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The experience of working-class students in a new dual-sector university: an extension of extant structural inequalities or transformative opportunities?

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Abstract

This study investigates the experiences of first-in-family participants in a dual-sector university in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland. In the context of the continuing debate around inequality in participation rates in higher education in Scotland and on-going concern with the attainment gap between working and middle-classes, I ask whether a dual-sector university could be perceived as being more relevant to the lives of non-traditional learners and provide an experience less alienating than a traditional university. I ask whether this dual sector environment can provide access to a valued higher education experience without causing the same sense of disjuncture and discomfort reported by many studies of working-class students' experience in the middle-class world of higher education (Reay et al. 2009b, Keane 2011, He Li 2013, Lee and Kramer 2013, He Li 2015).

The study was designed within an interpretivist paradigm, acknowledging the role of participant and researcher in co-creating knowledge and understanding. Using semi-structured interviews, towards the end of their first year, the experience of nine under-graduate students was explored. The methodological design and data analysis were informed by Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, capital and field. These concepts were employed as a framework within which the positioning of the students in relation to higher education and their interaction with the University could be considered.

The data evidenced an alignment between the habitus of the students and that of the University that eased their transition to higher education and sustained a motivational focus on the students' future career choice. Furthermore, the University prompted some students to extend their learning beyond the institution into vocational settings providing opportunities to begin to develop a professional identity from an early stage.

While the University provided local access to higher education to many who would otherwise have no opportunity to participate, the modest ambitions of the students and evidence of the continued pull of their primary habitus, suggested that the University offered opportunities for development and attainment that stopped short of transformation.

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Authors Declaration

'I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, that this dissertation is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution.'

Signed:



Printed name: Diane Rawlinson

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Inequalities and Higher Education

The prevailing discourse frames education as a means of liberation, a means of social mobility by which individuals can fully realise their potential (Thompson and Simmons 2013). This discourse identifies schools as having responsibility for challenging the low aspirations and expectations of the working classes (Stahl 2014) by framing education as a route to empowerment, a means of escape from traditional working class roles. The individual not engaging in further or higher education is somehow presented as 'incomplete' and 'unfinished' (Reay 2001a:338). Moreover, if an individual does not take up the 'opportunity' made available, then they are labelled as either lacking in ability or making poor life choices (Lehmann 2009a).

Under new Labour in the 1990s and subsequent Governments, including the Scottish National Party, we have seen a level of continuity in the discourse that links an educated workforce with national economic success. Young people are encouraged to invest in themselves in order that they can compete for the best jobs (Tomlinson 2008).

Despite this discourse and the prevalence of policies aiming to widen access to higher education, (for instance, inter alia Scottish Government 2007, Scottish Government 2008, Scottish Government 2010, Scottish Government 2016, Scottish Government 2017) and notwithstanding the well-reported expansion in student enrolments in recent decades (The Sutton Trust 2008), inequality in terms of participation persists (Riddell et al. 2013).

My aim in undertaking this small-scale research project was to investigate this continuing phenomenon of inequality using the lens of Bourdieu, operationalising his concepts of habitus, capital and field in order to develop a better understanding of the experience of the working-class student taking their first steps into higher education and in doing so, explore specific barriers working-class students have to overcome.

Having worked in the further education sector in Scotland for over twenty-five years, I had encountered many students embarking on a second chance at the education game. For many, this second foray into the world of education

followed years of self-exclusion prompted by negative experiences in their compulsory education years. The mature students I had encountered were frequently academically able; what they typically lacked was confidence along with a compass and map to help them steer a path through unfamiliar territory. I had also become aware of the potentially limiting impact of familial influencers when trying to persuade young people to commit to further study, to challenge themselves and to aspire to a better life. I understood that opportunity alone was not enough to challenge the status quo. My readings of Bourdieu's work resonated with these experiences and led to me choosing Bourdieu's concept of habitus as both the theoretical lens that would underpin my study as well as the root of the methodological approach I would take and the analysis of the data captured.

As Principal of one of the colleges within the University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI) partnership, I was working daily with the challenge of marrying two very different sectors within a single organisational structure. Inverness College UHI, is one of the largest academic partners that collectively comprise the University and is also the main provider of further education in the region. It offers access courses that lead to higher education and vocational skills development in construction trades, health and social care, early years' education, bricklaying, motor vehicle engineering, professional cookery and joinery amongst many others. It is also however, the sole university presence in a Highland urban zone, offering study from Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) level 7 to 12 and post-doctoral research opportunities in niche areas. I was aware of the challenges this brought (not least in resourcing such a venture) and was keen to investigate the potential a different type of university, (one that spans further and higher education sectors) might have in responding to the widening access agenda. My motivation in undertaking this study was therefore to gain a clearer understanding of the experience of working class students in higher education but specifically, in the context of this new dual-sector university.

This study builds on a substantial body of knowledge compiled to-date on widening access and issues of reproduction of inequality in education using the Bourdieu's 'thinking tools' of habitus, capital and field (see inter alia, Reay 2001, Ball 2003, Read et al. 2003, Reay 2004, He Li 2013, Lehmann 2014).

Building on this earlier research, I attempted to dig beneath what Morrison refers to the 'class-less meritocratic assumptions of the widening participation agenda' whereby 'opportunities are offered and the non-traditional working classes simply have to aspire to them' to shed light on the reality of the experience of non-traditional higher education students (2010:77). In this dual-sector context in the Highlands of Scotland, I investigated the reality of higher education for the working-class student.

A key principle of Bourdieu's concept of habitus relevant to my study is the 'internalisation', or what Bourdieu refers to as, the subconscious 'programming' of the individual, to think and act in a particular way. Bourdieu explains the habitus as being, 'a present past that tends to perpetuate itself into the future by reactivation in singularly structured practices' (2015:54). For Bourdieu, the repeated experiences of the individual create internal structures that not only frame their perception and interpretation of the world but also influence their present and future actions or practice.

Working for many years in the further education sector in Scotland, I had first-hand experience of the challenge of engaging non-traditional learners in any form of post-compulsory education. The literature illustrates the disjuncture experienced by working-class students when first exposed to the very alien and middle-class context of higher education while illuminating the contrastingly close alignment between the habitus of the traditional white, middle class, male university student and this field of social interaction. Unlike the traditional higher education student, the working class student is, within this body of work, described as having developed a primary habitus and a set of dispositions that do not position the student well in the context of higher education. The working-class student is portrayed as being uncomfortably aware of their lack of fit and lack of understanding of what can appear to be opaque and alien academic norms, all in addition to the trial of coping with the academic challenge of study in higher education faced by all students (Reay et al. 2009b). My aim in carrying out this study was to establish whether this debilitating sense of disjuncture would also be a feature of the experience of working class students in a different higher education setting, that of the dual sector university.

This study takes the findings of prior research into account and considers the experience of working-class students on under-graduate programmes in a dual-

sector university. That is, a university that spans all levels of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) and encompasses the work of both further and higher education. It attempts to operationalise the concepts of Bourdieu to investigate the experiences of working-class students in this fresh context.

As the dual-sector institution was a new university structure in Scotland, I considered it a relevant and important research context, potentially to inform future sector-wide developments as well as inform the development of local practice within my own institution in relation to inclusion, pedagogy and student support. Although the findings of this study were unlikely to benefit the participants directly, I intended to use any understanding gleaned to inform practice in future years.

1.2 A New Dual-sector University Context

Dual-sector institutions have emerged since the late 1980s (Gallagher 2006). These can be further education colleges that deliver higher education, for instance, in England through development and delivery of foundation degrees in partnership with universities, or franchising of degrees in colleges in Scotland. The number of universities providing further education courses adds further complexity to the landscape. There are numerous international examples of dual sector universities (for instance in Australia, Canada, New Zealand and South Africa) and research has pointed to an increasing lack of distinction between the two sectors of further and higher education (Gallagher 2006, Garrod and MacFarlane 2007). The so-called 'dual sector' institutions are diverse in organisational structure, governance arrangements and cultures, reflecting their different histories (Garrod and MacFarlane 2007). They are a relatively new phenomenon with a heterogeneity that can perhaps impede our understanding of the potential benefits and additional challenges they bring.

There has been increasing interest in researching the higher education experience the so-called dual-sector institution offers (see for instance, Bathmaker et al. 2008, Parry et al. 2008, Bathmaker and Thomas 2009, Fenge 2011, Leahy 2012). The emerging picture however, is opaque with obscurity caused, in part, by the complexity of the landscape described above. In England, for instance, Parry et al. report 270 further education institutions delivering higher education and 40 universities that deliver some further education courses (2008). In Scotland there are widening-access partnerships

providing curriculum maps with detailed articulation links, some leading to a guaranteed interview at the receiving university, a few with a number of guaranteed places. In addition, all of the further education colleges in Scotland deliver higher education in the form of HNCs and HNDs with several delivering degrees through franchise arrangements with universities. More recently, two dual-sector institutions, have been formed in Scotland, one of a specialist nature (Scotland's Rural University College SRUC) and one generalist (the University of the Highlands and Islands), the latter having University title.

Throughout the UK and indeed in an international context, there are institutions providing learning opportunities that span the further and higher education sector divide. Despite this, we know little about the student experience within these institutions (Garrod and MacFarlane 2007). Some have geographically distinct further and higher education sectors with accompanying distinct brands. Some have separate governance, funding and quality management regimes. In some, staff teach across sector boundaries and in others, the structure is more integrated (Garrod and MacFarlane 2007). This complexity exacerbates the issue of the lack of research available.

Much of the research that exists, focusses on the degree to which the provision in the dual sector institution complies with or is distinct from the traditional university experience. Leading some, for example, to question the validity of the higher education experience offered within this new environment (Morrison 2009, Leahy 2012). They question the approaches to learning adopted, the nature of the learning space, the likelihood of teacher participation in scholarship and research and the degree of academic autonomy.

The Scottish Government in recent months has promoted the depiction of education as a 'Learner Journey' operating seamlessly across sectors, serving the needs of the learner, rather than any one sector (Scottish Government 2017). The Scottish college and university sectors are engaging in this dialogue, differently positioning themselves as proactively responding to the Government's agenda, promoting their success in supporting student progression through the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (Colleges Scotland 2016, Universities Scotland 2017). Neither of these sectors however successfully captures the dual-sector context and amidst national concern with the need to close the poverty attainment gap through seamless provision of education across

SCQF levels, I considered this remiss. This study brings the higher education experience offered in a dual-sector institution into the widening access debate and that of the 'Learner Journey' and considers the potential impact of this different structure on the learner experience.

1.3 The University of the Highlands and Islands and its partner 'Inverness College UHI'

Inverness College UHI is an institution with its origins rooted firmly in the further education sector. The College was established in a Highland urban zone in 1960 to provide for the post-compulsory education and training needs of the region. Even in 2015, approximately 65% of its provision is categorised as further education and if higher national certificate and diploma awards (normally almost exclusively delivered in the FE sector) are included in this measure, this percentage rises even more. Traditional higher education, in the form of either top-up degrees or full four-year undergraduate degrees, is a relatively small but rapidly growing proportion of its work.

Inverness College UHI is one of the largest constituent colleges of the University of the Highlands and Islands. The University comprises 12 partner colleges and research institutes (known within the partnership as academic partners) serving the Highlands and Islands region. The University achieved university title and teaching degree awarding powers in 2011 and at the time of writing, was waiting for formal notification of its achievement of research degree awarding powers. Up to this point, an established university, one of the sponsoring institutions, had accredited research degrees.

The University, through its academic partner colleges and research institutes, serves a region that comprises half the land mass of Scotland and encompasses some very rural and remote areas. The original University of the Highlands and Islands project was developed in response to the need to provide access to higher education within the region. A collaborative venture linking all of the colleges and research institutes in the region was believed to be the solution to the issue of geographical remoteness and inaccessibility. Since its inception, increasingly sophisticated means of collaborative development and delivery have supported an expanding higher education curriculum. The academic partners collaborate to deliver a proportion of their courses through a blended delivery

mode (a mixed economy approach combining face-to-face instruction, video-conferenced lectures and on-line learning). Some provision is entirely on-line. Through this means, the University is able to support a greater breadth of curriculum in very remote areas where small class sizes would prohibit traditional face-to-face independent delivery. The presence of the University in the region brings access to higher education to non-traditional learners who are unable to leave the region for the period of their higher education study. It also supports young people who wish to undertake higher education study while living at home. In doing so, the University's provision forms a key strand of the Highlands and Islands' strategy to retain young people and reduce outward-migration of those of working age to the central belt of Scotland (Highlands and Islands Enterprise 2016).

Institutional documentation at the level of college and university explicitly states a commitment to the 'integrated' nature of UHI promoting and developing its further and higher education provision (University of the Highlands and Islands 2015:3). The curriculum offered by Inverness College UHI is designed to facilitate seamless articulation between further and higher education programmes and many staff teach across both sectors. This documentation, and that of the university partnership, indicates an aim to provide an environment with no unnecessary divisions across the two tertiary sectors.

Unlike the dual-sector institutions that feature in the 'Further Higher Project' (Parry et al. 2008), Inverness College UHI explicitly declares, 'a commitment to parity of esteem for vocational and academic study', to be at the heart of the organisation. That said, the University and its academic partners have struggled to reconcile at times the competing demands of its constituent parts and the differing values and culture of the further and higher education sectors.

Inverness College UHI has historically supported extensive modern apprenticeship provision across the construction trades and engineering that later expanded to include modern apprenticeships in business, information technology and hospitality. It also has well-established research centres and a growing number of PhD students researching subjects ranging from forestry to literature. The sign on the front of the college denotes the organisation as a

university and a college. Although the ground floor of the College is dominated by heavy engineering and construction trade workshops serving a large number of apprenticeships, it is frequently locally referred to as a campus of UHI rather than Inverness College.

Despite the nomenclature and the fact that the combined number of undergraduates and post-graduates has grown in the last three years by 24%, these are not the hallowed halls of academe. Within this setting, higher education students are more likely to be sharing a library space, corridors and cafeteria with those enrolled on non-advanced performing arts, plumbing and hairdressing courses than fellow undergraduates or post-graduate researchers. Go inside the building and the dual-sector nature of the institution is apparent. There is no segregation of learning spaces and students enrolled on further and higher education programmes share informal, collaborative learning and social spaces. Students come to college clutching ipads and academic journals as well as boiler suits and beauty therapy vanity cases.

The College has a research strategy and invites staff to bid into a research and scholarship fund. Organisationally, efforts are made through staff conferences to raise the profile of staff engaging in research and their workshops sit alongside those aimed at developing innovation in pedagogy and professional development. At the same time, the College is engaged in work with those considered furthest from the employment market and unable yet to cope with even mainstream further education. The institution offers a very different insight into the student higher education experience than studies to date and with the growing number of dual-sector institutions, both in the UK and globally, I believed it was worth further exploration.

Many staff have been employed by the institution for decades and have experienced the development of the organisation from further education institution with all its sectoral emphasis on second chance learning, support for additional needs, strong community links and support for vocational skills development (Halliday 1996). I was interested to see how this context that was clearly differentiated from a traditional university would impact the students' experience. I was keen to observe the interplay of working-class student habitus with this institution.

Since the granting of university title, and due to an ageing staff demographic, Inverness College UHI had experienced significant staff turnover and adopted a sustained commitment to investment in staff development, particularly to advanced-degree level. Many of the newly recruited staff did not have the same, shared institutional history, knowing only Inverness College UHI as part of the wider University, some only teaching on higher education programmes. In light of this, I was interested to see whether the institution, like those described by Bathmaker and Thomas (2009), was developing a single habitus or two.

This dissertation comprises six chapters. This, the first chapter, sets the context of the study in terms of the Scotland. The second chapter places this study into the context of the existing body of research, identifying prompts that informed my research design and issues that I believed required further investigation in the dual-sector setting. Chapter 3 explains the methodology adopted, the research design and the approach taken to data analysis. In Chapter 4, I report the main findings of the study that are then analysed in the light of the literature in Chapter 5. Finally, in Chapter 6, I summarise the conclusions that emerged.

Chapter 2 The Research Context

In my study I aimed to build upon the extensive body of research that considers inequalities in higher education, using the theoretical lens of Bourdieu's 'thinking tools' of habitus, capital and field, adding new knowledge through my focus on the dual-sector university context. This chapter explores the key findings of the literature that in turn influenced the research questions I developed and the methodology I adopted. Within the chapter, I introduce Bourdieu's thinking tools of habitus, capital and field and explain their relevance to the phenomenon of persistent inequality in levels of participation of different class groups in higher education and to my study of the experience of working-class students in a dual-sector university.

This chapter has three sections. In the first, I introduce Bourdieu's concept of habitus and its usefulness as a heuristic tool. I employ Bourdieu's concept of habitus to explain how our earliest sustained experiences and interactions programme us to a particular way of being, influencing our interpretation of the world around us and our position in it. I use Bourdieu's concept of habitus to explore the differing relationship the middle and working-classes have with education and consider how habitus can have both a reproductive and transformative influence in the education field.

In the second section of the chapter, I survey the literature that identifies the working-class habitus through the practice of decision-making in the context of higher education. I consider the body of research that investigates the experience of the working-class student in higher education and discuss the much-reported emotional impact caused by misalignment of the working-class habitus with the middle-class domain of the university. I then move on to the concept of a cleft habitus: the simultaneous holding of two habituses at once and the consequent difficulties for students in this divided state, moving between two worlds but belonging to neither. Finally, I consider the findings of studies that illustrate how some working-class students are challenging the dominant discourse and interpreting their dispositions positively in the middle-class university setting.

The third section of the chapter introduces the concept of the collective habitus, and reviews the literature that reports on how the collective practice and culture of an organisation can mediate the impact of a classed environment

on an individual. In this section, I explore studies that have reported on the institutional habitus from the perspective of institutional status, asking whether the institution's position in the hierarchy of the field affects the students' confidence in the ability of the institution to meet their needs. I then consider the expressive order of the university, that is, 'the expectations, conduct and manners embedded and expressed through the institutional culture' Morrison (2009), discussing the findings of studies that investigate the engagement of the student with their university beyond course requirements. Finally, I explore through the literature, the debate around the legitimacy of the higher education experience offered by differing institutions.

2.1 Bourdieu's Concept of Habitus and Classed Practice

In *Reproduction*, Bourdieu and Passeron define habitus as:

the product of the internalisation of the principles of a cultural arbitrary capable of perpetuating itself after pedagogic action has ceased and thereby perpetuating in practices the principles of an internalised arbitrary (2000:31).

Bourdieu suggests then that the key principle of the concept of habitus is the 'internalisation' or what he refers to as the 'programming' of the individual to think and act in a particular way at the level of sub-consciousness. Bourdieu explains the habitus as being, 'a present past that tends to perpetuate itself into the future by reactivation in singularly structured practices' (2015:54). For Bourdieu, the repeated experiences of the individual create internal structures that not only frame their perception and interpretation of the world but also influence their present and future actions or practice.

The primary habitus, Bourdieu and Passeron propose, develops in the family setting (2000). It is this habitus, he explains, that is most durable, establishing a way of being that has most impact on an individual's life trajectory (Bourdieu 2015:54). The pedagogical action of the parent, Bourdieu argues, establishes deep within our psyche, what is fitting and attainable 'for the likes of us' (2015:56). It is our 'embodied history, internalised as a second nature and therefore forgotten as history' (2015:56).

That said, Bourdieu does not dismiss agency but argues rather that conscious intent or practice is carried out following a sub-conscious assessment of risk and/or likely outcomes which is governed by the habitus - a process described by

Bourdieu as 'structuring structures'. The impact of habitus is therefore to reject the riskiest practices in 'an immediate submission to order that inclines agents to make a virtue out of necessity' (2015:54).

As an educator committed to instilling a sense of excitement and ambition for the self in students, the potential constraints of the primary habitus of the working class student, curbing ambition through a tendency to reproduce the status quo, caught my attention. Bourdieu's explanation for persistence in inequality despite the prevalence of policies designed to challenge the status quo resonated with my experiences working in the sphere of further and more recently, higher education.

Bourdieu explains how habitus develops according to class groupings. In his work with Wacquant he illustrates how class habitus is 'capable of generating practices that are convergent and objectively orchestrated outside of any 'intention' or 'consciousness' (2007:125, in Kleanthous 2013:155). He does not suggest that all members of a class group will develop an identical habitus as each will have lived through different experiences and in different orders. However, he makes the case that members of a class group will have encountered experiences most likely for members of that group and that this similar history has a limiting effect on practice. Practice, he explains, will differ and will be, to an extent, unpredictable because habitus, 'makes possible the free production of all the thoughts, perceptions and activities inherent in the particular conditions of its production' but this freedom of thought and practice occurs only within the limits established by experience (2015:55).

Bourdieu and Passeron propose that the middle-class child's primary habitus establishes a predisposition to value education, an expectation of educational success and a confidence in interpersonal skills that equips her well for scholastic work. The working-class child on the other hand is more likely to have developed a perception that scholastic attainment is not 'for the likes of her', to have little access to educationally successful role models and have fewer opportunities to learn the rules 'of the game' (2000). They highlight the importance of the development of linguistic skill in the early years in the family environment. He points out how educational judgements regarding intellectual ability are made by the school based on a child's language skills. Similarly, he explains how displays of cultural knowledge are interpreted by teachers as

evidence of intellectual capacity. The middle-class child therefore, growing up in an environment where discussion and debate over dinner is the norm, where there are regular cultural outings, where literature is accessible and where they are introduced to a wide social network, is greatly advantaged.

Where a child's working-class habitus is misaligned with that of the educational field, early school experiences can reinforce existing pre-dispositions. Adopting Bourdieu and Passeron's language, the primary habitus structures experiences in that lack of success at school, relative to the middle-class child, serves to confirm the working-class child's assumption that they are less able and therefore limits scholarly ambition (2000).

However, habitus, Bourdieu states, is not simply the summation of an individual's experience but rather an evolving state. It can be used to explain how, 'individual and collective ever-structuring dispositions develop in practice to justify individuals' perspectives, values, actions and social practice' (Murphy and Costa 2016:4). Unfortunately, as Bourdieu explains, the education system is structured ways that serve to reinforce and confirm a social hierarchy in which the middle-classes are the dominant group. From early school years, the working-classes, he argues, are disadvantaged and their school experiences reinforce their beliefs that they are not destined for academic success. The structures of education, he proposes, are structuring in that they confirm the understanding developed in the working class home environment, that their future lies elsewhere (Bourdieu and Passeron 2000).

Developing a better understanding of how the education system constrains the realms of possibility for some therefore was then one of the underpinning aims of my study.

2.1.1 Habitus and its role in reproduction in society

Bourdieu developed his 'thinking tool' of habitus to explain the enduring hierarchies and inequalities in society. In *Reproduction*, Bourdieu and Passeron explain the process by which inequalities persist. He describes how the importance of the early experience in the family and the pedagogical action of the parent creates the conditions for reinforcement of already established inequality during the school years of compulsory schooling. He proposes that habitus, consisting of 'schemes of perception, conception and action' are

'common to all members of the same group' (Murphy and Costa 2016:19). He explains how habitus is formed through a prolonged period of socialisation to the point at which it creates a sub-conscious way of perceiving and interpreting the world. He argues that the family 'tends to realise more fully the tendencies of all pedagogic action and is thus able, even in modern societies, to fulfil the role of a conservatory of inherited traditions' (2000:32).

Bourdieu explains that it is through exposure to repeated experiences and interactions with parents and significant others, over time, shared values and beliefs become inculcated in the individual. Those growing up in a typically middle-class home with parents and immediate family members who have higher education experience and professional careers will, he argues, grow up with an expectation of the same. For some, participation in higher education is even a 'non-decision', an unspoken entitlement that is never questioned (Ball et al. 2002, Reay et al. 2005, Crozier et al. 2008b). For the working-class child however lacking access to such role models and expectations, progression to higher education is far from an expectation. Although some do make it, described by Bourdieu as the 'lucky survivors', they do so more as the result of good fortune rather than conscious strategising (Ball et al. 2002, Crozier et al. 2008b).

Habitus sub-consciously establishes awareness and expectations of our position in the world. It sets boundaries that limit perceived possibility and inform our practice accordingly. As Dumais (2002:46) states:

individuals internalise their relative position and come to determine their possibilities, adjusting their aspirations and expectations according to perceived opportunities.

Bourdieu explains, habitus as:

a system of schemes of thought, perception, appreciation and action - produces misrecognition of the limitations implied by this system, so that the efficacy of the ethical and logical programming it produces is enhanced by misrecognition of the inherent limits of this programming (2000:40).

In simple terms, the working-classes interpret their negative school experiences caused by structural inequalities as a measure of their intellectual ability and justification of their beliefs that educational success is not a possibility for them.

The programming of the primary habitus of the working-class child to have low expectations of educational success and social mobility is reinforced by early school experiences due to the tendency of the education system to reproduce societal inequalities and reinforce the dominant culture. The limiting effect of the primary habitus is, Bourdieu explains, never greater than when those limits are set with the collusion of those dominated (2000:13). It is, he argues, the unrecognised arbitrary means of discrimination and disadvantage that gives the reproductive nature of the education system its strength.

As a dual-sector University, the University of the Highlands and Islands is the main provider of both further and higher education in the region. Mature students and non-traditional students apply in large numbers and many of these are seeking a second chance in education having had a poor school experience. Having worked in further education for over 25 years amongst colleagues who shared my commitment to widening access, I had an established level of confidence that the institution I was leading was inclusive and equitable in its academic judgements. Bourdieu's work however, prompted me to reflect further, asking whether this dual-sector institution was inadvertently discriminating against working-class students and supporting an inequitable society.

2.1.2 Habitus as permeable and transformable

As Mills states, many have accused Bourdieu of determinism (2008). Bourdieu, however, was keen to assert that 'habitus is not the fate that some people read into it' (2007:133) but rather, was capable of evolution or transformation.

According to Bourdieu, the individual is 'socially bound, socially structured', that is, our past, and particularly our early and repeated experiences frame our thinking and filter our interpretation of the world. However, Bourdieu grants that habitus is resilient but not everlasting and is impacted by on-going experiences. Experiences can both strengthen and adapt its structures but Bourdieu explains, individuals are more likely to be exposed to experiences that reinforce rather than transform the habitus and this predisposes the process to reproduction (2015).

Research has given us insight into the working-class habitus. Leathwood and O'Connell (2003), for instance, describe the working-class tendency towards

negative self-assessment; a sense of not being good enough. Winlow describes the traditional male working class disposition for hard work and engagement in manual labour that not only displays a toughness but the priority given to providing for one's family (2001) and Stahl further discusses the pride exhibited by the young men in his study in their commitment to finding employment (2014). Preoccupation with honour and avoidance of shame are recurrent themes in Winlow's (2001) work and Stahl's (2014) and further discussed by Reay across gender groups in relation to the value the working classes attribute to authenticity, and avoidance of being exposed as a fraud (2001). Winlow (2001), Stahl (2014) and Ingram (2009) each describe the working classes in terms of their need to fit in, to belong, even when they freely discuss the negative aspects of the community in which they find themselves.

The limiting impact on working-class individuals of the habitus that does not recognise higher education as attainable or even relevant to their lives is much reported (Hutchings and Archer 2001, Archer and Yamashita 2003, Mills 2008). According to Bourdieu, this limitation is 'the product of a particular economic condition, defined by possession of the minimum economic and cultural capital necessary to actually perceive and seize the potential opportunities afforded to all' (2007:124). The opportunities offered by the education system are not recognised by those at which they are targeted and through a 'self-regulated mechanism' (2015:62), they self-exclude.

That said, investment in the game of education features strongly in the work of Reay et al (2009b) and others, Lehmann (2013), Leathwood and O'Connell (2003), illustrating the dangers of adopting a simple binary model to the complex concept of class. These studies highlight however, the difficulty many working class students have in negotiating the highly complex field of higher education. Reay for example discusses the immense confusion experienced by students seeking to take up places in higher education. He Li (2015) and Lehmann (2012) further highlight the difficulties experienced by some working class young people once at university due to their previously restricted social networks and lack of confidence in the new social setting of the university.

In comparison, studies of middle-class young people have illustrated a consistently high level of self-confidence, a sense of entitlement and ease in moving between social groupings. They have described a belief in the value of

education and an ability to feel at home in an academic environment. Higher education is a natural progression from school for the middle-class child and typically, their family offers them inside knowledge and role models that can make the transition to higher education a process that requires little conscious deliberation (Read et al. 2003).

