Unit, and saw for the first time 'what I saw on television'. Bernard did not visit central London till he was twenty years old despite living in Dagenham which has regular tube services into London. He was taken there by his grandparents. He described his first trip into central London, aged 20, as being 'how people get into the plane and go to visit another country […] London is like different atmosphere '.

Thus, it is evident that a family's level of cultural and economic capitals can restrict their children's opportunities to broaden their experiences, their general knowledge, their social networks and generally, to have fun, so that they returned to school after the holidays with renewed enthusiasm. As Gillies (2005:842) points out, 'the enduring relevance of class for the parents in our samples was a central finding in our study'. Class may be seen in terms of 'capitals'. Bourdieu's concepts of capitals help to explain that the parents' level of education, cultural tastes and aesthetic dispositions provide the cultural capital in a child's home, assisted by the parents' economic and social capitals. Middle class families, with recognised and valued cultural and economic capitals, are able to provide expensive extra-curricular activities, such as, music lessons and organised holiday club programmes. Indeed, for Bourdieu, there was not a clearer sign of 'class' than engaging in music and 'playing noble instruments' (Bourdieu, 1984:18-19).

Furthermore, the participants were aged 18-24, with all, but three, being above the age of 20, and they had not undertaken work placements or internships until they undertook Possible's course. These are activities that middle-class children engage in, with their parents being able

to fund them, where internships are low paid. The extra-curricular activities mentioned above and also the work placements or the internships transform (Reay et al, 2009, Bourdieu, 1990a) the young people's habitus through the socialisation process, which is important in the fields of higher education and employment. However, these lie within the realms of economic capital, a point raised by the participants and therefore explored below.

4.10 Family support and economic capital

The research studies (Chapter 2) have indicated that most middle-class parents' influence their children's future. Therefore their children's attitudes to education are shaped from a young age, resulting in their successful post-16 trajectories being taken for granted. However, in my study, most of the participants were not in this privileged position, although their families (immediate or extended) wanted to assist them to succeed and tried to do so. As explained by Ball et al. (2000:144), 'for those parents who have no personal experience of further education […] purposeful intervention is difficult'. The participants' families also could not arrange private tutoring for their children as it required substantial economic capital.

Indeed, it is evident from this study that the families' ability to help is reduced by economic capital. Bernard articulates this effectively, when he says:

'lack of money affects people. In my life money has been a factor, if my mother had a job, more money, maybe tutors to teach at home, to buy things';

Another participant, Charlie, explained that his mother used to work in a sweet factory and so after school he 'used to go home. Sit indoors, alone, till she got home at 8 o'clock'. Nadia recalls the number of times her family had been moved around by the Council, including to 'a hotel in Canterbury', with no schooling when their house caught fire; Gail commented that her 'father is in prison for drugs', so it is her sister that she relies on for 'advice […] and if need money […] always my sister'.

Although social class was not mentioned by any of the participants, it was clear that there was a sense of bitterness about the social divisions in society and the economic power of the middle classes. For example, Gary (BTEC: Sports) explained that he did not apply to volunteer in the 2012 Olympics because he felt that it will be full of elites. He also mentioned how the wealthy, including

the Prime Minister and Mayor […] they had different upbringing from us […] how can they rich people understand how unemployed people like me live.

Additionally, Ailah commented that 'there are politicians who went to Eton and grew up in private estates, private schools, trying to tell us we don't need housing benefit'. Martin mentioned his mother doing two jobs and how he gives her half of his JSA. Bernard, talking about holiday activities, said that he wished there had been money for leisure activities like 'how other kids do'. Some participants mentioned that their families' lack of economic capital had affected them; for example, Bernard and Reena expressed regret about financial hardships faced by their families, which otherwise would have afforded them private tutoring whilst in school.

Furlong (2013:101) cites material resources 'as a crucial determinant of future life choices and attainment in schools and workplaces'. He explains (2013:101) that 'when material resources are challenging, there may be pressure on young people to leave school at earliest opportunity', so that they can 'help with family finances'. This was reflected in Martin's case where his mother works 'so hard', has 'two jobs to earn money' but the income was insufficient and so he was giving her 'half my JSA', as were some of the other participants. Clearly, in such circumstances, assisting their children by 'investing in education may be difficult, or impossible' (Furlong, 2013:101).

4.11 Conclusion

This chapter has examined the role that 'family' played in the lives of the NEET participants, particularly in the context of critical moments (for some), academic studies, extra-curricular activities, bullying issues, school absenteeism and post-16 trajectories.

In considering the factors for young people becoming NEET, all four staff members at Possible cited family's lack of interest in their children's education' and 'single-parent families' as the factors resulting in young people becoming NEET. Therefore it was decided to delve deeper into this matter with the participants who were all adult NEETs (aged 18 to 20, with all but three above the age of 20). As the analysis in this chapter reveals, the staff's perceptions appear to contradict the participants' accounts which show that they had family (immediate and/ or extended) who were supportive, providing emotional and moral support whilst they were in school and faced challenging issues. The participants went on to identify 'school' as one of the

factors that contributed to their becoming NEET. Adding strength to the participants' positive stance on their families was the fact that the participants were all living at home at the time of the interviews, except for Adam who had left home at age 24 and two days before he came to participate in this study. Furthermore, in contrast to the staff's views, it is note-worthy that participants, from both, single-parent and two parent-families, became NEET. Thus the NEET participants' accounts contradicted the staff's perceptions of the NEETs' families and showed that it is not necessarily familial disinterest in their children's education, nor the single-family households that contributed to young people becoming NEET and that it is necessary to probe further into the NEET issue.

Bourdieu's theoretical concepts of capital, habitus and field are helpful in explaining the relationship between the roles of the families and the NEET outcome for young people. The concepts illustrate that it is not so much whether the children are from single-parent families, or whether they have supportive families (immediate or extended). Crucially, it is whether their families possess the dominant forms of cultural and social capitals that would give them the knowledge and the economic capital in the form of financial resources to assist their children. Moreover, Bourdieu's concepts of habitus and field are useful to understand, for example, the powerlessness and linguistic difficulties faced by the families concerned when approaching the respective schools with regard to their children's bullying issues, or the confidence (cultural capital) required to attend Parents' Evenings. Thus, middle-class parents may intervene more in their children's education because they have the capitals (Bourdieu, 1986) in the form of knowledge, confidence (cultural capital), professional networks (social capital) and finance (economic capital) to do so. Reay (1998), after interviewing a diverse group of 33 mothers in two different schools (one pre-dominantly middle class and the other working class), found that 'it was only the middle-class mothers who had the power and resources to act effectively to shape the curriculum offered to their children' (1998:207) and concluded that:

> working-class mothers were just as passionate about their children's education as their middle-class counterparts […]. Rather, a combination of diminished resources and less social power meant they were not able to generate cultural capital for their time and effort to anything like the extent that middle-class mothers were able to (ibid:198).

In Bourdieusian terms, in this study, the form of familial support for their children's education and post-16 trajectories, whilst crucial, was not enough without the dominant forms of capitals and habitus to guide their children in the fields of education and employment. Brooks (1998:49)

notes that there is 'a strong co-relationship between different aspects of a young person's social class and their post-16 destination'. The participants were all, but for two, from working-class families and it would seem that the class young people belong to impact on their life chances and has a determining role on their future. Gillies (2005:842) states that her study 'reveals the extent to which the economic, cultural, social and personal resources are interdependent in families'.

The data analysed in this study also indicates that there is a link between the parents' capitals and the participants' trajectories. Brooks (1998:49) elaborates this point by reporting that the children's career choices are influenced by 'parental education', 'advice parents are able to offer' and their 'work networks'. A key component of achieving this is by parents transmitting to their children the knowledge (cultural capital) and personal attributes (habitus) needed to succeed in the fields of education and employment, something that did not happen with almost all the participants. This is encapsulated in Bernard's response with regard to familial guidance with his studies and career when he explained that his mother had never worked, so 'My mum tells me to get a job, but not about what you must have for the job'.

The findings in this chapter extend the understanding of the NEET group by showing that the perceptions of them as having disinterested families and /or as coming from single-parent households are not necessarily accurate and that the issues that the NEET group faces need to be probed further, with the role of social inequalities being taken into account. Moreover, this study, unlike others reviewed at the time of writing, looked into 'older' NEETs, aged 18 - 24 (with the 18 year old turning 19 the day after the interview), with all, but three, being above the age of 20. Furthermore, it is also the case that unlike other research (for example, Simmons et al: 2011, 2014), the 18 participants in this study have been continuously NEET since the age of 18, with 12 of them having been NEET since they left school. Additionally, none had been in employment since leaving school at 16. Moreover, in the context of family support, all the participants were living at home except for Adam who had been, but left home at age 24, due to distress caused by his step-father's violence towards his mother. Therefore, it is revealing, as the data analysed in this chapter portray, that, despite the passing years, the participants remember vividly the unstinting support their families have extended to them with the issues they encountered in school and how they reported their families were treated by their schools. More worryingly, despite their maturing years and the continued support from their families, the difficulties and challenges they faced during their formative years in the school appear to

continue to cast a shadow on their lives. This is illuminating because it reveals the long reach of challenging school issues and the extent to which they impact into adulthood.

Thus, the issue of family influence is complex. The participants had parent(s) and / or siblings or extended family members who were supportive, in the ways they could be: they possessed cultural capitals that made them concerned about their children's future, had aspirations for them and wanted to do their best for their children. However, having only limited financial resources (economic capital), the knowledge and confidence (cultural capital) and relevant professional networks (social capital) in order to grapple with the education system meant that their best did not match what middle class families could offer, as discussed further, in the next chapter on schooling.

Chapter 5   Getting on: schooling - the best years of their lives?

5.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the participants' school experiences by considering their perspectives on the relevant aspects of their secondary school life that shaped their post-16 trajectories and NEET status. Therefore it considers the views that they voiced on their academic outcomes, teacher-pupil relations and on the issues of absenteeism, exclusion and bullying.

Apart from home, school is where children spend most of their formative years. Bourdieu (1974:32) has suggested that 'it's probably cultural inertia […] that makes us think of the school as a liberating force'. Thus, as discussed in Chapter 2 (2:8: Theoretical Framework), Bourdieu viewed the education system as being manipulated by those with capitals for their own benefit. Thus, in the context of the school, 'rules of the game are accepted and it appears as if everyone is free to play, and everything is negotiable, but not everyone is equal' (Mills, 2008:87).

Research studies (Chapter 2) record that young people's school experiences influence their post-school transitions. 'School' featured much in the interviews with the participants. As such, it was necessary to understand the extent to which the participants' school experiences may have influenced their NEET status.

The participants left school between 2004 and 2010, therefore they were in secondary school when the Labour government was in power. So their accounts are set against the backdrop of the Labour government's emphasis on education and skills (as discussed in Chapters 1 and 2). All of the participants attended different secondary schools, so each account is personal to that individual's school. Yet, most of the accounts appear to have a common thread running through them of disappointment, disillusionment, disengagement and disadvantage. The topics that the participants raised are explored below, beginning with their academic attainments.

5.2 The importance of school academic outcomes

Bourdieu describes 'academic capital [as the] guaranteed product of the combined effects of [the] cultural transmission by the family and cultural transmission by the school' (Bourdieu,

1984:23). The participants raised the issue of their academic outcomes when discussing their school experiences.

Compulsory learning ceased at the age of 16 for the participants with the GCSE examinations at the end of it. Academic achievements in school are important because 'it is often observed that the higher proportions of the young people who become NEET, have lower levels of educational attainment' (Hutchinson and Kettlewell, 2015:116). Hence, the schooling experiences of the participants start with a consideration of their GCSE examinations' outcomes. As articulated by Simmons and Thompson (2011:77, 78):

> […] those in disadvantaged or deprived circumstances are least able to access the material and cultural resources [….]. These problems are intensified by educational underachievement, itself strongly associated with social disadvantage […].
>
> […] young people who underachieve in educational terms will generally be at greater risk of becoming NEET.

Thus, young people's academic achievements affect their life chances as they are important for entering Further and Higher Education and for employment (Hutchinson and Kettlewell, 2015, CBI, 2015). This is particularly the case in a labour market where graduates possessing relevant qualifications and skills are sought by employers:

> As knowledge-based industries and services gain increasing pre-eminence in the global economy, schools have become increasingly powerful players in the determination of life chances (Lynch and Lodge, 2002:1).

In terms of GCSE examination outcomes, the participants formed three distinct clusters: those who achieved no GCSEs; those who achieved some GCSEs but did not obtain the minimum grades of 'C' in Maths and English; and those who achieved five or more GCSEs, with A to C in English and Maths. Overall, 11 out of the 18 participants passed GCSE exams in one or more subject(s): a picture that contradicts the demonising of the NEET group particularly by the media. However, only three of the 18 participants, two females (Ailah and Sarah) and one male (Sukhor) obtained the minimum grades of C in both Maths and English that are required for progressing on to further/higher education. Nevertheless, these three participants, despite obtaining five or more GCSEs, with grades A-C in English and Maths became classified as NEET, together with those participants who did not obtain any GCSEs and those participants who did not obtain the minimum grades of C in their Maths and/or English.

The above-mentioned GCSE passes challenge some studies cited earlier which suggest that the NEET group consists of those with poor academic achievements. This also highlights further that the NEET group is not homogenous (Yates and Payne, 2006). Each young NEET person is an individual case, even in terms of academic achievements and outcomes. Other factors, in the field of education could lead some young people to become NEET and these underlying issues need to be examined if we are to understand better. The sections below seek to explore these issues.

5.3.1 Participants with GCSEs for A-Levels and university entries

Three of the 18 participants (2 females and one male) had five or more GCSEs with Grades A-C in Maths and English. However, as mentioned above, these exam results did not translate into positive post-16 transitions for them. Their accounts of the circumstances leading to their NEET status are explored below.

Sukhor spoke positively about his schooling and described his teachers as being supportive. He achieved eight GCSEs, with Grades A-C. So what led to him become categorised as NEET? Sukhor's post-school transition included attending his school's Sixth Form which tends to be the preferred choice for pupils with positive school experiences (Foskett et al, 2008). After A-Levels, Sukhor went to university but dropped out. I asked Sukhor about this decision and he explained:

> University was pretty intense. When I started my first year, I experienced individualism, […] do everything myself, something you have to accept when you go to university. Dropping out of uni, I asked my friend who said to leave if not interested […]. One main reason, I thought that I would get something [a job].

Sukhor's situation reflects one of the main challenges that some young people face in higher education. They are expected to become independent and be responsible for their university lives, including all aspects of their learning; in effect this means to 'take full responsibility for their progress and achievement' (Leathwood, 2006:614). This assumes that all the students will have the requisite knowledge and skills to manage independent learning at university. Hence, the way independent learning is conceptualised and operationalised is 'inappropriate for many students' (Leathwood, 2006:612). In Bourdieusian terms, those students who enter the field of higher education with accumulated capital will find it easier to progress. Such students' habitus and capitals will be in alignment with the academic practices of their new field and they are

advantaged by having 'a "feel" for the game' (Bourdieu, 2007:25). Hence Bourdieu saw the university as a structured field in which those endowed with accumulated capital recognised by the dominant group are successful, thereby making it an arena where social inequalities are reproduced (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992).

Moreover, Sukhor acted on his friend's advice to leave university and get a job which proved to be ill-advised due to the recession then (2007-09): Sukhor could not obtain employment, became classified as NEET and spiralled into depression. Drawing on Bourdieu's conceptual tools, it may be argued that although the capitals within Sukhor's family made them supportive of Sukhor's education, the cultural and social capitals they possessed were not the dominant forms, such as those possessed by graduate parents. As such, they were not knowledgeable about the unfavourable economic situation affecting employment opportunities to the extent it did. Thus, they were not able to advise Sukhor appropriately, nor explain to him the benefits of completing his degree and discuss with him his problems related to studying at university. Sukhor's parents had economic capital, but contrary to Goldthorpe et al's (1980) emphasis on economic capital as being the vital factor, it is evident that cultural and social capitals are also essential. As articulated by Ball (2003), cultural, social and economic capitals play a significant role in young people's education.

Following Sukhor's post-16 trajectory, it may be argued that the preparation for further and higher education needs to start earlier in secondary school, with career talks and also with visits to Sixth Forms and universities. This would familiarise secondary pupils with the further and higher education institutions, introduce them to their mode of teaching and also the independent learning expected of them. During my fieldwork, some of the participants, on discovering that I worked in a university, asked me about university life with a look of wonder in their eyes. Moreover, they were astonished when I said that they could visit any of the universities on their Open Days even if they had no intention of applying to them.

It is the unfamiliarity with the different styles of learning and academic writing required, that another participant, Sarah (British-African, working class), found challenging in Sixth Form. Sarah reported that she had nine GCSEs: '2As, 6Bs and 1C'. She explained that in Sixth Form she was expected to do more independent learning, with less intervention by teachers and, she also had difficulty with academic writing. As such, Sarah found independent studying difficult, struggled in her academic work, leading her to discontinue her A-Levels. Academic practices,

such as academic writing, unfamiliar to non-traditional students, could create in them a sense of exclusion, leading them to drop out (Lillies, 2001, Watson, 2013).

Both, Sarah and Sukhor progressed on to further and higher education but did not complete their studies. Sukhor's accounts reveal that he spent more time with his friends who were not at university rather than with students at his university. This could be said to reflect the disparity between his own habitus and the field of university, making him feel ill at ease in his new environment. This is in stark contrast to middle-class students who have a sense of belonging in the field of university; as indicated by Bourdieu (1990a:108), 'one of the privileges of the dominant who move in the world as fish in water'. Sukhor's situation shows that the 'non-traditional students [should be] supported all the way through to completion [of their studies], rather than concentrating resources at point of entry' (Archer et al, 2003:198). Thomas and Quinn (2007:2) support this point, expressing that the non-traditional students should have the 'opportunity to succeed in higher education rather than just enter it'. Although these comments are with regard to higher education, I suggest that they could apply easily to students like Sarah (9 GCSEs) who, as explained above, found the transition to Sixth Form learning challenging.

Sarah said that her father was unemployed, her mother worked for the NHS and that she was in and out of care during her A-Levels. Sarah's family not possessing the dominant forms of cultural and social capitals meant that they were unable to support her when she began to struggle with her A-Level studies. Ball et al. (1999:212) explain how post-16 'stayers-on' from disadvantaged families face difficulties and are likely to drop out, which appears to reflect the situations of Sarah and Sukhor. This reveals that good GCSE results, as achieved by them, could lead to successful entry into the fields of further/higher education, but their family habitus needs to be aligned with the requirements of the new field in order for them to cope successfully with the new behaviour or approach required in the new field. Where this is not the case, habitus can be transformed through an individual's choice but the change may entail difficulties and challenges, a situation that Bourdieu referred to as 'hysteresis' (1990a:116). Thus, I argue that there needs to be support provisions within universities, but also in Sixth Forms to provide a safety net for pupils (like Sarah) transiting school to Sixth Form.

Moreover, the absence of advice and guidance in schools to explain GCSE exam outcomes could sometimes cause undue distress to some pupils who may not have alternative sources, with the relevant cultural and social capitals, to provide the guidance. Ailah (female, British

Bangladeshi, working-class), passed five GCSE subjects (grades A-C), including Maths and English. Her background tells a story of self-harming and depression from the age of 12, but being clinically diagnosed only at 16. Additionally, she was moved from her family home to a safe house during her schooling. She recounts that she was:

> predicted high grades, As and Bs, but during my GCSE time everything was getting on top of me and it didn't go well. I got my results, they were bad and I had a breakdown.

Asked about her disappointment with her exam results, Ailah's explanation was, 'I took 8 or 9, I passed only 5, A to C'. Thus, Ailah thought that she had done 'so badly' in her GCSEs that she had a 'break-down' because 'no one, not even the teachers', informed her that her results may qualify her to do A-Levels (citing her illness as mitigating circumstances) and to go on to university which was her dream. As in Sukhor's and Sarah's circumstances, Ailah's family did not possess the dominant forms of cultural and social capitals and this meant that that they were unable to provide the knowledge and guidance that Ailah required, unlike 'those whose parents occupied privileged positions and utilised their available resources on their children's behalf' (Devine, 2004:17). Thus, it was that Ailah had to endeavour alone, with no offer 'of anything that might help' (Walkerdine et al, 2001: 145).

As described above, Ailah had striven hard to succeed academically in school and had achieved good GCSE results. This was despite a troubled family life, depression, self-harming and living in a safe house. So, how did Ailah succeed academically, when, as powerfully articulated by Walkerdine et al. (2001:140), 'it seems there is nothing in the social world to support that success?' The authors (ibid:145) explain that some working class children do succeed, relying on their 'inner resources' which the authors put down to a kind of 'psychic defence' which they explain is 'necessary to cope with family deprivation and poverty' (ibid:145).

In Ailah's case, it was not just her socio-economic situation that affected her, but also her mental health, as outlined above. However, this 'inner resolve' / this 'tenacity' that Ailah possessed, helped her to succeed despite her socio-economic situation and her mental health issues. As such, I would like to consider if this 'inner resolve'/ this 'tenacity' that Ailah possessed could indeed be theorised sociologically and to explore whether this quality could be conceptualised as a 'capital'. For example, 'lack of confidence' has not been viewed in psychological terms 'as individual traits or personal failings' (Leathwood and O'Connell 2005:608) by Bartky (1990, cited in Leathwood and O'Connell, 2003:608). Instead, this lack

of confidence displayed by some of Bartky's students was seen as being 'the result of systems of oppression' (Leathwood and O'Connell, 2003:318), thereby locating it in a sociological, rather than a psychological, context.

Similarly, Reay (2004:19) views 'confidence' in sociological terms, describing it as a 'qualitative dimension of cultural capital'. Additionally, Nowotny (1981, in Reay, 2004:60), drew on Bourdieu's concepts of capital in order to develop sociologically the term 'emotional capital' to describe women's emotional resources used within families. Reay (2004:60), then used the concept of 'emotional capital' sociologically to describe 'the intense emotional engagement the vast majority of mothers have with their children's education' (2004:57). Drawing on these examples, where psychological aspects have been developed in sociological terms, I am mooting here whether the 'inner resolve' / the 'tenacity', as displayed by Ailah, could be viewed sociologically as a capital? However, Ailah's was the only such case in this study and therefore to validate such a claim I contend that it could be an area for future research. This could attempt to explain how those possessing this 'personal resolve / 'tenacity' succeed, even when the socially legitimised Bourdieusian capitals (cultural, economic and social) are not dominant and mental health issues prevail. With the government's recent policy (House of Commons, 2018) to give mental health issues more attention, such research would be useful. Furthermore, in the context of this study, it may be seen as developing and widening the application of Bourdieu's concepts of capital and habitus to understand the factors in the lives of the young people that affect their post-16 trajectories, particularly as depression and suicidal feelings have been associated with some young NEET people (Prince's Trust, 2013, Bynner and Parsons, 2002). It might help to explain how some young people may yet succeed, despite mental health issues and not possessing the dominant forms of capitals and habitus.

The three participants considered in the above section had succeeded academically in school, but they still became NEET, a similar status to the other participants discussed below.

5.3.2 Participants without grades A- C in GCSE Maths and English

Six of the 18 participants (Gary, Charlie, Sarika, Gail, Nadia and Reena: two males and four females) sat their GCSE exams but did not obtain the minimum requisite of Grade C in Maths and/or English required for further or higher education and by employers.

One of the participants, Gary, had achieved eight GCSEs but not Grade C in Maths and English. Charlie obtained seven GCSEs with Grade C in Maths, but 'English, I got E grade' he said. Both of them, Gary and Charlie, had undertaken BTEC courses after leaving school, but they had been unable to obtain employment and became categorised as NEET. Wolf (2011), in her review of vocational skills, pointed out that literacy and numeracy skills are vital and should be addressed before young people undertake vocational courses. It could be that the difficulties that both, Charlie (with BTEC in Engineering) and Gary (with BTEC in Sports Management) have encountered in obtaining employment are due to many employers requiring a minimum grade C in GCSE English and Maths (CBI, 2015) or requiring degrees. As observed by Colley (2003), employers being the dominant players in the field, are able to stipulate the educational qualifications (the institutional capital) that they require in their workforce.

Sarika (18, British-Hungarian, working class), was home educated due to bullying, until she was able to attend a different school. She reported achieving five GCSEs: grades A to D, but not the required minimum grade C in Maths. She had gone on to do a BTEC child-care course, but dropped out because 'it was too easy'. Through not getting employment and subsequently engaging with Possible, Sarika became informed that to progress into employment or higher education, she would need a grade 'C' minimum for her Maths.