Other studies argue that working-class students challenge and counter the dominant discourse of aspiration and on-going development of the self. Stahl (2014) argues that working-class dispositions that prioritise a commitment to authenticity and loyalty to one's community and friends cause the young men he was working with to negotiate a position that enabled them to reconcile the influence of their embedded masculine working class dispositions with the aspirational goals of the dominant neo-liberal discourse. Winlow (2001) also illustrates the need to consider an evolving working class habitus and the development of new dispositions in an emerging post-industrial environment where traditional gender roles, for instance, no longer have the same meaning. Studies have shown how for many working class students, in the challenging environment of the twenty-first century, engaging in higher education necessitates complex risk management strategies. To this end, students adopt an instrumental approach to course choice (Lehmann 2009b), and university choice (Reay et al 2001b), in order to negotiate a safer route through the system, with the intention of minimising financial risk while attempting to benefit from the graduate premium.

As I read Bourdieu, I reflected on the potential a dual-sector university might have in exposing those enrolled onto further education courses to the hidden and obscure world of higher education, almost by stealth. I was curious to know whether ridding the academic world of its mystique, could remove some of the reported barriers created by perceptions of irrelevance and unattainability.

A key concept for educators interested in tackling inequalities is that described by Bourdieu as 'illu^sio', a state of being invested in the game (of education) and an acceptance and understanding of the stakes (albeit subconscious). Bourdieu contrasts this with a state of indifference, a rejection of the game and a lack of understanding of the stakes at play (2000:66). Worryingly, Bourdieu explains that 'one does not embark on the game by a conscious act, one is born into the game, and the relation of the investment, illu^sio, investment is made more total

by the fact that it is unaware of what it is' (2000:67). To address inequality, therefore, it would seem that we need to move more young people from a state of indifference (where they are likely to self-exclude) to a state of *illusio* (where they will meaningfully engage), regardless of their starting point.

Bourdieu explains that awareness of the reproductive nature of habitus can limit its constraining influence. He states, 'The individual is always, whether he likes it or not, trapped - save to the extent that he becomes aware of it' (2007:126). Following the arguments of Bourdieu then, as educators, if we are to move young people from a state of indifference (prompted by internal structures that whisper self-doubt, anchoring the working classes to their established dispositions) to one of aspiration and investment in education, we need to challenge these dispositions engendered by the primary habitus by creating opportunities for reflexivity. We need to create opportunities to raise what is sub-conscious to the level of consciousness whereby young people can be encouraged to question their assumptions and beliefs, applying a level of objectivity to what they have previously taken for granted in order that they may understand the possibilities that are available to them.

To make this shift, a young person needs to recognise the relevance of education to their lives and also develop a self-concept that enables them to tackle successfully the challenges of academic study. Bourdieu cautions that one cannot enter the 'magic circle' by simply making a rational decision to do so but rather that one has either to be born into it or go through a 'slow process of co-option and initiation which is equivalent to a second birth' (2015:68).

The relevance of the concept of habitus to the educator committed to the development of a more equal higher education system is therefore self-evident, inviting the question of how the evolution or transformation of the habitus can be facilitated. In order to address issues of inequality in participation in higher education, we need to understand how we can support individuals through a process of transition and avoid the reproductive tendencies described above, facilitating a shift from a sub-conscious assumption of irrelevance and impossibility in regard to higher education to a conscious awareness of relevance and possibility.

The writings of Bourdieu prompted me to consider the degree to which the students enrolled at the University of the Highlands and Islands were invested in education as a means of achieving self-fulfilment. I was interested to establish whether the students were engaged in reflexive practice and were aware of the impact of their habitus on their interpretation of the world and their position in it. I further reflected on the potential significance of what Bourdieu proposed as the need for 'striking and sustained experiences' to effect habitus transformation. As discussed above, I had considered the potential a dual-sector university might have in exposing working class further education students to the world of higher education by stealth. I was also aware however that a dual-sector institution such as Inverness College UHI, with its integrated further/higher education character could perhaps be less strikingly different to a working-class student than, say, a traditional university. I was curious to establish whether this environment would therefore be too familiar and too comfortable to support a transformational change in the students (Morrison 2009).

2.1.3 Habitus, capitals and the field of higher education

For Bourdieu, social fields (for example higher education) are a 'space of conflict and competition, in which participants vie to establish monopoly over the species of capital effective in it' (2007:17).

Bourdieu describes a process by which capital is generated, through the habitus. Bourdieu identifies two forms of capital: field-specific capital (for example educational capital) and sub-divisions of these field-specific capitals into economic, social, cultural and symbolic capital (Rawolle and Lingard 2013). Kleanthous explains how the 'acquisition of cultural capital and consequent success depends on the cultural capital passed down by the family, which in turn is largely dependent on social class' (2013:156).

The middle-class child benefits from greater access to economic capital and from the routine development of social and cultural capital. The typically wider social networks to which they are exposed gives them confidence in interacting with others. Having witnessed their parents dealing confidently with those in positions of authority, they behave similarly themselves. They benefit from experiences that have informed a sophisticated understanding of the world and an appreciation of a variety of cultural forms (Archer and Hutchings 2000). The

typically middle-class habitus positions individuals advantageously in the field of education due to their well-developed linguistic skills, the confidence that comes from feeling comfortable in an academic world, understanding the unwritten rules and with cultural references being shared between them and their teachers. Consequently, the middle-class child is well placed to continue to be:

successful in their strategies of (capital) accumulation', at home in the education field and with good 'understanding of the rules of the game associated with those practices (Rawolle and Lingard 2013:125).

As Bourdieu explains, they are 'equipped with (the) cultural capital and the ability to invest it profitably' (in Kleanthous 2013:156). The middle-class child operating in the field of education is, as Bourdieu describes, like 'a fish in water: it does not feel the weight of the water and it takes the world round itself for granted' (2007:127).

Bourdieu explains how the advantage the middle-class child brings to educational experiences helps to maintain:

the illusion that its (education's) act of inculcation is entirely responsible for producing the cultivated habitus, or by an apparent contradiction that it owes its differential efficacy exclusively to the innate abilities of those who undergo it (2000:205).

In reality, he argues, the education system merely 'confirms' the inequalities of the already established primary habitus, causing Bourdieu to call into question the claimed meritocratic values of the education system (Bourdieu 2000).

Contrastingly, the working-class child has fewer opportunities to develop the same level of linguistic prowess (Bourdieu 2000:166). The working-classes have narrower social networks (Bathmaker et al. 2013) that do not offer the same opportunities to develop confidence in interacting with those in positions of authority. Family members without higher education success model a future that is sub-consciously accepted as being representative of what is possible and probable (Reay 2001).

Bourdieu's work prompted me to reflect on my own role in an education system he describes as being structured to perpetuate inequality. I was interested to see if in the dual-sector setting, working-class students were aware of a deficit of cultural capital that hindered their understanding of the University's

expectations or their ability to feel at ease in the University setting. I was keen to explore their awareness of any deficit in educational capital that had an impact on their ability to respond to the academic expectations of the university and whether they were aware of or evidenced a lack of social capital and any consequent impact on self-confidence or practice. Furthermore, I wanted to ascertain how they perceived staff to be responding to their differing needs.

2.1.4 Bridging and bonding social capital and identity development

Bourdieu defines social capital as:

the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network or more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual recognition and acquaintance (2007:119).

It is the value that individuals gain from their social networks or through their belonging to particular organisations. Through these networks, individuals share experiences, knowledge and understanding that help individuals develop a feel for the game. Holland further notes that social capital also encompasses 'sociability', that she defines as 'the disposition and skill to use those networks' (2008:5). Watson highlights the power of social capital in its 'multiplier effect' in not only helping individuals develop a feel for the game but also helping in the accrual of linguistic and academic capital (2013:422), that is, resources that enable them to play.

Jensen and Jetten (2015) consider the relationship between students' socio-economic status, the social capital they bring to university and their ability to develop academic and professional identities during the course of their studies.

In the context of a higher education system that is increasingly tasked to integrate academic skill development with employability skills (Jensen and Jetten 2015), they investigated the relationship between a students' socio-economic status and the degree to which they benefit from opportunities to develop these academic and professional identities while at university.

Jensen and Jetten differentiate between the ease with which those from a higher socio-economic standing transition to university compared to those of a lower socio-economic grouping. They attribute this to the social capital accrued by those of higher socio-economic groupings and furthermore, discuss how these students find identity change easier as the transition to university is in keeping

with their sense of self. The students from lower socio-economic groupings, they propose, lack the social networks from which they can acquire the same level of understanding of the higher education sector and do not have the same sense of ownership of the higher education experience.

Jensen and Jetten explain that notwithstanding their differing amounts of accrued social capital on arrival at university, students are afforded opportunities to accrue further capital during their years at university that influences their ability to develop academic and professional identities. Like others before them, (Hasinoff and Mandzuk 2005, Holland 2008, Watson 2013), they distinguish between 'bonding' and 'bridging' capital, building on the work of Putnam (2000).

Bonding capital, they explain, refers to the capital gained from membership of social groups, leading to a sense of shared identity. Bonding social capital is recognised as developing from relationships within homogenous groupings that are inward-looking (Hasinoff and Mandzuk 2005). Bridging capital however, Jensen and Jetten explain, provides access to capital from beyond the boundaries of an individual's immediate social grouping, is outward-facing and facilitates the development of identity and growth. Such groupings can include business relationships. The key characteristic of social interaction that affords opportunities to accrue bridging capital is engagement with greater diversity and heterogeneity of groups. Holland summarised the difference between these two types of social capital explaining that bonding social capital helps people to 'get by' but bridging social capital helps people to 'get on' (2008:9).

The literature illustrates that although bonding social capital can be a positive resource generating feelings of belonging and security, it can also be limiting in its inward focus and reinforcement of homogeneity to the detriment of social cohesion and tolerance (Putnam 2000). The twin-faceted nature of bonding social capital is highlighted for instance in Holland's (2008) research into families and social capital. As part of the ESRC study Families and Social Capital (2002-2007), Holland reports on the value of social capital to disadvantaged young people providing essential support from family and friends, providing a secure base from which young people can achieve in the unfamiliar world of higher education. Holland compares the experience of middle-class young people who are able to draw upon their parents' social capital to smooth their

transition to higher education with that of working-class young people who lack this resource. In this regard she highlights the value that friendship networks can bring providing working-class young people with what she terms 'coping resources' that support them through transitions (2008:12). She also however, reports on the dangers of social capital and its ability to 'exclude, marginalise, constrain and entrap' young people as they are pulled back into the comfort of what their community sees as possibilities for their grouping.

In the Jensen and Jetten study, bonding capital is shown to support the development of academic identity. Membership of students' social groupings creates strong ties that helps the students self-identify as university students. Interaction with educators they propose however, affords the students opportunities to develop further, and in particular towards the development of a professional identity.

Jensen and Jetten found similarities in the perception of students from lower and higher socio-economic groupings of the impact of extra-curricular and academic interaction on the formation of academic identity. Although, as would be expected, those from a higher socio-economic grouping moved with ease in social circles and found a sense of community in extra-curricular clubs and societies, it was only through academic interaction with their peers that their academic identity was developed. Those from lower socio-economic groupings also valued academic interaction, for example, participation in academic debates but were less motivated to participate in socially orientated extra-curricular activities. Even in the case of academic interaction, students in both groups reported that although this bonding social capital helped them develop a sense of belonging and kept them at university, this capital did not necessarily help them to develop self-confidence as an academic.

In Jensen and Jetten's study, it was an opportunity to accrue bridging social capital that supported the development of academic and at times professional identity. Only a few instances of exposure to bridging capital (through direct interaction with educators) were revealed in the data gathered but no differentiation was identified between student socio-economic groupings in the reported impact of these interactions. Moreover, the students reported on the

positive impact on their academic and professional identities when educators evidenced that the contributions of individual students were valued and developed students' understanding of the culture and practices of their chosen professional field respectively.

Watson's study also concluded that even where the students' habitus on arrival at the university was out of kilter with that of the institution, they were able to adapt and take advantage of the opportunities provided (2013). In her study of the experiences of non-traditional entrants in higher education training to become occupational therapists, she explores how, in deploying social capital and their developing professional capital acquired through industry placement, the students are able to acquire further academic capital and a better feel for the game. Watson defines professional capital as:

the depth and breadth of knowledge appropriate to and legitimated by the professional practice context; a suitably professional disposition and appearance; enactment of collaborative, client-centred practice; professional execution of the professional role and associated personal management, including approaches to communication and team-working, and active engagement with reflective practice and continuing professional development (2013:424).

In exposing the students to their anticipated role through interaction with those of professional status, the students acquired a form of bridging capital. Watson recognised the responsibilities of universities in providing opportunities for students to acquire bridging capital. Aligning herself with the work of Thomas (2002) and Leathwood and O'Connell (2003), Watson welcomed the recent shift away from the deficit model whereby working-class students in higher education were defined in terms of what they lacked in comparison to the traditional, middle-class student, towards one in which the responsibilities of the institution were recognised (2013). Her work demonstrates the benefit to all students of the provision of opportunities to develop professional capital and highlights the way in which the development of professional and academic capital enhanced and supported one another.

I was aware that the experience of many students at the University of the Highlands and Islands students was very different from that of the traditional university student. The students at Inverness College UHI were studying through a range of delivery modes with many taking advantage of the on-line and

blended delivery modes that provided access to higher education from rural and remote settings. Those who were attending for face-to-face delivery were living at home and interacting with the university on a 9-5 basis. The student demographic was such that the age range of the student body was diverse and many of the students had family roles and responsibilities that meant the role of student was often combined with that of mother, father, carer or employee. I was aware that the students had fewer opportunities to interact socially with their fellow students and was keen to explore the potential impact of this on their ability to accrue bonding social capital while at university.

Crozier et al. (2008b) reported the significant impact a residential student experience at an elite university where the student cohort took on the role of family and students interacted in small groups in intensive tutorials with supervisory lecturers. The residential students were able to develop high levels of bonding social capital. This study prompted me to reflect on the experience of students at the University of the Highlands and Islands and question whether theirs was a lesser experience or just a different one.

Also of interest to my study however, was the finding that Jensen and Jetten reported, that in developing bonding social capital students were less likely to interact with those who could give them access to bridging social capital. That is, in strongly identifying with a student group, individuals from both socio-economic groupings accepted the norms of that group, including the perception of a sustained gap between educators and themselves. This finding, they report, supported the work of Putnam (2000) and Holland (2008) who described the potential limitations of bonding social capital, acting in effect like an anchor to the primary habitus.

Hasinoff and Mandzuk (2005) apply the concepts of bonding and bridging capital to a study of trainee teachers, investigating factors that have an impact on the ability of the students to develop a strong teacher identity. Unlike Jensen and Jetten's study, Hasinoff and Mandzuk's study did not identify a significant relationship between the acquisition of bridging social capital and the students' tendency to develop a strong teacher identity. They did report however, that the students had been given few opportunities to interact with a professional network beyond their own faculty and that this could have influenced this finding.

The Canadian study carried out by Hasinoff and Mandzuk (2005) identified alternative variables that did have a significant impact on the students' professional identity development. One of these was age. The life experiences of the students had led the mature students to have a stronger professional role anticipation and role commitment than the younger students. Other relevant variables were the number of 'out of class' hours the students committed to their independent study as well as the level of confidence the students had in their own ability.

The literature did not provide any conclusive evidence of the impact of opportunities to develop bonding social capital with their fellow students or bridging social capital with their lecturers and/or professionals relevant to their chosen field. They did however prompt a need for me to consider both in my study.

2.2 The experience of working-class students in higher education

The experience of working-class 'lucky survivors' in the field of higher education has been researched extensively. The literature explores the difficulties faced by those who have excelled at school, only to arrive at University to find that their painstakingly acquired academic capital no longer carries the same value (He Li 2015). The experience of those with more problematic school histories is reported as being even more traumatic as they attempt to navigate the seemingly obscure world of higher education with low levels of self-esteem and weak learner identities (Archer and Yamashita 2003).

Unlike their middle-class counterparts who progress smoothly to higher education and move with ease in this environment that is recognisable in its codes and expectations, the working-class students find themselves suddenly aware of being somehow set apart. In addition to the academic pressures common to all new undergraduates, the working-class students become uncomfortably aware that the way they behave, their speech, their way of dressing and their tastes threaten to give them away as outsiders at every turn.

In this section, I explore the literature that illuminates the working-class habitus and the relationship of the working-classes with education. I consider research that illustrates the emergence of a cleft habitus and consider the various coping

strategies adopted by the working-class students as they try to hold on to their sense of self, while realising their university ambitions.

2.2.1 Higher education and the working-class

As discussed in Chapter 1, the dominant discourse paints a tantalising picture for the working-classes, promoting social mobility through education, selling a discourse of meritocracy whereby hard work and academic ability will reap the rewards of the graduate premium and thereby, social advancement.

The literature around the experience of young working-class people in school, however, questions the veracity of these claims, supporting Bourdieu's exposure of this supposed meritocracy as a myth and describing the role of education in endorsing class-based privilege and discrimination (Archer and Yamashita 2003, Aries and Seider 2005, Mills 2008).

This creates a dilemma for the working-classes. They are simultaneously exposed to a discourse that promotes education as the means of escape from a life of hardship and insecurity, while internalising explicit and implicit messages in their school-years that they are not good enough to succeed academically.

The literature illustrates the complexity of the relationship the working-classes have with education and the impact this has on the development of young peoples' identities. In Reay's work with very young children, she highlights the degree to which young people have bought into the neoliberal discourse that paints the picture of the on-going development of the self as a requirement for success and educational attainment a key factor in making you who you are. In Reay and William's 1999 study, a young girl of primary age comments on her likely assessment score that she 'will be a nothing'. The young children Reay interviews worryingly map out possible life trajectories ranging from 'a good life and a good job', to 'living on the streets' based on SAT scores on spelling at the age of 10 or 11 years old (Reay 2001: 342).

Archer and Yamashita (2003) describe how the young people they interviewed had internalised their poor record of success at school and regarded themselves as 'dumb' and 'low grade' and 'not good enough'. This study also explores the contradictory nature of the reasons the young people attributed to their low achievement, attributing their difficulties to bad luck that they regarded as typical of people like themselves. Not only have these young people internalised

the judgement that they are not good enough but they also believe that this is beyond their control. Bodovski (2015) uses the concept of 'locus of control' to illustrate this aspect of habitus. Building on the work of previous studies showing the positive association of an internal locus of control with positive social outcomes (Ekstrom et al. 1986, Nunn, 1987, Chubb et al. 1997) Bodovski's work demonstrated the correlation between low levels of parental expectation with students' external locus of control.

The literature presents working-class constructions of higher education as complex with multiple factors cross-cutting one another to create inequality in participation rates. Archer and Hutchings argue that some reject outright the dominant discourse presenting education as a route to financial gain, explaining that whereas the middle-classes see higher education attainment as a requirement in order to access a good job and career, some working-class young people believe that only poorly paid employment is now possible (2000).

Many however, do aspire to higher education, and Reay argues that they have to contend with losing as much as they gain in that educational success at university requires the working-class student to reject their established culture, values and beliefs. Again, in Reay's work (2001), the risk to the working-class student in terms of loss of community is borne out through Shaun's story. When Shaun reveals his aspiration to a peer, he is told that what he is supposed to do is claim benefits. As Reay explains, in order to succeed academically, Shaun has to consciously reject the pathway he knows he is supposed to take and aim to be something he is not.

A key disposition of the working-class habitus revealed in many studies (Reay 2001, Crozier et al. 2008b, Stahl 2014) is the value attributed to authenticity by the working classes. Reay proposes that this need for authenticity causes the working-classes additional difficulty in the field of education. Whereas, she explains, the middle-classes are comfortable with the idea of going to university to 'find themselves', for the working-classes, aspiring to become something else through education equates to pretention, something that carries with it, ridicule, fear of exposure as a fraud and to be avoided at all costs. The working-class student therefore, in the university environment, has to somehow negotiate a path that enables them to reconcile their academic ambition with their established dispositions (2001).

Stahl (2014), in this context develops his theory of 'egalitarian counter culture' through which the working-class boys in his study rationalise their education experience alongside their egalitarian disposition. They negotiate a path between the prevailing discourse where the individual is all and competition a necessary part of success and their established habitus. Resisting the prevailing myth of meritocracy and constant encouragement in the dominant discourse to compete to be the best at all costs, the boys remain true to themselves and reflecting their primary habitus, aim to be ordinary, valuing the support embedded within their established culture within which there is no pretention and no one is better than anyone else. In this way, the strong sense of belonging and loyalty to the working-class culture is presented in the literature as both a strength and a weakness, offering support in times of difficulty but presenting an ever-present danger of constraining ambition and preservation of the status quo (Archer and Yamashita 2003). Stahl's boys engage in the education game, but on their own terms.

The literature highlighted the instrumental approach of the working classes to higher education (Lehmann 2009b). Lehmann discusses how the decision of working class young people to go into higher education may signal an intention to break away from their social group but on closer inspection can be seen to be firmly rooted in their primary habitus. Lehman explains how the instrumentalism of the working-classes is part of a risk management strategy. It is essential that having made the investment in higher education, they see a financial return. This is evidenced to Lehmann in the choice of degree courses that link directly to vocational careers. To illustrate this he cites the rejection of what he terms 'vague' courses such as sociology, history and biology in favour of an applied professional degree that will give them access to a middle-class job, even in the absence of social and cultural capital. Making the choice of a course that has obvious practical application and is directly linked to a job and career, is in itself far less pretentious than an abstract and purely academic choice would be.

Lehmann (2009b) further illustrates the link between the students' habitus and their motivation to go to university in describing the students' determination to live a different life to their parents. Having seen the hardship experienced by their parents, the students are determined to do better for themselves. This

determination is further reinforced by their experience of menial jobs undertaken while at school. Although Lehmann expresses some concern regarding the instrumentalism of the working-classes (and indeed increasingly the middle-classes) in higher education, he asks whether we should be making more of vocational goals in encouraging working-class students to overcome cultural class barriers imposed in higher education.

The problems faced by the working-classes do not end with the decision to participate. Hutchings and Archer's (2001) study of non-participants highlights the barriers created by the lack of detailed knowledge about qualifications they would need to access university and the concern recounted by students that having studied vocational qualifications, they would be less sought after as an applicant. University was regarded as financially risky, and participants in the study described their fear of being lost and overwhelmed by the size of the institution and even the nature of university estates.

The lack of knowledge and understanding of access arrangements and career pathways was also highlighted in Archer and Yamashita's study (2003). Although the young people they interviewed declared their ideal and aspirant jobs as being airline pilot, doctor, teacher, engineer or something in computing, their post-school destination plans of further education or training or a move directly into employment indicated a common lack of strategy to get from 'a' to 'b'.

This lack of knowledge and understanding is attributed to working-class students' lack of cultural capital. Their transition, the literature demonstrates, contrasts with the smooth progression of the middle-classes where a university experience is taken for granted to the extent that it is not discussed (Ball et al. 2002).

The literature signposted the need to consider not only the experience of the students in their first year of the University of the Highlands and Islands but also aspects of their educational history that had formed their sense of self as 'learner'. I considered it pertinent to explore their motivation in participation in higher education and how they perceived this to relate to their choice of institution.

It was clear that the working class habitus as illustrated by the literature was complex. I have presented the findings here in binary terms, to illustrate the fundamental aspects of the middle-class/working-class habitus divide. In practice, of course, I am aware of the diverse nature of class identity. Embarking on this study, I anticipated a messy reality whereby my findings would challenge any one-sized notion of working-classness.

2.2.2 The cleft habitus and the affective domain

Many studies describe how for the working-class students participating in higher education, particularly in the context of an elite university, operating in an unfamiliar field raises the habitus to the level of consciousness. With this, brings new awareness of a sense of 'otherness' that sets them apart from the traditional middle-class student.

The work of Reay (2004) highlights the impact of a lack of social, cultural and economic capital on the early experience of working-class students in the university environment. This is supported by the findings of other studies with students remarking on their difficulties engaging in conversation with their middle class peers who were well informed politically, linguistically adept and had very different cultural points of reference. The working-class student, the literature illustrates, not only has to cope with the academic leap to undergraduate study but also a heightened consciousness of each aspect of their way of being and a new awareness that they are somehow different from those around them.

The literature uses habitus as the embodiment of one's history to offer an explanation as to why a working-class student operating in a middle-class academic environment can be painfully aware of their lack of fit in terms of their very way of being. The students' awareness of their different way of dressing and self-presentation, mannerisms, speech patterns and even eating habits is replicated in several studies (Lehmann 2009a, 2013, He Li 2015).

The sense of 'otherness' these students describe is often accompanied by a perception of a deficit of cultural capital and a de-valuing of their culture of origin. Being judged and found wanting causes feelings of 'pain, ambivalence, displacement, alienation and shame' (Aries and Seider 2005:420)

Reay explains how for the working-class student, simply aspiring to achieve at university has connotations of pretentiousness, 'a hankering after the 'other' rather than an acceptance of the self' (2001:337). As discussed in Section 2.2.2, this creates confusion for the working-class student who values authenticity and has strong feelings of loyalty to their community.

Lee and Kramer reach similar conclusions that 'social mobility in higher education is as much the process of learning elite mannerisms, behaviours and 'rules of the game' as it is the process of gaining credentials, knowledge or wealth' (2013). In order to fit in in the very middle-class environment of the university, the working-class students have to consciously work at becoming something they are not. As Reay explains, the working-class students at university face confusion and fear of being found out as an imposter (2001).

The emotional discomfort that is rooted in a sense of not belonging is a common thread running through the research. Although all students, middle and working-class, describe the academic challenge of university, working-class students, we are told, have the additional challenge of having to cope with feelings of isolation and inferiority whilst having to navigate and understand the opaque and unwritten rules of academia, what Bourdieu describes as 'the struggle to determine the conditions and criteria of legitimate membership and legitimate hierarchy' (2003:11).

Studies demonstrate how the working-class students' awareness of their deficit in social and cultural capital has a debilitating effect on their ability to build friendships. This then further constrains their ability to accrue social and cultural capital, even when attending a university where they are studying alongside students who have capital that could be of benefit to them. The studies also report the impact of the students' awareness of their lack of social and cultural capital on their inclination to actively participate in the academic setting with students reporting that they chose instead to be silent and finding passivity to be the least risky option. In He Li's study, students took this approach in English classes, knowing that this would hinder any chance of improvement in the language but consoling themselves with the knowledge that in doing so they had minimised the risk of exposure as being inferior (2015). Students in He Li's study, found that educational or scholastic capital they had built in their school years and against which they were judged at school was not

enough in the university setting which also had expectations of self-confidence, debating ability, poise and leadership qualities in order to excel (2015).

Alongside the feelings of fear and anxiety prompted by the students' awareness of their lack of fit in the university environment, the literature describes how the students often must also cope with their growing sense of alienation from their friends and family at home. Students report feelings of guilt that accompany their growing sense of superiority from those they previously regarded as equals. Others describe their fear of being judged a 'snob' and their difficulty in masking their changed tastes, linguistic skills and world-view when interacting with family at home (Lee and Kramer 2013).

Crozier et al. (2008b) describe how some students compartmentalise each part of their lives in order to cope, establishing boundaries between their home and university lives with each part vying for their attention. Aries and Seider's (2005) study also identifies strategies of compartmentalisation that enable both versions of the self to co-exist. They describe the 'code switching' that the students employ as they move back and forth across the two environments of home and university, adopting different vocabularies, accents, conversational topics and ways of dressing in each. In the university setting, Aries and Seider report examples of working-class students masking their class background and illustrate how the students 'perform their identity', until their habitus evolves (2005:430).

Students describe having to balance their desire to succeed academically, to explore their capabilities, with their fear of being lost in the world of higher education and the fear of being cut off from their roots (Lee and Kramer 2013).