Moreover, Charlie and Gary appeared unaware that their BTEC courses would not replace the minimum grades of C in GCSE Maths and English. Without talking to their schools it is not possible to ascertain if pupils were informed of this GCSE requirement by many employers. It is also the case that both, Gary and Charlie, left school before the Wolf Report (2011) which highlighted the literacy and numeracy requirements. When I was talking to the participants, I became aware that they had been (until they attended Possible) much removed from the harsher realities of the job market requirements which evolved following the 2009 financial crisis. As discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, sound academic attainments from school are considered as the foundations to build upon in order to meet the requirements of a globalised economy. This reveals starkly the importance of cultural and social capitals. For example, Gary and Charlie, came from supportive families but their family habitus and not having the dominant forms of capitals meant that they did not have the professional networks available to middle class children, thereby providing guidance with regard to the qualifications required for the job market. Their families' situations, together with lack of resources in schools and FE Colleges

to provide up-to-date guidance, compounded their situations. As commented by Crompton (2009:7), 'increasing influence of neo-liberal policies has enhanced opportunities for middle-class deployment of economic, cultural and social capital'. However, unlike middle-class children, the participants in this study were very much on their own. They were expected to navigate their post-school transitions themselves, the responsibility was theirs and therefore they had difficulties carving out a future due to the structural inequalities in their world.

It needs to be noted that possessing poor English language skills could affect the ability to engage in learning activities. Additionally, to understand the teachers (the dominant players in the learning field), especially when feedback is given and to participate competently in all the GCSE examinations, for language permeates all the subjects. This affects, particularly, the children of newly arrived families in the UK, with the families not possessing the linguistic capital to assist their children in their new educational field. Two participants, Gail and Reena, were affected by possessing English as an Additional Language (EAL). As stated by Bourdieu and Passeron (1977:73):

> […] language provides, together with a richer or poorer vocabulary, a more or less complex system of categories, so that the capacity to decipher and manipulate complex structures […] depends partly on the complexity of the language transmitted by the family.

Thus, possessing rich English language skills may be seen as a marker of cultural capital. When attending UK schools, the new arrivals need the mastery of the English language to succeed academically. As Gail explained:

> When I came to this country my English was not good. Came to London at 14. Started school at 15. I flopped them [GCSEs]. The only one I passed was Maths. I was good in Maths so I got Grade C, with no English. Back in my country I was good in all, there grades 1 to 10 and I had 10s in all.

Similarly, Reena came from India aged 14 and joined school in Year 10. She recalled how she found it difficult because 'I did not understand the language [but] a pupil there speak same language [Gujarati] as me'. This social capital Reena developed proved valuable in helping her to understand and learn in the new educational field. Talking about her GCSE exams, Reena said 'flopped my English because not my first language, so I got D, other than that, I got A to Cs, for my science I got 2 A*.

Based on their accounts, Reena and Gail are academically able, but they did not enjoy the 'complexity of the [English] language transmitted by the family' (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977:73) which is valued in the field of secondary school learning. This may be said to reflect the position of most new arrivals to the UK. It may be argued that both, Reena and Gail, might have achieved better grades in their GCSE English if their parents had the resources (economic capital) to pay for private tutoring. However, Reena's family habitus in terms of support and aspiration for her educational success and their social capital (a cousin who was a pharmacist) helped her surmount the odds stacked against her to obtain 8 GCSEs (7 grades A-C) which included 2 A*s in Science. Additionally, unlike Gail, Reena described her school to have been very supportive with extra lessons and careers guidance, thereby the school being the provider of the cultural and social capitals that Reena required in order to understand UK's educational system and qualifications for further or higher education. A positive school experience (Foskett et al, 2008) has motivated Reena to re-sit her GCSE English and, if successful, to take up her conditional university offer of place to study Pharmacy. Reena's story could be viewed as one of social transformation; and, although Bourdieu described schools as contributing to social reproduction, he did acknowledge (Greenfell, 2008) that there are exceptions as reflected by his own academic success despite not coming from a middle-class family. On the other hand, negative school experience can be seen to foster bitterness and a disengagement from post-16 education as reflected in the case of Nadia, discussed below.

Nadia (21, British-Somalian) was in PRU and did GCSEs in Mathematics and English, but did not 'get good grades'. Nadia (who reported being bullied) expressed powerfully her anger with her school:

> You know what they had done, instead of taking the bullies out, they took me out and they wanted to send me to the Referral Unit where all the bad kids go. I was not a bad person and I am not saying those kids were bad as well but I did not deserve to be there and because of being there I could do only 2 GCSEs, English and Maths.

Nadia's situation seems to reflect Munn and Lloyd's (2005) findings, that working class pupils were more likely to be excluded from school. However, not having spoken to Nadia's teachers, it is difficult to conclude that social class played a role in her removal. Additionally, Nadia said she was self-harming, due to the bullying, so her mother agreed to her attending a Pupil Referral Unit (PRU). Despite the challenging circumstances faced by Nadia, she obtained 2 GCSEs. Another participant, Martin, also attended a PRU and his experience is considered below.

5.2.3 Participants without any GCSEs

According to Hirsch (2006:49) 'recent improvements in educational outcomes have still left one in four 19-year olds without a basic qualification'. This was the case with seven participants who had no GCSEs: five males, Martin, Hamid, Monir, Adam and Bernard and two females: Akosua and Kelly.

The reasons for their not gaining GCSE qualifications were explored. Martin said that he was bullied (explored further in a section below), so he carried a knife to school. Consequently he was excluded, sent to a PRU where he did not sit any GCSEs. Hence, Martin left compulsory learning aged 16, without any academic qualifications. Similarly, Monir mentioned that he did not sit any GCSEs but did not offer further details as he was participating in a focus group.

Bernard recounted that he was kept at home due to bullying and therefore missed crucial stages of his schooling, including GCSEs. However, Hamid had attended secondary school regularly, but he said that he was advised to do the BTEC rather than GCSEs which may prove difficult for him. He explained that his parents agreed with the teachers and remarked 'they just accept it. They said "it's OK, just do the BTEC like teachers advised" '. Hamid's parents' reaction accords with Gillies' (2005:845) findings, that for some parents with children who were struggling, 'hope was invested with their children securing basic education'. This also portrays the parents' deference to teachers and their assumption that teachers know best compared to them which stems from the family's low confidence: Reay et al. (2005) describe confidence as being possessed by those who have high levels of cultural capital. Looking through the Bourdieusian lens, Hamid's family had economic capital, but not the dominant forms of cultural and social capitals. Hamid did say that if the importance and relevance of the GCSEs for employment had been highlighted by the teachers, he would have attempted GCSEs. As articulated by Ball et al. (2000:144), 'for those parents who have no personal experience of further education […] purposeful intervention is difficult'. Similarly, Bernard explained that his mother had not been in employment and so she did not appreciate the importance of the GCSE qualifications in the field of employment.

As such, it may be argued that the educational outcomes of Martin and Bernard reflect the 'enduring relevance of class' (Gillies, 2005:842). Dunne and Gazeley (2008) found, in their studies, that teachers were more likely to move working class pupils on to vocational courses. However, Hamid described himself as middle class (based on his parents' economic capital)

and the school had provided him with learning support up to Year 9 and twice a week in Year 10, so it could be that he was struggling and the BTEC was the better option, as explained by his teachers. Modood (2004) explains that, amongst the ethnic minority population, some of the families possess what he termed as 'ethnic capital'. However, this is significantly with immigrants who might be classified as working class in the UK but who were middle class in their countries of origin. Moreover, being migrants, they recognised the need to help each other and formed social networks to share information on educational and career matters. 'Parents with middle-class orientations were thus able to actualise their "ethnic capital" by also mobilising their economic and cultural capitals [in order] to actively influence their children's educational aspirations and achievements' (Shah, Dwyer, Modood, 2010:1117). Hamid described himself as middle class but he based this on his parents' economic capital (owning four properties) in the UK. The significance of economic capital may be said to lie in being able to generate cultural and social capital. As an example, Hamid's parents could have used their economic capital to arrange private tutoring for him when his teachers reported that he was struggling academically. However, his parents did not possess the dominant forms of cultural and social capitals to guide him on educational and employment matters, unlike middle class families who drew 'on these capitals to advantage their children' (Gillies, 2005:842). However, it may be questioned, whether the teachers could have advised Hamid's parents about private tutoring when the school could no longer provide Hamid with learning support? Could the school's silence on this matter be interpreted as an example of Bourdieu's reproduction theory whereby he sees education's role as reproducing class positions? To what extent should a school go the extra mile? These questions are explored below.

5.3 Teacher Support

Foskett et al. (2008:37) highlight as paramount the 'influence of school based factors in the choices of young people' on leaving school at 16. This is confirmed by Torgerson et al. (2008:2) who state that 'high quality staff support was seen to increase the likelihood of post-16 staying on in general, as did positive atmosphere and an emphasis on academic excellence'. It follows therefore that the school staff, led by the Head, affect the young people's approach towards their post-16 education or training. The participants' responses were mixed on the question of support received from their school teachers. Torgerson et al. (2008:2) cite 'low teacher expectations' as one of the barriers to post-16 participation in education'.

Some of the participants said that they received the support from their teachers that they needed and therefore they provided favourable perspectives of their school staff. Sukhor registered that his teachers were 'definitely very supportive'. Reena, too, said that her teachers were 'very supportive' and described the kind of support the school provided:

> after school lessons, extra lessons. I used the facility for lunchtime homework class and after school homework class because I didn't know very much English, so I had to. They had morning classes as well, they help with your grammar, improved your talking, they run activity.

Sarika also spoke favourably of her school. Having left her previous school due to bullying, Sarika transferred to a new school that according to her 'was rated one of the top girls' school in the area, the teachers were the best I ever had. I am still in touch with some'. Having dropped out of a BTEC course because 'it was boring', she was considering returning to the same school to do her A-Levels.

Similarly, Gary said that his teachers were supportive, but interestingly, he thinks that this is because he 'represented the borough for football, they were good to me'. In a way this reflects a cynical view of his teachers and implies that if he did not have that status, the symbolic capital, the teachers may not have been 'nice'. He added that 'there were extra lessons but I did not go' and when asked why he did not go, he shrugged his shoulders and said that 'they were in subjects I did not like anyhow'. Gary's approach would appear to be governed by his liking for the subjects rather than seeing the necessity to achieve sound academic qualifications, the latter being characteristic of most middle-class children (Devine, 2004). Thus, although his family had cultural capital, in the absence of high levels of cultural and social capitals within his family, the significance of the extra lessons may not have been explained to Gary. Therefore he did not attend the extra classes which might have enabled him to achieve GCSE grades C or above in English and Maths. Nevertheless, Gary's interest in sports and encouragement from his school to pursue his interest, led him to undertake a BTEC course in Sports Management.

In contrast to the above positive opinions on teacher support, some of the other participants expressed unfavourable views about the teacher support they had received. For example, Nadia (working class) reported, in a bitter tone, of being told 'you will never amount to anything. You will be pregnant by 18'. Nadia asks angrily:

How does that make a young person feel? I am really angry when I talk about teachers and school, they let me down. Sorry. Don't get me wrong, there are some nice, sure, but not the ones I have seen, they let me down.

The above remark, reported by Nadia, appears to accord with Dunne and Gazeley's (2008:461) study which found that 'teachers consistently described lower educational and occupational aspirations for working class pupils'. Furthermore, Nadia's parents did not attend PTA sessions and it could be that 'teachers may interpret levels of parental involvement in school as a signal about the extent to which parents care about their children's educational outcomes' (Turney and Kao, 2009:269). Thus, Nadia's family did not possess the dominant forms of cultural capital and habitus that are valued in the field of school and could lead to positive support from the teachers.

Whilst Nadia did not allude to any ethnic bias in her teacher's comments, it was alluded to by Maria (staff). She explained that misunderstandings arise due to some of the teachers' non-awareness of cultural differences. She gave the example of a 'black pupil being upset' and 'kicking the teeth in' (a sound made by the mouth) which she described as a 'common thing that people from African and African-Caribbean countries do. So when black children do it, it is seen as being rude, disrespectful'. Maria said that the teacher's treatment of the pupil, due to misunderstanding the particular cultural characteristic, could affect teacher-pupil relations and impact on the pupil's confidence in himself and the school. She felt that in most cases this led to school absenteeism and, eventually, to the NEET status. This information was illuminating, adding to our knowledge about the reasons for some pupils' disenchantment with their schools which leads them to become NEET.

Another participant, Adam, also expressed dissatisfaction with the teacher support he received in school. Adam reported that he sat his GCSE exams 'but I did not pass them' which according to him was due to getting no teacher support. He explained that due to being bullied in the first 3 years of school 'my studies suffered' and that 'I did try to ask for one-to-one help and I did get a bit of it. But it was too late by then, too much to catch up'. Similarly, Hamid said his studies were affected by insufficient teacher support. Hamid expressed that he received support from Years 7-9, but was critical of the fact that he had not received 'enough in Year 10 onwards, only twice a week'. On closer questioning, he said that he did ask for extra help but teachers said that 'they are giving as much as possible'. This could imply a lack of resources rather than

unwillingness to help and this could have been the case, too, with Adam. However, it could also be that their respective teachers did not see them as having potential for good GCSE examination results, for Dunne and Gazeley (2008:454) report that 'teachers' constructions of both, [the] underachievement and [the] social class, affected the way in which they addressed underachievement within the classroom'.

Negative views were also voiced by Martin who said that his teachers did not look into the issue of him being bullied. This led to him carry a knife to school (which he said was to protect himself from the bullies) and consequently being sent to a PRU. In contrast to his negative views of his school teachers, Martin praised Sister Theresa, a nun volunteering in the PRU. Sister Theresa, according to Martin, gave him academic and personal support:

> she was so nice. She helped me with my studies. Help me with my writing. If I had no lunch money, if I say 'can I have £2 and I will give back', she always gave. I respect her more than teachers in school. She was just SO (emphasised) nice.

Martin also explained how Sister Theresa organised extra-curricular trips to places of interest and he took along his younger sister to expand her knowledge. He describes going into central London for the first time and seeing 'the Parliament and all that I see only in TV'. Martin also described how Sister Theresa allowed him to organise football in the park for the younger pupils, thereby helping him to develop valuable organisational and leadership skills and also qualities such as a sense of responsibility, useful in the fields of further / higher education and employment. It could be said that the above accounts reveal that Sister Theresa provided the cultural and social capital for the pupils in the PRU. Byfield (2008), building on Bourdieu's concept of capitals, developed the term 'divine capital' to signify the cultural and social capitals that young people acquired through attending church activities organised by the priests. In Martin's case it might be said that Sister Theresa appears to have provided a form of 'divine capital' through her role in the PRU. Martin's view of his school teachers (until he met Sister Theresa) had been scarred by what he considers as a complete lack of support when he was bullied, a matter that was raised by some of the other participants who were also bullied. This issue is discussed in the final section (Section 5:5) after considering (below) the problem of school absenteeism.

5.4 School Absenteeism

In the year of my fieldwork, the OECD report (2012) reported that UK has the highest rate of school absenteeism by pupils amongst developed countries, noting that school attendance is a crucial feature of positive school experience and outcome.

The UK government's ruling is that parents, 'must make sure that your child gets full-time education that meets their needs' and this can be in school or at home (DfE, 2013).

Schools are required to take registers when morning session commences and repeat it during the afternoon session (The Education [Pupil Registration] Regulations 2006). Some of the participants said that they attended school regularly. For example, Sukhor said that his 'attendance was pretty faultless. My parents were strict, not take me out from school' and he explained that his father had been in the army. It may thus be interpreted that discipline was embedded in the family habitus and accorded with the requirements for academic success in the field of school.

However, some of the participants in this study appear to have been able to remove themselves from school, after school registration. This, according to them, indicated that the school did not monitor closely the presence of pupils after registration. Thus, Gail commented:

> They have cameras, I can tell you I was going to school. I didn't go to my English lessons, none of my science lessons and teachers did not even know me and I came out of that school with 95% attendance. Tell me, how is that possible? Really bad school. I used to come in the morning, sign in and then disappear for the whole day.

Worryingly, Gail said that when she missed school, she was not at home, but 'in the street' dealing in and taking drugs. She said that some of her classmates took drugs, too, explaining that 'everybody is doing that, smoking ganja, taking ecstasy, most of the students these days smoke in school'. Asked about the reasons for the drug-taking amongst those pupils, Gail explained that, 'when I took drugs, I knew what I was doing, to forget my problems' and she said that this was the case with the others who bought from her. She continued, 'yeah, come from problem homes. They are not smoking for fun. Some do, but not all the time, the majority to kill stress'.

According to Reid (1999:1-2) there is 'increasing and worrying evidence that some truants spend their time engaging in fringe activities such as drugs […] participating in organised crime'. This appears to have been the case with Gail when she missed school. This also calls into question the responsibility of Gail's school for her welfare after pupils' registration. It is also pertinent to ask how Gail, of school going age, remained on the streets unnoticed by the police and therefore not taken back to the school, as the police did with Bernard?

Bernard's story reveals that, although his school tried to implement the attendance policy, a secure system was absent in order to prevent pupils from leaving the school. Bernard, like Gail, attempted to leave once registers were taken and this was due to him being bullied. However, there seem to have been random checks during some lessons. There was also the local police keeping an eye out in the street. As Bernard describes below:

Bernard:	They ask me to go back, I go back, but leave after a few hours.
HR:	Did they not know that you were missing after a few hours?
Bernard:	I wait until register is taken and go to a few classes, then, disappear.
HR:	Do they not take register in every class?
Bernard:	Some schools do. But, mine mainly make sure you are on the list morning and afternoon. Sometimes in class they re-check register so see I am not there.
HR:	Did they ever find out during those times they did not re-check?
Bernard:	Sometimes, when the police bought me back. Then, I see the headmaster who tells me off, say go back to your class. I say OK, but bunk again…climbing over low gate. Now very strict security system, so could not now.

Payne (2002:4) explains that 'truancy, or voting with the feet, is perhaps the most direct behavioural expression of negative attitudes towards a school' and this could be read as the reason for Gail's and Bernard's school absences, described above. In discussing her GCSE results, Gail had said that she had English language problems (having been schooled abroad until aged 14) and therefore did not sit any of the GCSE exams, except for Maths. Gail started at her UK school at the age of 15, in Year 10, a year when teachers concentrate on preparing pupils for GCSE exams. As such, with her weak English language skills, the lessons did not resonate with Gail, so she embarked daily on exiting school as soon as possible. Payne (2002:4)

cites 'boredom' as one of the reasons for pupils' 'negative attitude towards school'. Thus, Gail's account above portray her daily, desperate race to escape from school, particularly with the lure of earning money once outside. This was in direct contrast to Reena who also arrived newly in England and went straight into Year 10, but passed 8 GCSEs. As discussed earlier, Reena's account (section 5.2.2) shows that her school had an extensive programme of additional classes to help EAL pupils. It is possible that Gail's school, too, might have had such classes, but Gail did not mention them. This suggests that additional and different curriculum provisions (Spielhofer et al, 2009) are important if all the pupils, irrespective of their academic abilities, are to be kept engaged. However, school absenteeism also occurs due to personal issues such as bullying and when, in such situations, teacher support is perceived to be absent or inadequate, as is evident from some of the participants' experiences, recorded below.

The parents who supported their children's truanting, as in Bernard's case above, allowed it thinking that it would be best for their children. Irwin and Elley (2011:481) explain that 'all parents want to do their best by their children […] but how effectively desires translate into outcomes varies, depending upon where people are positioned within an unequal society'. Bernard's phrase that his grandmother and mother did 'not know better' (below) describes the position of those parents who supported their children's truanting, thinking that it might be best for their children who were being bullied. As reported in Chapter 4 (section 4:4). Bernard also said that, if at the time he had known the importance of GCSEs, he may not have missed school:

> Obviously, teachers should have done more, if [they had] explained how useful to have GCSEs, I might have stayed on. [….] Now I think of all the things I could have done. Wish had taken my GCSEs and all that. Terrible I did not do GCSEs I think. My classmates passed all that.

Thus, Bernard (aged 24, left school in 2004) expressed regret at not sitting the GCSE examinations. He said that the significance of leaving school without academic qualifications was not explained to him until Possible informed him about the credentials that are valued in the fields of education, employment and training. Bernard explains that his family did 'not know better' and this could be interpreted as due to his family not possessing the higher levels of cultural capital, but he felt that 'teachers should have done more'. This reflects the situation for pupils like Bernard who are reliant on their schools for such information, and, in the absence of which, those like Bernard struggle to get a foot in the field of employment and or higher education. This seems to reflect Bourdieu's (1974:32) argument that 'education is one of the

most effective means of perpetuating the existing social-pattern as it both provides an apparent justification for social inequalities and gives recognition to cultural heritage'. Bernard's lament above also shows the different approaches adopted by different schools in dealing with school absenteeism, with some of the schools providing support with home–schooling. For example, Charlie did not attend school for a period of time due to bullying, but the school supplied worksheets for him to do at home and he returned after a period at home and left school with seven GCSEs. Similarly, Sarika, said that due to bullying she 'studied at home for six months on worksheets and all that until I could get a place in L' which according to her was a better school. Whilst at home, she said that she 'used to have a teacher who came in once a week': this conforms to the legal requirements and therefore, officially, she was receiving education and not considered to be a school absentee. On the other hand, Bernard, Kelly and Nadia did not receive such assistance, nor did Gail who reported that her absence was not noted despite there being CCTV cameras. Hence the institutional habitus of each school provided a different culture with regard to school absenteeism.

Reid (2002:4) notes that despite various initiatives by the 'government, LEAs, schools, caring professions […] truancy and other forms of non-attendance continue to flourish'. Government measures to fine parents do not appear to have deterred pupils from truanting either. Kelly, one of the focus group participants, said, 'I found school boring. I truanted'. She said that her parents had been fined for her 'bunking off school. My father and mother were fined £200 each time, twice'. This is in accordance with the government ruling that parents 'can be prosecuted if you don't give your child an education' (DfE, 2013). Nadia was furious with the school for reporting her absence because she felt that she was doing it because of the bullying she was suffering and explained angrily what had happened when she was in Year 9:

> They wanted to take her [mother] to court because I kept bunking off school. I went to the attendance lady and I said, "listen, you people can't help me, my mum and dad been here since year 7" […] none of you cared over the three years, you want to take my mum to court and I am getting seriously bullied". Ya, I HATED school, HATED with a passion' (EMPHASISED).

Nadia's was furious because she felt that her mother's treatment was due to the 'psychological and social implications of living on the lower rungs of a societal ladder', with her mother being viewed as a 'less than ideal mother' (Jones, 2007:173).

Reid (1999:3) notes that 'one of the main reasons for missing school is bullying' and this is evident from the above accounts. Thus, 'bullying' as experienced by the participants, is considered below.

5.5 The issue of 'bullying'

The issue of bullying was mentioned by two participants in focus group interviews. Thus, it was explored further in the individual interviews, when the participants could talk privately and ten out of the thirteen individual interview participants talked about this issue.

Olweus (1994:9-10), a leading authority on the issue of 'bullying' in schools, states that:

> A student is being bullied or victimised, when he or she is exposed repeatedly and over time to negative actions on the part of one or more other students. Negative action [is] when someone intentionally inflicts or attempts to inflict injury or discomfort upon another [….]. Negative actions can be carried out by words […], physical contact [or without either] such as making faces […], intentionally excluding someone from a group [and] there is an in-balance in strength […] the student exposed to negative actions has difficulty defending himself/herself.

It would appear that bullying had come to be seen as an expected feature of school life by some of the participants. In the words of Bernard, 'I was a new face and I got bullied, but that is the reality of life in school'. Asked if by 'reality in school' he meant it is part of school life and to be expected, Bernard's response was:

> Yes. Obviously, for some people they know how to fight back, cope with it. To be honest, this generation, you can get bullied for anything, like you look at person and you can get bullied, so it can be anything'.

In contrast, Gary (British Caribbean) said that he was not bullied. He explained that a pupil getting bullied 'depends upon how you are in school [...]. It depends how you portray yourself. I think how you act in school decides how you are treated and where you go in life'. It must be added that Gary was tall, a sportsman and therefore unlikely to be taken on by bullies: male students who get bullied tend to be 'physically weaker than boys in general' Olweus (1994:32). Gary had also gained symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1986) in the field of school by becoming a football player for his local borough.

Bernard's and Gary's points about some not being bullied because they 'fight back' is borne out by the accounts given by two of the participants. Ailah (female) said:

> When I started there [secondary school] some tried to make comments and I tried to hit one with a chair, so they stopped. Once you break down that barrier, I got through, others who cannot be aggressive back suffer.

This is also borne out by Gail who said that she 'never got bullied [...] I am strong, if anyone did, I make sure they get hurt twice as much'.

In this study, two male and two female participants fought back when bullied. This contrasts with the findings by Glover et al. (2000:145) who note that, whilst there is not much difference in the number of boys and girls bullying others, a 'higher proportion of girls are less retaliatory and become victims'. Disturbingly, these accounts appear to suggest that the victims who do not fight back are at fault for not retaliating. Thus, the descriptions of those who tend to get bullied, given by Olweus (1994), confirmed by participants' accounts, make uncomfortable reading.