Reay explains that for many working-class young people, success in higher education is achieved only with a necessary rejection of their culture of origin (1996) and that academic success is achieved not through the endorsement of working class-ness but its obliteration, with education being presented as a means of escape (Reay 2001). The literature attributes the shame the working-classes feel in relation to their backgrounds to the historical portrayal of the working-classes as 'an unknowing critical tasteless mass from which the middle-classes draw their distinctions' (Reay 2001:335). Much of the research describes the emotional trauma this awareness causes (Dimaggio 1982, Keane 2011, He Li 2015). The literature evidences similar findings globally with studies based in

China (He Li 2013), Ireland (Burke 2015), Canada (Lehmann 2014) and Australia (Mills 2008).

The sense of working-class students being between two worlds and belonging to neither, that features in many of the studies, is what Bourdieu described as a state of cleft habitus (1999). Participants in studies report the discomfort of having to make conscious attempts to fit in in the academic world where the 'rules of the game' are neither explicit nor clear and simultaneously report the discomfort of being newly aware of their changed view of the world, their enhanced linguistic skills, their newly defined difference, when interacting in the home environment. Students report having to navigate uncomfortable feelings of superiority (along with the associated guilt) and awareness of being perceived as superior and no longer belonging by others (Baxter and Britton 2001). In both arenas they live with the fear of exposure as a fraud.

Having studied hard to get to university, the students find that their academic credentials are not the means by which they are judged as being eligible to belong. Some are shocked to discover that their 'academic or scholastic capital' which was previously highly acclaimed in the school environment and was the foundation of their student identity, was, at university, de-valued in relation to broader cultural/social capital, leadership, confidence, articulateness and appreciation of higher culture (Leathwood and O'Connell 2003, He Li 2013). They discover what He Li refers to as a mismatch of dispositions, whereby their previously highly prized status as 'academic' in schools is at university found to be at odds with their cultural deficit, leading some to question their identities as learners (2015, Lehmann 2012). Students in He Li's study chose not to compete in an arena where they lacked the tools to do so. In adapting to the university environment, they developed new dispositions, being less competitive and more casual in their approach to their studies. In Bourdieu's terms, they self-exclude from the competition in anticipation of likely future failure.

Much of the more recent research builds on the findings of the 2008 ESRC study, *The Socio Cultural and Learning Experiences of Working Class Students in Higher Education*, undertaken by Crozier et al (2008b) that has these issues at its heart. The study examines the experiences of working-class students in four different institutions in England: Southern, an elite university; Midland, a civic post 1992 university; Northern, a post 1992 university and Eastern College, a further

education college offering foundation degrees in collaboration with Northern. The study considered both the experiences of working-class students in higher education, identifying the differences between these students' experiences and those of middle-class students as well as the difference in experience of working class students in different types of university. This study was important in taking the literature beyond a binary working-class/middle-class divide to a more nuanced understanding of the experience of the working-class students. In terms of belonging for instance, the working-class students at the elite university struggled initially to be accepted socially and described a heightened sense of 'otherness'. Academically however, the intensity and focus of the elite university was in keeping with their studious dispositions and having spent school years masking their geeky image, they developed a sense of having found a place where they belonged. At Northern, whereas the students felt they belonged as they were amongst people like themselves, their academic focus and studious dispositions were out of kilter with the other students.

One of the conclusions of this study was that the structural inequalities of the higher education system, as illustrated through the differing institutional habitus of each of the institutions, exacerbated the difficult challenges faced by working-class students in higher education.

Studies report an ever more complex picture in the highly stratified world of higher education. Not all students, for example, we are told, experience the same degree of discomfort or prolonged disjuncture. The findings of the Crozier at al ESRC 2008 study have been replicated in later studies demonstrating that some students adapt quickly and describe feeling 'at home' academically. Some studies suggest that the students who quickly engage in the process of transformation are perhaps building on their earlier reflexive practice with their transformation beginning many years before during their school days (Reay 2009b, He Li 2015). These students report feeling academically at home, comfortable in the studious atmosphere of the elite institution, although still aware of the wider cultural misfit (Reay et al. 2009b, Watson et al. 2009, He Li 2015).

The literature highlighted the risk to working-class students of participation, not least the affective trauma experienced by others when operating as 'fish out of water' in the university environment. This sense of dislocation however varied,

not least according to the nature of the experience provided by different universities. In light of this I was keen to explore with students the degree of disjuncture they had experienced in both the dual-sector environment and in relation to their home environment as they adapted to the world of higher education.

2.2.3 Coping strategies

The degree to which risk management features in the working-class students' decision-making process has been discussed in section 2.2.1. The literature illustrates how the students adopt an instrumental approach to their education and attempt to identify through university and course choice a clear pathway to employment (Lehmann 2009b). Studies also report students seeking out institutions where they are people like themselves (Crozier et al. 2008b). The literature offers accounts of how, once at university, the students continue to adopt various strategies in order to survive.

He Li (2015), in her study of rural Chinese students in elite city universities in mainland China, discusses the shock the rural students experience when they realise that their academic capital that they had previously accrued and traded on, does not have the same value in the elite university environment. On finding that soft skills, such as leadership, team-working and debating skills are more greatly prized, some purposefully exclude themselves from a competition they cannot win. Some begin to take a more casual attitude to their studies, immersing themselves in low value activity such as playing computer games. Others reject the discourse that prizes softer skills and focus even more on their academic work, seeking to accrue further academic capital, the only capital to which they have access.

Keane describes strategies of 'distancing' adopted by different students groups in university which result in the formation of homogenous cliques that restrict social interaction across class divides. Keane differentiates between the defensive subservient distancing of the working-class students, avoiding interaction that threatens and intimidates and the status-maintaining distancing of the middle-class students, in turn avoiding any dilution of their perceived status (2011:453). There are echoes of these findings in He Li's work where rural students report their reluctance to take up positions in the students' union

having quickly established that this was a place owned by the elite students (2015).

Lehmann's study (2009a) in a Canadian University however, describes how the working-class students challenge the dominant discourse that describes them as structurally disadvantaged 'others', choosing instead to interpret their characteristics and values as advantageous in the higher education setting. The students focus on their stronger work ethic, their independence and higher levels of maturity when comparing themselves to the more affluent middle class students. Aries and Seider (2005) report similar findings with students remarking on the extent to which they had benefitted from the challenges they had faced, specifically mentioning their strong work ethic and understanding of the value of money. In doing so however, the students attribute their 'strengths' to individual traits and the parenting skills of their particular families rather than their class grouping. Similarly, the work of (Lehmann 2014) found that working-class students were able to challenge structural disadvantages of their class by drawing upon the strengths that were rooted in their class-based dispositions. For instance, the students were found to have high levels of resilience and determination to 'get in and stay in'. Lehmann explains that this helps the students avoid internal conflict. Had they, he explains, attributed their advantages to their working-class status, their ambitions to move into the professional middle-class world would have been difficult to rationalise.

Lehmann's students accrue cultural capital in their first two years of university study that broaden their interests and tastes in food, higher culture and politics for instance and they increasingly view the working-class habitus as narrow and constraining. As their habitus evolves, the students develop strategies that enable them to avoid feelings of guilt. Although the evolution of their habitus and the development of different tastes requires a rejection of the culture of their family, the students rationalise this by referencing the parental support they have been given to make something of themselves. In this way, the students interpret their evolving habitus and development of new dispositions as evidence of them fulfilling the ambitions of their parents.

The literature does not report every student as seeking to become something else. Reay argues for instance, that for most working-class students the risk of aspiring to an elite university and to become someone else is too great and the potential losses too significant to contemplate. She explains:

Instead most opt for safety and comfort: a combination of achieving academically and still being able to be themselves that stops short of transformation (2001:339).

In reviewing the body of research relating to the experience of working-class students in higher education, I noted the complexity of the relationship the working-classes had with education, the potential risks participation posed but the numerous strategies being deployed to manage these risks in the pursuit of academic success.

2.3 Institutional habitus

Inequality in higher education extends beyond differential rates of participation amongst class groupings to differing representation of classes across the hierarchical strata of the higher education sector. The structural inequalities that exist in the field of higher education whereby working-class young people are poorly represented in elite institutions and are far more likely to attend lesser institutions and choose less prestigious subjects are referenced in many studies (see, for instance, Reay 1998, Aries and Seider 2005, Furlong 2005, Crozier et al. 2008b, Mills 2008, Morrison 2009, He Li 2013). Read et al. maintain that the argument made by Giddens as far back as 1973, that 'the continued dominance of the wealthy middle classes in elite institutions ensures the reproduction of class privilege in an expanded system' (2003:268) is still relevant today. Moreover, this inequality is reflected globally, and reported in studies of the higher education systems in Australia (Mills 2008), China (He Li 2013, 2015), and Canada (Lehmann 2009a).

The differential representation of classes across the hierarchy of universities is not a straightforward illustration of exclusion. Working-class students do face greater challenges in achieving the required qualifications and dispositions to successfully navigate the application process for an elite institution. However, not all of the literature is illustrative of working-class students seeking to embrace the transition to a middle-class habitus through a higher education experience in the most prestigious institutions. Reay et al. (2009a) for instance,

describe how in choosing the local post-1992 university working-class students are engaged in a risk management strategy, holding on to the familiar to minimise the risks associated with the transition. Reay (2001) describe the additional risks faced by working-class students that go beyond the financial to include the risk to their sense of self, their understanding of who they are. In maintaining connections to their family, friends and for some, religious communities, the students are better able to hold on to a sense of self.

Read et al. (2003) interpret the working-class students' choice of local university as indicative of a need to belong in order to attempt to take advantage of the benefits of higher education. Their study sets the strategies of the working-class students, even in the lesser and local university, as a challenge to the dominant discourse. They highlight how the students choose to participate in higher education despite understanding their position as 'other'. However, they choose to enrol at the local university in an active rejection of the more prestigious institution seeking a friendly and unpretentious welcome. Read et al. describe the students' determination and refusal to be intimidated in the academic setting employing strategies to challenge the discourse of the independent learner. The students further empower themselves by positioning themselves as 'consumer' rather than alienated 'other'. Working-class students are, as these studies illustrate, participating in higher education but on their own terms.

Attempts to explain the persistence of inequitable student distribution by class across the higher education sector have drawn on the concept of institutional habitus (Reay 1998, Reay et al. 2001a, Greenbank 2007, Ingram 2009, Morrison 2009, Smyth and Banks 2012). Reay et al. define this concept as, 'the impact of a cultural group or social class on an individual's behaviour as it is mediated through an organisation' (2001a:3). The notion of an institutional habitus provides us with a tool with which we can conceptualise the complexity of the interplay between student and institution enabling us to probe beneath what may, at first, appear to be a simple binary ancient/new university, middle-class/working-class divide and examine further the agency of working-class students in the higher education field. Institutional habitus has been drawn upon in studies of choice-making influencing the nature of the transition to higher education (Reay et al. 2009a, Smyth and Banks 2012) and in studies of student experience post-enrolment (Thomas 2002, Crozier et al. 2008b).

The literature highlights three interlinked components of an institutional habitus that have a bearing on the higher education student experience, namely, the institution's educational status, organisational practices and the expressive order of the university. In this section, I explore the literature of each of these components of the institutional habitus in turn, before turning to the question of the legitimacy of the university experience offered in different contexts.

Although the literature identifies differences in the experience of working-class students in differing institutions, for instance elite ancient and post 1992 universities, I was able to find few studies considering the institutional habitus in the dual-sector context. Those I did identify, were more concerned with the governance and structures of the dual-sector institution than with the interaction between institutional and student habitus per se. This in itself highlighted the need for further research in this context if we are to gain better understanding of the potential role such institutions might have in challenging inequality.

2.3.1 Educational status

For many working-class students, the lack of familial experience of higher education leads to a high level of dependence on the school for advice. What may be presented as the students' decision-making therefore, was rather evidence of the influence of the school habitus. Reay reports on this in terms of the advice provided to students (1998). Reay reports that young people from private schools reflected on the school's expectation that they would aim high and apply to the best universities. In the state schools however, there were reports of young working-class people being advised to stay local, where they would have access to established social networks and support systems. Some were advised to avoid affluent, middle class universities where they were told, they would not fit in. The schools in Reay's studies were filtering for the potential student the meaning of the structures of the higher education field, determining what was appropriate for them.

Similar findings are reported by Ball et al. (2002) who demonstrate a clear relationship between the social intake of the school, the familial habitus of the pupils and the school's institutional habitus which impacts the pupils' choice-making. The school habitus, Ball et al. argue, presents some choices as obvious and others beyond the realms of possibility. They contrast the choice-making of

those from the private school to that of the state school. In the private school, they found that less than 2% of the pupils make a first choice of a new university. In the state schools however, the primary motivational factors are reported to be a wish to have a shared culture and ethnicity with those at the university and a continued connection to home and family, leading to a choice of the local and new university.

Furlong associated the students' decision-making practice with management of risk, arguing that choosing the local (and lesser) university means that students can live at home, maintaining existing social networks and employment (2005). These findings are supported by the work of Clayton et al. (2009) who also emphasise the importance of the everyday stability afforded by social networks and family while the working-class student negotiates the unfamiliar territory of higher education. Clayton et al. highlight however that sometimes this is not evidence of 'choice' at all as financial constraints, necessary continuation of employment and on-going family responsibilities limit the options of many non-traditional learners. Reay reaches similar conclusions regarding geographical constraints and draws to our attention that these are considerations raised only by working-class students (1998).

Ball et al. (2002), also discuss the influence of the school habitus on the choice of subject, which in turn, helps the middle-classes to retain their position of dominance. The private schools promote traditional academic subjects and the professions whereas in the state schools they report new subjects and those linked to less prestigious careers to be predominant. Ball comments on the highly instrumental approach of the working-classes to higher education, frequently choosing vocationally related courses that will lead directly to a career and hopefully, to the graduate premium. Ball illustrates however, that although the state school pupils were more explicitly instrumental in their approach, the middle class pupils in choosing high ranking universities and high value courses, were equally so, but in a less explicit fashion.

The literature underscored the difficulties of decision-making faced by working-class students who typically lack cultural and social capital required to make an informed judgement (Archer and Yamashita 2003). Read et al. (2003) challenge the findings of early studies that report students lacking understanding of the hierarchies within the higher education field and the differential status of

institutions. They propose that students are very much aware of the differing status but in choosing the lesser institution, they are resisting the dominant discourse, enrolling instead in institutions that they believe meet their particular needs.

Ball et al. (2002) reported, for instance, some avoidance of the elite institution that was perceived to lack relevance to the modern world and to the lives of the working-class students. The students also however, rejected some new universities that demonstrated a lack of alignment with their instrumentalism. For instance, universities marketing themselves by emphasising the social life of the students both at open days and through their promotional material and depicting less of a focus on the strengths of the course were also rejected by working-class students.

These findings are further supported by the conclusions reached by Archer and Yamashita (2003) and others considering student choice of higher education institution that highlight the distance at times between student choice of institution and the received wisdom regarding university hierarchy. They propose what would appear to be the better choice to the well-informed does not always correlate with the students' preferred option. Knowingly choosing the 'lesser' university (in terms of accepted sector hierarchy), did not necessarily mean that the students were less confident in the ability of the institution to meet their needs.

Despite interpreting the actions of the students as resistance to the dominant discourse, Read et al. (2003) suggest that in doing so, the students are contributing to the preservation of inequalities in the system with the majority of non-traditional learners congregating in the lesser institutions and facing questions regarding the legitimacy of their university experience.

In the studies described above, the choice-making process revealed in student interviews, illustrated the differing factors that underpinned the students' confidence in the institution to which they were applying, not least, the expectations of the school they were leaving. The literature however underlined the need to consider choice of university from the perspective of the student. Studies highlighted that working-class students' perception of institutional status did not necessarily correlate with the established hierarchy within the higher education sector and that factors such as proximity to home, a

wish to be amongst people like themselves and perceived resonance with their instrumental approach to education were just as, if not more, important. Furthermore, the literature questioned whether the students in knowingly choosing lesser universities were staging a challenge to the dominant discourse and defined hierarchy of the sector, or whether this was evidence of Bourdieu's symbolic violence at work. That is, were the students empowering themselves to access higher education but on their own terms or colluding in the perpetuation of inequality?

2.3.2 The expressive order of the institution

My review of the literature illuminating the experience of working-class students in higher education, drew to my attention the nature of the experience offered by the institution and impact of the engagement of the student with that offer.

Morrison considers what he describes as the expressive order of the university to be a key factor influencing the student experience. He defines that as being the expectations, conduct and manners embedded and expressed through the institutional culture (2009). Lehmann (2012) discusses the differing responses of students to the expressive order of an institution, highlighting the importance of students holistically embracing their higher education experience, going beyond academic efforts and integrating socially in order to develop the wider, soft skills necessary for continued success in a world where a 'degree is not enough' (Tomlinson 2008). These studies stress the need for students to gain more than their certification from their university experience and consider the influence of differing university environments on the ability of working-class students to fully engage in university life.

Studies demonstrate the differing opportunity students have to integrate into university life depending on their residential status, competing demands on their time, the need for some to undertake part-time employment and to continue to fulfil established family roles with the accompanying responsibilities. Crozier et al. (2008b) for instance compare the isolated bubble of the ancient elite university with complete immersion, residential experience and restrictions on term-time employment, with the daily 9-5 experience offered by the post-1992 university with its weaker pedagogical structures, fewer opportunities to interact with lecturers and other students and the option to withdraw from the wider student experience. Archer and Leathwood described this as the

difference between 'going through university and university going through them' (2003:177/178).

Crozier and Reay (2011) later draw upon the work of Bernstein (1996) and discuss the 'regulatory discourse' and 'instructional discourse' of the university to describe the means by which the university draws the students into its culture. They compare the strong framing of learning at an elite university where the students are closely supervised and undergo an intense residential experience with the weaker framing of learning at a post-1992 institution. In the environment of the post-1992, the students, they propose, are less embedded in the institution where fewer academic demands are made of them and students have the option of operating at a distance from the university with their student identity being only one of several identities in competition with each other. For instance, as well as student, they are often also, employee in addition to mother or father or carer.

The students at this college of the University of the Highlands and Islands at the time of this study had no access to halls of residence. Most students lived at home and either interacted with the university on a 9-5 basis or studied on-line through the university's virtual learning environment. I was interested in finding out how engaged the students were in their study, whether their student identity was one of several held concurrently or whether they were more fully absorbed by their university experience.

It was evident to me in my own interaction with students at the university that students were engaging with the institution beyond the demands of their course and I was keen to explore the students' perception of the university's expectations in relation to this wider engagement as well as their perception of the opportunities afforded them.

2.3.3 Organisational practices

Read et al. (2003) explain that even when enrolled in an institution where the non-traditional student is in the company of others from a similar background, the academic culture and practices of the institution can be isolating and alienating. They describe, for instance, the off-putting size of the university, the assumption that students will have academic writing skills. Unfamiliar

formats, such as seminars and tutorials, and the lack of guidance can all be problematic to the student struggling to adapt and fit in.

Recent studies have described a range of responses exhibited by working-class students experiencing higher education that reflect the varying degrees of convergence of the students' existing habitus to the new field and the social and cultural capital they bring to the game. Watson et al. (2009), for instance, distinguish between four differing responses by non-traditional students entering higher education in a Russell group university, to undertake occupational therapy degrees, namely, fitting in, adapting, resisting and being excluded. Whereas one student described a sense of coming home when studying in the university, another gradually withdrew from the experience until they eventually discontinued. Another again, negotiated a mid-way path giving as much of themselves as they were prepared to whilst ensuring that they held on to their established dispositions with which they were comfortable. This then, is not a straightforward or predictable transition. For some students, the transition involves a period of negotiation around the issue of identity.

As discussed in section 2.2.2 in relation to the affective domain, fundamental to any discussion of development or transformation is the potential impact of the institutional habitus on a student's self-worth. Studies report the negative impact of discovering not just a sense of 'otherness' but an accompanying perceived disregard and lack of value for their culture of origin (Thomas 2002).

The literature highlights how the working-class student has to contend with a devaluing of the values and capital they bring to the higher education experience (Reay et al. 2001a). For those that have progressed to higher education through a vocational route, this can mean a shift from valuing practical skills development to appreciation of knowledge and the ability to manipulate and present abstract information. It can also mean a shift from the valorisation of popular to high culture. In one of the few studies considering the dual sector environment, Garrod and MacFarlane (2007) explore the philosophical differences between the two sectors. He indicates that a danger is the marginalisation of the culture of the further education institution in favour of the university when students transition from one to the other - an echo of the deeply ingrained hierarchy of post-compulsory education that holds academic study in higher esteem than vocational skills development. As my study set out

to explore the nature of the experience of the working-class students in a new dual-sector university these findings were germane.

Thomas, in exploring the impact of institutional habitus on student withdrawal concludes that the more inclusive an institution, that is, the more accepting of diversity, the more likely non-traditional students are to persist in their studies. Thomas attributes this to the degree to which the students perceive the institution to be accepting of their culture and practice and highlights the degree to which institutional habitus determines what 'values, language and knowledge are regarded as legitimate', pointing out that pedagogy can become an 'instrument of socialisation and reinforcing status' (2002:431).

Crozier and Reay (2011) draw upon the data amassed as part of the 2008 ESRC study, *The Socio Cultural and Learning Experiences of Working Class Students in Higher Education*, undertaken by Crozier et al. (2008a) to analyse the learning strategies developed by students to help them cope in the university environment. They make use of Bernstein's (1996) pedagogic device and concepts of classification and framing to do so. To explain the students' ability to alternately understand or not the pedagogical structures and norms of the university, Crozier and Reay refer to Bernstein's 'Recognition Rules' and 'Realisation Rules' (see Bernstein 2000:17), relating to the students' ability to both understand the purpose of, for example lectures, tutorials and seminars, and their ability to perform appropriately in each context. Crozier and Reay relate the students' ability to understand their new context and adapt to it to the capitals they bring with them and their self-confidence as 'learner' derived from their learning histories.

Thomas (2002) discussed how students benefitted from an inclusive pedagogy that provided opportunities for interaction between staff and students promoting social relationships. She also stressed the need to have effective student support structures in place that responded to the differing levels of academic preparedness amongst the student body. These factors impacted on student persistence.

These findings have been reported in other studies reporting the need for working-class students to feel not only welcomed (Reay 2001) but also understood and with institutional arrangements that are sufficiently flexible to take cognisance of their needs and existing responsibilities. Cutting across these

feelings of belonging and/or exclusion are concerns relating to age, class and ethnicity. In choosing an institution where they feel at home, Furlong points out that working class students avoid places where 'posh lecturers' as well as students would make them feel inferior (2005:386). Students report that not only are they avoiding an unwelcoming atmosphere in which they would be made to feel inferior, but also a highly competitive one which is of no interest to them (Aries and Seider 2005).

Studies have highlighted the different interpretations of student behaviour when encountering the unfamiliar field of higher education, indicating the importance of teacher understanding of the students' background and potential explanation for what can present as challenging and unacceptable behaviour (Stahl 2015). They propose that in the field of higher education a key factor in the persistence of working-class students is the level of understanding of the challenges the students face. Along with this is the reported importance of the commitment of university staff to support students through a period of transition (Mills and Gale 2011, Kloot 2016), that is, a shared compassion and commitment to addressing issues of equality.

Notably in Morrison's study, the relatively high transition rate from further to higher education is partly attributed to the expressive order of the college concerned which is described as 'relaxed' and 'not pretentious' with lecturers describing the maternal role they play with their students (2009:6). Thomas (2002) reported the need for relationships between staff and students to be founded on a presumption of equality and having a lack of condescension. Morrison's work supports the findings of Stanton-Salazar which identified the importance of 'committed institutional agents' in students' decision to persist in higher education (1997 in Morrison 2009:7). In contrast however, Crozier and Reay (2011), highlighted the difference between the post 1992 university and the elite university in this regard, with the latter making deliberate use of 'professorial space'. In maintaining a distance between students and academic staff, the University lacked the warm and personal nature of the relationships at the post '92 University but used this distance to accentuate the status of the academic knowledge making it more desirable. Notably, however, Crozier and Reay report that the working-class students at the elite University succeed.

Greenbank (2007), describes the existence of sub-cultures arising within an organisation as policy is differently interpreted and enacted. In the case of institutions that cross the barriers of the further/higher sector divide this is more likely, with studies highlighting the separateness of the two sectors and their respective cultures and practice even within the same institution. Greenbank's study recognises the importance of the history of an institution in terms of the level of success it may have in widening access, with those institutions having a pre-university history as a polytechnic, previously primarily the reserve of the working-classes being pertinent to this.

The University of the Highlands and Islands developed from a partnership created between the further education colleges and specialist research institutes of the Highlands and Islands region. Inverness College UHI was one of the founding further education colleges. Although it was now an integrated dual-sector institution, staff were still employed there that predated the university and still taught exclusively further education courses. Others had been recruited post-university title and considered themselves to be university lecturers. Some taught across the further/higher education divide. I was interested therefore to see if this complex history impacted on the student perception of the institutional habitus and indeed, whether there was evidence of multiple habituses within the single institution.

2.3.4 The question of legitimacy

The amount of higher education delivered in a further education setting in Scotland is significant. For example 34% of higher education students were enrolled in further education colleges in Scotland in 2000/2001 and studies have pointed to the contribution this provision makes to the widening access agenda (Gallagher 2006). Yet, despite the significant proportion of higher education being delivered in a range of dual institution contexts globally, (Garrod and MacFarlane. 2007) there is a reported scarcity of research in this area (Bathmaker et al. 2008, Morrison 2009). Notwithstanding this lack of empirical evidence, the legitimacy of the higher education experience offered in such settings is being called into question. Whereas the accessibility of higher education in further education is well-recorded (Bathmaker et al. 2008, Lloyd and Griffiths 2008, Morrison 2009, Leese 2010, Fenge 2011), academics are less in accord regarding its validity as 'real' or 'proper' higher education.

Those questioning its validity refer to the 'spoon-feeding' approach of further education that does not develop independence in learning, an absence of scholarly activity that informs teaching and a lack of attention paid to the development of critical and analytical thinking (Lloyd and Griffiths 2008). They are measuring the higher education delivered in further education institutions against the traditional university experience and finding it lacking.

The debate itself is having an impact on the student experience. Students participating in higher education in a further education setting have demonstrated their awareness of the questioning from others of the validity of their experience and described the strategies they adopt to avoid being challenged and positioned as 'other' by those who have taken a traditional route through university (Bathmaker and Thomas 2009).

Leahy (2012) however queries the relevance of this question of validity, asking whether higher education in a further education setting should be aiming to be an altogether different experience, better suited to the needs of participants rather than trying to emulate some idealised standard. Indeed, the question has been asked whether such a consistent approach and experience within the university sector as is claimed actually exists (Phillips 2009) and whether we should have to conform to some mythical standard in order for the students' experience to be deemed valid.

Leese (2010) takes this further asking whether we should be paying attention to a 'new' higher education student emerging in the 21st Century, who combines work with study, spends less time on campus and has responsibilities that go beyond their academic development and listen more to their needs.

This concern with the legitimacy of the higher education experience located in a further education setting did not feature in all studies. Some in fact, defended its legitimacy arguing that the further/higher education distinction is merely a structural, administrative categorisation rather than 'being fundamentally different' (White 2009). This was clearly a contested issue and one I needed to explore further. Inverness College UHI was not a further education college but rather a tertiary institution with provision spanning all 12 SCQF levels. The College was one of the biggest academic partners of the University of the Highlands and Islands, itself an institution with university title, teaching degree-awarding powers and at the point of being awarded research degree-awarding

powers. That said, its further education provision and dual-sector status positioned it as non-traditional and 'other' in the highly stratified world of higher education.

The benefits of delivering higher education in a further education setting were clearly defined in the literature. The environment was found to be supportive. The culture of a further education college was found to be more closely aligned to that of the working class students and there was a pervading and comforting sense of familiarity.

Thomas's study (2002) for instance, describes an institutional habitus closely aligned to the primary habitus of the students. This theme is recurrent in studies of participants of higher education in a further education setting that cite the ability of these institutions to attract and support marginal students through their study through the provision of a less intimidating setting. Often they are geographically accessible and present a lesser financial and emotional risk (Lloyd and Griffiths 2008, Bathmaker and Thomas 2009, Fenge 2011, Esmond 2012).

The literature however identified different problems that accompanied this closer alignment. Although the more inclusive environment promoted a sense of belonging in the students and Thomas argues, had a positive impact on retention, it brought into question the issue raised by Morrison (2009), that is, the potential the institutional habitus of the further education institution offers the student for transformation. Morrison describes the ambivalence of the teachers at a further education college that offers progression to higher education within the same institution. The teachers are aware of the 'security blanket' being provided by the familiarity of the institution and the supportive staff-student relationships and question whether this environment is too safe, whilst at the same time, being aware of the opportunities presented to students who, in an environment of risk, appreciate the local and the familiar.

Some studies refer to the resulting problematic homogeneity of the student body dominated by the working-classes seeking the comfort of the local, the familiar and safe environment of the college. In choosing a university where the potential exposure to a diverse student body was less, students were found to be reducing opportunities to grow through interaction with people with different

ideas, different cultures and values. Their opportunities to accrue social and cultural capital were significantly reduced (Aries and Seider 2005).

The benefits to be gained through progression to higher education within a familiar further education setting therefore can come with their own compromises in a highly stratified and increasingly competitive higher education sector and global employment market. For the working-class student there would seem to be no escape from the threat of being an inauthentic higher education student - either from being found wanting in terms of lack of cultural fit in an elite traditional institution, or through the validity of their higher education experience being brought into question due to a non-traditional delivery environment.

If we accept Bourdieu's proposition that the habitus is permeable and capable of evolution if experiences are sufficiently striking and sustained, then a striking degree of difference between the institutional habitus and the student habitus is required to support the transformation sought. Following this argument, the student who attends an institution with a habitus less alien will experience less discomfort but will have less opportunity to develop and transform an existing habitus. This issue is the focus of Morrison's study (2009) that raises the possibility of students studying higher education in a further education institution as being potentially being too comfortable. Contrastingly, students attending an elite institution on a residential basis and becoming thereby totally immersed in the practice of that institution, have greater chance of initial discomfort but potentially more opportunity to develop and transform as they gain in confidence (Aries and Seider 2005, Lehmann 2012). I was keen to explore where the institutional habitus of the University of the Highlands and Islands would sit on this scale and how aligned it would prove to be with the primary habitus of the working-class students.

At the same time, the literature indicated that of primary concern was the ability of the institution to meet the needs of the students. The question for the higher education sector, I would argue, in line with Leahy (2012), is not how well the further education sector, or an emerging dual-sector university institution is able to mimic some elite university ideal - real or mythical - but how well such institutions can create a higher education environment relevant to student needs in the 21st Century.

Chapter 3 Methodology

3.1 The Research Question(s)

The overarching question posed by this study is the potential impact a dual-sector university might have on the widening access agenda. That is, does a university that engages in both further and higher education provision under one roof provide an environment that facilitates or hinders development and transformation of students? I ask whether this dual sector environment can provide access to a valued higher education experience without causing the same sense of disjuncture and discomfort reported by many studies of working-class students' experience in the middle-class world of higher education (Lehmann 2009a, Reay et al, 2009b, Keane 2011, He Li 2013, Lee and Kramer 2013).

I employed Bourdieu's thinking tools of habitus, and to a lesser extent, capital and field and used these to frame discussion around issues of inclusion and exclusion, reproduction and transformation. This study builds on previous extensive research into the experience of working-class students in the middle-class world of higher education, adding to this body of work by applying Bourdieu's concepts to a new context in Scotland, that of a dual-sector university. I ask whether this novel context reinforces the findings of earlier studies that evidence a higher education world that rewards the middle-classes while systematically devaluing the capitals of the working-classes (Stahl 2015) or whether the institutional habitus of the dual-sector institution offers a different and more egalitarian environment. The study investigates whether the dual-sector university provides for the participants the 'striking and sustained' environment (Burke 2015) required to challenge the primary habitus and if so whether this environment creates the same debilitating impact on working-class students described in other studies (Lehmann 2009a, Reay et al, 2009b, Keane 2011, He Li 2013, Lee and Kramer 2013).

The study takes cognisance of the higher education needs of students in a geographically remote region where access to higher education and employment opportunities are limited. It asks whether these geographical factors have an impact on the choices students make, on the developing institutional habitus of the university and on the experiences it provides.

Engagement in higher education carries with it (for the working- classes at least) risk (Reay 2001, Watson 2013). Working-class students face the dilemma whereby not engaging in higher education carries a risk of exclusion from rewarding careers. Yet, engaging in higher education has associated risk of debt (even in Scotland where Scottish students do not pay fees) and loss of earnings while studying. Furthermore, the working-class student graduating from a lesser institution and competing with middle class students graduating from elite institutions may find their degree does not bring the promised rewards.

The creation of a new university with such a non-traditional heritage brings with it questions of legitimacy. Although the geographical accessibility of UHI offers access to higher education at reduced immediate economic cost, any question of institutional legitimacy poses further risk to the enrolling student. In a world where it is reported that a degree is not enough (Tomlinson 2008) and within a highly stratified higher education sector, the question of value and associated risk to the students enrolling in a new and unique institution must be posed.

The study therefore considers the extent to which the higher education experience provided within a dual-sector university is perceived by those enrolled to be meeting their higher education needs and is regarded by them as an authentic university experience. This question has relevance both in terms of the level of economic risk being managed by the student as well as the potential impact on their self-concept and development. The study explores the expectations of university life and the students' understanding of what constitutes an authentic university experience. It further considers the development of identity as a 'university student', both in terms of the students' self-concept and how they perceive themselves to be categorised by others.

Finally, the study explores through consideration of the experience the university offers and the degree to which this experience is aligned with the needs of the students, the extent to which it facilitates transformation, challenging and enabling the dismantling of the limiting dispositions of the working-class students who attend.

In summary therefore, this study asks:

- How the habitus of the working-class student is revealed by the choice-making process they undertake prior to enrolling;
- How the university habitus reveals itself to students and how this impacts on their first year experience;
- What potential a dual-sector university has to address the additional challenges faced by working-class students in higher education?
- Whether the experience offered by the dual-sector institutions offers working-class student an experience that facilitates transformation or reproduction;
- What the higher education needs are of students in geographically remote region of Scotland in the 21st century?

3.2 Research Design

In this study I employ Bourdieu's thinking tools to investigate issues of inequality in education. I use Bourdieu's concept of habitus and to a lesser extent those of capital and field to question not just the objective structures of higher education as they exist in this geographically remote region of Scotland but also the subjective contexts through which these objective structures are understood and experienced. In employing habitus as a research tool I took, 'into consideration its complexity as a container of practices imbued in the objective and subjective contexts of the phenomena under study' (Costa and Murphy 2015:8) in this instance, working-class students in their first year of university study in a dual-sector university.

To use Bourdieu's concept of habitus I aimed to structure my research to try to uncover the invisible dispositions that constitute the students' habitus and sought to understand whether, in the context of the dual-sector university, there were indications of this habitus evolving.

Wacquant argues that habitus in isolation does not create practice but that 'it takes the conjunction of disposition and position, subjective capacity and objective possibility, habitus and social space (or field) to produce a given conduct or expression' (2014a:5). My study considers the students' journey to university and the influence of the primary habitus on choice-making. It aims to establish the habitus of the student on arrival at University (gleaned through

students' recollection of and reflection on the choice-making process they undertook) and uncovered through the students' reflections on the degree of alignment between their taken for granted dispositions and the habitus of the university (as revealed through the institution's culture and practice and what impact the exposure to the institutional habitus of the dual-sector university has had). It considers therefore, not just the habitus of the student arriving at the university but the students' perception of their position in the field of higher education, as revealed through their descriptions of their practice and their interaction with others in the early weeks and months of university life.

In adopting this approach I would align myself with Wacquant (2014b) and many other social science researchers in believing the concept of habitus to be a useful means to achieve a greater understanding of the world (Lehman 2009, Reay et al. 2009a, Murphy 2013, Burke 2015, Costa and Murphy 2015, He Li 2015).

In designing this study, I was conscious of the need to avoid simply overlaying my research with Bourdieu's concepts. My research design needed to be informed by the concepts of habitus, capital and field and in carrying out my research I needed to use the findings to inform the theoretical constructs I employed.

In choosing to adopt Bourdieu's concept of habitus, I have had to wrestle with the problem of how to operationalise habitus. How does one make visible, the invisible and mostly intangible set of dispositions buried deep in the psyche? How does one uncover the ingrained values, perceptions, unconscious positioning and very way of being that influences a person's interaction with the world?

Researchers have adopting various approaches to this problem in a variety of research contexts seeking, for instance, to use the lens of Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, capital and field to better understand issues of migration (Nowicka 2015), graduate employment (Burke 2015), youth crime (France 2015), the impact of the Web on professional practice (Costa 2015) and on study habits and practices of young people (Davies 2015).

The approaches that have been adopted in previous studies span quantitative (Bodovski 2015), qualitative methods (inter alia Burke 2015, He Li 2015, Norwicka 2015 and Stahl 2015) and mixed methods (Lee and Kramer 2013, Cairns 2015). Although these studies span different disciplines, I found each useful in

determining my research design, some in confirming what would not be useful, others providing valuable insight that helped to fine-tune my approach. Each reading of the work of others prompted further reflection on what it was I was trying to do and whether every detail of my research design was aligned to that purpose.

This insight was helpful in determining my research design. My questions needed to focus on how my participants behaved, what they did, as much as what they said they believed. If I was to employ the conceptual tools of Bourdieu, I needed to consider carefully the challenge of making the invisible visible.

I chose to focus on a period of transition, one in which there was a chance of habitus rising to the level of consciousness, understanding it would only be if the participants had felt like 'fish out of water' on entering higher education that such consciousness of habitus would occur (Bourdieu 2007). Revelations of discomfort, of awareness of not fitting in and participant descriptions of situations that seemed unnatural to them would be revealing. However, I also needed to consider the possibility that such an experience may lead to a wish to hide this lack of fit from me. Perhaps they would wish to play down the extent to which they became aware of a cultural or social deficit? In response, I decided that I would draw upon Nowicka's (2015) study in designing the questions asked, exposing the participants' deeply-held values, attitudes and prejudices as much through discussion of their practice as their stated views.

I also needed to consider that participants may have felt completely aligned with the habitus of the institution. If so, I needed to be ready to explore aspects of university life that provided them with that sense of fit. Had my participants not experienced disjuncture, only through revealing their practice and repeated actions and their understanding of the strategies they were employing, would I gain some insight into their habitus.

The potential for habitus to evolve through exposure to different and new experiences is at the heart of my study. The most obvious approach to uncover evidence of such transformation would be through a longitudinal study, for instance such as that adopted by Lehmann (2009a) in his study of working-class students in an elite Canadian university, using qualitative semi-structured interviews undertaken at a series of intermittent points in the lives of participants. While this appealed in terms of its potential to uncover real time

student perceptions of their environment and their interactions in it at different points in their life trajectory, time and funding constraints prohibited such an approach.

Other studies, such as Bodovski's (2015) make use of secondary data as a means of circumventing the time and cost constraints of undertaking a longitudinal study. However, given the novel context of the UHI, no such data was available to me. Should it have been however, I would have been reluctant to mirror this approach with its associated constraints, not just in terms of the questions asked by the original researchers, but also the lack of opportunity to explore first hand, the interaction of different agents within the field in question, an interaction which I believed would be revealing in terms of both the students' and the institution's habitus. Through participant descriptions of these interactions and through their perceptions of and reactions to university practice, I believed I would find the data I needed. This rich data, if it was to be meaningful, required a level of direction from the participants. I needed to hear what was important to them. Above all, I struggled with the idea of reducing experience to quantifiable degrees of alignment with researchers' questions and how much this would tell me.

My ontological position of believing reality to be socially constructed rather than an objective entity to be observed and measured, steered me away from a quantitative methodology and towards a qualitative approach. This I believed would facilitate an interaction with participants to generate data that could take me beyond an understanding of what they know (that may be uncovered through use of a questionnaire for instance) and closer to an understanding of how they know. My research is conducted within an interpretivist paradigm within which I acknowledge the role of participant and researcher as co-creators of knowledge. In adopting a qualitative approach I am seeking to give the participants a voice and a degree of influence over the data capture that will highlight what has been important to them in their development as students.

I decided that in keeping with this paradigm, interaction with the research participants with a commitment to free-flowing discussion would be my approach.

A biographical narrative technique such as that employed by Burke (2015) although likely to produce rich data in terms of student biography, I believed would not be so productive given the relatively narrow focus of my study. I decided instead, to borrow the principle of giving the participant a degree of autonomy over the focus of parts of the interview but would allow myself to raise topics not introduced by the participant. Burke analysed the rich data captured from his interviews to identify the repetitive practice and attitudes that would reveal habitus. His method lent itself to his study but was less suitable to mine with its specific focus on a particular point of transition. I decided I would need to find another way in to habitus.

Consideration was given to using focus groups to inform my research. This is an approach frequently used by the university as part of its quality enhancement practice and one that would therefore be familiar to student participants. Such an approach featured in prior studies and had generated useful data (for instance Davies 2015). My wish to gather rich data relating to the individual habitus of the participants, its influence on their journey to the institution, as well as their experience in the first year, led me to a decision to work with individuals rather than focus groups during the data gathering process. I aligned myself with Davies in understanding that 'every agent's habitus embodies unique characteristics as well as shared experiences' (2015:178). In conducting individual interviews with the participants, I had no doubt that references to shared experiences and shared reaction to them would emerge. I would have opportunity to identify commonalities but at the same time, by conducting individual interviews, I would also give individuals the required space to describe their potentially distinctive reaction, uninterrupted by others.

Although I could see the potential for focus groups to generate interesting data through participants building on one another's responses, I was concerned that a group situation may inhibit discussion relating to personal experiences, especially if these discussions provoked reflection on prior feelings of discomfort and unease. Furthermore, I was concerned to avoid any one voice dominating discussion, effectively closing down others (see Davies 2015) or creating 'group think' which could skew the data gathered.

I decided to use semi-structured interviews designed with sufficient structure to produce the data that would be required to inform discussion and draw conclusions around the research data, while leaving room for the students to influence the focus of discussion at key points and highlight issues and matters important to them and their journey. The ultimate intention was to produce data with the richness required to inform a robust discussion of the interplay between institution and student habitus in this novel environment.

My research was focussed on a period of transition, one which was nearing its end but sufficiently recent for the experience to be fresh in the mind of the student. I decided to schedule the research during the final months of the students' first year of university hoping that they would still have a clear memory of their journey to university and the experience of their initial few weeks and months. I identified this period as being one during which the students were most likely to have experienced a clash of habitus, if there had been one, between their primary habitus and that of the university. This decision was informed by Bourdieu's proposal that it is when there is a disjuncture between habitus and field (here the field of higher education) that habitus operates at the level of consciousness (1990 in He Li 2015). I located my research at this time of transition for the student participants, intending to explore with them their reflections on their experiences and their understanding of the foundations of any sense of disjuncture they may have experienced.

My reading of earlier studies however, made me alert to the possibility that the students may well have engaged in a process of transformation much earlier than during their first year at university. Reay (2001) for instance, describes participants who revealed much earlier engagement in a process of reflexivity and conscious development of the self, emerging from a growing awareness of being different from their peer group. This possibility was therefore built into the structure of the interview through the use of timelines.

As a way into uncovering the participants' habitus on arrival at university, I included an exploration of the journey that brought them into higher education, the key influences(ers) and factors that led to their enrolment. My intention was to uncover the students' perception of the world and their position in it, the level of their understanding of the complex highly hierarchical world of higher education and their aspirations and any sense of limitations on these. Through

such discussion I hoped to uncover their degree of investment in 'the game', whether they considered higher education to be likely or even possible for them, whether they had a sense of entitlement to such an opportunity or whether their journey to higher education was a problematic struggle.

To make the most of the interview opportunity, by encouraging prior reflection and to allow the participant some direction over the discussion, I asked each student to annotate a map of their journey in the form of a timeline, indicating influencing factors, positive and negative, and highlighting those they regarded as most significant. This timeline was to be the focus of the first part of the interview. In adopting this approach I drew upon the work of Alan France (2015) and his timelines and ecomaps used with participants in a study of youth crime. The timeline was also used to encourage discussion of reflexive practice that may have been triggered through discussion of significant events and influence of significant others.

The interviews were structured to facilitate exploration of the three components of habitus as delineated by Wacquant: the cognitive, the conative and affective. Wacquant explains that the cognitive aspects of habitus consist in 'the categories of perception through which agents cut up the world, make out its constituent parts, and give them pattern and meaning' (Wacquant 2014a:8). I aimed therefore to glean insight into the students' understanding of the opportunities that were available to them, exploring in particular, their understanding of the higher education sector.

Wacquant describes the conative aspects of habitus as consisting of the 'proprioceptive capacities, sensorimotor skills and kinaesthetic dexterities that are honed in and for purposeful action' (Wacquant 2014a:8). Part of the interview would then seek to explore the students' academic agility or ease with which they were able to understand and respond to the academic context or conversely, the disconnect they felt from these practices; how out of kilter they felt their skill-base to be and how they felt this positioned them in the world of higher education.

The affective aspect of habitus, Wacquant explains 'entails the vesting of one's life energies into the objects, undertakings and agents that populate the world under consideration' (Wacquant 2014a:9). I was both interested in the students' investment in education at the point of entry and the degree to which this had changed, if at all, during the first year of study.

I aimed, in relation to the conative components of habitus, to investigate the development of the students' academic skills and competencies, how they regarded their linguistic ability, their understanding and ability to respond to academic norms and practices such as engagement in academic debate in tutorials and formal written assignments, on first arrival at university and as the end of their first year approached. I was also interested in whether students referred to other skill-sets they had that had little bearing on this world of higher education and what this may reveal about their habitus and that of the institution. I was also alert to any reference to tutors' assumptions, expectations and degree of tolerance of skills deficits and the degree of disjuncture or 'cleft-ness' the students had experienced during this time.

Finally I intended to further explore the affective components of habitus to uncover whether the students were engaging in reflexive practice that revealed a developing self-concept, whether the students' positioning in relation to higher education and their future aspirations had changed at all, whether the level of their investment in academic study remained static or had developed in any way and to establish their appetite for continuing study and career. I wished to explore with the students any key influences(ers) that had prompted any change and the extent to which the limitations or boundaries set by their habitus was evolving.

As described above, the primary means of data capture I employed was through semi-structured interview. In the interviews however, the students made no direct reference to social class, discussing rather their dispositions in terms of personal characteristics. While developing the interview questions I was conscious of the sensitivities around class membership and reluctant to pursue a line of enquiry in the interview situation that the students may have found embarrassing or uncomfortable. That said, I was keen to explore their perspectives on class and decided to use a follow-up e mail to create an opportunity to do so, giving the students an opportunity to safely express their

views without risk of discomfort. This approach gave the students opportunity to reflect on the concept of social class before responding and prompted some helpful considered responses. The disadvantage of this approach however was that it generated only a 50% response rate. Although the replies received were helpful, I was unable to ascertain whether a nil response was indicative of a students' reluctance to declare their class status, a measure of their understanding of class as a concept or simply a reflection of other demands on their time.

My role as researcher and the subjectivity that brings to the study also had to be taken into account. Like those I planned to study, I was first-in-family to attend university and from a working-class background. As a grammar school student, having been through a process of selection at the age of eleven, I was encouraged throughout my school years to see university as the next logical step. Despite my mother being a primary school teacher and my eldest sister attending teacher training college, knowledge of higher education in the family was limited and the experience of university away from home was, at least initially, traumatic. My career has been in further education and for the last 12 years I have been a college principal, committed to widening access and heavily involved in institutional organisational development. I have a vested interest in the success of the college in its provision of further education and in its success as a constituent part of the university.

Given my personal history, I was aware of the need to approach this research with caution and with a commitment to reflexivity, to be prepared to turn my sociological gaze on myself, acknowledging the need to question at each turn my interpretation of data and maintaining an awareness of my subjectivities (He li 2015). Although I recognised value-free research as being unattainable, I committed to aspire to it (Burke 2015). Through my use of Bourdieu's thinking tools, I aimed to achieve the 'epistemological break' that would prompt me to question what I took for granted, to be alert for assumptions based on 'common sense'. Furthermore, I was aware of the dangers highlighted by Bourdieu of the 'double bind' that lay in the potential danger of simply replacing my subjectivities and preconceptions with those arising from the theoretical position I was adopting (Burke 2015).

Stahl's (2014) study of working-class boys and the development of an egalitarian habitus provided further reinforcement of the need to avoid Bourdieu's 'double bind' described above, as indeed did other research such as that of Reay (2009b) and Watson et al. (2009).

Stahl's findings evidenced the 'generation of a counter-habitus' rather than an evolving habitus that would more closely align his working-class male participants with the middle class world of education reported in earlier studies (He Li 2015, Lee and Kramer 2013). The boys in Stahl's study (2015) drew upon working-class dispositions towards solidarist, working-class communal values to find a middle path, avoiding the cleft-ness that may accompany success and academic failure. The work of Reay et al. (2009b) identified working-class students who reported feeling academically aligned with the university and more 'at home' in the studious environment than they had previously felt. Watson et al. (2009) reported student reactions to the university environment that ranged from fitting in, to resistance and exclusion. I understood therefore that I needed to be alert to findings that would challenge my pre-conceptions of the nature of the institutional habitus of UHI and the nature of any change to the students' habitus, which could potentially challenge rather than align with contemporary discourse of the benefits and risks of engaging in higher education. While my research built on the work of earlier studies, I needed to be open to findings that would challenge what had gone before, as well as my own interpretations of habitus and the Inverness College UHI context.

3.3 Ethical Considerations

Much thought was given to the potential benefits of this research as weighed against any potential risk to those participating. The aim of the research was to reach a better understanding of the experience of working-class students in higher education, specifically in a new dual-sector setting in order that this knowledge could be used to counter the enduring disadvantage working-class students face in the 21st Century, potentially through development of future policy and practice. Despite decades of research and policy-making, working-class students are still under-represented in higher education and I believe that it is only through continuing to work to understand the students' experience by listening to them and their stories, will progress be made. Although the small sample size posed a risk to the students in terms of preserving anonymity, the

nature of this risk was far outweighed by the potential societal gain of adding to this body of knowledge. That said, I embarked on this research very aware that 'an interview inquiry is a moral enterprise' (Kvale 1996:109), committed to minimising any risk to those who agreed to participate and to aim to transcribe the oral statements made accurately and to interpret these adopting a critical and reflexive stance, in effect, doing them justice.

I adopted semi-structured interviews as a research method as I believed it was only through talking to students that I could understand 'their lived world' (Kvale 1996:1). In using a semi-structured interview I anticipated being able to direct the process sufficiently to ensure the breadth of coverage I needed to inform my analysis and discussion across a range of topics, thereby building on earlier studies, but at the same time, give the students enough scope to influence the direction of the discussion and highlight experiences they viewed as being significant, particularly in relation to this new institutional context.

The study is a class-based research project. As a proxy for social class identification, participants were encouraged to volunteer on the basis of being first-in-family to attend university. Although consideration has been given to the use of the students' home post-code as a filter, the deprivation index is not helpful in the sparsely populated Highlands and Islands region in identifying class identity. For example, although the University of the Highlands and Islands enrolls only 24% of students from the 40% most deprived post-codes and only 8% from the 20% most deprived areas, 52% of those enrolled are from SEC classes 4-7.

I intended to interview ten volunteers from seven first year undergraduate education classes at Inverness College UHI. All volunteers were at least 18 years of age. An e-mail invitation was sent out to these classes inviting participants to self-nominate if they met the criteria of first generation in their family to engage with higher education. As the first-in-family was being used as a proxy for working-classness, I did not want to exclude any student who had an older sibling at university.

Students were asked to volunteer by e-mail to ensure protection of their anonymity throughout. I selected 15 students from those that volunteered to allow for any later withdrawals. In establishing the sample size, consideration

was given to the time and resource limitations of the study as well as the epistemological grounding within which it was set. My aim was to produce rich data from an in-depth exploration of the experience and knowledge of a series of participants that would provide me with the insight I required into their life view. I was aiming for quality, depth and richness of data first and foremost, with quantity of less concern. I believed that ten participants would provide me with sufficient data to establish commonality of experience while still working within the time allocation, enabling me to carry out a rigorous analysis of the data collected.

Ten students responded and nine of these turned up for their interview. The students' ages, course and parental occupation) is shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1

Student Characteristics:

Pseudonym	Age	Course	Parental Occupation (As described by participants)
Amanda	60	Psychology	Farmer - Self-employed Mother - Unemployed
Susan	23	Psychology	Mother – Unemployed Father – Leisure management
Pamela	23	Child and Youth Studies	Mother – Early years education assistant Father - Undeclared
Kirstie	18	English Literature	Mother – Administrator (ex. Armed forces) Father – Self-employed (Ex. Armed forces)
Gary	18	History	Mother – Clerical administrator Father – Armed Forces Office (deceased)
Ken	41	Geography	Mother – Unemployed Father – Skilled tradesman
Rhona	24	Environmental Science	Mother – Health Care Father – Public Sector semi-skilled operative (deceased)
Katie	47	Psychology	Mother – Unemployed (deceased) Father – Lower professional (deceased)
Mary	41	Environmental Science	Mother – Retail sales assistant Father – Public sector officer

E-mail invitations were sent out to seven classes of first year under-graduate students, explaining the nature of the study and the voluntary nature of participation. The invitation to participate clarified that students choosing not to participate would not be disadvantaged in any way.

Student identity was protected through a process of de-identified data through use of pseudonyms. Each participant was attributed a pseudonym, the key to which was known only to the researcher and kept secure on an electronic file restricted by password and accessible only by the researcher. The transcriber only knew the participants by pseudonym. Any risk to anonymity that could arise due to the small scale of the study and sample size was clearly explained to potential participants.

Each interview was planned to last approximately one hour. A flexible approach was adopted however that would enable the interview to be extended should the participant indicate a wish to talk further.

In order to make best use of the hour and to give students the opportunity to direct the discussion, I asked the participants to complete a short task prior to the interview. This task was to annotate a timeline indicating key decision moments and key influences(ers) and detractors that had affected their learner journey. This timeline was used to focus the first part of the interview on events and people perceived by the student to be significant.

A series of questions were developed to encourage the student to reflect on the decision-making process that brought them to the institution as well as their experiences in the first few weeks and months. The questions developed in themed interview sections provided structure to the interview (Kvale 1996) and ensured consistent coverage but were intended to be used flexibly in order that the interview would be allowed to flow and natural interaction ensue to provide sufficient depth of information that would inform a later analysis.

Themes and proposed associated categories or meaning units that inform the questions are provided later in this chapter.

This series of categories or meaning units associated with the interview themes, helped to ensure that I was alert to potential areas of interest during the interview and to trigger follow-up questions that clarified and probed the responses given whilst still enabling me to be open to new directions the interview may take. I anticipated that the final analysis, although making use of the meaning categorisation approach described above would also encompass other approaches, including but not restricted to, gleaning general impressions from re-reading the transcripts and re-playing the audio recording, identifying

patterns and making deeper interpretations of specific sections of the transcript (Kvale 1996).

Consideration was given to reliability of data collected in terms of whether the participant would give responses that accurately reflected their experience and or beliefs. I understood that the affective aspects of their experience, not least the much-reported sense of shame and guilt may lead participants to dissemble or at least play down situations they had experienced. I believed that to an extent this may be revealed through non-verbal communication or tone. Nevertheless, I structured the interviews to include questions that asked participants to describe the practice they engaged in, so that any stated view or beliefs could be triangulated against what the participants actually did.

It was predicted that the data, would most likely include personal data and was therefore anonymised through use of pseudonyms. It was agreed with participants that the key to their identity would be kept until the submission of the dissertation (anticipated September 2017). Following this date, the key to the identity of the participants would be destroyed. The data would then become irreversible and the identity of the participants and associated attribution of any opinion or personal disclosure would be permanently protected.

To summarise, the participant name/pseudonym key was to be destroyed by shredding following the retrieval date of the dissertation (anticipated submission date September 2017). The transcription of the interviews would be retained for 10 years after which it will be shredded. The audio recording would be destroyed following the retrieval date of the dissertation (anticipated submission September 2017).

The e-mail invitation included a plain language statement, information on the voluntary nature of participation and clarification that no student would be disadvantaged if they chose not to participate. Students were given written information about the purpose of the research, the interview approach that would be used, the intention to audio-record the interview, the time commitment they would be making and means of access to the findings of the study post write-up. The steps that would be taken to protect their anonymity were explained as well as the risks to anonymity that were posed through the small scale of the study and sample size.