In my study, the bullied participants explained that their passivity was the factor, supporting Olweus' (1994) description of bullied victims being those who are passive or insecure. As an example, Charlie explained that he was bullied because he was an 'easy target. Passive'. Similarly, Bernard said:

> I was very quiet, why I got picked upon, bullied and all that. I was quiet and not like standing up in front of the class and talking, or putting up my hand to answer. So, end of term, you have presentations in front of whole school, I missed all that, in the hall and all that.

Bernard added that he was not only called names but he was also hit in the playground. Olweus (1994:32) characterises the victims as being 'more anxious, and insecure […] often cautious, sensitive quiet […] suffering from low self-esteem [with] negative view of themselves'. This was the case with Bernard, who, as stated above, lacked the confidence even to put up his hand to answer in class. Moreover, Smith (2004) states that pupils who have disabilities, including a learning disability, tend to be at risk of being bullied. This was apparent in Martin's case as reflected in his account below:

I just used to get bullied, because I could not read well. I copied everything from the board, but I could not read properly, well, slow reader. I just used to get bullied […] sometimes calling me names. Sometimes hit me. So, when I was older, I thought enough, change my ways, cannot stand anymore and fight back. I blame some of the pupils and teachers who did not like me […] I fight back, carry knife for protection and got excluded.

Martin's reaction to being bullied was to finally 'fight back' and he decided to carry a knife to school to protect himself. The consequence was that he was excluded and sent to a PRU. As reported earlier in the chapter, Martin did not sit any GCSEs. He therefore had no academic qualifications, could not get any employment, became involved in committing crimes which eventually resulted in conviction and imprisonment and became NEET on release. Thus, the consequence of retaliating to bullying can be detrimental. Needless to say that Martin's reaction may be viewed as extreme in that he resorted to carrying a knife to school, but then how can there be any acceptable form of physically fighting back when bullied?

The problem appears to be the silent acceptance of certain kinds of behaviour between young people in school. In their study, Bansel et al. (2009:60) note that they found it difficult to identify bullying in schools: they found that 'much of everyday conflict in school was seen as normal and inevitable' and that 'repeated, intended to hurt and acceptable use of power' was what was looked upon as bullying. I argue that this finding is deeply worrying because it raises a lot of questions including, how many counts of an offensive behaviour are needed for it to be accepted as amounting to 'repeated' action? Also, how do you establish an 'intention to hurt' when a pupil can say easily say 'sorry, sir, it was an accident'? And what degree of force, constitutes 'unreasonable use of power'? For example, sticking the leg out to cause someone to trip and fall flat on the face does not need any power, but it is causing another physical pain. Thus, the whole issue of bullying seems to be mired in difficulties and, from the accounts given by the participants, those who are passive seem to suffer; this leads to their school absenteeism, with detrimental effects on their studies and mental well-being, thereby affecting their post-16 trajectories, as illustrated by Adam's case below.

Adam said that his sister had a 'weak bladder' so when he started school some bullies 'from my class had older ones in my sister's class, so they knew about it and also joined in with the bullying'. Ditch-the Label, an international organisation working on bullying issues, notes from

its recent (2017) annual survey that bullying leads to serious mental health problems, such as depression, self-harm or suicidal thoughts which matches what Adam went through. As Adam said 'In secondary school, 7, 8 and 9, I got bullied, it got so bad I was even thinking of taking my own life'. Adam's graphic account of what he suffered is given below:

> Calling me names, beating me up, throwing me in front of stuff, like one time I nearly got hit by a bus, they push me in front of it but I managed to move away quickly. I had been bullied in the first 3 years. You know it was all the time. I am just walking down the stairs and I got pushed down a flight of stairs, 24 steps, someone kicked me at the back, nearly went through a glass at the bottom [….]. I got bullied on that school trip to Epping Forest as well. I remember it like it was yesterday- we went down this path, someone pushed me, and I fell face down into these plants full of thorns, like rose bushes, you can imagine.

Adam said that it was when he fought back that the bullying stopped, explaining that 'I lost my temper, threw a computer chair at him [the bully]'and that when Adam returned after his 2-day suspension no-one bullied him and 'those who were bullies started to respect me'. This supports Olweus' (1994) observation that the passive ones get bullied and also reflects the experiences of some of the other participants' accounts discussed above.

Another example of bullying affecting mental well-being is Nadia's case. She self-harmed due to the bullying she suffered. She said:

> I was bullied throughout my school life. So, I used to self-harm at 11. The teachers made me angry. When I started secondary school I used to get pretty good grades, I believe I am a smart girl and then I used to bunk off school because of bullying. Instead of teachers creating somewhere victims of bullying can go and speak confidentially, (STARTS TO SPEAK ANGRILY) - they could not afford to do that, but they could afford to take my mum to court for something that she had no control over. That made me really angry. I look different because my mum dress me up different, she just come from Somalia. So, I was a target for bullying. Not my mum's fault. Lack of understanding amongst young people and teachers not say anything, not explain to them. The education system, to be honest with you, I hate to say this, is a failure. It is a failure in my eyes.

On the face of it, Nadia being bullied because of her being dressed in her Somalian attire could be described as racist in nature. Schools are required to record racist incidents by the Race Relations (Amendment) Act, 2000. However, Myers and Bhopal (2015:15) note that in areas

that are predominantly 'white, the schools were characterised by a lack of awareness of racism in the school […] and insufficient awareness amongst staff of the principles of good practice for preparing students for a diverse society'. But, in Nadia's case, she was in a school in east London which had a multi-cultural intake and Nadia herself did not attribute the bullying directly to racism. According to Sondegard (2012:360):

> whenever people expect or are expected to become members of groups or communities
>
> for example, the possibility arises that an individual's membership may be questioned.

This may be said to have been the case with Nadia and thereby, causing her immeasurable pain. Nadia and her family had habitus moulded in a distinctly different country and culture and therefore it did not accord with the new field (UK) they entered as refugees; as Bourdieu (1993:86) explained, 'habitus is linked to individual's history' (Bourdieu, 1993:86).

The young people reported receiving unstinting support from their families when they were bullied (discussed extensively in the previous chapter). According to their accounts, the parents intervened and tried to get the school to look into the bullying, but as described, for example, by Adam and Charlie, they were not successful and it led to confrontations with the school. According to Ranson et al. (2004:265), parents tend to respond emotionally when they feel that their 'children's welfare or future is at risk [and] the anger expressed in these experiences reveals a sense of demeaned capability and self-respect'. Ranson et al. (2004:262) suggest that in such situations 'how people speak to each other' and the 'language game they play out reveal unequal and embodied differences of material and cultural capital' and that 'parents' cultural capital could exercise a space of influence' (ibid:1). Thus, the middle class parents, in such situations, would be dealing with the teachers as equals and will know how to raise the issues in a manner that displays their knowledge of the law and their rights on this matter, as I have argued in Chapter 4. 'If the marginalised do not understand the rules of the game of schooling, how can they understand the moves that permit them to win?'(Mills, 2008:87)

The Education Act (2005:S.5) requires Ofsted Inspectors to consider the 'pupils' behaviour towards, and respect for other young people and adults, including freedom from bullying and harassment. They are also required to consider how well teachers manage the behaviour and expectation of pupils to ensure that all pupils have an equal and fair chance to thrive and learn in an atmosphere of respect and dignity'. Maunder et al. (2010:263) explain that 'how bullying is understood by the members of the school community is important because differences in definitions could result in an inconsistent approach and affect the success of intervention work'.

The reported lack of action by the schools appear to have demoralised the participants who were bullied. It is not just the psychological effects of bullying that needs to be noted but also the socio-economic effects. This study shows that the bullying experiences marred not only their school lives but also their futures, as they missed lessons and therefore left school without qualifications. Indeed, a longitudinal study by Kings College (Dr Ryu Takizawa., KCL online news, 2014) reported finding 'the effects of bullying still visible four decades later. The impact of bullying is persistent and pervasive with health, social and economic consequences lasting well into adulthood'. Therefore, the participants who reported being bullied will bear the consequences for years to come. Schools are required by the Education and Inspections Act (2006:4) to 'encourage good behaviour and prevent all forms of bullying'. But the participants' accounts suggest that in some schools the difficulty appears to be in finding strategies that are effective with different groups of pupils.

5.6 Conclusion

'Schools are repositories of all kinds of fantasies, of fears and desires, of hopes and disappointments, held by individuals and groups' (Reay and Lucey, 2004:48): the accounts given by the participants in my study appear to capture these sentiments aptly.

As discussed above, some of the participants had favourable views about their schooling. However, the majority conveyed negative accounts of their school experiences and raised issues from their schooling that appeared to still affect them despite their maturing years, with most of them being in their 20s. In particular, the participants who were bullied painted painful pictures of what they endured; the issue appears to have scarred their secondary school years, affecting negatively their academic attainments and bullying was viewed by the participants as a factor in them becoming NEET. The effects of bullying have been articulated powerfully and poignantly particularly, with regard to the perceived absence of teacher support, even after their parents had complained.

These parents, in taking up the bullying issue, exercised emotional capital (Reay, 2004). However, they did not possess the dominant forms of cultural capital to help them to use the language skills that could communicate their concerns to the teachers in a non-confrontational manner, and, therefore, the views of the teachers dominated the field. The head of the school

(in Bernard's case) and the teachers in the other cases were the powerful members in the field and therefore decided on the rules in the fields of the respective schools. The parents' capital determined their positions in the fields and also their ability to negotiate therein. Their habitus provided them with a 'sense of one's place' (Bourdieu, 1984:471) and so they did not appeal to the Board of Governors, or the LEA, but took their children out of the school instead. 'If the marginalised do not understand the rules of the game of the schooling, how can they understand the moves that would permit them to win' (Mills, 2008:87).

Bullying was an issue raised by several of the participants. The school bullying reported by them is a difficult issue, as not been able to talk to the schools concerned makes it impossible to reach conclusions about their anti-bullying strategies.

The participants' accounts also reveal the struggles faced by them to achieve academically and in trying to receive continued learning support with their studies. It reflects what Finlay et al. (2007:851) termed as 'the myth of low aspirations'. His study found that young people have 'normal aspirations, but sometimes low expectations' (2007:865), this being an inevitable consequence of being shaped by their social class. Nevertheless, some of the participants strived against the odds to achieve good academic results. Bates and Riseborough (1994:228) point out that 'young people strive, despite numerous obstacles, to create paths for themselves'. However, as noted above, the majority of the participants left school without the minimum GCSE grades required in the fields of further/higher education and/or employment, thereby reflecting Bates and Riseborough's (1994:228) observation that 'qualifications earned at 16 prove to be the best single indicator of directions that the individuals' careers could take […]'.

Listening to the participants, it is evident that their school experiences and outcomes were varied and personal to each. Some achieved five or more GCSEs, whilst others did not and moreover some did not sit their GCSE exams. Some were bullied, but the form of bullying varied with each of the victims and so were their responses, with some fighting back, some self-harming and some coping with it through school absenteeism. Even the absenteeism was treated differently, with some doing school-work at home. Thus, each had a different school journey that impacted on their life chances, thereby crystallising the fact that the needs within the NEET group are varied.

The participants undertook their secondary schooling when the previous government (Labour) was in power (1997-2010) and 'education' figured prominently in its government strategy, with the aim of producing a workforce equipped with skills for the globalised 21st century economy (Chapters 1, 2). The then government's educational policies were aimed at reducing the 'social class attainment gap' (DfES: 2006).The academic outcomes of the participants indicate that academic success is influenced by the capital endowments of the pupils. As suggested by Di Maggio (1982:189), 'it takes more than measured ability to do well in school'. Therefore, for pupils who do not come from homes with the dominant forms of capital, the schools need to bridge the gap to avoid the 'reproduction of middle-class habitus and advantage it confers on those who perform it' (Levine-Rasky, 2009:342). Thus, based on the participants' school experiences, it may be argued that underlying structural inequalities need to be resolved and that educational policies alone are not enough. As articulated by Simmons and Thompson (2011:8), 'to be born into a working-class family is to have a significantly lower chance of success in increasingly competitive education and employment markets'.

Young people from disadvantaged backgrounds need adequate support mechanisms to inform and prepare them for their post-16 pathways. In this context, 'careers guidance' was one of the topics highlighted by many of the participants and it is therefore considered in the next chapter.

Chapter 6   Moving On: careers guidance, seeking jobs and post-16 trajectories

6.1 Introduction

This chapter is about how the participants tried to make sense of their post-16 options and about the pathways followed. In order to understand the participants' trajectories and to set them into context, this chapter begins by considering the level of careers guidance that the participants reported was offered to them: pre-16 from their schools, and post-16 from the FE Colleges that were attended by some of them, the Job Centres and Possible. Next, there is a summary of the participants' post-16 trajectories, then a discussion of their attempts to secure employment, followed by the concluding section.

As discussed in Chapter 2, globalisation changed the labour market requirements. Therefore the school-leavers needed to know, not only about the post-16 courses and qualifications they required, but also about the formalities of obtaining employment: for example, writing a CV, a covering letter, application forms and an understanding of the working world. The participants left school, according to their respective ages, between 2004 and 2010. Thus, the applicable DfES' document 'Careers Education and Guidance' (2003:6) defines:

> careers guidance as enabling young people to use the knowledge and skills they develop to make the decisions about learning and work that are right for them. Careers education is described as 'helping young people develop the knowledge and skills they need to make successful choices, manage transitions in learning and move into work.

However, the participants in this study did not achieve this stated goal and became classified as NEET.

Morris (2004:4) found that 'effective and successful transitions' were achieved by those who had 'career exploratory skills and sound factual knowledge of courses and routes open to them'. Following Bourdieu's theory on capitals, Ball et al. (1999), Archer et al. (2010) and Thompson (2011) have observed that the young people from families possessing dominant forms of cultural, economic and social capitals are particularly advantaged because their families have clear strategies for their future. Hence, how successfully young people navigate their post-16 pathways may be said to be highly influenced by the advice obtained from their homes and/or schools.

However, for pupils whose families possess neither the required cultural capital nor relevant social capital to guide them on their post-16 pathways, schools are the only source of careers guidance. As argued by Ball et al. (1999:204), 'the positioning of students within "routes" can also be influenced by the expectations and assumptions of formal intermediaries - career officers, teachers, etc'. Therefore, resources for schools are crucial so that they can provide individualised careers guidance. Research (for example, Archer et al, 2010, Francis and Hutchings, 2013) reveals how parents with economic capital are able to move houses to live in areas with better resourced schools. All but two of the participants were working class. Two participants classified themselves as middle class based on their parents' economic capital, but as shown by the data in the previous chapters, their families did not possess dominant forms of cultural and social capitals to offer relevant careers guidance. Therefore, all of the participants' post-16 career trajectories may be said to be in contrast to those of many middle class children who attend elite institutions and also, forge successful careers as a matter of course, described by Bourdieu (1990b:65) as a 'practical mastery' of their circumstances. Also, Hamid and Sukhor's situations (Chapters: 4, 5) illustrate that possessing economic capital, without cultural and social capitals, is not on its own sufficient, as explained by Reay and Lucey (2004:41):

> Possession of economic, cultural and social capitals and a 'feel for the game' generated by middle class habitus [result in] a range of exclusive and exclusionary practices that provided their children with real as opposed to illusory choices.

Thus, a school's careers guidance service could be seen as the source of cultural and social capitals, providing information on the options available to school-leavers in the training and employment fields. This 'acquired system of preferences' (Bourdieu, 1998:25) will help school-leavers plan the actions they need to take for their intended career routes. It follows, therefore, that young people from families without the relevant cultural and social capitals in terms of knowledge and networks, nor able to receive relevant careers guidance from their schools, are more likely to be disadvantaged. As argued by Banks et al. (1992:1), 'more than any other period of life, youth is the time when critical choices are made'. Therefore, in order to understand better the factors that led to the participants' NEET status, they were asked about the careers guidance they were offered for their future pathways. These are explored next, commencing with their schools' careers guidance provisions.

6.2 Pre-16: careers guidance from school

The Education Act (1997) placed a statutory duty on schools to provide a minimum programme of careers' education and ensure that pupils from the age of 13 have access to impartial careers guidance. In 2004 this was extended to include pupils from Year 7 and 8 as well.

The participants' responses about their schools' career guidance provisions were mixed, with eleven speaking negatively and seven positively about them.

Thus, Sukhor remarked: 'a **LOT** (emphasised) of advice, good'. Sarika felt that her school assisted her because 'they organised a day and brought in 10 different Colleges so we can find out about courses, what for what job'. Gary (22) said that his school gave 'a bit of help. They helped me to get into College after I finished school'. Neither Sarika nor Gary mentioned receiving one-to-one guidance: a point to note as Sarika dropped out of her course and Gary could not obtain employment with his BTEC qualification. In contrast, Reena appears to have received individualised guidance, her teachers' cultural and social capitals acting as resources for Reena. She reported:

> They said you got good grade in Science, why not do something in the medical field? English GCSE not good, I could not do A-Levels, so apply for BTEC Applied Science.

Hence, Reena followed the individualised guidance offered, did the BTEC course and was offered a university place to study pharmacy, subject to re-sitting and obtaining a Grade C in English GCSE. It may be questioned as to why Reena was guided towards a BTEC course and not advised to do the A-Levels after re-sitting her English GCSE, as then she might have had a wider choice of universities. However, the BTEC course carries UCAS points which meant that Reena could apply to universities. Reena seemed satisfied with doing the BTEC course and the positive outcome of a conditional university offer. It would appear that for Reena, who on arriving in the UK entered Year 10 with her limited command of the English language, securing a place at university, albeit conditional, was a triumph. Therefore, she felt that her teachers' guidance was useful. Beck et al. (2006:667) observe that 'young people from non-White backgrounds are more reliant on "official" sources of guidance [...] for their labour market knowledge'. I suggest that this could be because such families, particularly new migrant families like Reena's, may only have limited knowledge about such matters, for example, about

the institutionalised form of cultural capital (educational qualifications) and the habitus valued by the employers who are the dominant forces in the field of employment.

Additionally, three focus group participants (Lydia, Sekinat and Akosua), who had attended separate schools, spoke favourably about their schools' careers guidance. Lydia reported that her school: 'told me about 'Performing Arts' course as I was interested in that and explained EMA'. Akosua agreed, stating 'Helpful. Told us about courses and EMA'. Sekinat commented: '[…] my teachers were supportive and told us about various options'.

The above findings, from the focus group and the individual interviews, accord with Archer et al's study (2010) which found that some school pupils were positive about their schools' careers guidance provisions However, it needs to be noted that, amongst the participants who were positive about the careers guidance received, Sukhor and Sarika did not complete their respective courses (dropped out) and Gary, Reena and Lydia were unemployed despite their BTEC qualifications. Moreover, although Sekinat and Akosua (focus group) commented positively on their schools' careers guidance provisions, they had not undertaken any form of education, employment or training post-16.

The above outcomes might be seen, on one hand, as the careers guidance not being tailored to their skill-set, but, on the other hand, there could have been other reasons why they became NEET. Indeed, Sukhor had explained (Chapter 5) that he dropped out of university mainly because of the independent studying required. Sekinat and Akosua may not have pursued the careers guidance offered, despite considering it useful, due to a variety of reasons which they did not wish to reveal in a focus group session. Sarika dropped out of her child-care course because according to her, 'everyday, we went in and did the same stuff, too easy for me'. In Sarika's case, it could be argued that with her five GCSEs, the school could have guided her towards a higher level Access course as during the interview Sarika expressed interest in attending University: a matter that might have been picked up if she had individualised careers guidance. Gary being unemployed could be because he is considered less qualified, with his BTEC Sports qualification having less legitimacy in the field of sports management, when competing with the university degree holders. Indeed, the Wolf Report (2011:8) notes that 'between a quarter and third of the post-16 cohort is [offered] a diet of low-level qualifications, most of which have little to no labour market value'. Gary reported that his school did not inform him that the sports' sector is a competitive field, with university graduates vying for

employment in it. This could have been so as not to demotivate Gary, or it could be that school staff did not have the specialised knowledge about the credentials sought by the employers (the dominant players) in the field of sports management.

It was not possible, within the parameters of this study, to interview careers advisers in schools to understand their rationale in advising particular courses and qualifications. It might be the case that teachers responded to expressed interest of the pupils: for example, Gary's interest in football and Sarika's interest in child development. But there is the question as to why BTEC courses rather than A-Levels for participants Charlie, Gary, Sarika and Reena who achieved five or more GCSEs? Is it because they are working class and / or ethnic minorities and therefore, thought more suited for the BTEC? On the other hand, it could be because they struggled in English and/or Maths and therefore they were not considered 'academically more able' (Wright, 2005:35). Indeed, only Ailah, Sarah and Sukhor obtained the required Grades A* to C in both, GCSE Maths and English. However, it is argued that advice given could have included, if not offered as reported by the BTEC holders, the option of re-sitting their GCSEs and then doing the A-Levels (a point raised by Ailah). This is because some universities, whilst accepting BTEC, also require some A-Levels.

It is also pertinent to consider whether the career guidance given was general and not tailored individually, because for the participants the school was the only source of careers guidance. As reported by the participants, their families wanted the best for them, but their families did not possess the dominant forms of cultural and social capitals required to be informed of the qualifications, extra-curricular activities and work-experiences valued in job applicants in the field of employment. Therefore, the participants did not embody the habitus and have social capital in the form of professional networks for the type of jobs they were aspiring to enter. Thus, for example, Gary did a 3-year BTEC Sports course, believing that it would lead to a career in Sports Management, but, at age 22, he had been unemployed since completing his BTEC course four years ago. Young people with 'uncertain occupational aspirations' or one misaligned with 'their school educational expectations' are considerably more likely to become NEET (Yates et al, 2011:513). Therefore, with regard to the participants who commented positively, it is not so much about their schools having careers guidance provisions. It is more about the schools providing individual guidance (as Reena received) for pupils from homes without the relevant cultural and social capitals so that they understand the qualifications and skills sought in the globalised labour market:

> […] sound information and advice is vital, poor choices can have long-term influence on young person's future. But such information is, all too often, conspicuously lacking both for young people and their families (McKinsey, 2014:41).

The majority (11) of the participants spoke negatively about their school's careers guidance support. So, for example, Hamid commented that 'they [the school] just tell us which College and what exam grades to get in'. Moreover, Adam remarked: 'No, I was given no guidance. I was left to my own devices. You just got congratulations, you have finished - we had a bit of a party and then left'.

Charlie (male) expressed similar sentiments, saying that 'careers guidance very important, but nobody gave any'. This point was supported by Martin who remarked, 'nothing from school. Nothing'. These accounts concur with Wright's (2005:24) finding that 'teachers rarely offered advice and guidance on what to do at the end of compulsory schooling, except advising the academically more able to stay on'.

The participants' sentiments (above) appear to convey a sense of being lost on leaving school, having no concept of what the future may hold. Whilst some of the participants appeared disappointed, some others expressed anger. For example, Ailah (5 GCSEs) articulated her sense of anger in not being advised to attempt A-Levels:

> We had [careers guidance] from tutors, but it was not very supportive. I wanted to do medicine, but the tutor said straight "Ailah, you will never do medicine". This is because of getting only 5 GCSEs. He could have advised about re-sitting, or going on to A-Levels, do better there and when apply to uni put in about illness. But, no.

The teacher's remark on a medical career might have been based on the fact that medical schools have stringent entry qualifications. However, Ailah's disappointment was that she was not advised what she could do to rectify the situation.

Some of the participants also identified careers advice that may be perceived as gender led. As examples, no male participant had been advised about 'child-care' related careers, but this was the case for Sarika, despite her five GCSEs. Moreover, as reported earlier, Nadia said that she was told by her teacher 'you will never amount to anything, you will just be pregnant and have so many kids by age 18'. Nadia added 'I am now 21, and I am not pregnant'. Amy (staff at

Possible) did voice concern that some female NEETs were accepting the stereotyping of the gender roles: 'I am a girl, expected to have baby young, get a house […] just silliness and stuff like that', and that therefore, schools needed to inform their female pupils about the wider opportunities available to them. This acceptance of the perceived role of females reported here might be categorised as a form of 'symbolic violence' which was described by Bourdieu (1977:166) as accepting unequal power relations as being 'the natural order which goes without saying and therefore goes unquestioned'.

Furthermore, the participants' accounts also indicate the importance of schools ensuring that pupils are supported with their decisions to improve their employability. As Taylor (1992) and McKinsey (2014) explain, some families have poor knowledge of available post-16 options especially with new jobs emerging through technological advances. This could lead to familial aspirations for their children being at odds with the requirements of the employment field. For example, Adam was told by his father to get a job instead of doing a course advised by Possible because, as Adam explained, 'he, [my father], [did] not understand [I] need qualifications'. Bernard (no GCSEs), applying for work experience with B & Q (a British company that sells home improvement products) was told by his mother to get 'a real job'. It needs to be noted that such family responses could be due to financial pressures (Furlong, 2013) and therefore the emphasis on obtaining paid employment. However it could also be due to families not understanding the employment sector demands and employers' expectations. Therefore, young people from such homes would benefit from individualised career guidance from their schools. Blenkinsop et al. (2006:4) found that the 'influence of external factors is less when the young people feel supported by schools in decision making'. Therefore, Morgan et al. (2007) advise that schools offering up-to-date careers guidance will offset inaccurate advice given by families and friends.

6.4 Connexions

The role and the effectiveness of Connexions (established in 2000) service have been discussed in Chapter 2. Its remit was to offer careers guidance services to 13-19 year olds. Therefore, the participants would have had access to advice from Connexions, if Connexions had been invited by their schools. Some of them said that they did not find the Connexions service helpful, for example, Charlie described Connexions as 'crap'. Hamid said that 'Connexions people come in. They do not know much' and Bernard agreed with Hamid. These descriptions offered by

the participants are supported by Archer et al. (2010:121) who note, 'Connexions does indeed lack the capacity to deliver both, targeted support and broader universal careers education'. However, Chadderton (2015:85) explains that this was because of Connexions being 'under-resourced' and therefore it was targeting 'young people "at risk" of exclusion at the expense of careers guidance for all'.

Thus, in most schools it fell to the teachers to provide careers guidance. However, as observed by one of the participants, Sarah (British-African, 22, dropped out of A- Levels), relevant careers advice in school was not available to all the pupils about their post-16 options:

> […] only good for people who actually knew what they wanted to do, then, they can guide them, but when you don't know what you want to do, they can't really help you.

According to Banks et al. (1992:2), 'probably the most important of dilemmas in mid-teens is what to do at 16, whether to stay on in the education system or get a job'. This dilemma is apparent in Sarah's response (above) and also from the other participants who talked negatively about their schools' careers guidance regarding their post-16 options. The oldest participant, Adam, left school in 2004, in the same year that the National Audit Office (2004:7) reported that 'many schools do not have the capacity [for] good quality impartial careers advice […], advice and guidance [being] co-ordinated or delivered by staff without any formal qualifications in the field'.

Despite the above-mentioned criticism, it was eight years later (Education Act, 2012), when changes to schools' careers guidance provisions were introduced, that is, two years after the youngest participant, Sarika, had left school. However, Ofsted (2013:11), reviewing the implementation of these new requirements, stated critically that it was 'not working well enough'. They found that school staff were providing limited information and not about the wider opportunities due to lack of up-to-date knowledge and training. Furthermore, for those identified as 'at risk' of becoming NEET, Ofsted noted that 'very few of them were given an opportunity to identify and tap into their potential' (2013:18). It would appear, therefore, that the situation had not changed significantly since the participants were in school, although this might be due to schools' limited resources. Post-16, the participants had to rely on other sources for career guidance and their experiences of these are explored below.

6.5. Post-16: careers guidance support

On leaving compulsory schooling, the young people in my study became reliant on external sources for their careers guidance. These external sources, as mentioned by the participants, included FE Colleges, Connexions, Job Centres, families and the voluntary sector.

Gary and Charlie were critical of the careers guidance provisions in the FE Colleges they attended for their respective BTEC courses. Gary (BTEC: Sports) explained that he was not directed by his College regarding the demands of the sports sector that he was wishing to enter and about other qualifications he may need in order to secure employment in that sector. Three years after completing BTEC, Gary, aged 22, said 'I am still looking for work […] and playing football'. Thus, he appeared unaware of the competition he could face from Sports degree graduates and specific skills demanded in the field of sports management.

Similarly, frustration with lack of career directions from his FE College was also echoed by Charlie. He said he sought assistance with applying for jobs relevant to his BTEC Engineering and he 'asked one of the lecturers. We got the longest ever list of jobs [but] I have no direction where to go. Go here, or go there? Yeah, no careers guidance, no help'.

Therefore, it would appear that those participants who were attending FE courses did not receive the guidance they needed: regarding employment opportunities in their respective fields, further qualifications and/or work experiences required, or about the job application process. Careers guidance is crucial even post-16, as the families without the dominant forms of cultural and social capitals continue to be unable to direct their children in their career pathways. Thus, the participants by not possessing the cultural and social capitals valued in the employment field, struggled to obtain jobs, or even relevant work placements, despite their institutional capital in the form of BTEC qualifications.

Once the young people became eligible for Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA), they appear to have relied on their Job Centres for guidance on jobs available, writing CVs, completing application forms and identifying training. However, criticisms were echoed about some of the Job Centre Advisers' attitudes, with some participants reporting about being made to feel humiliated about their NEET situations. For example, Adam (24, no GCSEs, homeless), questioned the purpose of Job Centres, remarking that they 'are a waste of time. I don't even know why they created

Job Centres, you know. I have been going to them since I was 16, I am 24 now'. Moreover, Bernard (24, no GCSEs) said that the staff at his Job Centre 'were not helpful' and treated him 'like [I]just want to be on the dole, like it is my fault, just lazy'. This was a sentiment shared by Nadia, who said 'when I had to go to the Job Centre […] those people were so horrible. I used to come out of there crying. I hated it'. This shows how much easier it is for the middle class young people to navigate their post-16 transitions whilst their working class peers struggle to do so. Bourdieu considered power as being distributed disproportionately in the world. In Bourdieusian terms, the participants' habitus was not in alignment with the expectations of the dominant group, the Job Advisers, in the field of the Job Centre. By being the key players, it is the Advisers who had the power to set the terms of engagement with their service, thereby reflecting the unequal power relations in the field. These experiences with Job Centres may be described as 'alienation' (Yates et al, 2011:532) of those whose did not possess the dominant forms of capital and therefore demotivating them, unlike the guidance the participants received from Possible, discussed below.

6.5.1 Possible's course and outcomes

Possible (Chapter 3), a national charitable organisation that works with young people, became an important resource for careers guidance for the participants when they undertook Possible's self-development course. They praised Possible's support in providing them with relevant and helpful guidance. Some of their comments and outcomes are outlined below.

Adam (24) said that deciding to attend Possible's 12-week course was 'the best decision I had made'. Similarly, Nadia said that she found Possible's course to be:

> Very, very, useful. Given me belief in myself. Confidence. Through the programme, I met a lady from ITV and she has been giving me interview practice.

Even Reena (with conditional university offer), who reported receiving personalised careers guidance in school, explained that Possible's course made her confident about public speaking. She said, 'I can speak in front of others now, when I started, no-one could hear me'. Reena also explained that the programme's residential element helped by giving her the confidence to be away from home: 'after the residential I felt that I could leave my mum, home and go away [to university]'. Reay et al. (2005) describe 'confidence' as an aspect of cultural capital and in Reena's case, although she had cultural capital through her parents support for her education,

it was not sufficient to give her the confidence to leave her home in order to enter the field of university, to enable her 'to move in their world like a fish in water' (Bourdieu, 1990b:163) as the middle class young people are able to do on entering university. Additionally, as a new arrival to the UK, Reena would have been nervous leaving a home location again and it reflects the challenges to the habitus of immigrants and refugees each time they enter a new field. This issue of confidence was also raised by Hamid (no GCSEs), who, compared his school's careers guidance to Possible's and commented:

> You ask about school helping, this programme help me the most. Yeah. Teach me about CV, interview techniques. Work experience. Give me confidence to talk in a group, to do presentation.

Furthermore, for Bernard (bullied in school, no GCSEs), Possible's programme appeared to have made him aware of the personal development, the qualifications and the skills he needed to achieve:

> Made me look at myself. It has made me think and work out what I […] need to do, not wait for it to happen.

Thus, Bernard appeared to have formulated an action plan. Recognising the importance of GCSEs, he decided that he would undertake Maths and English classes, thereby investing in the forms of capital that could be converted to economic capital. Also, through the social capital Bernard acquired through Possible, he was able to obtain from its staff character references and also assistance with writing job applications, resulting in Bernard obtaining a four-week work placement in a B & Q store (a British company selling home improvement products), to be undertaken after Possible's course. He said 'hopefully, they [will] offer me a job after 4 weeks' and if not, Bernard said that he would 'apply for an apprenticeship'. Clearly, Possible's course had helped Bernard to identify a way forward, something that his family was unable to assist with as his mother had 'never been in employment'. In the same vein, Gail said that Possible's course had helped her to identify the type of job that appealed to her. She said that the 'the work placement in the Women's Business Centre, working as a receptionist, I liked that, so my plan is to get a job in a hotel or office now'. She also intended to undertake ESOL classes, her long-term plan being to do an Access course to go to University.

Furthermore, Possible's staff offered on-going support and provided references for those who had completed their course which are useful as the participants did not possess previous

employment history: for example, Adam (unemployed for eight years) reported that he was applying for security guard training, with Possible's staff acting as referees. Similarly, the staff gave references for Charlie (22, BTEC), who was applying for a learning support assistant's post, after having volunteered in a similar role. These benefits accrued to the participants reflect the usefulness of social capital which the participants gained by entering the field of Possible. Also by accepting Possible's terms of participation and engaging in their self-development activities, the participants developed 'a feel for the game' (Bourdieu, 2007:25), reflected through the awareness they gained of what they needed to do in order to enter the field of employment that they desired. Thus, the cultural and social capitals acquired through engaging with Possible appear to have helped the participants, a vulnerable group with diverse needs. They became aware of their own potential, of the dispositions and the institutional form of cultural capital (educational qualifications) valued in the field of employment.

It needs to be highlighted that Possible's 12 week course, praised by the participants in this study, encompasses programmes that were suggested for schools by the DfES (2003). Having examined the participants' experiences of careers guidance, their post-16 trajectories are better understood. These are outlined below, followed by their experiences of seeking employment.

6.6 Post-16 trajectories

The participants became categorised as one group, under the term NEET. However, their accounts above and reported previously (in Chapters 4 and 5) depict the varied nature of their lived experiences. Their post-16 trajectories are recalled and summarised here.

Three participants engaged in criminal activities. Adam (24) said that he pick-pocketed to support his drug habit. He also assisted with a warehouse robbery. However, he was arrested when attempting to steal a bicycle and consequently spent a day in 'a cell', an experience he described as leading him to denounce his 'criminal way of life'. Gail, post-16, continued with drug-dealing and taking drugs, having started on them when in school (Chapter 5). When she was almost 18, her sister discovered her drug-dealing and threatened to report her to the police and that was a turning point for Gail (Chapter 4). Martin was convicted at age 17 for 'armed robbing of a man and also a house' and released from prison aged almost 21. I interviewed him two months before his 21st birthday and soon after his release. He talked about turning his life around (Chapter 4), becoming a father again with the sole responsibility for his child (whose

mother, his girlfriend, was in prison). Thus, each committed crimes but each faced different outcomes; for example, Martin's conviction diminishes his employment opportunities, limiting him to jobs for ex-prisoners or becoming self-employed. Adam will have a wider choice than Martin, but might be barred from certain jobs because of a police caution. On the other hand, Gail will face no employment restrictions as her sister's timely action meant that she has no conviction. Thus, this analysis illustrates aptly the individual differences within the NEET group and, when micro-analysed, the further differences within this subgroup are revealed, thereby indicating the necessity for individually tailored support.

The above pattern of differences may be observed with all the participants' lived lives. Thus, in terms of education, six participants entered further/higher education. However, four of them dropped out, but each for a different reason (as discussed above and in previous chapters): Sukhor from university, Sarah from her A-Levels, Nadia and Sarika from their BTEC courses. However, Gary, Charlie, Lydia and Reena completed their BTEC courses, but not in similar disciplines (Chapter 4), thereby qualifying for the different employment sectors and therefore requiring relevant, individual guidance on job applications.

The remaining seven participants, according to their accounts, did not engage in any form of post-16 education or training; instead, they sought employment but were unsuccessful. Indeed, becoming employed appears to have been the primary concern for all of them (except for Gail). As the 'unemployment' factor became integral to the participants' post-16 trajectory, this issue is explored further, below.

6.6.1 Seeking Employment

One participant, Gail, said that after a year's employment in a nightclub, she decided not to work. All the other participants explained how they had striven hard to obtain employment. At the time of being interviewed, the length of time the participants had been unemployed was from two years for the youngest participant (aged 18) to eight years for the oldest participants (aged 24). Hence, 'unemployment' appears to have stalked the post-16 trajectories of the participants and they struggled to enter the employment field. Brand and Hank (2014:727) warn that unemployment should be seen as a 'serious life-disrupting event […] inflicting long-term scars'.

This section starts with the views of Possible's staff who gave their perspectives on this matter during their interviews. The staff explained that many young NEET people grow up in families where there is a culture of 'worklessness' which influences them. Maria said:

> I think that a lot of people are not motivated, that is historically […] mum does not work, dad does not work, aunts and uncles do not work. So that is the trend that is filtered down to the young person.

Similarly, Amy explained that 'there are a lot of parents who have been on benefits for years, sort of instilled in their mentality, their children growing up seeing mum and dad not working'. Jack, supporting his colleagues' views, stated that 'If a child sees mum and dad hungry to go out to work, eight out of ten times, the child will want to do that when he grows up. Also those types of parents will encourage you to go out to work'.

Hence, the above explanations by the staff appear to indicate that some young people may come to accept their parents' fate as theirs, too. Thus, it may be questioned if that explains Gail's (ex- drug user and dealer) outlook whereby, after a year of working in a night-club, she decided not to be in employment. Gail's father is in prison (drug dealing) and her mother has never worked and therefore the familial habitus may be seen as having influenced Gail's attitude to employment , for habitus 'is linked to individual's history' (Bourdieu, 1993:86), that is, the home background one is brought up in, could have an effect on later everyday practice.

However, all the other participants stated unequivocally that they had wished to work: 'gave out so many CVs', 'apply everywhere' are examples of the responses from some of them. They appeared to have sought work with local retail stores such as Primark, Peacocks, B & Q and with supermarkets, but were unsuccessful. Hamid undertook his work experience 'in a dry cleaners', but left on the second day because 'it was boring'. Reena's work experience was two weeks in a youth centre and also a day of henna painting for Asian weddings; but these did not lead to paid employment, thereby reflecting Putnam's (2000) assertion that social capital within communities is not as resourceful as those with different communities and/or organisations. The participants' descriptions of their efforts appear to contradict staff observations. However, it needs to be noted that some of the participants were describing their attempts to obtain employment in the initial euphoria of leaving school and some after their BTEC courses.

As the participants had been NEET for 2-8 years (depending on their ages), it may be deduced that, as time went on, they might have become disillusioned and accepted their situations. Bourdieu's concept of habitus helps to explain how the outlook of young people's views are affected by their homes and upbringing, being 'heavily influenced by their own experiences and experiences of their own family, friends and local communities, providing […] a sense of what is normal for people like me' (Archer et al, 2010:93). Therefore, it would seem that, to a certain extent, as explained by the staff, some young people do become influenced by their families' situations, the lack of opportunities locally, and reconcile themselves to being NEET. For most of them, the exclusion from the fields of education and employment would have influenced their limited outlook on their future: 'practical anticipation of objective limits' (Bourdieu, 1984:471).

The participants' accounts also indicate that they limited themselves by seeking employment mainly in their local areas, classified as one of the most deprived in England and Wales (Olympic Park Regeneration Framework, 2009). As such, these were localities with reduced social and employment opportunities. However, Reena, despite being unemployed, painted a slightly positive picture of her locality saying that it 'has an office that assists with application forms', adding, 'my friend went there and got a paid job, with Olympics'. However, Reena was unable to clarify whether her friend's employment was full-time or part-time, or a zero-hour contract and, also, whether the job matched her friend's degree qualification. The participants' responses (apart from Reena's) painted a bleak picture of the local employment opportunities and revealed their sense of hopelessness. Hamid said 'There is not much. No jobs, nothing'. Martin shared this view saying, 'No. Nothing. Young people hang around the streets. The police come and ask them to move on. No youth centre. I wish there was'. Nadia added that there were no opportunities in her locality. She said, 'I don't think there are many opportunities because I have struggled to find a job […] just hard to get jobs, all closed down'. Henderson et al. (2007:14 cited in Archer et al, 2010:93) explain that the 'locality provides more than a backdrop for young people's lives […] also the collective context that shapes values and meanings'. This is evident in Sarika's description of the young people's lives in her locality:

> To be honest there aren't a lot of opportunities - you see a lot of youngsters hang around the streets, walking up and down, drinking in the park on Fridays and Saturdays. There are gangs - stabbing two weeks ago.

The data reveal that, even if the participants searched beyond their immediate location for jobs, it was still nearby. Bernard, for example, said that he had looked in Dagenham (where he lived) and when asked about searching further, he said, 'Stratford, Ilford', which are the adjoining areas. Similarly, Adam (homeless) mentioned that he had looked for jobs in Walthamstow (his residence before becoming homeless), and looking further afield stretched to East Ham and Redbridge close by, familiar areas where he had also lived previously. Hence, although they tried to search beyond their locality, it was still in the vicinity and within the areas described as being deprived. Thus, their habitus mediated and created an urge in them to seek jobs only in familiar fields, however devoid of employment opportunities, thereby reflecting Bourdieu's concept of social reproduction and habitus reproducing social positions.

Blenkinsop et al. (2006:81) describe young people without careers guidance from their schools as 'comfort seekers', that is, 'they have no clear picture of the future and thus choose things that are familiar'. However, it is argued that it may also be the case that young people's backgrounds, framed by class, tend to influence their choices, displaying a 'sense of one's place' (Bourdieu, 1984:471) leading to a reluctance to face new situations. This may explain why some young working class people seek employment in familiar locations after leaving school. A further reason could be said to be that they, like those in my study, wish to be with their families, as reflected by MacDonald et al's (2005:877) findings:

> the majority preferred to remain in wards that suffered from extreme problems of social exclusion […] [because of] the embeddedness of these individuals in close, locally concentrated family and social networks.

A similar pattern was identified by Reynolds (2013) when she looked specifically into black young people living in inner city London, similar to six of the participants in my study who were British of African or African-Caribbean origin. The local area affords them familiarity and, therefore, an inner sense of comfort and confidence which transcends the poor socio-economic situation of the area. Reynolds describes how their spaces hold 'intrinsic value […] providing them with a sense of well-being and belonging. This is despite the apparent problems of socio-economic disadvantage […]' (2013:484).

Furthermore, other factors may restrict young people to living at home and seeking local employment. One of the reasons could be that they cannot afford to rent elsewhere where there might be employment but which does not pay enough to enable them to rent. This is particularly

the case in London where rents are steep. It could also be that they find it difficult to get social housing as, being single, they would not be priority cases; for example, Adam became homeless when he left home himself, due to his step-father's violence towards his mother (at the time of participating in this study he was sleeping rough). Moreover, travel costs may act as a deterrent; for example, Charlie (BTEC: engineering), said that he did not apply for an engineering job in Kent because it was too far and therefore he would incur high travel costs. As pointed out by Reay et al. (2005:86), 'geography determines choice for a majority of working class [....]'. Therefore, for different reasons, some cited here, the participants concentrated on seeking local employment, thereby limiting their opportunities. Furthermore, one of the consequences of living in deprived neighbourhoods may not only be limited employment opportunities but also, to some extent, limited social capital, due to the participants having fewer employed neighbours and local friends.

The regeneration of deprived areas by the government may be considered relevant to the participants' job-seeking experiences. The Prime Minister, David Cameron, expressed in 2010:

> Let us make sure the Olympic Legacy lifts East London from being one of the poorest parts of the country to one that shares fully in the capital's growth and prosperity (DCMS, 2010:11).

Roberts (2000:18) explains that 'regeneration' means a 'lasting improvement in the economic, physical, social and environmental conditions of an area […]'. However, as illustrated by the young people's accounts above, their experiences appear to tell a different story with regard to 'economic' opportunities considering London was selected in 2005 to host the Olympic Games. The participants' accounts accord with the findings of Davies (2012:319) who states that the 'Olympic host boroughs remain deprived in relation to the other areas of London and England'. Davies explains that this is because 'various organisations have different remits and priorities' (ibid: 321) and that, although regeneration was recognised as vital to the area, 'a large number of policies and strategies are fragmented and difficult to link together into a holistic long-term plan for the area' as different bodies were tasked with the different aspects of delivering the regeneration programme. Additionally, Lawless (2012:324) warns that regeneration attempts are subject to the 'external world' and 'market forces'. In this context it needs to be recognised that the regeneration work was taking place in the midst of the 2007-2009 global recession which might have affected employers' capacity to create employment opportunities.

Thus, the locations where the participants said that they lived may be described as '[…] soured by demoralisation and disempowerment' (Simmons and Thompson, 2011:48). Therefore, it cannot be ignored that such environments could possibly wear down young people's optimism and affect their sense of urgency to move forward. Amy (staff) captures this in her description of the lives of most of her friends who grew up with her in such an area:

> I definitely feel that young people are a product of their environment. So what happens around them will dictate how they act and how they turn out. So for instance, the area I am from, I grew up in a council estate, 90% of my friends there, they are all grown up, they are not doing much, not many opportunities.

Amy's account, given above, is in line with Banks et al's (1992:1) view that young people are influenced by the 'characteristics of the locality in which they live'. Walkerdine et al. (2001), describe class, housing resources and locality as being inter-related. Thus, the participants' accounts of seeking any job (for example, in shops, supermarkets and market stalls) may be said to indicate decision making influenced by their backgrounds. It could also be due to not knowing:

> […] how to identify suitable employers who may need their unique talents [or] how best to select a suitable institution or programme of study that can enhance their learning and personal development (Hughes and Gration, 2009:13).

The participants also indicated that they were willing to undertake any job. However, this may not necessarily indicate low expectations of themselves but the absence of relevant guidance. On the other hand, opting for any job may also be due to wanting to or needing to contribute financially to their families, especially as the participants were adults (aged 18-24). Moreover, as discussed above, some of the young people might be said to be influenced by their parents' employment situations, family being a major influence on young people (Chapter 4). Thus, overall, those who were seeking employment, but possessed no GCSEs, appear to have lowered their expectations and said that, after leaving school, they were not choosy about jobs: Martin said that he would have taken 'anything'; Monir, looking despondent, nodded in agreement and Bernard said, 'I would have taken any job'. Therefore, they were setting 'objective limits' (Bourdieu, 1984:471); that is, they were placing self-limitations after considering the objective chances of getting employment based on their unsuccessful previous attempts to enter the field of employment.

Hence, it would appear that, after the participants' unsuccessful attempts to obtain employment, they reconciled themselves to their situations. According to Blenkinsop et al. (2006:vii) 'young people in schools that did not have […] support strategies, careers education and guidance in place, were more likely to have […] mindsets that reflected a "comfort seeking" or "defeatist" approach to decision-making'. It would appear that whilst not 'comfort seeking', some of the participants might have taken a 'defeatist approach' (ibid). However, it may be questioned as to what else could they have done coming from homes without the dominant forms of capitals and in the absence of state support mechanisms providing individualised careers guidance. Archer et al. (2010:88) point out that without 'cold [official] knowledge' it is 'more difficult for young people to subsequently navigate their way towards achieving their aspirations'.

Some of the participants' negative accounts appear to convey the feeling that they would not be in the 'NEET' category if they had received appropriate careers guidance including on-going support from their schools. However, it also needs to be pointed out, that those who said they received helpful careers guidance still became NEET and they did indicate that they had not received individual careers guidance. Moreover, some were absent from school and may not have availed themselves of the career services. It is also the fact that all of them were 'older' when they completed Possible's course and therefore had a different perspective on their future needs. However, it also needs to be noted that their reported unsuccessful attempts to obtain employment post-16 indicates that individually focused careers guidance (such as in Reena's case) from the FE Colleges attended, Connexions and Job Centre would have helped further. In the neo-liberal contemporary context, most of the participants were expected to, but, were not in a position to make informed decisions; hence, left to themselves, they struggled.

6.7 Conclusion

This chapter analysed the accounts of the participants on their perceived post -16 options and how they tried to make sense of pathways that transpired. The participants' families possessed cultural and social capitals, but not the dominant forms of these capitals that could guide their children on their career trajectories. Therefore they were reliant on external career guidance services: pre-16, from school and post-16, from Sixth Form, FE College, Connexions and the Job Centres respectively. The government's neo-liberal approach meant that being unemployed was viewed '[…] in the light of individual dispositions and inadequacies or the outcome of

perverse life-style choices' (Simmons and Thompson, 2011:7). This could be said to be reflected in some of the participants' reported experiences at the Job Centres.

The participants' trajectories show that individualised careers guidance from their schools was necessary but it also needed to have been available post-16, from Connexions, FE Colleges and Job Centres. The participants appear to share the same interest that the middle class children possess. However, as explained by Bathmaker et al. (2013:740):

> […] the middle classes are not only dealt the better cards in a high-stake game, but they have internalised the knowledge through economic and cultural advantages, of when and how best to play them.