As Principal of the College, I was aware of the dependency relationship with students. However, the relationship is a distant one involving no personal interaction with the students or direct involvement in their learning experiences. I explained in the e-mail approach to classes however, that their participation was entirely voluntary and no student would be disadvantaged in any way if they chose to not participate.

The interviews were scheduled to take place in a meeting room in Inverness College UHI main campus. This meeting room was selected for its privacy, the ability to set the room up in an informal, welcoming manner and for its neutrality, minimising the likelihood of the student experiencing any anxiety at being interviewed by the College Principal. I also set out to establish an empathetic relationship with the participants in revealing my own first in family status and indicating my understanding of the opportunities and challenge this status poses. I decided however not to elaborate further than these succinct statements to avoid exerting influence over the participants' responses.

Effort was made to set up a welcoming, informal environment and to make the interview as natural an exchange as possible without losing the structured nature of the interaction. Each participant was given encouraging non-verbal feedback and respectful attention was paid to their disclosures of experience and opinions offered. Interpretation of points being made were checked during the interview process to verify the accuracy of the understanding of the researcher and to reassure the participant that their descriptions and opinions would be accurately represented in the findings.

Any requirement for additional support in reading the plain language statement and consent forms was explored with the student at the stage of volunteering and again before the interview started. I explained that any difficulties in written communication could be overcome through verbal interaction with the student, ensuring their understanding and informed consent. Should it be necessary, I explained that verbal consent to participate and understanding of the purpose and nature of the research could be recorded on the audio recording of the interview.

The research did not involve topics of a sensitive nature, nor was it targeting vulnerable groups. However I was aware that the participants in discussing their approach to learning and potentially, their learning history, may have disclosed

sensitive information relating to their lifestyle, past or present and/or difficult past experiences in learning. In the unlikely event a participant were to become distressed having raised any particular experience, my intention was to offer to stop the interview, offer the support of College services and indeed, remind the student that they were under no obligation to continue. Should the student have disclosed an unknown vulnerability such as a mental health issue the participant would have been offered a referral to College guidance and support services.

3.4 The Structure of the Interview

Each interview opened with confirmation of the student's consent to participate and a brief summary of the aims of the research. I then asked a series of closed questions that would enable me to categorise the students' family and class background. These questions were:

1. Where they were from/where they grew up.
2. What their parents/siblings did.
3. Who in their family, if anyone, had been to university.

The interview was then structured in three parts, these were, choice-making, cleft-ness and the nature of the higher education experience.

3.4.1 Choice-making

The first part of the interview was designed to expose aspects of the primary habitus, the 'embodied history, internalised as a second nature and so forgotten as history' (Bourdieu 2015:56), and its influence on the students' journey to this institution.

The aim of this section was to explore with the student, the dispositions developed in the family setting, as they related to education and specifically, higher education and any indication of a secondary habitus developing during the school years. It aimed to illuminate some of the affective components of habitus in terms of the degree of 'investment in the game' made by each student and through discussion of the students' understanding of their own position in the field of higher education and their expectations of how this would influence their life trajectory. I intended to investigate how they approached the choice-making process itself, their expectations, their sense of entitlement

or lack of, whether they were engaging with higher education with an explicit instrumental intent or were attributing value to higher education for its own sake. Indeed, I wished to find out whether they had in fact proactively engaged in choice making per se, or whether their arrival at Inverness College UHI was the outcome of some arbitrary factor or simply, deferment of entry into the world of work.

In its exploration of the influence of the primary habitus, this section of the interview aimed to establish the level of economic, social and cultural capital accrued by the students and the degree of influence this had on their choice-making. This section also incorporated discussion relating to the cognitive components of the primary habitus through exploration of their understanding of the higher education sector in all its complexity and the origins of this knowledge. This part of the interview aimed to shed light on the students' knowledge, or lack of knowledge, of the dual-sector nature of the institution and its position in the stratified world of higher education. Furthermore, it was anticipated that these questions would provoke responses that would reveal the students' perception of risk as it applied to their university studies.

3.4.2 Cleft-ness

The middle section of the interview was designed to offer an opportunity to explore the extent to which the student had felt aligned with and comfortable operating within the institutional habitus of the dual-sector university. It explored the extent to which they had engaged in a process of reflexivity during this initial few weeks or months, or even prior to their arrival, with any accompanying questioning of themselves and their primary habitus.

Through this part of the discussion I intended to shed light on the conative components of habitus, that is, the students' awareness and acquisition of skills and capacities relating to the higher education field. The questions were designed to encourage the student to consider not only their own experience but also how this compared to their peer group and their understanding of potential different experiences/challenges. Through this discussion I intended to expose their understanding of the field-specific capital valued in higher education and the extent to which they were aware of their own capital accumulation

(educational, social and cultural) or deficit and what had triggered this awareness. This awareness, or lack of, would be referenced back to the primary habitus and its associated capital (educational, social and cultural) accumulation.

This section also offered the student an opportunity to discuss the degree to which they had experienced a sense of disjuncture, if at all, whether there was any awareness of transformation, in terms of cognitive and conative elements of habitus any accompanying emotional impact and any consequential impact on their relationships developed within the primary habitus.

Finally, this part of the interview encouraged the students to discuss any coping strategies they had adopted to cope while managing themselves across two different habituses, if this was their experience.

Part of the discussion focused on the students' relationships with their peer group and the staff of the university. Through a discussion of their interactions with other agents in the dual-sector setting, I hoped to make visible the institutional habitus through the eyes of the working-class first year student. In this part of the interview I attempted to explore the degree to which the student had been able to participate in the learning process and the extent to which they believed their contribution to have been valued. In exploring these aspects of the students' experience, this section of the interview aimed to produce data relevant to the conative aspects of the students' experience, their ability to operate effectively in the world of higher education but also the affective aspects of their experience and the impact this had on their continued investment in the game.

3.4.3 Aspiration, ambition and career-mapping

This part of the interview was designed to highlight, through discussion, the students' career ambitions and what they now considered to be probable and possible, 'for the likes of them'. It was focused therefore on the 'structuring structures' of habitus. It was intended that this section would link back to the first part of the interview during which the student set out their initial rationale for undertaking an undergraduate degree and confirm whether that rationale was still relevant or whether there was evidence of changed ambition and understanding of what was possible.

This part of the interview was designed to facilitate a discussion that would further reveal the affective component of the primary habitus and give some insight into any emerging signs of transformation (in terms of whether the student perceived their position in the world to be changing) as well as give space to further discussion of potential development of the cognitive components through their developing understanding of the way the game was played was developing and the degree to which the wider potential benefits of high education were understood.

This section particularly sought to uncover any indication or early signs of habitus transformation and building on the work of Lehmann (2014) sought to ascertain whether any evident signs of transformation correlated with the approach the student had taken to their university experience. As a way into this, this part of the interview opened with a discussion relating to the nature of the students' experience, whether they compartmentalised their university life on a 9-5 basis or whether it was having a more profound impact throughout different aspects of their lives.

A discussion of the difference between college and university students was employed as an accessible approach to a discussion on 'universitiness' and the students' sense of authenticity in this novel setting. The questions were designed to explore the students' developing self-concept and the degree to which they considered themselves and were perceived by others to be authentic university students and depending on their course, professionals in training. It was anticipated that these questions would reveal any reflexive practice the students were engaging in and lead into a discussion on career planning they were engaged in, even at this early stage.

The question of authenticity and 'universitiness', and the discussion relating to their future aspirations were used to link back to the earlier issue of risk discussed in the first section of the interview as well as to illuminate any indication of habitus transformation and sense of the limiting structures of the primary habitus evolving.

The Interview Schematic used during interviews is provided in Appendix D.

3.6 Reflections on the Process

Despite the amount of reading, planning and preparatory structuring of the interview schematic itself I had done prior to carrying out the interviews, the participants themselves, the reality of the interview and the emerging data all surprised me. This was for me, a stark reminder that researching with human participants is a messy business.

I was struck by the diversity of my participants. I had always expected a diversity of age, given the demographic makeup of the UHI student body, but in using first-in-family as a proxy for class, I had anticipated a greater degree of commonality than was immediately apparent. During the initial stages of analysis for instance, I found myself having to search for indicators of class that I had presumed would be more obvious. I learned to triangulate evidence, comparing and contrasting students' statements regarding their self-positioning in class groupings with their stated practice. Whereas some identified themselves, for instance, as middle class, their dispositions suggested a working-class status.

As the interviews progressed and my confidence grew, I became more adept at gently steering the participant who wandered off topic and being more relaxed became more adept at spotting opportunities for a follow up question. At the same time, I found that revisiting my research aims, reviewing the research question and reflecting on completed interviews to be helpful between interviews to keep me on track and maintain a standard approach.

Although I understood prior to this process that a transcription was itself a construct derived from the interview, until I came to examine the data, I don't think I fully appreciated the degree of interpretation that transcription represented. This was most apparent when reviewing data in those early stages between interviews when the memory of the interview was fresh in my mind. As I read the data I could still hear the participant's voice. The additional layer of information that this brought to the analysis was a prompt for me to keep returning to the audio recording, even after the transcripts were complete and checked by the participants for accuracy.

An illustration of how this influenced the interpretation of the data would be consideration of Kirsty's transcript. At the start of the interview, Kirsty was

using standard vocabulary and was modifying her accent, minimising its impact on the communication. By the end of the interview however, she had reverted to a much stronger accent and her diction became increasingly peppered with the dialect of her home environment. The transcriber however, has translated the vocabulary into Standard English, in doing so losing the richness of the responses I had heard. Furthermore, at the end of the interview, as I turned off the audio recorder, Kirsty revealed that awareness of her distinctive accent caused her to purposefully remain silent in class as she did not want to be set apart from the others or judged. Her awareness of her accent in the university setting and the conclusion she had drawn that it was in some way inappropriate would feature in my analysis.

Although Kirsty's accent and use of dialect was a striking example of the need to keep reverting to the audio recording, there were other instances where this proved a useful approach to take. In Mary's interview for example, she demonstrated her experimentation with the new academic language she has been exposed to. Reviewing the audio recording allowed me to consider the tone she was employing and the level of confidence that underpins her speech at different points. Mary appears to be trying on new language for size. The vocabulary is new to her and at times she is very self-conscious in her use of it, at others her language use is less hesitant. At one point she asked me to clarify the correct terminology to employ. Playing this through, gave me access to a far more nuanced analysis of the exchange, giving me some insight not only into Mary's academic development during this first year but also the level of confidence she had in experimenting with the new vocabulary and also asking me, seen at that point as 'the expert', for verification. Through the audio recording, I was able to interpret the degree of comfort Mary had in openly acknowledging that this was all new to her. None of this was explicitly stated and would have been lost had I relied entirely on the transcript.

Immersing myself in the transcripts in the early stages prior to engaging in a systematic coding exercise was a time-consuming but necessary process. Only after three of four readings of the transcripts, moving from one to the other did I begin to see patterns and look beneath the superficial meaning of the text.

Identification of any evidence of 'cleft-ness' is illustrative of this point. I had initial concerns that the participants were not describing the levels of anxiety other researchers had reported. My participants seemed too comfortable! They claimed to have maintained un-interrupted relationships with family and friends and were surviving the first year of university, apparently without too much difficulty. As I became more immersed in the data however, I was able to spot subtle signs of cleft-ness and identify differing methods being employed by different participants to manage this cleft state.

Ken, for instance, evidences a degree of cleft-ness through his descriptions of the exchanges he has with his friends and his father. He rationalises his development and his growing expertise in geography and conservation using the reference points of his working class habitus. In his description of the exchanges in the pub with his friends, he puts his growing expertise in the same category as the technical knowledge of his friend the joiner, using this classification to explain and excuse the lack of interest his friends have in his new passion. This categorisation allows him to reassure himself to an extent that these relationships have not changed. He is keen to assert that his father could have done what he has done and that his father shares his interest and understanding. In doing so he is normalising his own development, resisting any inference that he is in anyway superior or set apart. Reading between the lines however, and picking up on his asides, these claims do not tell the whole story. He clarifies for instance that his father's knowledge of geography and conservation issues is gleaned solely from TV documentaries. When discussing the way his friends regard him as an intellectual equal, he wryly comments that if he ends up as their children's teacher, they may have to rethink that sense of equality.

To help me in my analysis of the transcripts and in particular to help me see beyond the surface meaning, I made use of a series of questions suggested by Braun and Clarke:

- How does a participant make sense of their experiences?
- Why might they be making sense of their experiences this way and not another way?
- In what different ways do they make sense of the topic discussed?
- How 'common-sense' is their story?
- How would I feel if I was in that situation?

- What assumptions do they make in talking about the world?
- What kind of world is revealed through their account? (2013: 205)

These questions helped me to identify quickly a recurrent theme of participant acceptance of an external locus of control, whereby many described themselves in quite passive terms with little agency in mapping out their lives. Some were explicit in this, for example Susan's advice to her younger self was not to panic because 'that safe path you have been walking on can crumble completely'. In other transcripts, the passivity and lack of control was expressed through their fatalistic interpretation of life. Katie for instance several times refers to the universe intervening and sending her a message, directing her path. Others, for instance Mary, simply use passive language, 'I fell pregnant', in doing so, distancing themselves from agentic responsibility.

I proposed to each of the participants that they may wish to annotate a timeline in preparation for the interview. This device was employed to encourage reflection prior to the interview itself. My expectation was that they would bring the annotated timeline with them and that the discussion in part one of the interview would centre on this document. I had deliberately used gentle suggestion in the e-mail exchange that they might find this a useful approach to take in preparing for the interview. I avoided being more direct in my instruction to participants being very aware of the risk of non-attendance should I introduce too onerous a task or one which was too prescriptive or difficult to complete. I found however that in doing so, I erred too far on the side of caution and was not sufficiently clear in regard to my expectations. Participants did engage in reflection prior to the interview but only a few annotated the timeline or brought it with them. I believe it was still useful in focussing their thinking, clarifying that my interest was in the choice-making process that had brought them to the university but was likely to have started years before. More specific instruction however may have elicited richer information, for instance had I given specific instruction and perhaps means of identifying key influencers at each life stage. I regard this as a missed opportunity.

3.7 Method of Analysis

The interviews were structured in line with three themes that had emerged from the literature review, namely, choice-making, cleft-ness and aspiration/career mapping. Each of these three themes, I anticipated would help to operationalise habitus.

Through an exploration of choice-making I hoped to uncover the sub-conscious dispositions of the students (and those of their key influencers) as well as gaining some insight into their grasp of the complexities of the field of higher education, the various capitals (social, cultural and economic) they had accrued and their understanding of how 'the game' was played.

In exploring the students' sense of alignment or disjuncture with the institution's habitus in the first few weeks and months in the middle section of the interview, I hoped to gain further confirmation of the nature of habitus gleaned through the first section, with a particular focus on the students' ability to operate in the field of higher education in terms of academic performance as well as social embeddedness or isolation.

The final part of the interview was designed to uncover habitus by probing the students' aspiration and ambition and inquiring how the student was acting to realise these ambitions. Through this discussion I hoped to establish the influence of the habitus in terms of any limitations it was setting. In doing so, I aimed to make visible the 'structuring structures' of habitus, and explore whether these dispositions were evolving even in these early higher education phases or whether the primary habitus of the student took precedent in setting out for the students what was deemed probable or even possible for them and their careers.

This final section of the interview however did not focus exclusively on the concept of habitus but differed in that it shifted focus away from this concept in part to encompass consideration of the higher education expectations and needs of the students. In doing so my intention was to ensure that my study would not only provide some insight into the working class students' experience in a dual-sector setting but would give the students a voice in terms of what type of higher education experience they were seeking. I sought, through this discussion, to establish what type of higher education experience the student

deemed to be relevant to their lives and was perceived to be necessary to assist them in achieving their academic and career goals. This final part of the interview linked to the earlier discussion of perceived risk to the student in participating in higher education. The study I had hoped would help inform future policy and practice to widen access. However, I did not want to assume that the barrier to higher levels of participation was due to disjuncture between the habitus of student and institution. I also wanted to know whether the experience being offered did indeed meet the needs of the students and whether this alignment or lack of with student needs was also a factor.

Within the three themes described above, I planned to analyse the response according to the three aspects of habitus described by Wacquant (2014a), as affective, cognitive and conative. Within each of these categories I had identified a series of codes that I had judged likely to emerge (on the basis of these featuring consistently in prior research). Although I was predicting these as being likely to be useful in my analysis and therefore worth being alert to during the interviews, I resolved to keep an open mind and also be alert to unpredicted and surprising responses should they emerge.

The themes, categories and codes identified for analysis are set out in Table 1.

The interviews were audio recorded with the prior consent of the participants and later transcribed.

The transcriber was asked to produce a verbatim transcript that accurately recorded the verbal interaction but did not attempt to indicate pauses or intonation. In doing so, I aimed to produce a readable transcript enabling a reasonable analysis, while avoiding complex and, for my study, unnecessary annotations used in studies with a primary linguistic and psychological focus (such as that by Mishler 1999 and featured in Kvale 2007).

Field notes made during or immediately after the interviews were added as annotations to the transcripts where they occurred. Following the transcription process, each interview audio-recording was played through and any relevant notes made that indicated a particular hesitancy or tone that was considered significant to the interpretation of the written transcript. In doing so, I was

attempting to ensure that the transcripts were as true as possible to the interview while accepting that the transcription process itself inevitably involved an interpretation of sorts in that it reduced the dialogue in all its non-verbal richness to a written form and I was making decisions as to what was relevant in terms of tone/pause and what was not. I was however making these decisions from an informed position, having been part of the interview itself and these annotations were expected to be exceptional, limited to occasions where their omission would create misleading transcript.

The written transcripts were e-mailed to the participants who were asked to verify these. Participants were also invited to make further comment on any of the questions should they wish, before returning them.

Each interview was condensed and coded according to the pre-established themes described in Table 1. Making decisions on themes and codes prior to embarking on the research helped me avoid being overwhelmed at the analysis stage by the volume of transcript produced (Kvale 2007). It also maintained my focus during the interview process on the reasons for the study and what I was trying to achieve. During the interviews themselves I found this a useful counter-balance to the temptation to allow the interview to wander into interesting but less relevant territory. That said, I was aware of the need to keep an open mind and be alert to participant responses that surprised.

In this interpretivist study, my concerns with validity were addressed through 'checking, questioning and theorising' throughout the entire process (Kvale 2007:123). In drawing upon the work of Bourdieu and that of other researchers in embedding the concepts of habitus and to a lesser extent, field and capitals in the research design, I sought to ensure that I was actually measuring what I set out to measure. The interview structure was designed to create three distinct but related opportunities to operationalise habitus and the questions relating to each part carefully considered to encourage relevant response, while being sufficiently open to provide the participants with opportunity to lead and influence the discussion. Closed questions were employed during the interview to check interpretations being made were accurate.

Table 2:

Data analysis scheme:

Theme	Category	Code
Choice-making	Cognitive aspects of habitus	Using understanding of sector
		Having no choice
		Seeking the familiar
	Affective aspects of habitus	Emotional consequence of decision-making
		(e.g. panic, stress, fear, excitement, anticipation)
	Conative aspects of habitus	Not knowing how
(UCAS system, institutional research, course research)		
Cleft-ness	Cognitive aspects of habitus	Understanding of their position in the world
		Perception of relationship with others
	Affective aspects of habitus	Emotional impact of early experiences
		(stress, anxiety, fear, pride, joy, shame, guilt)
	Conative aspects of habitus	Not knowing how
		(lectures, tutorials, assignments)
Aspiration and career-mapping	Cognitive aspects of habitus	Understanding their position in the world
		Level of ambition
	Affective aspects of habitus	Emotional impact of aspiration/role anticipation
	Conative aspects of habitus	Developing and implementing a strategy
		(Developing skills, building a network,
		exposure to professional environment)

My intent was not to generalise the findings of this study but rather to use these findings along with the findings of past research to inform future discussions with staff and managers regarding how this novel environment of the dual sector institution is perceived and experienced by students, the degree to which it is meeting their needs and impacting on the widening access agenda. I aimed however, to provide sufficient depth of information and analysis to enable readers to judge for themselves the degree to which any of the findings provided an insight into other contexts. As Kvale states, the degree to which this will be

possible, 'hinges on the extent to which the attributes compared are relevant, which again rests on the rich dense thick descriptions of the case' (1996:223).

The final analysis, although making use of the meaning categorisation approach described above, also encompassed other approaches, including but not restricted to gleaning general impressions from re-reading the transcripts and re-playing the audio recording, identifying patterns and making deeper interpretations of specific sections of the transcript (Kvale 1996).

Chapter 4 The Working-class Habitus in the Dual-sector University

In this study I explore whether a dual-sector university, delivering both further and higher education provision within a single organisational structure, using shared staff and space, provides an environment that eases the difficult transition to higher education experienced by working class students and reported in so many studies (DiMaggio 1982, Keane 2011, He Li 2015). Furthermore, I ask whether in doing so, this environment facilitates or hinders the evolution and transformation of the students' habitus.

Bourdieu's concept of habitus was central to the study and provided the lens through which the students' experiences were analysed. The operationalisation of habitus as the embodiment of the students' established dispositions, structuring their interpretation of the world and their position within it was central to the methodology of the study as well as the data analysis.

In order to explore the interplay between the students' habitus and that of the university, I first had to establish the nature of the students' habitus. By structuring the interview questions to focus on key decisions and transition points that were likely to have disturbed the equilibrium of the students, my intention was to operationalise habitus, even if this fell short of raising it to the level of the students' consciousness.

In this chapter, I report the key findings that emerged through the analysis of the student transcripts. The chapter is organised into three sections. In the first section, I discuss the students' habitus, as an embodiment of the dispositions they revealed through their responses to the interview questions and any follow up exchanges of e-mails. In the second section, I explore how the students' habitus structures their initial reaction to the university environment and influences their practice in the early stages of their university experience. Finally, in the third section, I consider the legitimacy of the students' university experience. I ask, specifically, whether the university met the needs and expectations of the students and whether there was any evidence of transformation taking place.

4.1 Locating Class Grouping and Revealing the Primary Habitus

My study was concerned with the additional barriers to successful completion of higher education encountered by the working classes. My first task was therefore to identify a participant group from the working class. National indicators of deprivation such as SIMD (Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation) lack relevance in the rural Highlands of Scotland. The Highland region has a highly dispersed population with a high prevalence of rural poverty, poor access to amenities, higher education and employment opportunities as well as fuel poverty¹. Large urban areas of multiple deprivation that the national indicators tend to measure are few. In this region therefore, I did not consider post-code to be a reliable class indicator. Instead, I adopted first-in-family categorisation as a proxy for class when selecting participants to take part in the study and invited students to self-select on this basis. I structured the interview to reveal through discussion of the students' dispositions and practice, their class grouping. Following the interview, I sent students a follow-up e-mail requesting their thoughts on their class grouping and the impact this may or may not have had on their experience. The replies received were analysed along with the interview data.

All of the nine interviewees were of the first generation in their immediate family to attend university. Some were the absolute first (Ken, Katie, Kirstie, Gary, Amanda, Mary, Susan). Others, for instance, Rhona and Pamela had a sibling who had gone to university just before them. Two had extended family members with university experience. Pamela's uncle and the girlfriend of Kirstie's father, for instance, had higher education experience.

The students each described their parents' occupations. With the exception of Katie, whose father was a lay preacher and seller of religious texts, Amanda whose father and husband were farmers, and Rhona whose mother was a nurse, parental occupation was semi-skilled, unskilled, manual, or they were unemployed.

¹ A person is living in fuel poverty if, in order to maintain a satisfactory heating regime, they would need to spend more than 10 per cent of their household income (including Housing Benefit or Income Support for Mortgage Interest) on all household fuel use (Scottish Government 2014).

A few of the students made direct reference to their class. Some of the students did not see class grouping as static but instead regarded this as fluid and linked class to family income. Some described how their class grouping had changed over the years mirroring the family's changing financial circumstances. Some adopted a broader definition that tied class grouping to financial circumstances and taste, accent, vocabulary, self-confidence and power.

Amanda, who came from a farming family, categorised herself as middle class. Kirstie also considered herself middle class as her father had launched a successful business but like Mary, she described herself as having a working class upbringing with her class classification changing as their family became more affluent in recent years. Mary and Susan both indicated that their class grouping was somewhere between working and middle, although Susan asserted her wish to claim any future success as being attributed to being working class and determined. The financial status of Susan's family had deteriorated in recent years following her parents' divorce and she considered herself less middle class now because of this. Susan discussed how her friends from school thought she was middle class because she called her evening meal dinner rather than tea and her mid-day meal lunch rather than dinner. She was quick to add however that her accent was far from posh, she did not know what the rules of etiquette were and she would not know how to eat at a fancy dinner table. Those who identified themselves as working class exhibited a degree of pride as they did so, whilst insisting that class was not an issue that caused them any concern.

Not all of the students offered reflections on their own class categorisation either in the interview itself or in response to follow-up questions by e-mail. I designed the interview questions however, to reveal the students' dispositions, developed in the primary habitus and operating at the level of sub-consciousness. This helped inform a class judgement.

4.1.1. Habitus as revealed through an exploration of Illusio (investment in the education game)

In this section, I explore what the students' motivation in enrolling at the University revealed about the nature of the students' primary habitus and their embedded dispositions.

The habitus of the students who were self-proclaimed members of the working-class or believing themselves to be somewhere between working-class and middle, having experienced a degree of social mobility since childhood, did not prove to be a limiting factor to the point of self-exclusion from higher education as proposed by Bourdieu and Passeron (2000). The stories the participants told suggested that higher education was very much valued amongst the working-classes and that the perceived economic benefits of participation were being pursued. Moreover, there was no sense in their responses of university not being 'for the likes of them'.

On the contrary, what emerged clearly in the students' responses was the students' investment in the game of education. The data revealed the aspirations of the parents of the students for them to go to university and the aspiration of the students themselves but this fell short of a sense of entitlement. There was a spoken ambition rather than the unspoken assumption of the middle classes. When Kirstie for instance, fails to meet the conditions of her conditional offer for a place at an ancient university and threatens to find a job instead, her mother reminds her of her life long wish to go to university, 'You are going to Uni. You've always wanted to go to Uni.', spurring her on to find a place somewhere else.

The students stated a clear belief that education was the route to social mobility: to financial security, to a better quality of life and enhanced status. They regarded it as a route to employment that was more meaningful and, for some, a way out of a hand-to-mouth existence. Ken, for instance, declares it 'a courageous step, but it's a no brainer as well in a way. It did take a bit of courage but it also made sense'. The students had fully bought into the dominant discourse and almost all of their responses indicated an unequivocal investment in the game of higher education.

Nor was the investment in the game limited to school leavers. Ken for instance, in mid-life, discusses the need for a degree to be able to increase his earning power sufficiently to counter any loss of pay that will accompany his loss of shift work. Similarly, Katie sees her degree as opening the door to a range of second career opportunities.

Although the students were invested in the game of education, their reflections were indicative of a lack of understanding of its rules, its complexity and how to play. Their expectation was borne of a naive interpretation of the dominant discourse and a largely undifferentiated expectation of economic return on investment. Their limited exposure to graduates in their immediate family and social circles gave them scant opportunity to accrue the cultural capital they required to develop an understanding of the complexities of the higher education system. This was a limiting factor rooted in their working class habitus and created a gap between their ambition and their ability to realise it. Susan's response is indicative of this when she asserts that if she just keeps participating her life chances will somehow improve.

I think in my head if I had just kept studying then I am kind of secure in a sense and also I am learning as much as I can to get the best chances in a sense, to get better, better opportunities in the future.

Susan has no understanding of the complexities of the tertiary education sector, claiming not to understand or set any store by the further/higher education distinction.

I don't think even know I really connect it as (both a college and a university). It's just a learning environment so I don't really see a difference between college and Uni.

What she falls back on is her deeply embedded disposition for hard work. She is indiscriminate however in its application, opting to spend her time informally learning through open source materials on-line when her course gets too tough to contemplate and her strategy is limited to just maintaining effort.