In contrast, most of the participants narrate their painstaking efforts by circulating their CVs, only to be faced with rejections or silence. This could be because individual guidance in writing CVs was not offered, or it could be because work placement opportunities were limited, or not available. Work placements would have helped the participants to develop the required habitus sought in the field of employment (such as employability skills and confidence), and also, in the process, generated social capital. Hodkinson and Sparkes (1997) explain that young people make career decisions based on what they envisage as being possible. Thus, many participants were applying to retail shops in their local areas, being restrained by their cultural, social and economic capitals to explore further away, or to look beyond retail jobs. Therefore, the participants would have faced competition from undergraduates and graduates applying to work in the shops and the supermarkets (ONS, 2012). Their location also played a role, being rooted in a highly deprived area with limited job opportunities when they left school. An added disadvantage of being in an urban area is that the participants do not have access to agricultural jobs such as fruit or vegetable picking, in view of undergraduates taking up service jobs, such as cleaning, restaurant and supermarket work (Gill, 2014). Indeed the participants' local area, London's East End, has three universities on its door-step. In the event, it would appear from the accounts of the participants that they left school or FE and floundered in their attempts to obtain employment, thereby generating in most of them a 'sense of one's place' (Bourdieu, 1984:471).

What is also apparent is that the issues faced by the participants were dissimilar and therefore each needed individualised guidance. Possible's course encompassed all the elements that would help young people individually and therefore reflects what may be achieved by adopting

a holistic approach. As discussed earlier, this was crucial for those from homes without the dominant forms of cultural, economic and social capitals and therefore the habitus to enter the field of employment successfully. They might all have been unemployed but the factors that led to their NEET status are varied; for example, this ranged from having a criminal conviction to not having the institutionalised capital, in the form of educational qualifications, recognised by employers who are the dominant forces in the field of employment and therefore having the power to set the standards. Possible's holistic approach, to a certain extent, may account for their success with the participants: each received personalised focus on the basis that no one NEET person's habitus is similar and therefore the needs of each will be varied.

It also needs to be noted that Possible's programme encompassed the same careers guidance provisions as required by DfES (2003) for schools. Thus, it is argued that the participants' accounts analysed indicate that it is not whether careers guidance is being offered that is critical but the quality of it in terms of being individually focused. Crucially, it becomes the only source of information for children whose families do not possess the dominant forms of cultural and social capitals which would provide the knowledge and professional networks to guide them on the career pathways they wish to follow. Failing that, as Hughes and Gration (2009:13) state, many of the young people will be 'marginalised, unemployed or under-employed' and, as they warn, this has 'vast economic, social and human consequences'.

The next chapter summarises the findings discussed in the last three chapters, the limitations to this study and also the contribution that this study makes.

Chapter 7   Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

This chapter draws the thesis to a close. As recorded in Chapter 3, the fieldwork was undertaken in East London. The data generated are from 18 young NEET people and four staff members who work with young people who are NEET. The young NEET people who participated in this study included an ex-prisoner, a homeless person, an ex-drug dealer, previous drug users, an ex-alcoholic, self-harmers, a university drop out and some who had suffered from depression. It was an ethnically diverse group, consisting of: British-English, British-Pakistani, British-Hungarian, British-Latvian, British-Bangladeshi, British-African, British-African-Caribbean and British-mixed race. Their ages ranged from 18 to 24 years and consisted of one 18 year old (who turned 19 the day after I interviewed her), two 19 year olds, and 15 individuals in the age range of 20 to 24. They were all working class except for two who defined themselves as middle class (based on their families' economic capital). In terms of gender, the participating NEET group consisted of 10 females and 8 males.

Thus, the participants' backgrounds illustrate that the NEET group is diverse and that therefore, they have varying individual needs, as aptly indicated by this and also some of the other studies (Chapter 2). They recounted their lived experiences, revealing aspects which could help to better the understanding of the factors that contributed to their becoming NEET.

A summary of the findings relating to some of these issues and the conclusions that can be drawn are set out below, following a recollection of the questions that guided this research. This study's limitations and its contributions are noted next. Suggestions for future research and the implications of this study are then outlined, followed by concluding comments.

7.2 What I set out to seek

The primary aim of this study was to explore the diverse experiences and trajectories of some young people, aged 18-24, who have been categorised as NEET and residing in London, the capital of the UK. In doing so, it addresses the question of how some young people become NEET and how they make sense of their transitions into this category. The research questions were:

1) what influenced the young NEET people's pathways in education, employment and training?

2) what are the perceptions of the staff who work with the NEET group about the factors that contribute to young people becoming NEET?

3) what are the young people's experiences of careers guidance services?

4) how do the young people relate to the label 'NEET'?

7.3 What I found

This was a qualitative study and the interviews that were conducted were guided by the research questions outlined above. The questions are inter-linked to some extent, for example, questions 1, 2, and 4 and so the data from each, together, formed part of the relevant chapters. The data from interviews with Possible's staff draw on the perspectives of those who work closely with young NEET people and therefore point to the salience of wider, social, and cultural influences on the young people's pathways. The analysis of the data generated have been presented in the preceding chapters (4, 5 and 6).

In this section, I summarise the main findings that address the research questions (outlined above). The themes that were identified related to: 'family' (Chapter 4), 'school' (Chapter 5), and 'careers guidance and employment opportunities' (Chapter 6). The chapters, together, explain the participants' post-16 trajectories, leading to them becoming NEET: all of them being NEET continuously since the age of 18, with 12 of them continuously since leaving school at 16 and none of them having been in employment since completing their compulsory learning (then at 16). The data analysis revealed each of the themes to be underpinned by social class and therefore this topic is discussed separately, followed by the issue of 'categorisation'. The findings are summarised below, starting with the 'family'.

7.3.1 Family

Chapter 4 discusses the role of the 'family' in the lives of the participants and explores 'family' influence on the post-16 trajectories of the participants. This chapter also includes the views of four staff members who work with the NEET group and they offer their opinions on the role played by 'family' in the lives of young people who become NEET.

This study's findings support previous research (Chapter 2) which indicates the significance of 'family' in young people's transitions and also that the family influence can be not only from parents but also from siblings. However, importantly, this study adds to this knowledge by revealing that, for some young people, 'family' could also include extended family members, for example, grandparents, cousin, aunt, uncle (Chapter 4.2.1), thereby reflecting the influential roles played by some relations. Furthermore, in contrast to the staff views and those in some literature (Chapter 2), the participants reported that their families (immediate or extended) were supportive during their school years. However the fact that their families did not possess the dominant forms of capitals (cultural, economic and social) meant that this support was not enough. This was evidenced in the home-school relationships where families were interested in their children's academic studies and protecting their children from bullying, but they did not have the habitus required to negotiate successfully in the field of school. This chapter also extends Bourdieu's concepts, particularly cultural capital in terms of language competency, to illustrate the challenges faced by newly arrived families in the UK, as for example, faced by Nadia's mother (a Somalian refugee), resulting in her mother not having the confidence to enter the field of school to meet the teachers, the dominant forces. For Bourdieu, this reflected the inequalities in the power exercised, since 'all linguistic practices are measured against the legitimate practices, that is, the practices of those who are dominant' (Bourdieu, 1994:53). This study's inclusion of participants who are newly arrived to the UK and information about their families adds to the understanding of the problems faced by EAL speakers and how that affects their children in the fields of education and employment, resulting in some of their children becoming NEET.

The staff's views (Chapter 4.7) considered were not specifically on the participants' families but were formed from working with the NEET group in general. The staff were in unison in putting forward the 'family' as the overwhelming reason for young people becoming NEET. Their examples included families permitting school absences, being work-shy, not disciplining their children and family breakdowns. As discussed in Chapter 4, some of these concerns may be seen as drawing on popular deficit discourse about 'problematic' families (Hayton, 1999:56) and it is suggested that some of these are related to parenting values which are embedded in the cultural capital of the families.

In considering the post-16 trajectories and experiences of the participants, the findings indicate that they continued to live at home in their adulthood except for one participant, Adam, who

left home aged 24 due to his step-father's violence towards his mother, but became homeless in doing so. However, the form of family support available, without the dominant forms of capitals (Bourdieu, 1986), meant that the families were unable to advise their children on the challenges they faced when navigating their post-16 pathways in the fields of further/higher education or training or employment. The data reflect the vastly wide-ranging issues that the participants faced which indicates the individualised support that each NEET person requires.

The findings also confirm the significance and the value of the dominant forms of capitals in families, as has been articulated by Bourdieu (1986). Without them, progress in school was challenging for most of the young people, as considered below.

7.3.2 School

Chapter 5 offers a detailed discussion of the participants' accounts with regard to their school experiences. Their accounts reveal that all, but six, of the participants felt that their school experiences impacted negatively on their post-school pathways, leading to them to becoming NEET.

The negative school experiences reported by the majority of the participants included the issue of bullying, the absence of teacher-support regarding the bullying, reduced learning support and weak careers guidance provisions. These experiences led to some of the disaffected young people leaving school without the GCSE qualifications valued in the fields of further / higher education and employment. These findings extend previous studies (for example, Reay and Lucey, 2004; Torgerson et al, 2008) to include the experiences of NEETs which indicate that negative school experiences could be varied and once young people become disenchanted with school, for whatever reason, a climate of mistrust of educators festers. As suggested by Furlong (2005:384) 'often such bad memories refused to contemplate any form of employment or training that would involve returning to a class-room situation' and, as reflected in this study, this could lead to some young people becoming NEET.

Furthermore, crucially, the findings advance the existing knowledge and add further depth on this issue of becoming NEET by showing how long lasting the impact could be; most of the participants had remained outside of education, employment and training for almost two to eight years after leaving school at 16.

One key issue that affected some of the participants included the withdrawal or limiting of the academic support provided as they reached Year 10, leading to the perception that teachers help only those who were able to achieve higher GCSE grades. It follows therefore that those affected felt not only let down, but the withdrawal of support also dented their confidence in their academic ability (Furlong, 2006). In educational terms, out of the 18 participants, eight out of the ten females (80%) had one or more GCSEs, but only three out of the eight males (37%) had one or more GCSEs. However, only three out of the 18 participants (16%) achieved the minimum of grade C in GCSE Maths and English, required to enter the fields of higher education and employment.

The participants were ethnically diverse but their ethnicity was not mentioned by them as being an issue with the school problems they faced. However, as discussed in Chapter 5, Maria (staff) alluded to misunderstandings created by some of the teachers' unawareness of certain, ethnic or cultural mannerisms. She described how such unawareness could affect the teacher-pupil relationship, resulting in pupil disaffection with the school, followed by absenteeism or truancy and consequently, the NEET status. This was illuminating and added to the knowledge about factors that may lead to some young people becoming NEET.

Bullying was a major school issue that blighted some of the participants' lives. Chapter 5 portrays vividly the participants' experiences of being bullied and the consequences suffered. The chapter also shows that each of the victims experienced bullying in different forms and each reacted differently. Their explanations indicate that victims who were passive continued to be bullied but not those who retaliated. Additionally, it is generally believed (for example, Glover et al, 2001) that boys retaliate and girls tend to be passive. However, in this study the male and the female participants retaliated equally. It also reveals how the effects of bullying can become a vicious cycle, as illustrated, by the experiences of the bullied participants: the bullying causing absenteeism from school, resulting in poor academic qualifications, thereby leading to the reduced opportunities in the fields of further education and employment, and, consequently, the NEET status.

It is said that post-16 engagement with education is influenced very much by the ethos of the school and staff support (Chapter 2). Overall, the findings portray the negative views on the support provided by the teachers on the various issues. Thus, reduced academic support led to

the perception that only the academically able were being helped to achieve better GCSE grades and with regard to the bullying cases, teachers were described as 'not listening' or 'not doing anything', or 'not caring'. Hence, these perceived lack of teachers' concerns contributed to the participants' disaffection with their schools. In terms of self-harming and depression which affected their studies, both male and female participants appeared susceptible to them.

The above findings support relevant research (Chapter 2) that convey how young people's school experiences influence their post-16 trajectories. However, there is a debate (Chapter 2) as to whether the school or the family is the determining factor in young people's transitions. Possible's staff were united in highlighting 'family' influence as most important: 'it all starts with the family' (Simon). It can be argued that what is apparent from my study is that family and schooling cannot be viewed separately; they are interlinked as families' capitals affect their children's educational outcomes in school and thereby their post-16 transitions.

Moreover, and importantly, whilst some young NEET people do get scarred for life (Chapters 1 and 2), resulting in a life of crime, or alcoholism, or drugs and / or depression, this study reveals that some are also open to being re-engaged in education and training, if motivated by people they trust and who they feel care about their future (like Possible's staff). The question that follows is whether Possible's effective course and approach can be provided earlier on in the lives of young people? One medium for incorporating it would be to include it in schools' careers guidance provisions. Another issue raised by the participants was 'careers guidance' and it is considered below.

7.3.3 Careers Guidance and seeking employment

Chapter 6 discusses the careers guidance support the participants received pre- and post-16. It puts their post-16 trajectories into context and gives insight into the varied pathways that they followed.

The participants' feedback on this matter reveal seven favourable and eleven unfavourable comments. The findings indicate that some of the schools encouraged post-16 participation in education by providing information about the EMA and, in one case, inviting FE Colleges to the school, so that pupils could find out more about the courses offered. However, of those who commented positively, two of them (aged 24) did not engage in any education, employment or training (reasons not disclosed). Six of them proceeded to further / higher education, but four

of them dropped out: one due to independent studying required at university, the second one with some independent study required in Sixth Form, the third from her BTEC course but did not give a reason and the fourth participant due to her finding her BTEC course unchallenging. In the fourth case the course guidance given by her school could be questioned, particularly in view of her five GCSEs and interest in going to university. On the other hand, her FE College, providing the BTEC course, could have advised her to change to a higher level course; indeed, two other participants, who had achieved their BTEC qualifications, were critical of their FE Colleges' careers guidance provisions.

Overall, this study reveals that the majority of the participants felt negatively about their schools' careers guidance provisions and there were similar criticisms from those who attended FE Colleges. These findings indicate that young people from families without the dominant forms of capitals need individualised career guidance provisions pre- and post-16. This may explain why, to a certain extent, the participants did not understand, until they engaged with Possible's programme, the educational and training skill-set demanded by the employers (the dominant forces) in the fields of employment.

The findings also suggest that some of the careers guidance offered by some schools may be perceived as having a gender, racial and/or class bias: for example, Ailah being told 'you will never do medicine'; Nadia that she will 'be pregnant and have so many kids by 18'. This also subscribes to the popular portrayal, especially by some media, of some of the female NEETs as pregnant teenagers or teenage mothers (Simmons et al, 2014). However, in this study no female participant fitted that description; in contrast, a male participant, aged 20, reported that he had become a father when he was a teenager; also, that he will be becoming a father again and that he will be the child's sole carer as the child's mother, his girlfriend, is in prison.

In terms of careers, some female participants chose courses perceived traditionally as gender related (Skeggs, 1997), such as child care, while some female participants revealed themselves to be aiming ambitiously for professional qualifications, such as pharmacy and medicine. Some male participants also seemed to aspire towards courses seen as traditionally masculine (Archer et al, 2010), for example, becoming a security officer or a football manager.

Post-16, the young NEET people reported not having skilled sources for careers guidance. They were critical of Job Centre Advisers who they found to be unsympathetic about their situations,

revealing the dominant powers in the field of the Job Centre to be the Advisers and the powerlessness of the participants as they entered the Job Centre field. They felt Connexions had also been unable to guide them. This does not necessarily indicate that Connexions failed to provide the necessary services: it could be that the participants did not access Connexions regularly, or follow through on their advice; or, as explained by Chadderton (2015), Connexions lacked the resources to provide a holistic approach, including the continuous support that the participants required and subsequently, received from Possible. In considering the participants' criticisms, 15 out of the 18 participants, were aged 20+ and above, indicating four or more years (post-16) of being NEET; hence, the reason for their disillusionment and why they did not consider beyond their NEET status until they undertook Possible's course.

7.3.4 Seeking employment

Chapter 6 also discusses the participants' unsuccessful attempts to obtain employment in their locality and also the issues relating to the regeneration of the area in which the participants lived. This affected the participants who were keen to work, which was all but one. There are varied reasons for their unsuccessful outcomes. In terms of employability, it could have been badly written CVs, lack of work experience, weak skills and qualifications. In terms of the field of employment, a limitation was that they were seeking employment locally, one of the most deprived area in the UK, with few employment opportunities in 2012, when the fieldwork for this study began. It also needs to be considered that living in an urban / city environment, some agricultural jobs (such as fruit picking) that do not require formal qualifications, were not available to the participants. The staff at Possible and also, some of the earlier studies (Chapter 6) report a sense of resignation on the part of young people where their families were unemployed. Furthermore, some of the participants' personal issues, such as convictions, drug or alcohol problems and depression, also identified with the NEET group (Coles et al, 2002, Bynner and Parsons, 2002, Prince's Trust, 2013) could be seen as factors that may have prolonged their post-16 NEET status, thereby creating a sense of hopelessness.

As discussed in Chapter 6, what surfaces from the data is how keen the participants were to obtain employment and how different are the factors that led the participants to be unemployed. Overall, the findings indicate that the participants needed guidance from family and/or school to make informed choices about their post-16 options. Moreover, it shows that post-schooling, careers guidance from external sources is crucial when it is not available from families who

may possess neither the relevant career related knowledge (cultural capital) nor the relevant professional network (social capital). Therefore, this shows the influences of family and school, mediated by social class. Indeed, 'class' is the common thread that has been apparent in all the themes discussed above. Therefore, in the post-16 pathways trodden by most of those who become NEET, social class may be argued to be a major factor, as discussed below.

7.4 Social Class

All the participants spoke positively about their families' (immediate or extended) support whilst they were in school. The families were keen for them to succeed in school, obtain further qualifications and move into employment. This supports earlier research indicating that this is not the aspiration of only the middle classes (Reay, 1998, Gillies, 2005).

However, the participants became NEET despite the support the participants reported receiving from their families. This study's theoretical framework, Bourdieu's (1986) concepts of capital, (cultural, economic, symbolic and social), habitus and field help to explain the NEET outcome. They illustrate how the families with the dominant forms of capitals are able to translate their support into positive post-16 trajectories for their children. This study shows that the words and acts of support the participants received from their families, although important, were not sufficient without the relevant capitals.

The findings also reveal that some of the participants were aware of and angry about the social class divisions present in society. They did not call it class nor have an open discussion about it. However, snatches of their views (for example, from Gary and Ailah) recorded in the data chapter (Chapter 4) indicate that some of them felt strongly about the social class divisions that exists in society. They were frustrated and angry about the inequalities because they spoke in an agitated manner about these issues whilst some had sadness and regret etched on their faces (for example, Reena, Bernard and Nadia) when talking about what they missed due to family circumstances. Gender and / or ethnicity related issues were not mentioned by any of the participants. Hence, in considering whether gender, ethnicity or class played a role, it is evident that the shadow cast by 'class' on the participants lives was the one that evoked emotions in them.

The findings from the preceding chapters (Chapters 4, 5 and 6) indicate that the NEET issue is embedded in social class. Bourdieu's concepts of capital, habitus and field have been used extensively in all the discussions in previous chapters to explain the role class plays in young people's lives. They show how particular groups are advantaged and why some young people become NEET. The overall conclusion to be drawn from the findings is that both family and school are major influences on young people's post-16 trajectories. However, these influences are embedded in 'class', signified by the possession, or not, of the dominant forms of capitals, Therefore, it is argued that ultimately, class is a major factor in young people's post-16 trajectories. Thus, for the participants, their families not possessing the dominant forms of capitals affected their educational attainment in school and therefore their post-16 options. The findings of this research support other studies (Chapter 2) in illustrating that whilst gender and ethnicity may play a role, it is class that seems to have an overwhelming effect on young people's life chances. In a way it may be said that the participants in my study were united by class rather than the term 'NEET' which is discussed below.

7.5 Categorisation

One of the research questions was to explore how the young NEET people feel about the term 'NEET' used to describe them. For Bourdieu (1990a:28), categorisation was akin to 'racism' which leads to the 'victims' of it being 'stigmatised' and confined to a group with 'negative' connotations. The categorisation issue was discussed in Chapter 2 because of the criticism that the term demonises a particular group. It also camouflages the diverse nature of the group and, therefore, their varying needs. As the relevant literature (Chapter 2) articulates, it is important to recognise this diversity if policies are to be effective.

The participants' accounts recorded in the preceding chapters (4, 5 and 6) support the view that the NEET category is diverse. However, this study found that the participants were not aware of the term 'NEET' nor that they were being categorised as such. Moreover, their responses indicated their indifference to it.

Hence, it is argued that the participants' unawareness of the term could be viewed positively. It implies that the term is not used in their presence by the officials they encounter, such as, at Connexions, Job Centres and Possible. Indeed, the data shows that Possible's staff had predicted confidently of the participants' unawareness of the term. As such, it raised a moral

dilemma for me and it was something that I reflected on: whether I should have raised the topic with the participants, thereby making them aware of the label attached to them? I was acting on my readings in the literature review. It troubled me but, as time went on, I drew comfort from the fact that the participants were indifferent when informed of the term, some even agreeing that it captures their situations and also that no reference was made about it over the following months, when I saw them during my fieldwork.

The staff responses recorded on this matter also bring a new perspective on the use of the term 'NEET'. It is that for organisations working with the NEET group, the categorisation is helpful for a variety of reasons. These range from being able to identify specific funding allocations to run programmes for the NEET group, to the types of welfare benefits NEETs may qualify for, to apprenticeships or specific training schemes available for NEETs. Hence, at both a practical and administrative level, the term appears helpful for those who are actually on the ground, helping the NEET group, who in turn appear to be oblivious to its usage. An amused staff member's remark, 'it's only all you academics going on about it,' shines a different and new light on the 'categorisation' debate.

As noted in Chapter 1, the term 'NEET' has become international in its usage, it brings focus to this group of young people (Chapter 2) and, as revealed by this study, the term is useful to organisations working with young NEET people. However, earlier research (in Chapter 2) and this study highlights that the diversity of the NEET group has to be recognised for policies to be effective and that the NEET group should not be considered 'a race apart' (Avis, 2014a:66). The descriptions of the participants given in this chapter's 'introduction' illustrate the diversity of the NEET group. The findings indicate that each person's account is personal. Thus, even when experiences might be similar, for example, being unemployed, the reasons for the unemployment could be various: from no training or work experience, to not possessing GCSE qualifications, to lack of opportunities in local areas. Hence, it is argued that the participants' accounts indicate that the use of the term 'NEET' to categorise them could also be problematic, for it masks the varying needs of the individuals within the NEET group. Thus, as discussed earlier (Chapters 1 and 2), there are policy implications, that is, if measures to help the NEET group are to be effective, the diversity of the group needs to be recognised.

7.6. Limitations

It is recognised that this is a small study. The participants were only those who had enrolled for Possible's course in East London. An alternative could have been to arrange to interview the young NEET people on Possible's programmes in different locations or with the other organisations that are working with young NEET people. Nevertheless, pragmatically, it was not possible for me to travel to different sites due to my full-time employment and elderly care responsibilities. However, additional data were collected when Possible's staff, who work with young NEET people, agreed to be interviewed. The staff provided their perspectives on why some young people become NEET and their observations point to the salience of wider social and cultural influences on young people's pathways.

Reflecting on the study, I questioned if I should have followed up with the four focus group female participants instead of accepting their collective response that they would not have more to say in individual interviews. However, I concluded that this might have been perceived as putting pressure on them, thereby going against the ethics of voluntary participation.

Furthermore, as most of the participants sought local jobs, interviewing some local employers and also Job Centre staff could have provided their perspectives on barriers faced by the NEET group. This might also have provided me with additional questions to put to the young people. However, as well as diverting from the research question, which was essentially focused on the experiences of the NEET participants themselves, this task would have been impeded by time pressures, as explained above. Similarly, it was not possible to contact schools to obtain their perspectives on the careers guidance regulations (DfE, 2012) that were introduced at the time of my fieldwork: this may have assisted further my thinking on the topic and generated ideas for future research, addressed below.

7.7 Future Research

The following have been identified, from the findings of my study, as potential topics for further research:

a) It would be valuable to interview the participants to see how they progressed with their future plans, as discussed in the research. It would provide insight into any obstacles or challenges they faced and therefore, how they were resolved. This would also help to obtain information on support mechanisms that were available to them. Whilst follow

up of research participants can be challenging at the end of a study, these participants are likely still to be supported by an organisation (in this case, Possible), thus enhancing the opportunity for further investigation.

b) In view of the Raising of Participation Age (RPA), a study of how young people from homes with limited capitals have decided on learning pathways to adopt until the age of 18, would be enlightening. This would be in the context of pressures on such young people to obtain employment 'to help with family finances' (Furlong, 2013:101).

c) A further study of value would be to look into the challenges faced by the schools in delivering a compulsory curriculum based careers education, as suggested by Eurydice and Cedefop (2014), the Gatsby Report (2014) and, found to be necessary by this study. Further, to look into the challenges of delivering individually tailored careers guidance in schools, revealed as being crucial by this study.