Other participants revealed a similarly unsophisticated, limited knowledge of the higher education sector, its stratified nature and the potential impact of this on any potential economic benefit. Ken for instance, explicitly seeks the graduate premium. However, his analysis of the relative worth of a higher national diploma and a degree fails to factor in any hierarchy of value by course or institution. He is dismissive of any suggestion that the higher education provision offered by Inverness College UHI might be of lesser status than that offered by more established universities. Rather than offering a counter argument to this suggestion, Ken presents it as immature gossip.

I remember when I went to college to do the business administration part then, there was a bit of a stigma within Inverness College amongst the people who were going to University, or when we were in school about it, and it never put me off. Yeah they used to call it, because it was more a technical college at the time and they (the college) were kind of branching out into business administration and that it was kind of, kind of looked down upon, but it never swayed me then and it certainly didn't sway me now. Its, because its, now as a mature adult that, people's perceptions of it has even less impact on me, you know.

Ken's response illustrates his disposition to be loyal to his working-class community, defending the technical college and insisting on its worth, potentially to his own cost.

Pamela alone is more equivocal in her response stating:

If we were going to start a future together and now we are paying for a wedding it gives me a better chance of getting a better job, in my head anyway. I know you hear lots of stories of graduates not getting good jobs and that, but at least if I have a degree and I am not stuck in a job that I don't like then it's kind of making our future look a bit better.

Pamela is aware of media reports that bring into question the validity of the promise of the graduate premium. Yet, despite her ambivalence, in this, her second application to university, she colludes with the hegemonic discourse and quashes any doubts she may have. She admits that she is choosing to ignore the stories about participation in higher education failing to improve the life chances of some people, choosing instead to hold on to the belief that only with a degree can she avoid a future of dead-end jobs. In the absence of a more informed route to social and economic mobility, Pamela has no option but to hope for the best. Pamela is aware of the risk she is taking in forgoing earnings for years to access the graduate premium that may never be realised. The alternative however is to accept that she will never progress beyond a low paid job.

The students' responses not only reflect a lack of social and cultural capital, leaving them in an uninformed position when planning their academic progression but also a tendency to accept rather than question the received wisdom, even when the ambiguity is reported to them. The collusion with this discourse, in Bourdieuan terms is an act of symbolic violence (Bourdieu and

Wacquant 2007:167) whereby the students 'accept the ideologies of domination around them' (Stahl 2015:24).

The students' goals did not relate exclusively to accrual of economic capital. This was not evidence of cynical credentialism: participating in higher education with the sole purpose of collecting certification. They wanted to improve their earning power, to bring a level of stability to their lives and avoid the precariousness of a hand-to-mouth experience but their responses also reflected a belief that without higher education, they were restricted to mundane, meaningless work. While wanting to escape the drudgery of minimum wage jobs or the impediments to their family life presented by shift work, their reflections were also suggestive of their wish to bring meaning and purpose to their working lives.

Pamela and Rhona for instance, initially worked in minimum wage jobs for a few years after leaving school before deciding that returning to education was the answer. They hinted at the lack of meaning and value they attributed to non-graduate roles. Rhona, for instance reported on how she gave herself a talking to, stating 'Rhona, what are you actually going to do?' Pamela commented that her parents think she is happier because she is no longer, 'stuck'. Gary sums this up recalling his determination to escape what he perceived to be the monotonous lives of his family.

I just didn't really want to be like my family. They just really just wasted their lives all the time just doing job after job, endless job. I just wanted to do something with my life to be honest. It's why I just decided to do Uni.

Although partially motivated by his need to escape, Gary makes claim to a higher humanitarian aim while acknowledging in a self-deprecating manner, that it would be unlikely that he would have a significant impact.

I would quite like, maybe not to change the world but at least help make it a wee bit better I guess.

Gary's response reveals his not only his humanitarian, community-spirited disposition but also his perception of his relatively insignificant and powerless position in the world. To consider himself capable of changing the world would be pretentious. Gary rather is self-deprecating and striving for authenticity when stating the aim to 'at least help make it a wee bit better'. These were

dispositions shared by other students participating in the study. The nature of these emerged through their decision-making as they navigated the transition to higher education.

4.1.2 Habitus as revealed through scrutiny of decision-making

In this section, I consider what the students' decision-making process revealed about their habitus and embedded dispositions, discussing the key findings that emerged in turn. The students' dispositions consciously and sub-consciously structured their decision-making practice as they chose an institution and course. They were highly instrumental in their motivation and exhibited a strong desire to seek the graduate premium. Most however lacked the cultural capital necessary to develop effective strategies to do so. Some consequently made quite arbitrary decisions about what to study and where.

Several of the students however, did not have the luxury of a choice of institution. Their various familial responsibilities tied them to the locality within which a single university was located. Others with the freedom to go further afield chose to stay and enrol at the new dual-sector university, even when they met the conditions of offers from more prestigious institutions revealing in doing so further aspects of their habitus.

The students' decision-making process indicated a lack of accrued cultural capital demonstrated by their lack of understanding of the sector, its complexity and the potential impact of the choices they were making. They revealed high levels of dependence on their immediate family and a lack of self-confidence when exposed to new situations. I consider each of these dispositions in turn below.

The students' reflections on their attempts to navigate the daunting university application process poignantly illustrated the distress many experienced attempting to make choices in the absence of knowledge or understanding of the sector. Some described the sense of isolation and anxiety they experienced in the context of the looming UCAS submission date, fully aware of the extent of the knowledge gap they had. Kirstie describes the growing sense of panic created by the approaching deadline, finding herself isolated and forced to make choices between unfamiliar subjects. She pounces on the subject she has at least heard of but admits that she did not really understand what it was.

So I was like, I am going to university and it came to like two weeks before the deadline where you have got to submit something to UCAS and it was like I still don't know what I want to do! So it was like, so UCAS gives you all these things and I was like scrolling through and I was like no, no, psychology! I don't really know what that is!

In a state of panic, Kirstie does choose psychology on the basis that her friend has chosen to study psychology at the same institution and that at least she would not be alone. In doing so, she highlights her disposition to seek the comfort of the familiar, avoiding the need to brave new social situations unaccompanied and uses friendship networks as a resource to help her manage the transition to higher education.

Others in describing the stressful transition time between school and university confirmed their disposition to take a highly instrumental approach to university but explained the difficulty they experienced in satisfying this need while lacking the knowledge required to make meaningful connections between the academic courses on offer and potential careers. Pamela, having grown up in a small remote village with a narrow social circle finds herself lacking the capital she requires to identify successfully a course linked to a potential career. Furthermore, those at school in a position to support her, wrongly assume that she has all of the knowledge and support she requires.

Pamela stated:

I think 'cos my mum works in the School and that and she was on all the parent council meetings, everyone assumed that she would just (help) and nobody really asked. They just thought, "Oh she is going to go we will just leave her to it." So, everyone else was getting help with personal statements and stuff but nobody really helped me or asked me. They just all assumed.

Pamela applies and is offered a place at an elite art school. The high levels of stress she then experiences and her reflections on this period highlight the clash between her working class disposition to take a highly instrumental approach to university and her lack of knowledge. Her distress also illustrates her prioritisation of loyalty to her family as well as her frugality. In the absence of a clear career choice, Pamela weighs up the potential financial risk to her family against what she sees as a trivial reason for going.

I was conscious of money. I didn't want, I don't think it would have been wrong, but in my head it would have been wrong because I didn't want to go just to meet people. I thought that's a lot of money to spend on just meeting people. I wanted to go to University but I was

conscious of the fact that I didn't want it to be wasted time and I didn't know what I wanted to study.

Pamela presents her decision not to go to university as frugal, sensible and noble, concluding that to go with this intent would have been self-indulgent and disrespectful to her parents. In doing so, she illustrates how her working class dispositions structure her practice.

Pamela's reflections illustrate the distance between her aspiration and any hint of entitlement. Her decision-making process at the point of leaving school illustrates the clash between the 'structuring structures' of her working-class primary habitus and the very middle-class higher education system. She struggles with the disjuncture between the very middle-class assumption that university is a place to develop interest and further knowledge, learning for learning's sake, and her working-class instrumentalism and belief that a university degree is about training for a specific career. In the absence of assurance that an art degree will set her on the right career path, she chooses instead a minimum wage job.

Although many of the students' inability to successfully steer a course through the transition to university revealed working-class dispositions at work in the higher education field, this was not exclusively so. Amanda's decision-making perhaps exemplifies most the arbitrary nature of the student's choice of course and Amanda exhibited many middle-class dispositions. She opts for a course purely because this is an available place and is apparently unconcerned about doing so.

So when I went in the very nice lady said, what would you like to study, so I thought well actually, Literature. "Oh she said, I am very sorry that's full up but we have got places in Psychology" so I said well I will do that then.

Amanda however is retired. The potential for financial gain is not her motivation. She is not seeking the graduate premium. Regardless, steered by her wish to study in this exciting new university and finally attain a degree, she makes an uninformed choice. Amanda displays very middle-class dispositions, for instance, self-confidence, operating at ease in new contexts and in dealing with those in positions of authority. These dispositions though, do not prevent her from making this fundamental mistake. On the contrary, Amanda, if

anything, is over-confident and mistaken in the belief that she will cope admirably regardless of course choice.

As the students reflected on the decisions to stay close to home at their local dual-sector university, the students revealed further aspects of their habitus. What emerged was the high levels of inter-dependence between them and their immediate family, the value they attributed to maintenance of close family links, their lack of self-confidence in new contexts and their limited access to economic capital.

Ken reflects on this issue:

Looking back I would say I wasn't prepared to leave (names the place) and look after myself... I just, you know, loads of kids do it but I just didn't feel I was ready to go and live in the big city.

Susan's first application to higher education was when she was leaving college having completed a further education course in Drama. The guidance her drama lecturers offer suggests a lack of understanding on their part of her circumstances and confidence levels.

I remember them just recommending drama schools. But a lot of them would have been in three hours distance. I went to the local university. It was close.

Garry, similarly chose the comfort of the familiar, stating, 'It (UHI) didn't seem as foreign, as say Aberdeen or something.'

The responses of other students highlighted family inter-dependency and high levels of family loyalty, dispositions that constrained their choice of institution. Rhona for example chooses to support her recently widowed mother by staying local. She explains:

And then after things sort of happened with my dad and I am not, I am in no way saying that my mum, my mum would never say like don't leave home, stay here you know. But I just felt because we have got like dogs and cats and things I wouldn't want to quite leave her to deal with all that on her own straight away.

The students' descriptions of their experiences at open days revealed their lack of confidence in unfamiliar settings, mixing with a wider range of people. Kirstie's experience visiting an elite university and finding that her appearance marked her as 'other' was traumatic.

Aye it was like everybody was just like, why has she got purple hair, what a weirdo and I was like and I heard everybody going, 'Oh my god!' and I thought, I don't like this, I don't like everybody staring.

Although Pamela attributes her rejection of a place at an elite art school in the central belt to a lack of clarity regarding future career and a fear of adding to the family's financial pressure, she also described her lack of 'fit' with those she met at the open day, describing the tutors as 'quite pretentious really'. Other students echoed Pamela's rejection of those she regards as pretentious and corresponding value she attributes to authenticity.

Almost all of the students discussed their lack of alignment with the stereotypical student living in halls and enjoying a hedonistic lifestyle. Many of the students asserted their distinction from immoderate drinkers and highlighted their contrasting sobriety and industrious application to their studies to explain the irrelevance of the traditional residential student experience to the reality of their lives.

Rhona explains:

I have, I have never been like much of a drinker or night clubber or whatever, it's not even the word, but I have never been, it's not really ever been my interest.

Garry points out that people he knows from school who went away from home to university are living a different life that he believes to be more stressful, explaining, 'They are probably out more partying and all that and worrying more about deadlines and all that.'

Several of the students mention financial constraints in explaining their decision to study locally. Ken, for instance explains:

When I left school in 1992 it would have been almost impossible for me to go to university in the central belt. I could not rely on financial assistance from my parents, so if I did go I would have to rely on part-time employment to fund my studies. This has a knock on effect on your studies as those who do not have to work can commit much more time to their studies and so are at an advantage.

Ken offered two explanations for his decision to stay local, illustrating a complex interplay of dispositions and accrued capital influencing his decisions. He refers to a lack of confidence and dependence on his mother to take care of his daily needs but also to financial constraints. Ken was aware of this interplay of

factors, referring to both in his explanation of his decision to stay local when he leaves school. Rhona however, exclusively cites her need to look after her mother when she explains her decision but her frequent references in other contexts to her own lack of confidence and avoidance of new experiences suggest the interplay of factors of which she is largely unaware.

As illustrated above, the students' awareness of the structuring impact of their habitus differed, depending on their reflexive capacity. Some were more aware than others of the impact of their established dispositions on their practice, not least their decision-making.

As would be expected, the students' habitus as revealed through their responses regarding both their investment in the game of education and their choice of institution and course, evidenced gradations within the binary categories of working and middle-class as well as overlap between the two. Despite the variation revealed however, some students revealed through the practice and reflections recounted, consistently held dispositions. These were:

- Investment in the game of higher education
- An instrumental approach to higher education
- Aspirations that fell short of a sense of entitlement.
- A lack of cultural capital exhibited through a lack of understanding of the complexity of the sector and how it worked
- Lack of economic capital
- High levels of dependence on immediate family and strong family loyalties
- Lack of self-confidence in new social situations

4.2 The Interplay between Habitus and University

In this section I explore the interplay between the students' habitus (as the embodiment of the dispositions identified in the first section), and that of the university in their first few days, weeks and months. In doing so, I was seeking to understand the degree of alignment the students had with the new academic environment and whether indeed, they were conscious of the same lack of fit or disjuncture reported in so many other studies (Baxter and Britton 2001, Aries and Seider 2005, Reay et al. 2009b).

The habitus of each of the students and the deeply embedded dispositions they brought with them differently structured their interpretation of the academic world and moulded their response to it. Although most of the students initially struggled to cope in the university setting, they adapted quite quickly. Their self-concept as 'learner' that they brought to the university was a factor in their ability to adapt. Some made conscious reference to the strengths of their working-class habitus, although these were described in terms of personal characteristics. As the students adapted to the new environment, some became aware of a growing distance and lack of fit with their home community. In this section, I explore each of these findings.

4.2.1 Fish out of water

The students had had little opportunity to accrue the cultural capital that would have given them some insight into university life and the nature of undergraduate study. Consequently, they were operating blindly in the early days. Their lack of confidence in new situations compounded the problem leaving the students anxious, confused and for some, isolated in their distress.

Gary is introverted and isolates himself from other students. He lacks the social ease and confidence of the typical middle-class student as well as the cultural capital to draw upon to help him anticipate the experiences he encounters. Consequently, he finds the first few weeks frightening and disorientating. He repeatedly refers to 'the unknown' and having to figure out what to do in various situations. His reflections of the early weeks have an undercurrent of apprehension and fear.

It was kind of a bit intimidating, going into a class full of people you have never met or you don't know. And obviously you don't know what is going to happen or anything and you have an idea but I guess not really until it hits you in the face and well the first week's kind of throwing you in the deep end getting you to do essays and all that, and study and all that and it was quite a step up from high school. It was bit frightening at first.

Living at home with his mother and younger sister, he has no one to help him prepare for this transition to undergraduate study. All he has to draw upon is his school experience that was itself fraught with difficulty. Not only does he not know what to expect and how to respond, he finds himself isolated in his fear, lacking the confidence required to bond with others. Gary lacks the social

capital that could have provided him with more knowledge of what to expect at university and the 'sociability' to develop bonding social capital once there. Like others, for instance Kirstie and Susan, Gary is unable to develop friendships and a social network that would help him better cope with the transition.

The students' lack of confidence in this new environment and their uncertainty about what will be required of them caused them to try to operate from the periphery, seeking the safety of anonymity and invisibility while they figured things out. Unfortunately, for some, the mode of delivery adopted by this university prevented them from achieving this, as Kirstie found when she attempted to hide out at the back of the class.

So I thought I would just take a seat. So, I sat right at the back and then the video conference came on and I was like, oh my god I am on the screen! So I was like pushing my chair to the side.

Rhona offers a similar account explaining the horror of finding that her embarrassment was being broadcast around the entire region through the video conferencing technology.

And then on our very first day she went through the discussion board and read out everybody's answers and she had got us to zoom in on our faces to the class. She said, "Oh so where is Rhona? Oh there she is", and zoomed in and I was like no, please don't zoom in on me! And I just, I could feel my face getting red and it was.

Being directly asked a question and being forced to answer, or even volunteering a response, invoked fear of exposure. Kirstie describes her on-going fear of being called upon to answer a question, even by the end of her first year.

So I sit at the back and I was like do not ask me a question! Do not ask me a question if I cannot answer it! I still didn't answer. It's been a whole year and I still didn't answer.

Kirstie spends her first year hiding and silent, not prepared to risk being exposed as a fraud.

Students studying on-line and thereby enjoying a degree of anonymity in class still experienced anxiety that prevented them from freely asking questions for fear of ridicule. Pamela explained,

If I was sitting physically in a classroom I wouldn't say something for fear of, oh that was a stupid comment but online they don't really know who you are but still I think you are like, oh they are really going to think I am an idiot if I ask this.

The words the students used indicate the initial trauma they experience. Amanda, for instance declares her first few days and weeks to have been 'petrifying'. Much of Amanda's fear was caused by her lack of expertise with technology and this was an on-line course. She explained, 'I appreciated it was all going to be online which was frightening because I didn't understand Blackboard.'

This was a fear shared by several of the students.

Most struggled with the demands of academic writing. Susan found herself repeatedly bewildered by academic conventions expected by the university, frustrated by what she perceived to be the superficiality of the requirements of academic writing and believing that the substance of her work was what should be judged. She explains this to her mother:

I just complained to my mum, I was saying oh it's like, a lovely dinner in front of you but I have to put some leaves on and make it look pretty. What if it doesn't taste nice, it could look pretty but it doesn't taste nice and that's how I was connecting it to my work. It needs to sound right. It needs to sound smart. I need to be answering the question and here I am. I feel like I have to make it look pretty.

Despite her frustration, Susan recognises the authority of the University. Rather than persisting in her arguably valid assertion that it is the substance of her responses in academic assessment that should be assessed rather than her writing style and the format of her essays, Susan concludes that she is just being childish and acquiesces, 'explaining, 'I was just really being a baby and complain to my mum about it but I got over myself, I sorted it.'

In 'getting over herself' Susan reminds herself of her place as a student and knuckles down to work. Susan's habitus is such that challenging those in authority is unthinkable and any inclination to do so, immature. In acquiescing in this way, Susan exemplifies Bourdieu's concept of symbolic violence, accepting the ideologies of domination that are at work in the field of higher education.

Not all of the students experienced this disjuncture in the university setting. Ken for instance was immediately at ease and anxious only to get started. He describes any nervousness as equating to that of the first day in a new job when you are anxious to get along with your new colleagues. Even this analogy suggests an absence of any sense of being in any way inferior or ill-equipped for

university. Ken was quick to declare himself working-class and as he reveals his dispositions, they confirm this categorisation. Unlike the other students however, Ken managed to accrue relevant cultural capital immediately prior to starting the course. He accessed this capital through his relationship with his girlfriend who was at the point of graduating from a well-established university. This capital when combined with his work ethic, led to a very smooth transition for Ken.

Ken had read all the material provided by the university prior to induction and had listened to his girlfriend's accounts of her experience. To an extent, he knew what to expect and in the form of his girlfriend, had ready access to a guide. By the end of the first day of induction Ken in his words was, 'just dying to get going, dying to get started'. Unlike the other students, at the time of submitting his first essay, Ken was able to seek reassurance from his girlfriend prior to submission. Her advice on format helped Ken avoid mistakes.

Ken benefitted in the early weeks from the cultural capital his girlfriend shares with him, compensating for his own lack of knowledge. From his preparatory reading and through his vicarious exposure to the world of higher education, he was able to learn enough to understand quickly the expectations of him. His girlfriend's support in the early days as well as his own commitment to the course helps build his confidence, helps him avoid mistakes and achieve high grades. This becomes a self-reinforcing cycle firmly establishing a strong learner identity.

It went really well, I got an A'' for it and I was told it was worthy of a third year so I was just over the moon. But, I put in the time, I put in a lot of time and it taught me what to do, I have got to prepare. I have got to do the reading around the subject, you know. It's all very well you knowing what they are asking for, because they have told you it but you have got to go and source that information and you have got to reference it.

Most of the students linked their initial anxiety to a fear of exposure as imposters in the university world, but this was, for most, only in terms of their intellectual capacity. None described a lack of fit with the other students or a conscious sense of somehow being 'other', even when asked directly about the other students in their class. They sought anonymity and to participate from the periphery while they familiarised themselves with the rules of the game but for the most part, they were not consciously adapting their way of being to fit in.

One exception to this was Kirstie who was consciously modifying her speech. Kirstie had grown up speaking in a regional dialect. She had a strong accent and routinely used the dialect of her home region. In her interview, Kirstie attempted to speak Standard English but was unable to sustain this for long. Kirstie confessed at the end of the interview that one of the reasons she had yet to speak in class was because she did not want anyone to hear her accent. Kirstie was one of the most academically able students achieving 'A's and 'B's for her essays. Despite this assurance of her academic ability, Kirstie would not speak in class for fear of being judged as 'other'. Her reluctance to be heard in class suggested a consciousness that her accent and dialect was inappropriate in the formal academic setting. She felt the need to translate any potential response or question in class into her second language before contributing. Yet despite the conscious modification of her speech, Kirstie is adamant that she has made the right choice and that it is a good cultural fit for her. Out of the formal class setting during the early weeks, Kirstie readily initiated discussions with other students, apparently unconcerned with her accent in a social setting.

Kirstie describes at length her preoccupation with personal presentation and her need to blend in. Having attracted unwanted stares at an open day at an elite art school, she dyes her hair from purple back to brown before turning up for induction and dresses conservatively only to find her lecturers here have purple hair and wear the clothes she prefers.

I looked at Beverley and I was like I didn't even have to dye my hair, I would have fit right in, I would have been fine. And I was like, me and Beverley would have matched and I was like, this is the place I need to be, this is my place and I love it here because everything is blue and purple, everything is different colours.

Kirstie's responses clearly illustrate the response echoed by many of the other students that their discomfort related primarily to the unfamiliar requirements of the mechanics of learning.

4.2.2 Learner identity as an enabler and constraint

The students did not fall into a simple binary grouping of working and middle class. As would be expected and as discussed in Section 1, their habitus, as the embodiment of their dispositions positioned them on different points on a scale of working to middle class. Within the group therefore, the students had been exposed to differing home environments and school experiences that had led

them to develop differing constructs of their learner identity. The students' differing strength of learner identity structured their reactions to their new university experience. Those with the weaker self-concept as 'learner' struggled to interpret the expectations of the university and decipher the mechanics of the learning environment. A strong learner self-concept did not always result in a smooth transition. Amanda's self-concept as a strong learner and indeed an educational professional caused her to resist the institution's demands and for a time inhibited her ability to progress. I explore these issues below.

Susan categorised herself as working-class and described a precarious family context within which she found herself providing the main support to her recently divorced mother. In the midst of family difficulties, Susan made her first attempt at university some years before but was pulled back into the role of family carer and dropped out in the first semester. Susan's school experience, followed by this false start at university left her with a very weak self-identity as a learner and low self-esteem. She explains:

I think because all through school I struggled with things. I remember in primary school being put in special, extra classes and in high school there was, I actually managed to get in a higher class for maths. Although the teacher, I thought, but I could be biased, I thought all she did was shout and she wasn't very helpful. I moved down again, I thought again I am in a low group and I am rubbish.

Susan's accepted belief that she is 'rubbish' frames her experience of a Statistics module in Semester 1. Her recollection of the statistics module illustrates the dismay she felt when she found that University, just like school, was to be endured and to be survived.

I was reading the lessons on-line and it was saying things like mode median, mean and I thought I am back to maths in school and I hated maths so much and I am back to it.

Susan's reflections of the first few months point to the degree of misalignment of her habitus and university and the on-going structuring impact of her primary habitus. Susan interprets her difficulties as further evidence of her lack of intellect, a self-concept developed and continually reinforced during her school years. The demands of the course overwhelm her. Every aspect of the learning process is alien to her, confusing, frustrating and accompanied by a rising panic that exacerbates her difficulties.

There was an essay, I remembered the date today because there was an essay due in yesterday and I just, it was awful, but there was so much research that I had to get done and there wasn't much research I could find and just reading a load of rubbish and nothing that was answering my question.

Her description of the feedback she is given points to the distance between her understanding of academic writing conventions and the expectations of the university.

I can't remember the exact thing, but which did kind of give the vague and it was a lot and she even said you just have to kind of, it's, it's about whether you structure it, it's how you are doing your paragraphs, its blah blah blah. It's all this.

Not all of the students arrive with weak learner identity. Ken, Pamela, Katie and Kirstie, are confident in their identity as successful learners and quickly put any initial anxiety regarding their course behind them.

Pamela explains that she has always been aware of her academic ability but simultaneously is at pains to avoid any accusation of pretentiousness.

This is going to sound really big headed and I don't want it to but I have always been good at writing academically and I really enjoy English.

Mary, who categorises herself as middle class (while believing she had a working class upbringing) similarly refers to her strong learner identity but makes no attempt at self-deprecation:

I realised I was bright because I was doing well on all the tests and put in all the highest groups and I would always come out first on, on the tests.

During the interview, Ken reveals that his primary school teacher told his parents that he was 'university material'. Furthermore, Ken remarks that others have since reinforced the early judgement of his primary school teacher, stating, 'A lot of people have said to me you are intelligent enough to go to University'.

Although proud to classify himself as working class, Ken has a strong internal locus of control, a disposition more usually attributed to the middle-classes. Ken's reflective capacity and maturity has facilitated his development and given him the insight required to explain his past educational experiences. Ken believes that his failure to excel

academically at school and at college was due to lack of effort on his part. Given his diligent approach this time, he fully expects to succeed and is doing so.

Rhona arrives at the university having achieved an 'A' in her Managing Environmental Resources Higher the year before. Despite this recent success she initially has a weak learner identity. Rhona is quickly accepted into a friendship group with two other women on her course. This network enables Rhona to develop the bonding social capital she requires to bolster her learner identity. The interaction with her class-mates, the swapping of notes regarding feedback on assignments and mutual support through the more challenging moments of the course helps to boost Rhona's confidence and ability to envisage success.

Kirstie reflects on her school experience.

I was the first person in my class to do higher maths and the only girl. And I was pretty smart, but there was like I always wanted to, I loved school so I always wanted to go to University.

Although Kirstie was struggling to interact with staff and students at the university, she brought with her high levels of confidence in her ability to succeed academically. She is however heavily reliant on her past school experience and while operating as she was, in isolation, had little opportunity to accrue either bonding or bridging social capital. This leaves Kirstie as an 'outsider' in the university world, taking advantage of its opportunities (to a degree) but never developing a sense of ownership of it. Furthermore, in the absence of interaction with lecturers in particular, Kirstie was limiting her opportunity to develop through exposure to people with differing dispositions.

A strong learner identity however did not lead to a positive experience for all of the students. Amanda, as a retired primary school teacher, had a strong learner identity. She described how at teacher training college she was not stretched and found it, 'a doddle really'. By her own acknowledgement however, that had been a very practical course, learning the mechanics of primary school teaching mostly through practicum. In the university, Amanda finds herself in a very different environment.

Amanda's emotional response is complex. She is fearful of failure and accompanying accusations of pretention from family and colleagues. Although she presents herself as confident in the University setting, and described some

enjoyable moments, her over-riding emotional response seems to be anger and resentment.

Amanda was motivated by a need to prove others wrong, not least her mother who had told Amanda she was a plodder and not university material. In enrolling, Amanda was risking her long established self-identity as an education professional. Amanda considers herself intellectually able but still 'unfinished', lacking the degree credential.

Amanda was passing her assignments but with low grades. Amanda dismisses the assessment of her written style, as being too descriptive for an academic essay, her use of rhetorical question ill-advised and her references dated, as subjective. This feedback did not fit with Amanda's established sense of self as a skilled learner and indeed, educator so she forcefully questions its validity.

Amanda categorises herself as middle-class and her challenge to the lecturers in response to this feedback is illustrative of her middle-class confidence in dealing with those in positions of authority. She is articulate but does not understand the requirements of academic writing. She attributes the low grades to a combination of her being a natural arts student rather than a science student as well as to the subjectivity of the lecturers who she believes are still learning their craft. Amanda is not yet comfortable operating in the university setting, despite being middle-class.