7.8 Contribution to Knowledge

This study provides an original contribution for a variety of reasons as outlined here. It is the first time that a study has been undertaken on a NEET group that is aged 18-24, who have been continuously NEET since the age of 18, with 12 of them in this position from the age of 16. The inclusion of the 'older' age group adds to the previous research on NEETS considered in the Literature Review (for example, Simmons and Thompson, 2011; Simmons et al., 2014).

Additionally, the RPA makes this study involving 18-24 year old participants very timely. This study is highly relevant as it charts the lived experiences of young NEET people, aged 18-24, thereby providing insight into their needs and also the support (pre- and post-16) required.

Moreover, all of the participants were living in London. Being located in London is useful because it reveals the challenging experiences and trajectories of this marginalised group of young NEET people, despite living in the UK's capital city, with the vast array of opportunities it is perceived to offer. It is especially of value being located in London's East-End, with its re-generation programmes, due to the Olympics 2012. Additionally, all the participants in this study lived at home except for one who moved out when he was aged 24.

Furthermore, there does not appear to have been a study on the NEET group that includes the work of a charitable organisation aimed at helping young people who are NEET. This study explores the work of such a charitable organisation and how it helps the young NEET people to move out of the NEET category.

Moreover, this study highlights how this charitable organisation that works with the NEET group has specific interventions and approaches for the young people that appeals to them, as reflected by the participants' praise for Possible.

Additionally and significantly, this study also illustrates that 'older' NEET young people could be encouraged to move out of their NEET status if they have the opportunity to engage with staff (like those at Possible) that they feel care for them and can be trusted. Thus, this shows that the disaffection expressed with authorities (school heads, teachers, Connexions staff and Job Centre personnel) can be eroded. Hence, this study signifies hope.

Furthermore, no research has been found in which the views of the young NEET people, and those of the staff that work with them, have been elicited on the issue of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) being labelled as 'NEET'. As a result, the responses obtained in this study throw new light on the 'NEET' categorisation debate.

In addition, this study furthers the knowledge about the factors that impede the successful transitions of young people. It reveals how much 'family', 'school' and 'class' intersect, leading to the conclusion that the common factor in this intersection is class, shaping young people's progress in school and their trajectories after leaving school.

More significantly, with 15 of the 18 participants being aged 20+ and above, this study depicts the continued long reach of the influences of family and schooling, encapsulated in social class: the enduring shadow cast into adulthood and on young people's life chances.

This study has also helped to develop the Bourdieusian conceptualisation of NEETs, as outlined here. The study shows, for example, that NEETs could have families who are very supportive and interested in their children's education. This is in contrast to the findings of, for example, Bynner and Parsons' (2002) study on NEETs which identifies parents' 'lack of interest in education' (ibid: 289) as a factor in their children becoming NEET. This point was

also echoed uniformly by Possible's staff who work with NEET young people. However, in this study, the participants described at least one family member (immediate or extended) as being very supportive, interested in their schooling and their post-16 pathways; for example, making financial sacrifices to provide a few English language private tutoring lessons, seeing school staff several times to try to solve bullying problems, collecting school work to do at home when their child was absent from school. Thus, according to the participants, their families were interested in their education, had expectations for them and thought that they were providing what was necessary for their children to progress in the field of education into the field of employment. Therefore, it follows that these families of NEETs could be described positively as having cultural capital, but their children remained disadvantaged because their families did not have access to other aspects of cultural capital, for example, knowledge of higher education and career routes; or other capitals, for example, economic capital to provide extra-curricular activities, or social capital to provide useful professional networks.

Furthermore, in this study, the majority (12 out of 18) of the participants had been NEET post-16 and all of them since the age of 18, with 15 out of the 18 participants being over the age of 20. In the Bourdieusian sense, this quiet acceptance of their sustained period of being NEET may be seen as reflecting their 'sense of one's place' and 'practical anticipation of objective limits' (Bourdieu 1984:471). This study, therefore, adds to Bourdieu's explanations about such situations by illustrating how long-lasting could be the effects of the internalised and classed experiences, leading consequently to a kind of self-exclusion.

Moreover, this study's inclusion of participants who are new arrivals to the UK adds a new element for the application of Bourdieu's conceptual tools. For example, it illustrates that for these participants, it meant new fields in terms of schooling, housing and employment. It also reveals the challenges posed to their habitus, inculcated in another country but having to be 'transported' and acted out in a different field. Moreover, it shows how their cultural capital, particularly, their institutionalised capital in the form of academic qualifications, may not be recognised in their new field. It also shows how not having the English language skills could affect their confidence (cultural capital) to interact with the dominant players in the new field. Therefore this study extends the application of the conceptual tools of capital, field and habitus by mapping the experiences of some young NEET people who are recent migrants to the UK. The study also shows that in extreme need, such as migration, habitus does evolve more quickly than has been described by Bourdieu.

Moreover, this study identifies further sources of social capital. Bourdieu's concept of social capital is possessed by those who are dominant in a field and social capital is seen as valuable networks generated by family, friends and neighbourhood. This study extends the sources of social capital to include the charitable organisations. The source of social capital for the participants was the charitable organisation called Possible which works with NEET young people. Possible helped the participants to identify ways of not being NEET by offering guidance on both, academic and vocational courses, arranging employment experience, skills training, mentoring and ongoing support. In Bourdieusian terms, the social capital acquired through Possible, helped the participants to view their future as a field of opportunities, beyond what they had envisaged.

Additionally, this study highlights the role of the internet as a new form of social capital for the young people. Most of the young people reported that they had gained information about Possible and its self-development course by accessing the internet, whilst two of them said they had read descriptions of it posted by their friends on Facebook. Hence, this study illustrates the internet and social media facilitating a form of social capital.

Furthermore, this study also reveals how, despite the odds, even when, in the Bourdieusian sense, the dominant forms of capital are not available and despite personal issues (such as depression and self-harming), a young NEET person is capable of chiselling a way out of the NEET status. The personal quality displayed in such a situation shows dogmatic resolve and this requires recognition as it has not featured, as far as I can tell, in previous literature on the NEET group.

Overall, this qualitative, in-depth study goes beyond the statistics and advances knowledge on the varied factors that led this group of 18-24 year olds to become NEET and the complexities of their lives. As such, it examines the issues of becoming NEET from the perspectives of a diverse group of young people, including new arrivals to the UK (not included in the previous research on NEETs) and considers the factors that influenced their trajectories and experiences of becoming categorised as NEET. The knowledge gained could contribute to the current debates on education, employment and training of young people. The understanding attained may help interested parties, including policymakers (UK and overseas), schools and training providers. The information generated about interventions and approaches that appeal to NEET

young people could also assist other voluntary organisations that are working to meet the needs of young people classified as NEET.

7.8. Implications

In concluding this thesis, I reflected on the aspirations that lay behind the *Bridging the Gap* Report (1999) and the support mechanisms for disadvantaged young people that emerged from it. However much criticised, it included the setting up of Connexions, the EMA and Aimhigher. Nevertheless, all of these have now ceased. However, it could be argued that they may not have been perfect because they were new measures: as such, what was needed was reformation and not dismantling in entirety.

As explained above (7.7), this study shows how long lasting are the effects of negative school experiences, casting a shadow into adulthood, Despite being in the 18-24 age range, the key issues raised by the participants were school related and included bullying, poor school-family relationships, removal of academic support, unawareness of the value of GCSE grades A*– C in Maths and English and weak careers guidance. Thus, focusing solely on the participants' concerns, they imply that well-resourced strategies are needed to help all pupils of all abilities.

The Education Act (2011) requires schools to offer programmes that prepare pupils for the working world. A DfE funded study (Thornton et al, 2014) found that much is being done to encourage disadvantaged pupils to consider university. However, the study (ibid) also noted that most of these initiatives are in schools with a Sixth Form, that activities tend to be during the GCSE/AS Level years and they are aimed at those who are disadvantaged but academically able. Thus, most of my study's participants would not have qualified for them. Additionally, the research (ibid) found few mentoring or ambassador schemes in schools which is something that would benefit those pupils from homes without the dominant forms of capitals, such as the participants. Moreover, Ofsted (2013) were critical of school provisions for those at risk of becoming NEET and also, Ofsted (2016) warned about the government's lack of strategy for preparing young people for work.

In view of schools' limited resources, forming external partnerships seem relevant as reflected by the participants' praise for Possible's course. Thus, external input might be attractive to pupils and help to supplement schools' provisions. Francis and Hutchings (2013) note the

overwhelming extent to which middle-class families' social and economic capitals provide extra-curricular activities and career enhancing opportunities for their children (Chapter 4). However, for those from disadvantaged backgrounds, schools are the only source for similar activities. For example, Possible's self-development package includes a residential week of team activities, community volunteering and work placement. These are particularly beneficial to pupils from families who do not have the economic and / or social capitals to provide the extra-curricular activities to develop team-work and inter-personal skills which are important whether or not pupils opt for higher education.

The participants' key concerns which they identified as affecting their post-16 trajectories are considered individually below and potential partnership examples noted.

Academic support

Academic achievements in school are important because they affect post-school education and consequently employment opportunities (Hutchinson and Kettlewell, 2015, Simmons and Thompson, 2011). As such, where school resources are limited, external partnerships (for example, 'The Access Project' and local universities' volunteering schemes) could augment schools' academic support provisions. This would make the provisions available to all the pupils and therefore will not be perceived as helping GCSE high grade achievers only.

Anti-bullying ethos

Although all schools are required by the Education Act (2005) to work hard to create an anti-bullying ethos, school bullying existed as recounted by some of the participants (who attended school between 2004 and 2010). Furthermore, bullying appears to be continuing to exist as one of the biggest charities, 'Ditch the Label' reported that, 'within the past year 1.5 million young people [aged 12-25] in the UK experienced bullying' (Ditch the Label Annual Bullying Survey, 2017:6). A study by Boulton (2011) found that pupils tend to be less receptive to anti-bullying advice from their own school's staff. Thus, partnerships with anti-bullying organisations (for example, 'Ditch the Label', 'Anti-bullying Alliance'; 'Kidscape') with specialist programmes may appeal better to pupils.

Careers Guidance

The young people's post-16 experiences (Chapter 6) reveal a sense of unpreparedness for what lay ahead of them post-16: primarily the competitive nature of the job market, the limited local

job opportunities, and the skills and qualifications required by employers. In particular, there does not appear to have been an awareness of globalisation and the disappearance of jobs for school-leavers.

The participants' accounts on this topic imply the following:

a) that careers information needs to be offered to pupils from the beginning of secondary school. It would harness pupils' interest earlier and address the questions about possible paths and options, especially for those who come from homes without the dominant forms of cultural and social capitals;

b) that careers guidance needs to be embedded in the secondary school curriculum so that it is timetabled and reaches all the pupils. This would ensure that the careers guidance is 'systematically provided to all students' (Eurydice and Cedefop Report, 2014:85);

c) that the careers guidance embedded in curriculum needs to include interview practices and work placements, as for example, offered by Possible. This will help pupils to interact confidently with employers and to meet the challenges of an increasingly competitive employment sector; and

d) that pupils need to be informed at the start of secondary school that 'English and Maths GCSE (grades A* to C) are fundamental to employment and educational prospects' (Wolf Report, 2011:9). Similarly, pupils need to be informed of the usefulness of studying foreign languages for employment in a globalised economy. This suggestion, if put into place, will mean that academic studies and careers guidance will intersect, conveying the link between the subjects studied and the careers those subjects will serve. This way the interest in studying to enter certain careers may be fostered for 'too many young people fail to see the relevance of their studies to future work and life roles' (Hughes and Gration, 2009:13).

School-family Relationship

Following on from above, schools need to encourage family involvement by inviting them to their Careers Fairs and employers' presentations. This would mean that families are better informed to support their children's post-school trajectories. It would also engender better relations and trust between staff and families as families are welcomed into schools on days other than Parents' Evenings.

These opportunities, providing additional contact with families, could also enable the schools to appreciate the families' cultural capital when they display interest in their children's progress in the field of education and their emotional capital when they raise concerns about their children's welfare, for example, with bullying issues. It will also help schools to discover the social capital that some families may possess, for example, Reena's cousin being a pharmacist, Ailah's father working in a restaurant, Gail's sister working in the hotel hospitality sector. Such families, for example, could be valuable sources of careers information and could be contacts for some of the pupils who may wish to enter similar fields of employment. In the Bourdieusian sense, the above attempts will mean that it is not just middle-class capitals that are valued by schools.

Post-18 Support

As noted throughout this thesis, it is important not to blame families, but to see structural inequalities, as being at fault. This study reflects that the neo-liberal approach leads to young people 'being thrown on to one's own fate […] placing burdens to make right choices […] that some young people are ill-prepared or ill-equipped to handle' (Yates et al, 2011:529).

Therefore the concerns expressed by the participants need attention for the number of NEET young people remain high. There were 767,000 NEET young people, aged 18-24, in October-December 2016 (House of Commons Briefing, 2017, SN06705). Moreover, at a time when the RPA is in place, 'the 16-18 NEET rate was 8.0% in April to June 2016, up 0.5 percentage points from comparable quarter in 2015 […]'(DfE, 2016:1). Furthermore, Maguire (2015) observes that there are NEET young people who cannot be reached and therefore, their actual numbers may not be reflected in the above-mentioned statistics.

This study indicates the complexity of the issues that are faced by the NEET group; looking at the 'adult' group revealed a myriad of differing needs that appear to have surfaced as the NEET status continued, and with it a sense of hopelessness. It needs to be recognised that the NEET group is not a homogeneous group and that individual attention is needed if policies are to be effective. It is argued that much can be learnt from international approaches, as outlined below:

a) Denmark's example of adopting a holistic approach, involving an individualised plan for each NEET young person, which helped to reduce Denmark's number of young NEET people (Fouche, 2010); and

b) Holland's example of one-stop centres, accommodating in one location all the specialist services, from mental health to careers advice (House of Commons, Children, Schools and Families Committee, Eighth Report of Session 2009-2010, Vol 1).

Adopting Denmark's holistic approach and locating it in one-stop centre, as in Holland, would entail financial costs. However, it will not be as much as the costs incurred when young people become NEET (Chapter 1), with the consequent emotional costs, as analysed and discussed in this thesis. Some choice words from the Kennedy Report (1997:2) appear prophetically apt now, as I argue for the above mentioned support mechanisms:

> Prosperity depends on there being a vibrant economy. But an economy which regards its own success as the highest good is a dangerous one. Justice and equity must also have their own claims upon arguments for educational growth.

A Final Comment

When I began this study, London was getting ready for the Olympics. My fieldwork was carried out in London's East End, primed to have increased opportunities due to the siting of Olympics there (Olympic Park Regeneration Framework, 2009). London's East End is also where the participants lived and had attended school. Moreover, it is where they attended the centre, to undertake Possible's course for 12 weeks, thereby walking past the posters about the Games. Furthermore, as part of Possible's course, the participants undertook community work locally, and also most of the work placements. Most of these activities were located within the shadow of the Olympics stadium, in the midst of London's preparation, adrenalin rush and publicity for the Olympics. However, during the interviews, as I listened to the young people relating their lived experiences, it might be said that the excitement of the Games was not palpable in their lives. It seemed as if two separate worlds were operating in parallel and I recalled hooks' (2015: xvii) description of what it is to be marginalised: being 'part of the whole but outside of the main body'. For them, the competition was out in the real world, applying for jobs that they were desperate to obtain so that they need not go to the Job Centre again, to be 'treated like lazy' (Bernard) or 'come out crying every time' (Nadia), so that 'my mother can stop doing two jobs' (Martin), so no more 'looking for homeless shelters' (Adam). It is hoped that this study has articulated their lived experiences and what can be learnt from them, for they spoke so that tomorrow's young people will be helped to make informed transitions on leaving school.

REFERENCES

Allan, G and Skinner, C (1993) *Handbook for Research Students in the Social Sciences*. London: Falmer Press.

Archer, L. (2007) Diversity, equality and higher education: a critical reflection on the ab/use of equity discourse within widening participation, *Journal, Teaching in Higher Education,* 12:5-6, 635-653.

Archer, L., Hollingworth, S., Mendick, H. (2010) *Urban Youth and Schooling*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Archer, L., Hutchings, M. and Ross, A. (2003) *Higher Education and Social Class: issues of exclusion and inclusion*. London: Routledge Falmer.

Atherton, G., Cymbir, E., Roberts, K., Page, L., Remedios, R. (2009), *How young people formulate their views about their future* (DCSF Research Report – RR152). From: https://www.researchgate.net/publications/237595519   Accessed: 23/9/2015.

Avis, J. (2007*) Education, Policy and Social Justice: Learning and Skills*. London: Continuum

Avis, J. (2014a) Beyond NEET: precariousness, ideology and social justice-the 99%, *Power and Education,* 6:1, 61-72.

Avis, J. (2014b): Comfort radicalism and NEETs: a conservative praxis, *International Studies in Sociology of Education*, DOI: 10. 1080/09620214.943030.

Ball, S. (2003) *Class Strategies and the Education Market: The Middle Classes and Social Advantage.* London: RoutledgeFalmer.

Ball, S., Macrae, S. and Maguire, M (1999) Young lives, diverse choices and imagined futures in an education and training market, *International Journal of Inclusive Education,* 3:3, 195-224.

Ball, S., Maguire, S. and Macrae, M. (2000) *Choice, Pathways and Transitions Post-16: New Youth, New Economics in the Global City.* London and New York: Routledge Falmer.

Ball, S. and Vincent, C. (1998) "I heard it on the Grapevine": 'hot knowledge and school choice', *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 19:3, 377 – 400.

Banks in East London, from: www.bba.org.uk   Accessed: 23/11/2018.

Banks, M., Bates, I., Breakwell, G.M, Bynner, J., Emler, N., Jamieson, L. & Roberts, K. (1992), *Careers and Identities.* Buckingham: Open University Press.

Bansel, P., Davies, B, Laws, C. & Linnell, S. (2009) Bullies, Bullying and power in the contexts of schooling, *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 30:1, 59-69.

Barber, M. (2008) *Instruction to Deliver.* London: Methuen.

Bates, I and Riseborough, G. (1993) *Youth and Inequality.* Milton Keynes: Open University Press.

Bathmaker, AM., Ingram, N., & Walter, R., (2013), Higher Education, social class and the mobilisation of capitals: recognising and playing the game, *British Journal of Sociology of Education,* 34:5-6, 723-743.

BBC Business News, 2002, *Dagenham: End of the Line.* From: www.bbc.co.uk Accessed: 12/11/2018.

BBC Business News, 2012, *Ford's Southampton and Dagenham closures mark end of era*. From: www.bbc.co.uk Accessed: 12/11/2018.

Beck, Vanessa, Fuller, Alison and Unwin, Lorna, (2006) Safety in stereotypes? The impact of gender and race on young people's perceptions of their post-compulsory

education and labour market opportunities, *British Educational Research Journal*, 32:5, 667 – 686.

Bell, J. (1999). *Doing Your Research Project: A Guide for First-time Researchers in Education and Social Science*s (3rd Ed). Buckingham, UK; Open University Press.

Blaike, N. (2007) *Approaches to Social Enquiry*. Cambridge: Polity.

Blenkinsop, S., McCrone, T., Wade, P. and Morris, M. (2006) How do young people make choices at 14 and 16? RR73. London: DfES. From: http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/RR773.pdf Accessed 12/11/2014.

Blythman M. and Orr, S. (2002) A Framework for Institutional Change, in Hayton, A and Paczuska, A. (eds)   *Access, Participation and Higher Education Policy and Practice.* London: Kogan Page, pp 165 – 177.

Boulton, M.J. (2011). Resistant to the message: Are pupils unreceptive to teachers' anti-bullying initiatives and if so why? *Educational Studies*, 38:5, 1-5.

Bourdieu, P. (1974) The School as a Conservative Force in J. Eggleston (ed) *Contemporary Research in the Sociology of Education.* London: Methuen, pp 32-46.

Bourdieu, P. (1984) *Distinction: A social Critique of the Judgement of Taste.* Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1986) The Forms of Capital. In J. Richardson (Ed), *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*. New York: Greenwood Press. pp 241-258

Bourdieu, P. (1990a*) In Other Words: Essays towards a Reflexive Sociology*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1990b) *The Logic of Practice*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1993) *Sociology in Question*. London: Sage Publications.

Bourdieu, P. (1994). *Language and Symbolic Power* edited by J. Thompson. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1998, 2007). *Practical Reason: on the theory of action*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1999) *Weight of the World: Social Suffering in Contemporary Society.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bourdieu, P. and Passeron, J.C. (1977) *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture*. London: Sage.

Bourdieu, P. and L. Wacquant (1992) *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology.* Chicago: University Of Chicago Press.

Brand, M. and Hank, K., (2014). Scars that will not disappear: long-term associations between early and later life unemployment under different welfare regimes, *Cambridge Journal of Social Policy*, 43:04,727-743.

British Bankers Association, from www.bba.org.uk Accessed 12/11/2018.

British Education Research Association, from www.bera.ac.uk Accessed: 9/10/2010.

British Sociological Association (2004), from www.britsoc.co.uk Accessed: 12/7/2011.

Brooks, R. (1998) *Staying, or Leaving? A literature review of factors affecting the take-up of post-16 options.* From: http://www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/91166 Accessed: 30/6/2015.

Brown, P. (1995) Cultural Capital and Social Exclusion: Some Observations on Recent Trends in Education, Employment and Labour Market, *Work, Employment and Society* 9:1, 29-51.

Brown, P. and Lauder, H. (1999) Education, Globalisation and Economic Development in Ahier, J. and Esland, G. (eds) *Education, Training and the Future of Work l: Social, Political and Economic.* London: Routledge, pp 31-61.

Bryman, Alan (2004) *Quantity and Qualitative in Social Research*, London: Routledge.

Bryman, A. (2016) *Social Research Methods,* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Byfield, C. (2008). *Black Boys Can Make It: How They Overcome Obstacles to University in the UK and US*. Stoke-on-Trent: Trentham.

Bynner, J. and Parsons, S. (2002). Social Exclusion and the Transition from School to Work: The Case of Young People Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET), *Journal of Vocational Behaviour* 60:2, 289-309.

Castells, M. (2005) *End of Millennium: The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture,* Volume 3. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.

CBI (2015) *Education and Skills Survey.* From: www.cbi.org.uk   Accessed: 6/7/2016.

Chadderton, C. (2012). Problematising the role of the white researcher in social justice research, *Ethnography and Education*, 7: (3), 363-380.

Chadderton, C. (2015). The new statutory requirements in career guidance in England and the implications for careers provision under the Coalition Government, *London Review of Education*, 13:2, 84-97.

Chadderton, C and Colley, H. (2012). School-to-work transition services: marginalising 'disposable' youth in a state of exception? *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 33:3, 329-343.

Coles, B., Hutton, S., Bradshaw, J., Craig, G., Godfrey, C and Johnson, J. (2002). *Literature Review of the costs of Being 'Not in Education, Employment or Training at age 16 -18'*, Norwich: Department for Education and Skills.

Coles, B., Godfrey, C., Keung, A., Parrott, S., and Bradshaw, J. (2010). *Estimating the life-time costs of NEET: 16-18 year olds not in Education, Employment or Training*, from https://www.york.ac.uk/inst/spru/research/pdf/NEET.pdf Accessed: 11/12/2015.

Colley, H. (2003) Engagement Mentoring for 'Disaffected' Youth: A New Model of Mentoring for Social Inclusion, *British Educational Research Journal,* 29:4, 521-542.

Colley, H. (2006) Mentoring for Young People Not in Education, Employment or Training: A 'NEET' Solution, But to Whose Problems? *Nuffield Review of 14-19 Education and Training Working Paper* 36. From http://www.nuffield14-19review.org.uk/files/documents121-1.pdf   Accessed: 12/12/2012.

Colley. H., Hodkinson P.M. (2001) Problems with "Bridging the Gap'': the reversal of structure and agency in addressing social exclusion, *Critical Social Policy*, 21:3, 337-361.

Cooke, G. (2013) *No more NEETs: A plan for all young people to be learning or earning,* London: IPPR. From: https://www.ippr.org   Accessed: 3/1/2014

Coolican, H. (2004) *Research Methods and Statistics in Psychology*. London: Hodder and Stoughton.

Creswell, J. W. (2009) *Research Design.* London: Sage.

Creswell, John W. (2013) *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*. London: Sage.