The low grades Amanda is given for her assignments force her to either question her established self-image or alternatively position herself in opposition to the university, rejecting the feedback. Her middle-class confidence and self-esteem, internal locus of control, and strong sense of self as a very capable and experienced teacher prevent her from learning from the feedback she is given. Rather than accepting that she must develop new skills to meet the expectations of the University, Amanda's habitus leads her to the interpretation that the lecturers in the University have yet to develop an objective consistency in their marking and that the course is still 'bedding in'. Positioning herself in opposition to the university however, leaves Amanda angry, resentful and unable to develop.

Katie's responses illustrated the fragility of some of the students' learner identity. Katie had attempted to attain a university degree through another

university a few years earlier. Katie had confidently enrolled with expectations of success. She struggled however to meet the expectations of the University and in her words, found the whole process 'devastating'. She left having scraped a pass at D in a single module and had only recently persuaded herself to try again. This experience undermined Katie's confidence in the initial phase. In the context of a supportive environment however, she was able to overcome her lack of confidence and was progressing well. Katie also quickly found herself a study partner and is quite instrumental in doing so. Her relationship with her study buddy is mildly competitive and Katie is aware that her grades are better than her friend's. Katie's exposure bonding social capital contributes to her ability to quickly adapt to the university environment.

4.2.3 The strengths of the working class dispositions

The students' working class habitus did not always disadvantage the students. In this section I explore the ways in which the students drew upon their various working-class dispositions to cope with the transition to higher education. Few of the students reflected consciously on this process. Moreover, these dispositions were presented as personal character traits rather than being class-based.

Rhona and Gary lacked confidence and self-belief as successful learners and struggled with self-doubt and anxiety. Both however, drew upon their working class resilience and strong work ethic to overcome their initial disjuncture.

Rhona described her delight as her self-doubt turns to pride.

I remember thinking I am never going to manage to do this, but I did, I did. I was really proud of myself.

Gary describes his first assignment as 'abysmal' and just listing facts rather than structuring an academic argument. Having been awarded a 'D', Gary explains:

It was bit demoralising, so I just fought to just well, I know what I have to improve on, just move on. Worst-case scenario I mess up again. It's not the end of the world. I just used it as a benchmark and forced myself to work even harder.

Gary's working class habitus enables him to put this low grade into perspective, asking himself what is the worst that can happen. Gary has been through worse and his resilience and strong work ethic combine to spur him on to the next

assignment. His pride mingles with his working class self-deprecation when he reveals his grade trajectory.

They were a bit all over the place, it's like, the first two were like 'D's, the others were 'C's and the last one was a 'B' so gradually improved. Yeah and now, I am averaging 'B's so it's not too bad.

In terms of academic achievement, Gary's perseverance pays off. At the end of his first year, Gary remains socially isolated at University, 'reading between the lines' to establish how others in the class are doing but with his own grades on a steadily improving trajectory and despite his social isolation, Gary reports high levels of satisfaction with his course stating, 'Yeah I find it quite fun, quite engaging.'

Katie similarly displays high levels of resilience despite having had an experience at another university that was in her words, 'an unmitigated disaster'. She had previously undertaken a stand-alone module and struggled through it isolated and increasingly despondent. She scraped a pass at grade 'D' and was left feeling depressed. Katie admitted that this experience made her question her ability to achieve her goal:

I was thinking to myself, well if that was my experience could I do a full degree? If that's how bad I felt doing a stand-alone module then how would I feel doing my degree? So it was quite scary and quite daunting to think I am putting myself back in this situation again.

Notwithstanding this first taste of university life, Katie is undeterred.

Susan was struggling most with the leap to under-graduate study. For Susan, panic followed hard on the heels of misplaced initial confidence. Only when her first essay was returned to her did she become aware of the distance between her expectations and those of the university.

I thought it was quite simple and then I was doing my essays so it was simple. Got the essays back, I hadn't done as good. Then there was a bit of panic.

Despite having to re-sit an assignment and feeling the need to switch modules to avoid a second semester of policy, Susan perseveres. Susan's perseverance is also illustrative of her resilience. Susan has lived a precarious existence. She describes a turbulent time of death, ill-ness and

caring responsibilities, coupled with the family's need to relocate to a remote part of the Highlands to keep a roof over their head. This history has taught Susan that life is unpredictable and harsh. Despite the challenges she faced she displays a stoic acceptance of her lot and carries on.

The students draw upon their disposition of resilience and courage when confronting their fears. Despite being frightened to participate in class discussion, Gary steels himself and decides to just do it.

At first it was, everyone was quite quiet you are quite afraid to speak up so, but eventually you just say oh to hell with this and just speak up and you just get more and more comfortable with it.

None of the students attributed this resilience to their class. The closest reference is made by Gary when he comments that getting another grade 'D' wouldn't be the worst thing in the world, hinting at the connection between his ability to maintain perspective and his challenging childhood. Rather, they describe their resilience and work ethic as personal attributes.

Ken is explicit in this when he compares his own industrious approach to that of some of the younger students in his class.

I don't know what their results are but yeah, yeah I mean, the weeks before deadlines. It just bamboozles me. The deadline is 5 o'clock on the Friday and sometimes we are in on the Wednesday and they are saying "Oh I had better get this started" and like I will have put mine in already and I have done like weeks. And like some of them are doing it that way and getting 'A's and others, I don't grudge it at all but it's just not the way I would do it. I couldn't do it that way because you can't look at yourself in the mirror and say I did my best. If you don't get an 'A', I think well you got what you deserved.

Katie explains the difference between her and her family and friends who would not do what she is doing is her personal courage:

I think I am a bit braver. I am willing to kind of put myself into situations that maybe make me feel uncomfortable or if I feel it's for my benefit, while a lot of people don't.

Again, Katie believes her courage to be a personal characteristic. She also understands the need to seek new experiences in order to develop.

Almost all of the students had been in paid employment for a few years and they drew upon this experience to help bring structure to their university study. Ken explains:

Well, I mean, our scheduled classes are 12 hours a week and like I am in most days from nine or ten o'clock until four or five.

Pamela recognises that motivation to study in the absence of structure is the most difficult challenge she faces. Her solution was to stick rigorously to a timetable she has pinned to her study wall.

I would focus on module one on a Monday morning, afternoon and evening and then on the Wednesday morning and (in the) afternoon you would have a break and then start again in the evening. It helps to make a timetable for yourself to structure it to make it a bit easier because it is easy to get distracted when you are at home.

Katie comments on the difficulty others in her on-line class have motivating themselves to study. Like Ken and Pamela, Katie decides to take a structured approach:

I find I basically started it, the degree, thinking I am going to look on this as a job so I get up in the morning and I am at my kitchen table by 10 o'clock at the latest and I have breaks every 45 minutes and I have a lunch break and then I am studying until at least half past six. My friends and family have been told, look for all intents and purposes I am working Monday to Friday. If you want to see me, I am free weekends.

Pamela even made a virtue out of her restricted financial capital highlighting the additional motivation she decided would come from her personal financial investment.

We talked about money cos obviously that would be a big issue cos like we would have to put me through it rather than my parents putting me through it obviously so but I thought if I had to fund it myself it would make me more committed to it.

4.2.4 The cleft habitus: operating in two worlds but belonging to neither

The strength of the students' university ambitions were revealed in their interviews. Now enrolled, they were consciously working to adapt to the academic demands of the University and described their awareness of changing dispositions and developing skills. At the same time, the students' responses revealed their on-going need to be authentic and a conscious fear of being thought of as pretentious. An essential part of their habitus was the importance

of loyalty to family and community. As some adapted to the university, adopted new ways of thinking and developed a new perspective on the world, they became increasingly aware of the growing gap in knowledge and perspective between them and their family and friends. This consciousness introduced new tension into established relationships. The students found themselves having to reconcile feelings of guilt as their emerging sense of superiority clashed with their disposition of loyalty to family and community and their need to hold on to a sense of authenticity. In this section I explore the students' reports of this state of cleft habitus and their various coping strategies.

Gary describes his ambivalence, wanting to be able to bounce ideas off his mother but aware of her inability to help without having had a university experience herself.

I talk to my mum every now and then about it but I mean she can't really help so much, so. Depends on what it is. She is quite set in her ways, like, if it is a time period she is quite interested in she will be quite surprised at some of the things she learns. Like, I am always correcting her when she makes historical inaccuracies or scientific inaccuracies. Sometimes she takes it well and sometimes she's like Gary don't be telling me that, tell me how to do this. She is, she is a bit like your parents: she is a bit more traditional I guess in her opinions and all that. So sometimes, some of the things she says, not like racist or anything but kind of the things she can say, but I mean that's just my interpretation so.

Gary's comments reveal his growing sense of superiority in terms of his subject-knowledge as well as the growing gap between his world-view and, what he perceives to be, his mother's less-enlightened views. While highlighting the uninformed views of his mother who he maintains is 'set in her ways', he is at pains to simultaneously defend her against any accusation of racism. His final comment, 'that's just my interpretation', again suggests an air of self-deprecation and need to acknowledge that even now, he may be wrong.

Pamela's comments echo Gary's sentiments as she describes her inability to turn to her mother for help and her difficulty in managing her feelings of guilt as she finds herself judging her mother who does not appreciate the need for citations.

Because she has not done a University degree I, sometimes, this sounds really bad and I don't want to make her seem stupid but she doesn't understand that you need to have proof of where you have gotten stuff from. Because, you can't get marks if you are just like coming up with it out of thin air as it seems.

Glimpses of Ken's growing sense of superiority appear amongst his working class self-deprecation and modesty. When asked if his friends regard him as being in any way different or changing, he replies, 'No definitely not.' But then wryly admits, 'They might when I end up being a teacher for one of their kids'.

Some found themselves re-negotiating their relationships. Pamela in adopting a new identity as a university student was challenging her boyfriend's assumption that she will continue to play her traditionally working-class gendered role of girlfriend and future wife, preparing and delivering his lunch to his work. She explains:

I think after the, this semester he has been a lot more understanding than the first semester. I think he had a view of University that you see on the TV like students just laying about, watching TV. I think he thought that's what I did with my days when he was at work but after a couple of arguments I think he understands more that when I am at home I am not just sitting there. I am actually doing stuff.

Not all of the students experienced this tension. Those, such as Susan and Kirstie, who struggled most to embed themselves in university life regarded their relationships with family and friends unchanged. Both continue to rely heavily on their parents for support as they battled with their academic and social difficulties respectively.

Susan turns to her mother when she feels completely overwhelmed and unable to cope.

Sympathy, it's really, difficult at the moment so she has given me a bit of sympathy. I think she just as well, she just keeps like, she just tries to keep me calm if I am struggling at the thing, (she will say) just take a break, breath and go back to it later. It's just the moral support she gives.

Kirstie reveals her on-going closeness to her father and reliance on his support while disguising her fear of not being accepted into a friendship group with feigned diffidence.

I am not too fussed about making friends while I am at Uni. Like everybody says like it's the perfect thing to do to make friends and stuff like that while you are at Uni because you remember them but my dad always tells me that he doesn't know anybody from school. He doesn't speak to anybody from school so it's like what is the point? It's like if I don't have to I am not going to, so I would rather just keep to myself. I am not too fussed.

Mary differed again in that although she had a different world view than the rest of her family, specifically due to her passion for conservation, this had developed prior to her enrolling on her university course. Mary's passion for her subject was aligned closely to her sense of loyalty to family and community.

There were 22 altogether, there were 16 red kites and 6 buzzards that were found, the majority of them were then subsequently tested and found to have been illegally poisoned so because I had worked, I work up at Tully where we feed the red kites, we were all distraught, you know it was awful. So, somebody approached me and said, you know this is a really good opportunity to put a campaign page together, made up of like local people who are angry about what had happened. We wanted something to you know, the perpetrator to be caught, the law to be changed to make it easier for people like that to be caught and that kind of thing. So that's how it all started.

She was committed to preserving the local ecosystems for the common good. She also had a very practical rather than pretentious reason for prioritising the development of her technical skills and academic vocabulary. In order to be taken seriously in her wildlife campaigning she reasoned, she needed to be able to participate in informed debates.

I hope that is how it comes across anyway. Because you get, when you, when you post, post on Facebook as a representative of this group, you need, you need it to sound as if you know what you are talking about at the very least. If you are just coming out with any old rubbish, no one is going to take you seriously. So yeah that's, that is the whole intention of coming to college was to, to get that background knowledge.

Mary chooses not to engage her partner in discussions about her course, knowing that he will not understand but there is no sense of added tension in the relationship. If anything, Mary believes her partner indulges her in her passion and is prepared to participate to an extent.

No I would take Brian with me, I, I, you know I would bird watch walking down the street anyway. I just I am always looking, I am always noticing what is around even in the garden, even walking down the street so you never stop, you never switch off but yeah I used to take Brian with me and he used to, I mean he knows now about a lot of birds that he wouldn't have learnt about if I had not taken him and he didn't mind at all, it's quite sweet.

In summary therefore, scrutiny of the data revealed that:

- The students had accrued little cultural capital and consequently had little idea of what to expect and how to behave in the university

environment. Moreover, they lacked self-confidence in new situations. The university environment was an 'unknown' entity and provoked feelings of anxiety and fear amongst the students. The focus of their anxiety became the new mechanics of learning to which they were exposed.

- Through their early experiences in school, the students had developed differing concepts of themselves as learners. Aligned with Bourdieu's proposal that the 'individual is always, whether he likes it or not, trapped... within the limit of the system of categories he owes his upbringing and training' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 2007:126), the students' concept of themselves as learner gave rise to differing university experiences. The strength of their learner identity influenced the degree of discomfort they experienced and the length of time taken to adapt.
- Regardless of their internal construct of themselves as learners, the students were able to draw upon their working class dispositions of resilience and a strong work ethic to conquer their self-doubt or at least survive. They put their difficulties into perspective in the context of their challenging lives and exhibited a steely resolve to overcome their fear of exposure.
- The students exhibited signs of a cleft habitus in that they were conscious of having to modify their behaviours and conversational topics when moving between the two. The students demonstrated awareness of balancing the need to avoid any accusation of pretention and preserve their authenticity with their University aspirations. The fear of facing accusations of pretentiousness introduced tension into interactions with family and friends. Furthermore, their disposition to be loyal to family and community, provoked feelings of guilt as they struggled with emerging feelings of superiority.

4.3 Reproduction and Transformation

In the previous section, I reported the ability of the students to operate in the university context. Most of the students were adapting to this environment. Moreover, any initial discomfort and anxiety, for the most part, had been restricted to the students' lack of understanding of academic conventions prior

to enrolling. That most of the students were demonstrably able to adapt quickly to the university environment could be construed as evidence of the ability of the institution to offer an accessible route into higher education for non-traditional entrants. Conversely however, the ease with which the students were able to feel a sense of belonging in the university environment may well have indicated an environment that lacked challenge and in line with the concerns of Morrison (2009), was too comfortable to fulfil its transformational purpose.

In this section, I explore further the nature of the dual-sector university habitus and consider how the institution itself mediated the exposure of the students to the higher education field. I ask whether the dual-sector university provided the students with a legitimate higher education experience and whether, it was capable of supporting and facilitating transformation. Specifically, I looked for evidence within the data that the environment the University provided was, in Bourdieuan terms, 'sufficiently striking and sustained' to support the evolution of the habitus.

In considering the legitimacy of the university experience I chose not to judge it against some potentially 'mythical ideal' (Leahy 2012) but instead, considered how it measured up against the needs and expectations of the students. Having considered the responsiveness of the institution to the needs of the students, I then looked for signs of transformation.

This section is structured into three parts. In the first, I explore the students' confidence in the ability of the University to meet their higher education needs. I consider the degree to which the University habitus was aligned with that of the students. The student/staff relationships as reported by the students and the students support systems in place. In the second section, I discuss the differing ways in which the students engage with the university, the extent to which their engagement is constrained by their mode of attendance and the University's extra-curricular offer. Finally, in the third section I ask whether the data evidences habitus transformation or whether despite the students' reported academic attainment, the data suggests the continuing influence of the primary habitus.

4.3.1 Institutional commitment

I found that none of the students questioned the legitimacy of the student university experience offered by this new dual-sector university. Given their lack of accrued cultural capital, this was perhaps unsurprising. They had had little exposure to the higher education sector or to those with higher education experience. They were reliant on the limited advice provided by school guidance staff, the reported contemporaneous experience of their friends and what was reported in the media. The points of reference against which they could judge the institution were few. That said, there was evidence of the alignment between the students' dispositions and the habitus of the university. This alignment was reflected in the students' confidence in the institution's ability to meet their needs and their on-going satisfaction with the choice they had made. The alignment was particularly apparent in terms of the students' instrumental approach to higher education and their need for support and understanding and the University's stated mission (University of the Highlands and Islands 2015).

As I explored in Section 1, almost all had enrolled onto a degree programme seeking the graduate premium. With the exception of Kirsty and Gary, they had chosen vocational courses that offered clear pathways to careers and for almost all, their post-course employment was a primary concern. In this, their habitus and embedded dispositions were aligned with that of the institution.

This was a university that encompassed further and higher education. Approximately 70% of its provision was non-advanced and vocational in nature. The institution had historically been founded upon a collection of constituent parts that included nine colleges of further education that were themselves funded to provide relevant and responsive further education and training to support economic and community development. That the institution had a strong focus on post-course destination was therefore not surprising. The College was engaged in extensive delivery of training through apprenticeships and had strong employer relationships. Furthermore, the university's strategic plan (University of the Highlands and Islands 2015) set out clear aims to have a transformational impact on the region's economic development and employers were routinely invited to work closely with academic teams to consider course design and delivery methodology.

The students were aware of the institutional prioritisation of post-course success and transition to employment and reported staff working closely with them to discuss post-course options even at this early stage in their course. Rhona, for example, discusses the support available to students to help them develop a level of familiarity with their field and help build relevant experience.

Yeah I mean we have got, like the environmental science students' support group. They are always posting like events that are coming up. That is how I found out about the sort of the wildlife fair, you know any sort of, like there was one recently for like, a (name of employer) undergraduate programme came up on blackboard. You know there is loads. If something is, if it comes up in that sort of sector it is posted on blackboard for us to see and it is really good that, that you know we are being made aware of these things whether it is job opportunities or events or, just things like that. Yeah so it's been, yeah they are really handy so.

Both Katie and Pamela report having insightful and productive discussions with lecturers about their post-course options and both quickly realise the wealth of options open to them of which they had not been aware prior to enrolment. Katie describes the individually tailored advice offered by her lecturer:

Since I have started I have been speaking to Deborah and a few other people. A lot of people seem to think that going down the route of health psychology would be a very good option for me because of my background and because in health psychology I would already have that understanding of nursing and when a lot of health psychology deals with health professionals it would definitely be a benefit.

Following the advice of her lecturer, Pamela had contacted a third sector agency and had been in the process of organising voluntary work.

Susan is still unable to visualise passing the course, let alone identify a post-graduation professional role. Regardless, she is also aware of the focus on post-course destination. She reports her lecturer having told the class that they were all '*practising Psychologists*', encouraging them to think and act like qualified professionals from an early course stage.

These students had not enrolled at a university to engage in learning for the sake of learning. Their primary habitus led them to be more instrumental than this. Some, like Ken, were proactively weighing up the potential return on their investment. Others, such as Pamela, had rejected outright a place at a much more prestigious university on a course that was not vocational in nature. For these students, this was not a lesser experience than that offered by the more

traditional university but rather one more in keeping with their instrumental needs.

The students also referred to their confidence in the academic ability of staff. Ken, perhaps the most prepared for his university studies, is captivated by his lecturers and speaks of their knowledge and ability to inspire in positive terms.

We spent a day with our lecturers in the Cairngorms so straight off it is like it's not in the classroom with her sitting at the front preaching or teaching or that. It was like, that introduction right away you know and from that day you could tell her passion for the subject, straight away and you think well if these people can't teach me then who is going to teach me you know? You could see, one is more a human geography whereas the other is physical geography and like the things she was picking out like, from the scenery we were standing by we were just like wow. Everyone would have walked past it you know and it just, it just, it made me more confident that I was doing the right thing. Because you could tell the knowledge they had and, not just the knowledge, anyone can have knowledge but they had the feeling for it you know, like they wanted to impart all this knowledge they had on you, you know?

Although Amanda is critical of the skills of some staff who she believes lack objectivity in their marking, she identified one of her lecturers who she found inspiring:

Yes, yes I think the tutors I meet, one is fabulous. He is the most interesting, one of the most interesting people I have met. He is just one of these people. Once in a lifetime you meet somebody who has a joy in teaching and he radiates that.

Kirstie's description of her lecturer again indicates her appreciation of his skills and passion for his subject:

My poetry lecturer is really nice. I have got him this semester as well. And with him he speaks about Shelley all the time. He loves Shelley and it was really nice because he is really enthusiastic. He is like, if he is reading a poem that he doesn't like he doesn't show it. He will tell you he doesn't like it but he doesn't show that he doesn't like it, he is like, erm, this is this poem. It's crap. Do not read any of his other poems but he will read it through and he will be like oh this is annoying but you have got to love this bit. He is so enthusiastic about everything and he makes the worst poems seem amazing and it's great.

The students also reported confidence in the institution knowing them as individuals, caring about them and providing guidance that helped the students to identify themselves as mainstream rather than 'other'. These were students

lacking in confidence, heavily dependent on close family for support and taking a step into the unknown.

The University had emerged from a partnership of further education colleges and research institutes. Historically therefore, the founding further education college partners had a strong commitment to access and inclusion that had influenced the university environment. Many of the staff pre-dated the university having first taught in the colleges of further education and most continued to teach across the further/higher education boundary. The staff was familiar with the needs of non-traditional learners. Policy and practice had developed within the institution therefore that supported individuals choosing to return to education having had poor experiences at school or to provide an alternative to the traditional academic route for those eager to leave the traditional classroom. Furthermore, attention was paid to the specific needs of individuals and extensive student support structures were in place.

When asked directly how their experience compared to the more traditional experience of more established universities, for instance, the students gave positive responses. Specifically, the students remarked on the personal experience offered as distinguished from the larger institution. Gary comments on the experience of his friends in institutions where you can get lost, anonymous in a sea of other students.

Well they are more at the like bigger universities and all that. I know some of them are kind of like in massive classrooms and not very, on a personal level with the lectures and all that. Don't know their names or anything. That's why I like it here because it's quite small groups and the lecturers know your names and all that. I guess you kind of well, get to know them a bit more in person. (You are) more of a human than just a thing that is in front of them.

Kirstie echoes this judgement, remarking that her lecturers know her name and acknowledge her in the corridor.

I never once emailed Alison or spoke to her at the end of class but she still says hiya to me in the corridor.

Some of the students defined the relationships they had with staff in terms of warmth and caring. These relationships were described in nurturing terms and the students turned to staff to help bolster their self-confidence as learners. Although she is aware of her own difficulties in achieving the academic standard

expected of the university, this does not impact on Susan's relationships with staff. Susan has doubts about her ability to complete the course that she expresses several times but her words suggest warmth in her relationships with staff.

Yes, my PAT, I love. Can joke around with and she is just really lovely. The other tutor is really comfortable and you can just talk to and ask questions. My other tutor he does the foundation of research, they are the ones (subjects) that I don't necessarily like but he is lovely anyway and I can still talk to him even if I don't know what he is saying I can still really talk to him and get on with him.

Katie is similarly reassured by her lecturer that her negative experience at a traditional university won't be repeated here where students are well-supported. She explained that her lecturer told her:

I wouldn't find myself in that situation and that if I felt that I wasn't then I had to speak out and tell them.

Despite her difficulties with the course, Amanda recognises the support she is given.

There is a wonderful Katrina who is the IT person at Psychology, she is a lovely girl. And she didn't make me feel stupid 'cos I didn't understand Blackboard. It's quite daunting. You have to get your head round it and I just kept at it. I had a very high stress level to start with. It was unfortunate that I had missed the first bit.

The students' descriptions of their relationships with staff are a clear indication of the extent to which they had begun to feel a sense of belonging. Even those students struggling socially, expressed their satisfaction with the experience and the amount of enjoyment they were getting from it.

While the level of support the students described was comforting as the students struggled to understand the expectations of the university, I was aware of the risk this posed to the students' development. In order to offer a legitimate university experience, the university needed to provide sufficient challenge to help the students develop independence in learning and ultimately transformational change. This became the focus of further analysis.

4.3.2 Levels of engagement

The students had all rejected a traditional residential experience and were all interacting with the university on a 9-5 basis, either directly through their physical attendance, or by imposing a 9-5 structure on their on-line engagement.

With the exception of Kirstie who wished she could live in a hall of residence on-site, rather than continue with her three-hour commute, the students had rejected outright a residential experience. They were not seeking complete immersion but rather a student experience that they could accommodate alongside their other commitments and roles.

This style of engagement allowed the students to continue to live within a familiar structure, previously experienced at school or in employment. In doing so, they avoided any unknown, unstructured and unnerving freedom, and importantly, were able to live at home, reducing financial and emotional risk.

Several of them remarked how they treated university like a job and described how their structured approach distinguished them from 'layabout' students who they saw on TV. It enabled the students to fit their higher education experience into the normality of their lives. It was university but on their terms. Moreover, the students did not report this as a necessary compromise but rather a preferred approach.

Gary comments that his friends who had chosen residential experiences were exposed to more pressure:

Where they are at obviously they are in student accommodation so they are exposed to well something that is completely different and I have never been exposed to so they are probably out more partying and all that and worrying more about deadlines and all that.

A similar view is offered by Rhona who describes her sister's experience living away from home as being far more pressurised than her own:

I live at home but she has got to look for a flat each year. And on top of doing her, her studying and everything and she has got, you know I have got the car, I can drive up here and things and she has got to do buses and stuff and in a way I do, I do feel bad.

These students, many of whom had worked for a number of years, and experienced a degree of poverty and even chaotic lives, had little patience with the stereotypical drunken student image. They repeatedly remark that 'That is just not me', 'I don't drink', 'I was never much of a party person' and struggle to relate to those who do. For them, university is a serious business from day one, with strong ties to the world of work; a place that can add meaning to their

lives. They were purposeful in their studies and conscious of the financial investment they were making.

Despite opting for this 9-5 experience that would enable the rest of their lives to continue as normal, some of the students reported the university influence impacting on other areas of their lives. The university organised industry sector fairs and encouraged the students to attend these and others further afield. Students were encouraged to undertake voluntary work to provide them with relevant work experience and help them establish a professional network. These activities for some extended their university experience beyond the 9-5, infiltrating other aspects of their lives, extending their social as well as professional networks and providing them with sustained exposure to those with different dispositions. Through these means, some of the students were exposed to opportunities to develop bridging social capital (Putnam 2000).

Rhona for example describes being drawn into her chosen industry sector by her classmates who are active volunteers in the conservation sector. Rhona herself describes how membership of this group exposes her to the capital of others with different experiences and to more and more opportunities.

Both of the women on my course are volunteers with the RSPB and they were like you should do it too. You should do it too and I am not. That's, I, I applied and I am now a volunteer as well so. And, they're sort of opening more, not opportunities, but they will say like oh this event is happening if you want to come along to this or, oh we are taking part in this would you like to do it. And it's been so nice that they have included me in things and I feel like, not more opportunities but like, well sort of there is more opportunities sort of happening and I am doing different things now. And it's, it's really nice that they have included me in that and I am meeting new people through them now as well and things like that.

Rhona accrues bonding social capital (Putnam 2000) through her relationship with her classmates who help her to settle into university life. Her two classmates provide her with a support structure that helps her to navigate the academic world and develop a strong learner identity. However, through this group she is introduced to vocationally relevant voluntary work. This work offers Rhona the opportunity to build bridging social capital (Putnam 2000) that helps her to begin to develop her future professional identity. By the end of the first year, Rhona was researching potential careers in her industry sector and trying on new identities for size.

Rhona's volunteering activities that take her out of her comfort zone support her personal development. Furthermore, her initial encouragement came from her fellow students. Although the university did not provide a sufficiently diverse student mix to cause the students to be aware of their class-based habitus, many commented on the diverse age group of each cohort. Through age and experience therefore, some students had accrued more capital than others prior to enrolling at the university and others benefitted from interaction with them.