Crompton, R. (2009) *Class and Stratification*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Crotty, M. (1998). *The Foundations of Social Research: Meanings and Perspectives in the Research Process.* London: Sage Publications.

Crozier, G (2003) Researching Black Parents: Making sense of the role of research and researcher, *Qualitative Research* 3:1, 79-94.

Data Protection Act (1998). From: http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/29/contents
Accessed: 9/5/2011.

Davies, L.E. (2012) Beyond the Games: regeneration legacies and London 2012 *Leisure Studies,* 31:3,309 – 337.

Department for Culture, Media and Sports (DCMS (2008). *Before, During and After: making the most of London's 2012 Games*.   From:
https://webarchive.ntionalarchive.gov.uk   Accessed: 23/11/2018.

Department for Culture, Media and Sports (DCMS) (2010), *Legacy Action Plan: plans for the Legacy from the 2012 Olympics and Para-Olympic Games.* From:
www.culture.gov.uk/publications/7674.aspx   Accessed: 23/11/2018.

Dearing, R. (1997), *Higher Education in the Learning Society* (The Dearing Report), London: HMSO.

Denzin, N.K. (1989) *Interpretive Biography.* London: Sage.

Denzin, N.K. and Lincoln, Y.S. (2000). *Handbook of Qualitative Research.* London: Sage Publications.

Denzin, N.K. and Lincoln, Y.S. (2011). *Handbook of Qualitative Research.* London: Sage Publications.

Department for Education (2016).NEET statistics: quarterly brief, April to June, 2016. From www.gov.uk/statistics/neet-statistics-quarterly-brief. Accessed: 1/11/2016.

Department for Education (2013). School attendance and absence. From: www.gov.uk Accessed: 9/1/2015.

Department for Education (2015). NEET Statistics: quarterly brief, April to June, 2015. From www.gov.uk/statistics/neet-statistics-quarterly-brief Accessed: 30/11/2015.

Department for Education, 2012: NEET Statistics: quarterly brief, January to December, 2012. From www.gov.uk/statistics/neet-statistics-quarterly-brief Accessed: 30/9/2015.

 Department for Children, Schools and Families (2009) *Youth Cohort Study*. From: dera.ioe.ac.uk/9065/601-2009.pdf   Accessed: 2/2/2016.

Department for Education and Skills (2003) *'Careers Education and Guidance in England',* DfES/0163/2003. From www.gov.uk   Accessed: 3/2/2015.

Department for Education and Skills (2003), Widening Participation in Higher Education, DfES publication. From: www.webarchive.nationalarchive.gov.uk   Accessed: 3/ 3/12.

Department for Education and Employment (1999), Learning to Succeed: A New Framework for Post-16 Learning, Cmnd. 4392, TSO, London.

Department for Education and Employment (2000) Connexions: The Best Start in Life for Every Young Person, Nottingham: DfEE publication, Ref: CX2.

Devine, F. (2004) *Class Practices: How Parents Help Their Children Get Good Jobs.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

DiMaggio, P. (1982) Cultural Capital and School Success: The Impact of Status Culture Participation on the Grades of U.S. High School Students, *American Sociological Review,* 47:2, 189-201.

Ditch The Label (2017). Annual Bullying Survey (2017). From www.ditchthelabel.org Accessed: 15/6/2017.

Donovan, T. (2012), London 2012: Olympics jobs legacy 'falls short'.
From: www.bbc.co.uk   Accessed: 24/11/2018.

Duke, K. (2002) Getting Beyond the 'Official Line': Reflections on Dilemmas of Access, Knowledge and Power in Researching Policy Networks, Journal of Social Policy, 31:1, 39-59, published by Cambridge University Press.

Dunne, M. and Gazeley, L. (2008) 'Teachers, social class and underachievement', *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 9:5, 451-463.

East London Trades Guild, from: www.eastendtradesguild.org.uk Accessed: 23/11/2018.

Education Act (1997, 2005, 2011.From: www.legislation.gov.uk   Accessed: 12/12/2016.

Education and Inspections Act (2006), From: www.legislation.gov.uk Accessed: 12/12/2016.

Education and Skills Act (2008), From: www.legislation.gov.uk   Accessed: 24/11/2012.

Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations (2006). From: www.legislation.gov.uk   Accessed: 12/12/2016.

East London NHS Trust, from: www.nhs.uk Accessed: 23/11/2018.

European Commission (2014) *Eurydice and Cedefop Report: Tackling Early Leaving from Education and Training in Europe: Strategies, Policies and Measures*   From: http://eacea.ec.europa.eu. /education/Eurydice   Accessed: 27/3/2015.

Fawcett, Barbara and Hearn Jeff (2004). Researching 'others': epistemology, experience, standpoints and participation, *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 7:3, 201-218.

Field, J. (2005) *Social capital and Lifelong Learning.* Bristol: The Policy Press.

Finlay, I., Sheridan, M., McKay, J. & Nudzor, H. (2009) Young people on the margins: in need of more choices and more chances in twenty-first century Scotland' *British Educational Research Journal*, 36:5, 851-867.

Flick, U. (2006) *An Introduction to Qualitative Research*. London: Sage.

Forsey, M. (2008) Ethnographic Interviewing: from conversation to published text, in Walford, G. (ed) *How to Do Educational Ethnography.* London: Tufnell Press, p.57-75.

Foskett, N., Dyke, M., Maringe, F. (2008) The influence of the school in the decision to participate in learning post-16, *British Educational Research Journal*, 34:1, 37-67.

Foskett, N. and Hesketh, A. (1997) Constructing choice in Contiguous and Parallel Markets: institutional and school leavers' responses to the new post-16 marketplace, *Oxford Review of Education,* 23:3, 299-319.

Francis, R. and Hutchings, M. (2013) Parent Power? Using money and influence to boost children's chances of educational success. From: www.sutton.trust.com Accessed: 27/2/2017.

Fouche, G. (2010) *Danes show the way to get young people to work.* From: http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2010/jan/20/youth unemployment Accessed: 18/8/2011.

Furlong, A. (2005) Cultural dimensions of decisions about educational participation among 14- to 19- year-olds: the parts that Tomlinson doesn't reach, *Journal of Educational Policy*, 20:3, 379-389.

Furlong, A. (2006) Not a very NEET solution: representing problematic labour market variations among early school leavers: *Journal of Work, Employment and Society,* 20:3, 553-569.

Furlong, A. (2013) *Youth Studies: An Introduction.* Oxon: Routledge.

Furlong, A. and Cartmel, F. (1999) Social Market and Labour Market Transitions in Ahier, J. and Esland, G. (eds) *Education, Training and Future of Work l.* London: Routledge, pp 219-235.

Gabe, T. and Fernandes A. (2009) Disconnected Youth: A Look at 16-to-24 Year Olds Who Are Not Working or in School, Congress Research Service Report for Congress. From: http://www.crs.gov   Accessed: 15/3/2010.

Gatsby Report (2014) from www.gatsby.org.uk/reports/pdf/gatsby-sir-john-holman-good-career-guidance-2014.pdf   Accessed: 6/6/2016.

Gill, N. (2014). *One in seven students work full-time while they study*, 11 April 2014, The Guardian, www.theguardian.com   Accessed: 21/3/2015.

Gillborn, D. and Youdell, D. (2000) *Rationing Education: policy, practice, reform and equity.* Buckingham: Open University Press.

Gilles, V. (2005) 'Raising the 'Meritocracy': Parenting and the Individualization of Social Class', *Sociology,* 39 (5):835-853.

Glover, D., Gough, G., Johnson, M., Cartwright, N. (2000) Bullying in 25 secondary schools: incidence, impact and intervention, *Educational Research*, 42:2, 141-156.

Goldthorpe, J.H. (in collaboration with Llewellyn, C and Payne, C) (1980) *Social Mobility and Class Structures in Modern Britain,* 1st edition. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Gorard, S., Rees, G., and Fevre, R. (1999) Patterns of participation in lifelong learning: do families make a difference? *British Educational Research Journal* 25:4, 517-532.

Gorard, S. and Smith, E. (2007) Do barriers get in the way? A review of the determinants of post-16 participation, *Research in post-compulsory education*, 12:2, 141-158.

Gray, D. E. (2004) *Doing Research in the Real World*. London: Sage.

Green, A.E. & C. Hasluck. (2009) Action to Reduce Worklessness: What works? *Local Economy,* 24:1, 28-37.

Grenfell, M. (2008) *Pierre Bourdieu: Key Concepts*. Buckinghamshire: Acumen Publishers.

Guba, E.G. and Lincoln, Y.S. (1989). *Fourth Generation Evaluation.* CA: Sage Publications.

Guba, E.G. and Lincoln, Y.S. (1994). Competing paradigms in qualitative research. In Denzin, N.K. and Lincoln, Y.S. (Eds) *Handbook of Qualitative Research,* 105-117, CA: Sage Publications.

Hammersley, M. (1992) On Feminist Methodology, *Sociology*, 26:2,187-206.

Harding, S. (1987), *Feminism and Methodology*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Hayton, A. (1998) *Tackling Disaffection and Social Exclusion*. London: Kogan Page.

Hayton, A. and Paczuska, A. (2002), *Access, Participation and Higher Education: Policy and Practice.* London: Kogan Page.

Heath, Sue, Fuller, Alison and Johnson, Brenda (2010) 'Young People, social capital and net-work based educational decision-making', *British Journal of Sociology of Education,* 31:4, 395 – 411.

Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), 2014: from www.hesa.ac.uk
Accessed 5/2/2015.

Hirsch, D. (2006) '*What will it take to end child poverty?*'   From:
Joseph Rowntree Foundation: www.jrf.org.uk/knowledge/findings/socialpolicy/0366
Accessed: 30/1/2015.

Hodkinson, P., Sparkes, A.C. and Hodkinson, H. (1996), *Triumphs and Tears: Young People, Markets and the Transition from School to Work.* London: David Fulton Publishers Ltd.

Hodkinson, P. and Sparkes, A.C. (1997) Careership: a sociological theory of career decision making, *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 18:1, 29 - 44.

Hoggarth, L. and Smith, D.I (2004) Understanding the Impact of Connexions on young people at risk.   From: http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130323031907/https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eorderingDownloadRR607.pdf   Accessed: 29/12/20124.

Holland, J. and Ramazanoglu, C. (1994) 'Coming to Conclusions': power and interpretations in researching young women's sexuality, in M. Maynard and J. Purvis (eds), *Researching Women's Lives from a Feminist Perspective*. London: Taylor & Francis, pp.125-148.

hooks, bell (2015) *Feminist Theory: from margin to center.* New York: Routledge.

House of Commons Children, Schools and Families Committee: *Young people not in education, employment or training,* Eighth Report of Session 2009-10, Vol 1. From: https://www.officialdocuments.gov.uk   Accessed: 6/6/2010.

House of Commons Research Briefing Papers (2015). *NEET: Young People Not in Education, Employment or Training*.   From: http://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents   Accessed: 12/3/2016.

House of Commons Research Briefing Papers (2016). *NEET: Young People Not in Education, Employment or Training*.   From: http://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents Accessed: 11/9/2016.

House of Commons Research Briefing Papers (2017). *NEET: Young People Not in Education, Employment or Training*.   From: http://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents   Accessed: 11/5/2017.

House of Commons (2018). *Mental Health Policy in England*.   From: https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk   Accessed: 30/9/2018.

Hughes, D. and Gration, G. (2009) '*Careers and Guidance related interventions: evidence of impact'*, Reading: CfBT Educational Trust.

Hutchinson, J. and Kettlewell, K. (2015) Education to Employment: complicated transitions in a changing world, *Educational Research*, 57:2, 113-120.

Impetus-PEF (2014*)*, *Make NEETs History in 2014 Report*: from www.impetus-pef.org.uk   Accessed: 18/6/2015.

Institute for Public Policy Research (2013), *No More NEETs*. From: https://www.ippr.org.pdf   Accessed: 12/7/2014.

Irwin, S. and Elley, S. (2011) Concerted Cultivation? Parenting Values, Education and Class Diversity', *Sociology*, 45:3, 480-495.

Jenkins, R. (2002), *Pierre Bourdieu*. London: Routledge.

Jerrim, John (2012*), Family Background and Access to High Status Universities*: Sutton Trust. From www.suttontrust.com   Accessed: 31/1/2015.

Jones, S. (2007). Working–Poor Mothers and Middle-Class Others: Psychosocial Considerations in Home-School Relations and Research, *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, 38:2,159-177.

Jowett, M. and O'Toole, G. (2006) Focusing researchers' minds: contrasting experiences of using focus groups in feminist qualitative research, *Qualitative Research,6:*4,453-472.

Kennedy, H. (1997*). Learning Works: widening participation in further education*. From: www.dera.ioe.ac.uk   Accessed: 20/03/2017.

Law firms in East London. From: www.lawsociety.org.uk   Accessed: 23/11/2018.

Lawless, P. (2012) Can area-based regeneration programmes ever work? Evidence from England's New Deal for Communities Programme, *Policy Studies*, 33:4, 313-328.

Leathwood, C. (2004) A critique of institutional inequalities in higher education (or an alternative hypocrisy for educational policy), *Theory and Research in Education,* 2:1, 31- 48.

Leathwood, C. (2006) Gender, equity and the discourse of the independent learner in higher education, *Higher Education,* 52:4,611- 633.

Leathwood, C and O'Connell, P. (2003) 'It's a struggle': the construction of the 'new' student' in higher education, *Journal of Education Policy,* 18:6, 597- 615.

Leitch, S. (2006) Prosperity for all in the Global Economy: World Class Skills. From: www.dera.ioe.ac.uk   Accessed: 15/3/2017.

Levine-Rasky, C. (2009) Dynamics of Parent Involvement at a Multicultural School, *British Journal of Sociology of Education,* 30:3,:331-344.

Lillis, T. (2001) *Student Writing Access, Regulation, Desire.* London: Routledge.

Lincoln, Y.S. and Guba, E.G (1985) *Naturalistic Inquiry.* Beverley Hills, CA: Sage.

London Metropolitan University (2006), *Access Agreement.* From www.londonmet.ac.uk Accessed: 9/12/2009.

Learning Skills Council Report (LSC) (2005), National Employers Skills Survey 2005. From: http://www.lsc.gov.uk/LSC/2006/research/commissioned/nat-employersskillsurvey2005keyfindings-re-june2006. pdf.   Accessed: 27/9/2010

Lynch, Kathleen and Lodge, Anne (2002) *Equality and Power in Schools.* London: Routledge Falmer.

MacDonald, R. (2008), Disconnected Youth? Social exclusion, the 'Underclass' and Economic Marginality, *Social Work and Society*, 6:2, 236-248.

MacDonald, Robert, Shildrick, Tracy, Webster, Colin, Simpson, Donald (2005) 'Growing Up in Poor Neighbourhoods: The significance of Class and Place in the Extended Transitions of 'Socially Excluded' Young Adults, *Sociology,* 39:5, 873-891

MacInnes, T., Kenway, P. and Parekh, A. (2009) *Monitoring Poverty and Social Exclusion.* From: http://www.jrf.org.uk   Accessed: 21/4/2012.

Maguire, S. (2015): NEET, unemployed, inactive or unknown-why does it matter? *Educational Research* 57:2, 121-132.

Maguire, S. and Rennison, J. (2005) 'Two years on: The Destinations of Young people who are not in Education, Employment or Training at 16, *Journal of Youth Studies*, 8:2,187-201.

Marshall, C. and Rossman, G.B. (2006) *Designing Qualitative Research*. London: Sage.

Maunder, R., Harrop, A. and Tattersall, A.J. (2010) Pupil and staff perceptions of bullying in secondary schools: comparing behavioural definitions and their perceived seriousness, *Educational Research,* 52:3, 263-282.

Maylor, U. (2009) What is the meaning of 'black'? Researching black respondents. *Ethnic and Social Studies*, 32:2,369–387.

Maynard, M. and Purvis, J. (eds) (1994) *Researching Women's lives from a Feminist Perspective.* London: Taylor Francis.

McDowell, L. (2001) 'It's that Linda again': Ethical, Practical and Political Issues involved in Longitudinal Research with Young Men, *Ethics, Place & Environment,* 4:2, 87-100.

McKinsey Center for Government (2014) *Education to Employment: Getting Europe's Youth into Work.* From: https://www.mckinsey.com/insights/social_sector/converting_education_to_ employment_in_Europe   Accessed: 10/11/2015.

Mellor, J., Ingram, N., Abrahams, J., Beedell, P. (2014) 'Class matters in the interview setting? Positionality, situatedness and class,' *British Educational Research Journal,* 40:1, 135-149.

Milburn, A. (2009) The Final Report of the Panel on Fair Access to the Professions, London: HMS.

Mills, C. (2008) Reproduction and transformation of inequalities in schooling: the transformative potential of the theoretical constructs of Bourdieu, *British Journal of Sociology of Education,* 29:1, 78-89.

Modood, T. (2004) Capitals, Ethnic Identity and Educational Qualifications, *Cultural Trends,* 13:2, 87-105.

Morgan, D. (1997) *Focus Groups as Qualitative Research.* London: Sage.

Morgan, S., Hutchinson, J. and Crompton, N. (2007) *Effective Transitions for Year 8 Students,* Occasional Paper: Centre for Guidance Studies, University of Derby. From: https://www.derby.ac.uk/files/icegs_effective_transitions_for_year8_2007.pdf Accessed: 12/11/2014.

Morris, M. (2004) *The Case for Careers Education and Guidance for 14-19 Year Olds*. From: http://www.nfer.co.uk/publications/downloadablereports/pdf_docs/MM483.pdf Accessed: 14/11/2014.

Mosselson, J. (2010) Subjectivity and reflexivity: locating the self in research on dislocation, *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education,* 23 (4), 479-491.

Munn, P., and Lloyd, G. 'Exclusion and excluded pupils', *British Educational Research Journal*, 31:2,205-21.

Myers, M. and Bhopal, K. (2015) Racism and bullying in rural primary schools: protecting white identities post-MacPherson, *British Journal of Sociology of Education,* 38:2, 125-143.

Nash, R. (1990). Bourdieu on Education and Social and Cultural Reproduction, *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 11:4, 431- 447.

Nash, R. (1999). Bourdieu, 'Habitus' and Educational Research: Is it all worth the candle? *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 20:2, 175-187.

Nash, R. (2002), A Realist Framework for the Sociology of Education: thinking with Bourdieu, *Educational Philosophy and Theory,* 34:3, 273-288.

National Audit Office (2004) Department for Education and Skills: Connexions Service: Advice and Guidance for all young people (Report of the Comptroller for Auditor General, HC484) London: The stationery office.

National Equality Panel (2010). *An Anatomy of Educational Inequality in the UK*, London: Government Equalities Office.

Nayak, A. (2006) Displaced masculinities, chavs, youths and class in the post-industrial society*, Sociology,* 2006, 40:5, 813-831.

Newham's Legacy Story (2014). Newham Council Communications 02947. From: www.newham.gov.uk   Accessed: 23/11/2018.

OECD (2012). *Education at a Glance.* From www.oecd.org/edu/highlights.pdf Accessed: 27/3/2013.

Office for Fair Access (OFFA). From www.offa.org.uk   Accessed: 18/ 10/2015.

Office for National Statistics (ONS) (2012) Statistical Bulletin: Labour Market Statistics, March 2012 from: www.ons.gov.uk   Accessed: 24/8/2013.

Office for National Statistics (ONS), 2012. Graduates in the Labour Market, 2012. From: https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20160106230110/http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dep171776_259049   Accessed: 23/10/2018.

Office for National Statistics (ONS) (2015), Statistical Bulletin: Labour Market Statistics, August 2015. From: www.ons.gov.uk   Accessed: 24/3.2016.

Ofsted Reports (2013, 2016). From: https://www.reports.ofsted.gov.uk Accessed: 9/3/2013; 12/1/2017.

Olweus, D. (1994) *Bullying at School: what we know and what we can do,*.Oxon: Blackwell.

Olympic Park Regeneration Framework. From: www.gamesmonitor.org.uk/files/strategic-regeneration-framework-report.pdf   Accessed: 3/3/2015

Osborne, M. (2003) Increasing or widening participation in higher education? An European Overview, *European Journal of Education,* 38:1, 5-24.

Panel on Fair Access to the Professions (2009) *Unleashing Aspirations: Final Report*
From: http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/media/227102/fair-access
Accessed: 9/6/2010.

Payne, J. (2002) *Attitudes to Education, and Choices at Age 16: A Brief Research Review,* Policy Studies Institute: Report to the DfES Advisory Panel on Research Issues for the 14-19 Age Group.

Pell, R. (2016) 'Thousands of graduates working in jobs that don't require any qualifications'. From: https://www.independent.co.uk   Accessed: 24/11/2018.

Pemberton, S. (2008). Tackling the NEET generation and the ability of policy to generate a 'NEET' solution - evidence from the UK, *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy*, 26 (1): 243-259.

Power, A. (2012). '*The Olympic investment in East London has barely scratched the surface of the area's needs'*. From: blogs.lse.ac.uk   Accessed: 27/11/2018.

Prince's Trust (2013). *Youth Index Report*.   From: www.princes-trust.org.uk/about-the-trust/news-views/youth-index-2013.   Accessed: 9/9/2014.

Putnam, R. (2000). *Bowling Alone – the Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New York, Simon and Schuster.

Quinn, J. Lawy, R. and Diment, K. (2008) 'Dead end kids in dead end jobs'? Reshaping debates on young people in jobs without training*, Research in Post-Compulsory Education,* 13:2,185-194.

Race Relations Amendment Act (2000). From: www.legislation.gov.uk Accessed: 9/9/2014.

Raffe, D. (2003) *Young People Not in Education, Employment or Training*. University of Edinburgh, Centre for Educational Sociology. From http://www.ed.ac.uk/ces Accessed: 5/12/2009.

Ranson, S., Martin, J. and Vincent, C. (2004) 'Storming parents, schools and communicative inaction', *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 25:3, 259-274.

Reay, D. (1995) They employ cleaners to do that, *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 16:3,353-371.

Reay, D. (1996) Contextualising choice: social power and parental involvement, *British Educational Research Journal* 22:5, 581-596.

Reay, D. (1998) Engendering social reproduction: mothers in educational marketplace, *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 19:2, 195 - 209.

Reay, D. (2004). 'It's all becoming a habitus': Beyond the habitual use of habitus in educational research, *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 25:4, 431- 441.

Reay, D. (2004) Gendering Bourdieu's Concepts of Capitals? Emotional Capital, Women and Social Class, *Sociological Review,* 52 (2_suppl), 57-74.

Reay, D. (2006). The Zombie Stalking English Schools: Social class and Educational Inequality, *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 54:3, 288-307.

Reay D., Crozier, G. and Clayton, J. (2009) 'Strangers in Paradise: working class students in elite universities, *Sociology,* 43:6, 1103-1121.

Reay, D., David, M., Ball, S. (2005) *Degrees of Choice, social class, race and gender in Higher Educatio.,* Staffordshire: Trentham.

Reay, D., Lucey, H. (2004) Stigmatised Choices: social class, social exclusion and secondary school markets in the inner city', *Pedagogy, Culture and Society*, 12:1, 35-51.

Reid, K. (1999) *Truancy in Schools*. London, Routledge.

Reid, K. (2002) *Truancy: short and long term solutions.* Oxon: Routledge.

Reynolds, T. (2005) *Caribbean Mothers: Identity and Experiences in the UK*. London: Tufnell Press.

Reynolds, T. (2013) 'Them and Us': 'Black Neighbourhoods' as a Social Capital Resource among Black Youth Living in Inner-city London, *Urban Studies* 50:3,484-498.

Robbins, L. (1963) *Higher Education: report of a committee,* London: HMSO.

Roberts, P. (2000) The evolution, definition and purpose of urban regeneration In P. Roberts and H. Sykes (Ed) *Urban Regeneration: A Handbook*, pp.9-36, London: Sage.

Robson, C. (2002) *Real world research*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Ross, A. (2003) Access to higher education: inclusion for the masses? In Archer, L., Hutchings, M., Ross, A (Eds) *Higher Education and Social Class: issues of exclusion and inclusion*. London Routledge/Falmer. pp 45-74

Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) (2013) *Review of Implications of Scottish Executive's NEET Strategy for SQA*. From www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/35847.958: Accessed: 21/10/2015.

Seale, C. (2004) *Researching Society and Culture*, London: Sage.

Shaw, B., Dwyer, C., Modood, T. (2010) Explaining Educational Achievement and Career Aspirations among Young British Pakistanis: Mobilising 'Ethnic Capital'? *Sociology,* 44:6, 1109 -1127

Simmons, R. and Thompson, R. (2011) *NEET Young People and Training for work: learning on the margins.* Stoke-on-Trent: Trentham Books.

Simmons, R., Thompson, R., Russell, L. (2014) *Education, Work and Social Change. Young people and marginalisation in post-industrial Britain.* London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Simmons, R. (2008) Raising the Age of Compulsory Education in England: a NEET solution? *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 56:4,420-439.

Skeggs, B. (1997, 2002) *Formations of Class and Gender: Becoming Respectable.* London: Sage Publications.

Skeggs, B. (2004) *Class, Self, Culture.* London: Routledge.

Smith, Iain Duncan (2015) *Labour stands for welfare dependency*: Daily Telegraph, 15/2/2015 www.telegraph.co.uk Accessed: 29/4/2016.

Smith, P.K. (2004) *Bullying: Recent Developments,* Child and Adolescent Mental Health, 9:3, 98-103.

Social Exclusion Unit (1999) *Bridging the Gap: New Opportunities for 16-18 Year Olds Not in Education, Employment or Training,* Cm 4405, London: HMSO.

Sondergoard, D.M. (2012) 'Bullying and social exclusion anxiety in schools', British *Journal of Sociology of Education,* 33:3,355-372.

Sparkes, J. and Glennerster, H. (2002) Preventing Social Exclusion: Education's Contribution in Hills, J., Le Grand, J. and Piachaud, D (eds) *Understanding Social Exclusion.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp.178-201.

Spielhofer, T., Benton, T., Evans, K., Featherstone, G., Golden, S., Nelson, J. and Smith, P. (2009) *Increasing Participation: understanding young people who do not participate in education or training at 16 or 17*. From: www.nfer.ac.uk   Accessed: 9/10/2015.

Stanley, L. and Wise, S. (1993) *Breaking Out Again: Feminist Ontology and Epistemology.* London: Routledge.

Sutton Trust (2014), *Mobility Manifesto*, Sutton Trust: September 11, 2014.   From: www.suttontrust.com   Accessed: 6/1/2016.

Takizawa, R. (2014) *Impact of childhood bullying still evident after 40 years*. From: www.kcl.ac.uk/ioppn/news/impact-of-childhood-bullying   Accessed: 30/6/2014

Taylor, M.J. (1992) 'Post-16 options, young people's awareness, attitudes, intentions and influences on their choice', *Research papers in Education,* 7:3, 301-355.

Thomas, G. (2009) *How To Do Your Research Project.* London: Sage Publications Ltd.

Thomas, J. (1993) *Doing Critical Ethnography*. California: Sage.

Thomas, L. and Quinn, J. (2007) *First Generation Entry Into Higher Education: An International Study.* Milton Keynes: Open University Press.

Thompson, P. and Walker, M. (2010) *The Routledge Doctoral Students Companion.* Oxon: Routledge.

Thompson, Ron (2011) Reclaiming the disengaged? A Bourdieuian analysis of work based learning for young people in England, *Critical Studies in Education,* 52:1, 15 -28.

Thomson, R., Bell, R., Holland, J., Henderson, S., McGrellis, S. and Sharpe, S. (2002) Critical Moments: Choices, Chance and Opportunity in Young people's Narrative and Transition, *Sociology,* 36:2, 335-354.

Thornton, A., Pikering, E., Peter M., Leathwood, C., Hollingworth, S., Mansaray, A. (2014) School and College Strategies to Raise Aspirations of High Achieving Disadvantaged Pupils to pursue Higher Education. From: www.gov.uk/govt/publication Accessed: 9/1/2017.

Torgerson, C., Gorard, S., Low, G., Ainsworth. H., See, B.H. and Wright, K. (2008*) What are the factors that promote high post-16 participation of many minority groups?* A focused review of UK based aspirations literature. From: https://eppi.ioe.ac.uk Accessed: 9/10/2016.

Tomlinson, S. (2005) *Education in a post-welfare society*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Troyna, Barry (1998) 'The whites of my eyes, noses, ears …' a reflexive account of 'whiteness' in race related research', in P. Connolly & B. Troyna (eds) *Researching Racism in Education: Politics, Theory and Practice*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Turney, K. and Kao, G. (2009) Barriers to School Involvement: Are Immigrant Parents Disadvantaged? *Journal of Educational Research*, 102(4), 257-271.

University and College Union (2013) *NEETS Survey*. From: www.knowledgeeconomy.org.uk   Accessed: 15/10/2015.

Universities in East London, from: www.ucas.com Accessed: 23/11/2018.

Walford, G. (ed) (2008) *How to do Educational Ethnography.* London: Tufnell Press.

Walkerdine, V., Lucey, H., & Melody, J. (2001) *Growing Up Girl: Psychosocial exploration of class and gender.* Basingstoke: Palgrave.

Watson, J. (2013) Profitable portfolios: capital that counts in higher education, *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 34:3, 412-430.

Watts, M. & Bridges, D. (2006) 'The value of non-participation in higher education', *Journal of Education Policy,* 21:3, 267-290.

Willis, P. (1977) *Learning to Labour: How working class kids get working class jobs.* London: Ashgate Farnborough Saxon House.

Wisker, G. (2001) *The Postgraduate Research Handbook.* New York: Palgrave.

Wolf, A. (2011*) Review of Vocational education- The Wolf Report*. From: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/review-of-vocational-education-the-wolf-report.   Accessed: 6/7/2015.

Wood, N. (2013). Where did LOCOG go? *Management Today.* From: https://www.managementtoday.co.org/locog-go/article/1210890 Accessed: 24/11/2018.

Wright, S. (2005) *Young people's decision-making in 14-19 education and training: a review of the literature*. From: www.nuffield14-19review.org.uk Accessed: 6/1/2016.

Yates, S. and Payne, M. (2006), Not so NEET? A critique of the use of 'NEET' in setting targets for interventions with young people. *Journal of Youth Studies* 9:3, 329-344.

Yates, S., Harris, A., Sabates, R., Staff, J. (2011) Early Occupational Aspiration and Fractured Transitions: a study of entry into NEET status in the UK, *Journal of Social Policy,* 40(3), 513-534.

APPENDIX 1 – LIST OF NEET PARTICIPANTS

Table of young people not in education, employment or training ('NEET') who were interviewed.

All their personal details given below were given by the interviewees themselves. 'Class' for Gail and Sarika, deduced from data collected (reason: Chapter 3).

Key: FG=Focus group; I=Individual Interview; MC=Middle Class; WC=Working Class; F=Female; M=Male

'Future Plans' were attributed to becoming motivated by, and during, Possible's programme.

Name	Age	Gender	Ethnicity	Class	Parents' occupations	Qualifications	Current situation	Future Plans
Adam (I)	24	M	British-mixed race	WC	Mother: single-parent/unemployed Father: hospital porter (has gambling problem)	Sat GCSEs: no passes	Completing course with Possible; Homeless	Get room/ homeless shelter; FE/Sept: security guard course
Ailah (I)	20	F	British-Bangladeshi	WC	Mother: unemployed/ disabled; Father: waiter.	5 GCSEs A-C Completed Possible's course	To start volunteering for Possible soon; Applying to volunteer in a hospital	Become a doctor; FE/Sept: BTEC 'Access to Medicine'.
Akosua (FG)	20	F	British-African-Caribbean	WC	Mother: single parent; unemployed	No GCSEs	Completing Possible Course	FE/Sept: Access Course; apply to Middlesex University for nursing degree
Bernard (FG,I)	24	M	British-English	WC	Mother/single-parent: unemployed	No GCSEs	Obtained 4-week work experience with B & Q	Doing Maths & English. If B & Q work experience

						Completed Possible course		does not lead to a full-time job with them, will apply for apprenticeship
Charlie (I)	22	M	British-English	WC	Mother/single parent: unemployed	7 GCSEs: grades C to E; BTEC Engineering; Completed Possible's course	Volunteering for Possible to gain confidence	Has applied for Learning Support tutor post with FE. Reference provided by Possible
Gail (I)	20	F	British-Latvian	WC	Mother/single parent: unemployed; Father: in prison	1 GCSE: Maths, Grade C	Completing Possible's course; Applying for hotel jobs	FE: enrolled for ESOL classes; Obtain work: in a hotel, progress in it; May go to University as advised by sister
Gary (I)	22	M	British-African Caribbean	WC	Mother/single-parent: unemployed	8 GCSEs: grades B-E but no min. grade C in Maths and English; Completed BTEC	Unemployed. Does football training. Completed Possible's course	Has volunteered for Possible. Looking for work relating to his BTEC and join a football club
Hamid (FG,I)	19	M	British-Pakistani	MC	Mother: unemployed;	No GCSEs BTEC	Completing Possible's course	FE:BTEC in Sept. Get a job, a car, a house; have

Name	Age	Gender	Ethnicity	Class	Parents	Education	Current	Aspirations
					Father: owns 4 properties	(school advised BTEC instead of GCSEs)		property business like father
Kelly (FG)	20	F	British-English	WC	Parents: unemployed	No GCSEs	Completing Possible's course.	Applying to do voluntary work with young people; Do 'Youth Work' and 'Child Care courses'
Lydia (FG)	24	F	British-English	WC	Mother: unemployed Father: disabled	3 GCSEs Did a 'Performing Arts' course	Completed Possible's course.	Identifying a 'Journalism' course - to work in magazine production
Martin (FG,I)	20	M	British-African-Caribbean	WC	Mother/ single-parent: 2 cleaning jobs	No GCSEs. Completed Possible's course-first time completed a course	Has conviction. About to become a father (2nd child), girlfriend in prison	FE: Sept: Music course. Be an excellent father to child to be born. Work as a youth worker/be a musician
Monir (FG)	24	M	British-Bangladeshi	WC	Mother: single-parent; Unemployed	No GCSEs	Completing Possible's course	FE/Sept: IT course; To work in IT

Nadia (I)	21	F	British-East African	WC	Mother: unemployed; Father: unemployed/ alcoholic	2 GCSEs: English, Maths. Performing Arts College: dropped out after 2 months. FE: BTEC: Health & Social Care: dropped out.	Completing Possible's course Awaiting interview with Monsoon-part-time work	FE: BTEC Business and to start business with sister
Reena (I)	19	F	British-Indian	WC	Both parents: restaurant workers	8 GCSEs, A*in Science, but no grade C in English. Completed BTEC in Applied Science.	Completing Possible's course; Applying to work as a henna artist to earn money whilst waiting to re-sit English GCSE	Re-sit GCSE English: need Grade C and above to go to University for Pharmacy degree: offered a place at Plymouth subject to obtaining GCSE English minimum grade C
Sarah (I)	22	F	British-African	WC	Mother/single parent; in employment.	9 GCSEs: 2 As, 6Bs, 1C; AS Level 2 Ds, 1E	Applying for Fashion related courses	Motivated to do a Fashion Foundation Course and then go to University

						Completed Possible's course		
Sarika (I)	18	F	British-Hungarian	WC	Mother: cleaner Father: lorry driver	5 GCSEs: A-D; BTEC: Childcare- dropped out (bored).	Completing Possible's course; applying for temporary jobs for the summer before starting FE course in Sept	FE/Sept: BTEC Childcare Higher level; Interested in going to University after that
Sekinat (FG)	23	F	British-African	WC	Mother: single parent; unemployed	7 GCSEs	Unemployed; Has a child Completing Possible's course	FE/Sept: Access course to do nursing degree/midwifery
Sukhor (I)	24	M	British-Bangladeshi	MC	Mother: unemployed; Father: self-employed	8 GCSEs A–C, 2 A-levels; University: IT Degree, dropped out; Completed Possible's course	Applying for IT related jobs with guidance from Possible	Work in IT for a city firm; assist in father's business

APPENDIX 2 - PILOT STUDY INFORMATION LETTER

'Understanding why some young people become ''NEET': a pilot study of the views of staff working with young people who are "NEET'

June 2011

Dear

I am undertaking a Doctorate in Education (EdD) at the Institute for Policy Studies in Education (IPSE), at London Metropolitan University. My research study relates to young people (aged 16 – 24 years) who are Not in Education Employment or Training (NEET).

The overall aim of the doctoral research is to explore the experiences and trajectories of young people who become labelled as 'NEET' and as it is a diverse group, to determine to what extent these are influenced by class. Despite various measures (Aim Higher, Educational Maintenance Allowance, New Flexible Deal, Vocational Diplomas, the Widening Participation Policy), there are currently 938,000 young people identified as 'NEET' (DoE: Feb, 2011).

I am interested in undertaking a pilot to study the views of staff working with young people who are 'NEET'. The aims of the study are: to explore staff perceptions of the factors that play a role in some young people becoming 'NEET' and to identify the services provided by organisations for 'NEET'.

As you work with the 'NEET' group at your organisation, I would like to invite you to participate in the study. This would involve being interviewed by me, for about 45mins to an hour. The questions will centre on the topics outlined in the aims, cited above.

The data collected, including personal information, will be kept securely and I would like to assure you that your anonymity and confidentiality will be respected and protected at all times. Please note that it will be your right to withdraw from participating at anytime: before, during or after the process, without offering a reason for doing so.

If you do participate, the information that you have offered will be used to answer the research questions. Extracts from your interview data might be quoted or referred to in my thesis and in any other publications that may follow on the topic. However, as stated above, your anonymity and confidentiality will be protected and in no way will you be identified.

If you do accept my invitation and agree to participate in the research study, please complete the attached consent form and return it to me.

Thank you very much.

Heera Rajah   (Project will be supervised by Prof Leathwood

h.rajah@londonmet.ac.uk   c.leathwood@londonmet.ac.uk)

APPENDIX 3 - CONSENT FORM

I, (please print full name) …………………………………………………..,

agree to participate in the research study being conducted by Heera Rajah.

I understand that:

1) I have the right to withdraw before, during or after the interview (s) and I do not have to give any reason for doing so, nor will I be penalised in any way for doing so.

If I seek to do so, I can request for the data collected up to then to be destroyed.

2) If I agree to participate, some or all of the data collected from interviewing me may be quoted or referred to in Heera Rajah's Doctoral thesis, or any subsequent publications by her.

I agree to the above mentioned use of the information I provide on condition that:

1) My anonymity will be respected and protected at all times
2) Confidentiality will be maintained about my role in the research study
3) Any data collected about me or from me will be respected and protected
4) Any data that I offer will be held securely and destroyed as soon as practicable

The accompanying letter to participants, detailing the nature and purpose of the research study, has been read and understood by me. I have also been granted the opportunity to seek clarifications and ask questions about any aspect of the research study.

I agree to participate in the research study on the above terms.

Signature of Participant: …………………………………… Date: …………………

Signature of Researcher: …………………………………. Date: ……………….

APPENDIX 4 - PILOT STUDY INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

<u>Interview Schedule:</u>   A Staff member at an organisation that works with young people who are NEET

<u>Introduction</u>

- Brief explanation of the study and purpose of the interview
- Re-emphasise the points on confidentiality and anonymity cited in information letter and consent forms
- Permission to record the interview
- Any questions?

<u>Questions</u>

1) Please can you tell me about your current job, your current role in your organisation?

2) How long have you been doing this work?

3) What services does your organisation provide to support those who are NEET? Can you tell me about other organisations offering similar service?

4) Please can you talk me through how you came into this field of work?

5) In your experience of working with the NEET group, what are the factors that play a role in some young people becoming NEET?
(prompt if required: family, school, peers, financial)

6) To what extent does class, gender, ethnicity, culture play a role in some young people becoming NEET?

7) What do you feel about the label 'NEET'?

8) How effective are the services you provide in terms of outcome?

9) What are the challenges / barriers that you face in trying to provide the services for those who are NEET?

APPENDIX 5 – INFORMATION LETTER FOR YOUNG PEOPLE PARTICIPATING IN INTERVIEWS

April 2012

Dear

I am a doctoral student at the Institute for Policy Studies in Education (IPSE), at London Metropolitan University. My research study is about the experiences young people (aged 16 – 25 years) who are not in education, employment or training.

I would like to invite you to participate in a group interview. This would involve a group discussion lasting for about 30 -45 minutes. The questions will centre on topics such as your school experience, your aspirations and careers guidance received in school, employment and training opportunities available for young people in your local area and the training programme you are doing now.

The interview will be recorded with your permission, and the audio file will be kept securely. Everything you say in the interview will be treated confidentially. You may withdraw your participation at any time: before, during or after the process, without offering a reason for doing so.

If you do participate, the interview will be transcribed later and used to answer the research questions of my study. Anonymised extracts from the interview data might be quoted or referred to in my thesis and in any other publications that may follow on the topic. However, as stated above, your anonymity and confidentiality will be protected and in no way will you be identified.

If you do accept my invitation and agree to participate in the research study, please complete the attached consent form and return it to me.

Thank you very much.

Heera Rajah

h.rajah@londonmet.ac.uk

(Project Supervisors:

Kim Allen: k.allen@londonmet.ac.uk

Ayo Mansaray: a.mansaray@londonmet.ac.uk)

APPENDIX 6 - YOUNG PEOPLE CONSENT FORM

I, (please print full name) ……………………………………………………..,

agree to participate in the research study being conducted by Heera Rajah.

I understand that:

1) I have the right to withdraw before, during or after the interview (s) and I do not have to give any reason for doing so, nor will I be penalised in any way for doing so.

If I seek to do so, I can request for the data collected up to then to be destroyed.

2) If I agree to participate, some or all of the data collected from interviewing me, may be quoted or referred to in Heera Rajah's Doctoral thesis, or any subsequent publications by her.

I agree to the above mentioned use of the information I provide on condition that:

1) My anonymity will be respected and protected at all times
2) Confidentiality will be maintained about my role in the research study
3) Any data collected about me or from me will be respected and protected
4) Any data that I offer will be held securely and destroyed as soon as practicable

The accompanying letter to participants, detailing the nature and purpose of the research study, has been read and understood by me. I have also been granted the opportunity to seek clarifications and ask questions about any aspect of the research study.

I agree to participate in the research study on the above terms.

Signature of Participant: ………………………………… Date: …………………

Signature of Researcher: …………………………………. Date: ……………….

APPENDIX 7 - FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Interview Schedule: young people attending training programme for those who are not in education, employment or training

The focus group session will begin with:

- A brief explanation of the study and purpose of the interview
- A re-emphasis of the points on confidentiality and anonymity, cited in information letter and consent forms
- A request for permission to record the interview
- An outline of the topics to be discussed
- An opportunity to ask any questions / clarifications

INTRODUCTION

I have this sheet on the table with some background information I would like about yourself. I shall write down the information, one by one, as you give it to me. Would you like to sit at another table to give me the information privately?

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

FAMILY

-Do you live at home? Please tell me something about your family.

(prompts: parents, siblings, extended family members?)

BACKGROUND / SCHOOLING

-Please talk me through your school experience: what was it like?

(prompts: liked/disliked, aspirations, inspirational teachers, motivated, raising of compulsory learning age)

-What were your aspirations?

(prompts: parents' expectations, siblings', own aspirations, affected by funding issues/ EMA)

-What kind of information and guidance did you receive in terms of your career aspirations?

-What did you think you would do when you finished school?
(prompts: college, 6th Form, work, etc)

-What happened when you finished school and how did this differ from what you expected?

-The government wants to raise the learning age / school leaving age to 18, do you think that would have made a difference to you?

POSSIBLE'S COURSE

-Coming on to what you are doing now, how did you find out about this Programme?

(prompts: from Job Centre/ parents / siblings / school/ own research)

-Why this particular programme?

(prompts: choice/ forced/ expectations, expectations met, suited their needs)

-How useful do you think this programme has been?

(prompts: what aspects they most enjoyed / not enjoyed, practical and geared towards getting a job or more about education, tutors on the course, tailored to their needs)

-Do you think that it makes a difference that the programme is run in a college?

CLASSIFICATION

-Thinking about how young people not in education, employment or training are classified, what do you feel about the label 'NEET'?

(prompts: know about this label / use a couple of media illustrations from articles on this category to stimulate responses)

-Do you think it is a stigmatising label?

(prompts: indifferent, positive, negative connotations, identify or dis-identify with the label, etc)

-What do you think, if anything, that all the young people on this course have in common?

FUTURE PLANS

-What do you intend on doing after completing this course?

(prompts: work placement/ paid employment/ volunteering/ training course/ further education)

-Has doing this course changed what you were considering doing next?

APPENDIX 8 - INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Participants: Young people who are not in education, employment or training

Each interview session will begin with:

- A brief explanation of the study and purpose of the interview
- A re-emphasis of points on confidentiality and anonymity, cited in the information letter and consent forms
- A request for permission to record the interview
- An outline of the topics to be discussed
- An opportunity to ask any questions/ clarifications

INTRODUCTIONS

Please say a few words about yourselves: I have this sheet listing the background information about yourself I would like. I shall ask each and write down your answers or you can look at it and give me your answers as I write them down. If you do not wish to answer something, that is fine.

BACKGROUND/ SCHOOLING:

-Tell me a bit more about your school experience: you mentioned previously that you enjoyed / did not enjoy school and it affected you positively/ negatively: was this always the case and if not when it did happen?

(Prompts: secondary school / start of GCSE year-Yr 10)

-Please talk me through why this happened?

(Prompts: depending on enjoyed /did not enjoy: supportive/ non-supportive staff, subjects liked/ disliked; confident / lack of confidence, learnt easily/ learning difficulties, bullying/ friendly peers)

-Did you approach anyone for help with your school problems?

(Prompts: teachers, school support staff, parents/ grandparents/ siblings)

-Did you look forward to school trips - participate in school trips and if not, why not?

(Prompts: lack of funds, did not like them, parents taken you already)

-What encouragement were you given by your teachers to take your GCSE exams

(Prompts: none; exam significance explained/not explained; teacher met with parent(s) to explain).

-What kind of guidance did you receive from your teachers with regard to what you could do after Year 11 / post-school pathways?

ROLE OF PARENTS / FAMILY

-Please could you tell me something about your family?

(Prompts: parental employment, education; siblings: ages and what they do; grandparents)

-Did you look forward to your school holidays and what did you do during the holidays?

 (Prompts: family holidays in UK/ overseas; learning activities with family and / or siblings like visiting museums, local sports / leisure activities; watched TV; no money, just hang around with friends)

-What about visits to your local library, did you go often with your parents/ siblings and what did you do there?

(Prompts: read there, borrow books/ not borrow, had lots of books at home, participated in activities)

-Did you have regular extra-curricular activities like music lessons, swimming, drama classes in the evenings, or the weekends?

-Take me through your family situation: did any factors have an influence on you and if so, in what ways?

(Prompts: cultural, religious, gender based, looking after siblings, elderly parents, financial)

-Would you say that your parents' were involved in your education?

(Prompts: how helped: followed your school work; helped with homework; attended
Parent - Teacher meetings; talked to teachers if you had special problems. Could not help because…)

INFLUENCE OF PEERS / SIGNIFICANT OTHERS

-Please tell me about your friends?

(Prompts: in school; outside school: in neighbourhood)

-Did you ask them for advice / guidance when you were not sure about something?

-Who would you say has influenced your choices regarding what to do after leaving school?

  (Prompts; teachers, family, peers/significant other)

-Has this influence been helpful/ unhelpful?

EMPLOYMENT

-Please talk me through your experience of trying to get a job after leaving school.

-What do you think have been the problems / drawbacks, if any?

  (Prompts: ethnicity, gender, class, lack of confidence, no qualifications, no jobs)

-Did you get internships or work experience, even if you could not get jobs?

-Did any of your friends get jobs or work experience/ internships and if so how?

-Did you discuss your post-school pathways with your family / siblings / teachers whilst still in school?

-What factors would you say have contributed to you being not in any form of education, employment or training since the age of 18?

-Looking back what could have helped you to avoid / prevent the situation you have been in since leaving school / FE?

(Prompts: family, school/FE: information, advice and guidance; Job Centre personnel; family; local labour market knowledge, confidence, willingness to travel, qualifications, GCSE grades A* - C in Maths and English)

POSSIBLE'S SELF-DEVELOPMENT COURSE

-Nearing the end of the course / having completed the course, have you benefited from it and if so, how?

-Do you wish it had been longer?

-If a longer programme, what else would you like to see included?

-You had mentioned that one of the benefits was that the team became a 'family'- was this important and why?

-Is continued support Possible can provide after the course helpful / will be helpful?

FUTURE PLANS

-What are your plans for when you complete your course / or now that you have completed it?

-If original plans have changed, why and what are you planning to do instead?

-If not, have you started already on anything as planned and if so how is it going?

(Prompts: interesting, as expected, learning useful skills/ knowledge, easy to learn; difficulties in learning/ understanding, helpful tutors)

-To those who said in focus group about starting a business: still the aim?

  (If not, why not?)

-Do you talk to your parent (s) about your future plans?

  (if no, why not?)

-If not talk with parent (s), with whom do you discuss about your future plans?

-What would your parent (s) like you to do/ their expectations for your future?

-Does it matter to you what your parent(s) want for you?

As I said at the start, the purpose of my talking to you and also your friends over the last few months is to understand better why some young people become not in education, employment or training. We have had a long chat and you have told me lots, but is there anything more you want to say?

-Any questions?

- End: thank you very much for talking to me and I wish the best for your future plans.