Mary was one such mature student. Mary's transformation started prior to enrolling at the university. Following several local incidents involving threats and damage to local wildlife, Mary was encouraged by a friend to start a campaign to protect the wildlife that remained. Mary was initially one of a group but soon found herself to be the mainstay of the campaign. Just like Gary and Rhona, Mary participates in a range of new activities that take her out of her comfort zone and into the world of social and traditional media. Each of these new activities provides Mary with opportunities to accrue bridging capital that provides her with more understanding of her chosen field. Mary brings this accrued capital with her into the university environment. Beginning with raw passion and a personal commitment to protecting the natural world, Mary accrues sufficient academic capital to become more sophisticated in her understanding and applies this knowledge in her voluntary work.

Some students, for instance Ken, acquire bridging social capital through their interaction with their lecturers, other students, and with those already working in their chosen field. He describes his appreciation of these interactions:

and a lot of the on-line masters students were there as well so you kind of got to know a lot of people and you were speaking to people who had already succeeded so, you know, that was good.

In participating, Ken is exposed to others with differing values and dispositions. Through their interactions, the students (for instance, Ken, Mary and Katie) moved from a vague sense of wanting a degree and the perceived associated economic benefits to a more sophisticated understanding of potential futures.

Ken's only disappointment is that there are no students in his class in his age group. Although he is sociable and interacts with the other students, there is no sense in his responses of close bonds being formed.

Others such as Pamela, Katie, Susan, Kirstie and Gary are either studying on-line with few opportunities to interact with other students or are socially isolated due to lengthy commutes or natural shyness and lack of sociability. They are limited in their opportunities to build bonding social capital and have to be self-reliant to survive any academic challenges. Pamela and Katie however, do take advantage of opportunities to interact with lecturers and Pamela, at the time of interview, was in the process of arranging voluntary work in her vocational field.

To summarise, although the students engage with the university for the most part on a 9-5 basis, they are provided with opportunities to acquire some bonding social capital and bridging social capital. The bridging social capital the students accrue comes from their own personal research, interaction with staff who even in this first year are working one to one with the students exploring career options and through the participation in industry-specific events and voluntary work that the University prompts them to undertake.

4.3.3 Educational attainment or transformation?

Many of the students exhibited signs of personal development. Some were developing new dispositions and were consciously over-riding some of the limiting dispositions of their primary habitus. These students were developing independence, self-confidence, pride in their achievements and ability to interact socially in new and challenging situations. These new dispositions however, were not yet having a transformational impact on their lives and their ambitions remained modest. Furthermore, the data revealed that the nature of the students' ambitions reflected the continued influence of their primary habitus as well as the ambitions the university had for them.

Rhona's emerging confidence is apparent when she attends a wildlife fair alone at the university and is bold enough to introduce herself to one of her lecturers she has only seen on a videoconference link. She engages in reflexive practice and takes delight in her own development, remarking how the balance of power is changing in her relationship with her boyfriend. She is no longer the one who 'hangs back' while he shows her around.

I am a bit more confident, because he, he, he (her boyfriend) actually said that to me the other day. He said that he used to be the more confident one and I was quite shy. But we came up here for the open day. He wanted to sort of get a wee feel of the building and see what kind of courses there were on offer. And I sort of knew a few of

the lecturers so I was chatting to them and just chatting to people and he was saying like it's totally switched, you are the one that is talking to people more now and I am sort of hanging back. I don't see it but he sort of he said that and it made me (realise it). But yeah I think he would say I am a bit more, bit more sort of determined, I know what I want to do now and I am a bit more confident about it, hopefully.

Rhona had always been conscious of her shyness and reluctance to try something new. Having been encouraged to face her fears and experiment with new experiences, she now appreciated the beneficial impact on her development.

I have sort of learnt that about myself. That I am capable of doing these things I just sort of needed that, that push and I like to think I am sort of getting a bit more confident and meeting new people.

Rhona's comments echoed Pamela's reflections on the changing relationship with her fiancé. She explains that she had to assert herself to escape the tethers of the traditional gendered role she was playing but had done so.

I think he had a view of University that you see on the TV like students just laying about, watching TV, I think he thought that's what I did with my days when he was at work but after a couple of arguments I think he understands more that when I am at home I am not just sitting there I am actually doing stuff.

This was only one aspect of Pamela's personal development. The significant change she highlighted was her growing independence and self-reliance.

I think I have learnt that I am more independent than I thought I was. Because I thought I was always like, relied on people, like emotionally and like needed like confirmation that you are doing well. And I needed that kind of boost but I think seeing myself write things and complete it and get good grades back I can be proud of myself and not be ashamed of that, I don't need someone else to tell me.

Like Rhona, Pamela's reflexivity has brought self-awareness that includes the awareness of the limiting aspects of her habitus. Pamela explains that previously she would have felt ashamed of being proud of herself and her achievements. This pride would have clashed with her deeply embedded disposition to be self-deprecating, to play down any achievement that might in any way set her apart.

Consequently, she was now deliberately grasping opportunities that came her way to try new things. Rhona explained that she had decided to take part in the study for this very reason.

I mean one of the reasons I sort of thought I would do this with you is that you would give me something sort of new to do as well as helping a wee push to try and something new. If not, I am just terrible, I am just sort of oh I don't really want to go.

Many of the students remarked on their growing confidence, which had become noticeable to their families.

Gary relates his mother's comments:

My mum would say I have grown out of my shell I guess a bit more and I am a lot more confident and all that I guess.

Some of the students had begun a process of reflexivity prior to enrolling at the university. Ken for instance for some time, had understood his need to develop a career linked to the land and the Highland environment. Ken was very conscious of the impact of the university experience itself however on his perspective of the world and his position in it. When asked whether he believed he had changed, he replied:

Yeah definitely. The geography degree, one of them said it is just one big guilt trip. We are doing about climate change. We are doing about sustainable development and just we are left right and centre being told what we are doing wrong in life as individuals and as societies and you know? So yeah my perception of the world has changed (it's) just, it's just chalk and cheese from this time last year.

Mary's developmental process began prior to her enrolment when she started to lead the wildlife campaign. During the early days of the campaign, Mary was engaged in one new experience after another, developing her confidence and understanding of her chosen field as she did so.

Just because it, I had to push the boundaries in terms of my own ability to get, you know to involve the press and to organising skills. And especially with the petition because I had to go in and hand it in. So I was organising all that as well and the press alongside it so that was quite difficult and a real revelation to me because I had never done anything like that before and they are all skills that I have learnt to do now so.

Mary however, understood that to be taken seriously in her field, she needed technical knowledge and the accompanying vocabulary. As she explains the problem she had, she demonstrates the degree to which she has grown in the university setting. She can now use confidently her technical knowledge to argue her case in the conservation field.

Well, say somebody, say for example, somebody shot a hen harrier on a grouse moor. They would then argue that, oh it's all to do with conservation of the grouse or conservation of a lapwing because then that hen harrier won't predate the chicks but then you are messing up the whole ecosystem. You see I wouldn't have maybe had the terminology for a start to have argued the case for the hen harrier. But now I know that the hen harrier is the top predator. There are different trophic levels in, in an ecological habitat, you know. I have got that background knowledge now and I can explain things much more, much more better, much better than I would have done previously.

Mary had also developed a sophisticated knowledge of the sector and sufficient self-awareness to understand where she will be happiest. Now Mary has 'found her voice' as she terms it, she decided she does not want to be silenced by having to toe the corporate line.

I have got an opinion and I am allowed to have that opinion at the moment but once you start working for somebody in a high, in a strategic role, or any kind of high, high job, high profile job in a big organisation your voice is the voice of the organisation, you are instantly silenced. So I don't want that to happen, I don't want to, I don't want to work for the RSPB and then not be outspoken when the hen harriers are getting killed down in England, I don't want to, I don't want to be silenced. I want to still have a voice.

Although Mary interprets her decision to avoid high-level strategic roles as being rooted in her need to preserve her right to be independent of thought and retain her voice in the world of conservation, it could be interpreted differently. I was aware that in choosing to self-exclude from the competition for such jobs, this could also have been evidence of Bourdieu's symbolic violence at work and Mary's inability to throw off the tethers of her primary habitus.

Katie, Amanda, Kirstie and Susan stated outright that they did not believe they had developed at all during their first year at university. In stating this however, Katie is dismissing her significant development in confidence and her increasingly sophisticated knowledge of her field and her ability to visualise herself in a range of potential professional roles post-graduation.

Amanda, Kirstie and Susan however, demonstrate few signs of development. These three students were particularly challenged by the university environment, though each in differing ways and none of them were fully engaged in their university experience.

Kirstie and Susan had little opportunity to develop bonding social capital (Putnam 2000) and were each quite isolated from their fellow students. This left Susan without a supportive network to help her overcome her academic challenges and strengthen her weak learner identity. Furthermore, neither Kirstie nor Susan engaged in activity that would facilitate the accrual of bridging social capital (Putnam 2000). They had little exposure to others working in their future industry field of choice and no opportunity to begin to develop a professional identity. Kirstie and Susan's confidence remained at the same low level as it was prior to enrolment. They operated from the periphery avoiding further exposure to the unknown. This was despite Kirstie's academic success. Scoring 'A's and 'B's on assignments, Kirstie still lacked confidence to contribute to class discussion.

In not engaging fully and limiting their interaction with others in or out of the university environment, the students' opportunities to be exposed to experiences sufficiently striking to support transformation were severely curtailed. They were for the most part, observers from the periphery rather than participants, holding themselves back and maintaining a distance from the direct experience.

Those students showing some signs of habitus evolution were developing new dispositions. Some were consciously over-riding what they now recognised as the limiting effect of the dispositions developed in the primary habitus. Their new dispositions were impacting positively on their ability to challenge themselves to grasp opportunities that came their way, their ability to interact with others and their self-confidence and self-esteem. Their career aspirations however, remained modest, and illustrated the continuing influence of their primary habitus. Moreover, their modest aspirations were aligned with the expectations of the university.

Ken had anticipated his future professional role longer than most of the other students and had totally immersed himself in his studies. His academic record was exemplary and his passion for his subject was clear. In terms of future career however, his goal is to match his previous wage of £27,000 without being required to work shifts.

I just thought it would be good to get into something where I could put something back into to this land, work 9 to 5 and hopefully get

the similar wages. At the end of the day, if I get a job doing something I love, doing that hours and it's not the same wages, well I can live with that, its, the wages are the third, kind of third priority because if you are doing something you love then everything else kind of hopefully falls into place.

Rhona spends time, even in her first year on job searches considering her options. Like Ken, her goals are very modest.

I keep checking like conservation job websites and seeing what come up and thinking like an Ecology Officer or Conservation Officer, like oh that sounds good. . . I mean yeah money at the end of the day would be quite good but I think that I, ultimately I would love to do something that I enjoy, you know? I would love to be able to be like I am going to work now and off I go, you know I am happy. I am doing something that I enjoy so that's, that's the goal I am aiming for. Something that I enjoy where I am sort of helping to do something and yeah I am just happy with what I am doing so.

Mary alone mentions a strategic role in her field but concludes that she would be reluctant to sacrifice her 'voice' for a corporate salary.

Well I suppose just, you know, strategic positions in other wildlife organisations so there would be RSPB, Scottish Wildlife Trust. Some things so it's funny though because the more campaigning I am doing. I am lessening my chance of getting a job with a big organisation at the end of it because I have got an opinion and I am allowed to have that opinion at the moment.

Pamela is weighing up the relative merits of either primary school teaching or social work, both very predictable choices. Katie is perhaps more ambitious than the others in considering a role in health psychology or joining a friend's business as partner offering art therapy. The responses of the others above, all suggest that the students were justifying their lack of ambition by suggesting that financial return is of secondary importance.

The students were attending regular sessions with their personal academic tutors (PATs) who were providing advice on future career paths. None of the students mentioned alternative, more challenging professional roles being proposed by their PAT which suggested that the university was, at best, failing to challenge the students' modest career ambitions and at worst, colluding with them.

Some of the students had chosen a course that connected with their primary habitus and established dispositions. For some of the students, Ken, Mary, Katie and Rhona, this was a conscious connection between the course and a deep-

rooted disposition. Gary however was not conscious of the link between his course choice and the dispositions developed in his early years.

The courses most of the students had chosen could be described as vocational in that they provided pathways to a range of careers in specific fields. These sector-specific fields were founded on values. For instance, three of the students were studying either geography or environmental science. Central to both of these courses were concepts of sustainability and conservation. The central tenet of Ken's course was a commitment to protecting the environment. Ken summed it up when he declared, 'It's just one big guilt trip really', and then carried on to discuss the insignificance of the human era in the overall history of the earth and the devastating impact man has had. Ken shares these values.

Mary enrolls onto her environmental science course directly to satisfy her need to have a greater influence in wildlife campaigns but she and Rhona refer back to their interests in conservation being nurtured by family and close family friends in their early years.

Katie enrolls on a Psychology course so she can take on a future role related to health and well-being, in keeping with her nursing background. It is only during the interview however, when exploring her motivation for going into nursing originally that she makes the connection back to experiences in her childhood.

None of the students were following directly in the footsteps of family member or close family friends but there were clear links to their primary habitus. Ken's extended family featured generations of farmers. Pamela's mother worked in childcare at a school. Their career choice, like the others in this group was made in keeping with a set of values developed in their early years. The alignment of that set of values, with deeply embedded dispositions to care for the health of others, for the principles of conservation and concern for the environment, and for childhood development and their choice of future professional role was common to the students in this group.

Some of the students reflected on their initial introduction to their vocational field by a close family member or family friend. This applied to Mary, Rhona and Pamela. Katie had watched nurses in the home regularly caring for her mother and Gary was sub-consciously influenced by the values he shared with his

parents. Those who consciously reflected on this tie inferred that this perhaps was what they were meant to do.

It was something that my granny got me into, sort of looking at garden birds and that sort of side of things. That really interested me so when my brother and I were younger we used to say we were going to be biologists, we used to watch like, the TV shows on animals, or what are all the Sky channels? You know like discovery planet or something like that. We used to think oh we are going to do that, we are going to be biologists, we are going to go off and look at animals and things.

The connection between their current ambitions and childhood aspirations, seemed to help the students to visualise their future vocational role. At the same time however, this choice acts as an anchor to their primary habitus, tying them to the past and their established habitus and identity. Their limited economic capital and the geographical constraints imposed by their family responsibilities further constrained ambition.

Gary, referred directly to the risk of post-graduate study and lack of guaranteed career at the end of it:

At the start of the year I was more towards the historical like research and all that. But the more and more research I did into it, the more I was put off by it. It's just again, it's just no chance of a job and all that. And I don't know if I would really enjoy it as it is a lot of work for well not even a massive pay off.

Mary reflects on the sparsity of PhD scholarships in her field this far North commenting;

I don't think there is anything specifically for conservation or birds specifically. There's a lot to do with renewable energies.

Ken restricted his original course choice on the basis of job geographical constraints.

To summarise:

- The institutional habitus was aligned with the students' habitus and their instrumental dispositions. The students reported warm supportive relationships with staff and remarked positively on staff skills and knowledge. Consequently, the students, for the most part, expressed confidence in the ability of the institution to meet their higher education needs.

- Some of the students reported structuring their studies as they would a job, attempting to stick to normal employment hours, even if studying on-line. There were no university halls on site and students had limited opportunities to socialise out of class and develop bonding social capital. Some of the students did, however engage with their studies or in related activities beyond the requirements of their course. The students engaging in related activities were developing bridging social capital that was supporting their identity work.
- Most of the students were exhibiting signs of personal development, including evidence of habitus evolution. Some reported enhanced confidence and an enhanced awareness and reflection on some of the constraints of their primary habitus.
- Although some of the students were becoming increasingly reflexive and developing new dispositions, their modest career aspirations and the on-going 'pull' of their primary habitus, suggested that their development, as yet, stopped short of transformation.

Chapter 5 The Push and Pull of the Working-class Habitus

In this Chapter, I reflect on the findings, reported in the preceding chapter, in the context of the literature, establishing the extent to which these findings were aligned with what was previously known and understood about the experience of working class students in higher education.

The Chapter is structured into four parts. In the first section, I consider the influence of the students' working-class habitus on their relationship with education and the motivation that drives their engagements with the University. I explore the embedded dispositions that create the 'push' required to participate. I further examine the classed practice of the students' decision-making and the gap between their aspiration and understanding of the field.

In the second section I compare the students' reported experience in the dual-sector institution with the findings of earlier studies. I ask whether the students experienced the same degree of disjuncture reported in other studies, or whether the students' experience was 'too comfortable' (Morrison 2009:224) to support transformation.

In the third section, I compare aspects of the institutional habitus and their influence on the students' ability to develop a sense of belonging in the University and their ability to engage in productive identity work.

Finally, I reflect on the challenges of working with Bourdieu's concepts as well as the potential offered by alternative theoretical approaches to gaining a better understanding of the experience of working-class students in higher education.

5.1 The Working-class's Relationship with Education

In this section I compare and contrast the students' relationship with higher education with that reported in the literature. I consider the students' motivation in participating and their understanding of the field of higher education.

5.1.1 How instrumental were the students?

Bourdieu defines 'illusio' as 'a state of being invested in the game and understanding (albeit subconscious) of the stakes (2000:66). I found that the students were very much invested in the game and through their risk management strategies, revealed their conscious awareness of the stakes at play. In this, their approach to higher education resonated with the findings of earlier studies (Reay 2001, Leathwood and O'Connell 2003, Lehmann 2009b).

The students bought into the dominant discourse of education being the route to social mobility. Just as Reay (2001) found, the students had accepted that it was through educational success that they would be able to have a better life. They interpreted the purpose of education narrowly, as Dwyer discusses, absorbing the Government's agenda, conflating the social and economic roles of education to one that is exclusively economic (1995). Their explicitly instrumental approach was a product of their working class habitus, the value they attributed to authenticity, independence and their limited economic capital.

Some of the students' responses resonated with Reay's (2001) description of the this discourse that presents the individual not engaged in further or higher education as 'incomplete' or 'unfinished'. This concern is revealed in both Pamela's interview and Rhona's. Each of them had worked for a few years in a minimum wage job and both expressed a similar view that somehow, this work was not meaningful and they needed to 'do something' and make something of their lives. Their interpretation of societal expectation is reinforced by the subsequent approval that is forthcoming from family members who no longer see them as 'stuck'. On a similar note, Susan's comments also reveal the extent to which she sees her personal value being determined by her educational attainment. With echoes of Reay and William's (1999) primary school pupil's assessment that she will be 'a nothing', Susan declares herself to be 'rubbish' when struggling academically.

Linked to this is what Leathwood and O'Connell refer to as the 'discourse of hidden potential' used by mature students Ken and Mary (2003:604). In Leathwood and O'Connell's study, this potential had not been recognised at school. Both Ken and Mary however, discuss a degree of academic success at school, or at least, recognition of their ability by the school, and attribute their

subsequent failure to achieve in a higher education environment to personal lack of application and the impact of having children respectively. Their wish to demonstrate their academic ability, a belief long-since held, remains however, a strong motivational force.

Like Lehmann's (2009b) students, the students were taking a very instrumental approach to their university experience and were actively seeking the graduate premium. Kirstie describes her yearning ambition to go to university to achieve the same level of success as her secondary school English teachers who she perceives as 'having it all'. Ken acknowledged that he was taking a bit of a risk in leaving the security of his public sector job but still regarded this move as a 'no brainer' in terms of his future career prospects. Ken was actively managing the risk through his reckoning of the relative value of a degree to his current Higher National Diploma status, but also through his relatively modest expectations of return on his investment.

Pamela also reveals her highly instrumental approach to higher education and consequently, the distance between her working-class habitus and that of the middle-classes. In contrast to the 'non-decision' of the middle-classes identified by Ball et al. (2002) where the path to university is a given, Pamela wrestles consciously with the misalignment of her wish to go to university in order to meet different people and her instrumental approach that demands a tangible economic return on the required investment.

Pamela's decision to turn down the offer of a place at an elite art school away from home and take a low-pay job instead is illustrative of the 'pull' of her working-class habitus. Only years later, having chosen instead to study an applied course which she perceives as a pathway to a range of careers including teaching and social work, is she prepared to invest further in the education game. Pamela's actions resonated with the findings of Lehmann (2009b) who reports differences in subject choice between the middle and working-classes with the latter for more likely to study applied subjects than the middle-classes.

Ken's and Pamela's pragmatic instrumentalism is mirrored by Rhona, Gary and Katie. Susan, also buys into the dominant discourse but her motivation is less pragmatic and more fraught. Rather than systematically attempting to use education as a pathway to a good career and social mobility, Susan is desperately trying to bring a level of security to her precarious lifestyle by

participating, whatever form that may take. Her comments reflect the findings of Leathwood and O'Connell who concluded that students increasingly referred to the need for security or valued qualifications as a 'safety net' (2003:605). Susan declares that if she just keeps trying to learn (anything) her life will improve. Just as with those interviewed by Leathwood and O'Connell (2003) Susan's preoccupation is with survival despite the odds being stacked against her.

As Lehmann reports (2009b), some of the students saw higher education as a means of escape from the lives of their parents, evidencing the 'push' of the working-class habitus. Ken and Gary both referenced this but in different ways. Whereas Gary described his parents as having 'wasted their lives doing job after dead-end job', Ken regrets the lack of opportunity his parents were given to take a different path. Their differing interpretations of the circumstances within which their parents lived could be attributed to age, maturity and reflexive capacity.

Only one of the students, Pamela, expresses a level of ambivalence in relation to the dominant discourse of the kind reported by Archer and Hutchings (2000). Like some of Archer and Hutchings' students, Pamela reveals her awareness that the graduate premium may only exist, 'in her head', as she has heard about the plight of unemployed graduates. Yet, even with this level of ambivalence, Pamela commits to her course, recognising, that even in this environment of 'inflated credentialism' (Reay 1998), and consequent 'social congestion' (Brown 2013:683) as everyone adopts the same strategy to get ahead, she has little choice but to participate.

The students' responses indicated a yearning to go to university, an aspiration that at once excited and initially terrified them. Theirs was not the expectation of the middle classes but rather an ambition that they had nurtured. In this, the data aligned with the findings of others (Archer and Hutchings 2000, Reay 2001, Ball et al. 2002). The students narrowly interpreted the purpose of higher education, seeing this, for the most part, in very instrumental terms, for some a means of achieving a basic level of security in life, for others, a pathway to

more lucrative employment. There was little evidence that the dominant discourse of education offering a route to social mobility was being seriously questioned. Those of working age, regarded participation in higher education as a requirement to enable them to live the life they wanted to live.

5.1.2 How classed was their decision-making?

The students' decision-making process revealed a great deal about their working-class habitus, their understanding of the higher education field and the terms on which they were able to participate in higher education. Although they each were differently positioned on a scale of working-class to borderline middle-class, in all but one of the students' interviews, the challenges they described in relation to their educational histories and decision-making practice revealed working-class dispositions they held in common that differentiated them from the middle classes. Notably these were:

- An explicitly instrumental approach to higher education;
- A lack of social capital;
- A lack of ease in new social situations;
- A strong work ethic;
- A high level of dependence on their families for moral support;
- The value attributed to authenticity;
- An avoidance of pretentiousness;
- A sense of loyalty to their community.

These dispositions reflected those reported in previous studies (Reay 2001, Reay et al, 2001, Winlow 2001, Leathwood and O'Connell 2003, Ingram 2009, Lehmann 2009a, 2012, 2013, Stahl 2014 and He Li 2015) and discussed in Section 2.1.2, influenced their transition to higher education.

A common thread running through the data was the impact of the lack of cultural capital on the students' transition to higher education. The knowledge gap that emerged between the students' aspiration to go to university and their ability to formulate strategies to help them navigate the application process, choose an institution and course, reflected findings of prior studies (Reay 1998, Hutchings and Archer 2001). Their parents offered moral support and encouragement but they were not equipped with the capitals (economic,

cultural or social) nor the strategies of the middle-classes. The students were invested in the game but had only a rudimentary grasp of its rules and little access to experienced players to offer coaching and guidance. The students revealed little knowledge of the hierarchies operating in the field of higher education and the impact their decisions could have on the potential return on their investment.

This is in sharp contrast to the non-decision to participate in higher education of the middle-classes, prioritising elite institutions and with few choosing applied, vocational courses reported by Ball et al. (2002).

For some of the students, geographical factors, coupled with financial and other constraints underpinned their decision to come to the University of the Highlands and Islands. Some with family responsibilities for instance, had no choice (Mary, Ken, Amanda). In this way they mirrored the practice of the pragmatic 'contingent choosers' described by Ball (2006:222). Others though, made a definite choice to stay local and continue to live at home. Reflecting the literature, these students chose the safe and familiar environment of the local university as was found by Clayton et al. (2009). Many of the students had close family members who had undertaken further education courses at the University. This was therefore an institution that was recognised as relevant to their lives.

Some of those that made the choice to stay local had siblings who had taken a different path in accepting a residential place at a university away from home. This illustrated what Bourdieu termed the nature of the habitus that:

makes it possible to produce an infinite number of practices that are relatively unpredictable...but are also limited in their diversity
(2015:55)

Those siblings that left to study away from home had a clear idea of course choice and intended career.

Almost all of the students explained their choice of the local University in terms of a rejection of the alternative, residential experience in a traditional university away from home. Gary's comments align with the findings of Hutchings and Archer (2001) who concluded that some working-class students seek to avoid the size and anonymity of the traditional university. Some, they

reported, even wished to find an alternative architectural environment. This is exemplified in Kirstie's comparison of the contemporary environment of the University of the Highlands and Islands with what she perceives to be the unwelcoming austere architecture of an ancient University in another part of the country.

The findings, like those of Crozier et al. (2008b) revealed a complexity of decision-making practice that could not be explained in terms of a binary working/middle-class divide. Rather, it illustrated a more nuanced picture of gradations within class groupings, illustrating the diverse nature of class identity. In this way, the students revealed differing degrees of working-classness as Crozier et al. found depending on their available economic capital, social capital, dispositions developed in their primary habitus and the structuring impact of subsequent experiences. Just like Reay's students, the students participating in this study varied in age, some school leaving age, others in their 40s. Some of the students juggled family responsibilities alongside their studies. Others were able to focus solely on their studies. The students came from different socio-economic circumstances. Some had savings that meant they were comfortably coping without a wage while they studied; others were managing to get by with part-time employment. Some had considered university their next logical step; others had wrestled for years with a deep-seated desire that had been repeatedly thwarted by circumstance. Just as in the Reay et al. (2009a) study, the experiences of each of the students influenced their learner identity and thereby their ability to adapt to the university environment.

For some, experiences had reinforced their working-class dispositions. For instance, Susan's family traumas and economic difficulties reinforced her external locus of control. For others, experiences had prompted their reflexive capacity and consequent wish to overcome the constraints of their primary habitus. Gary, for example, becomes increasingly aware of the distance between his own ambition and the lifestyle of his extended family. Ken is able to recognise how the constraints of his own habitus and dispositions have moulded his life trajectory to date. His experience of working shifts and the impact this has on his family life however further strengthens his working-class work ethic.

Kirstie's family had, in recent years, accrued more economic capital as her father's business became more successful. Kirstie herself categorises herself as now middle class but having had a working-class upbringing. Although Kirstie did not experience the financial constraints of some of the other students in making her choice of institution, her family still did not have the cultural capital to support her through the applications process. Having had no prior exposure to the higher education field, Kirstie's parents have no experience to draw upon and indeed, only her mother persists in her encouragement when the transition proves difficult. Kirstie's description of the panic she experiences when she is up against the UCAS deadline and is forced to choose a subject without having the basic understanding of what these subjects are, or where they might lead, is poignant.

In section 5.1 I demonstrated the students' investment in the game of education. The students bought into the dominant discourse and were explicitly seeking the graduate premium, albeit with an accompanying need for self-fulfilment. The students' reflection on their difficulties negotiating the transition from school to higher education and the number of false starts that were recounted, were a clear indication of their lack of understanding of the sector and the rules of engagement. In this, the findings were aligned with the existing research in the experience of working-class students in higher education. What was also clear, was that most of the students had established clear terms on which they would participate in higher education. These terms included the need to study from home and to be able to visualise a clear route to employment. These findings mirrored those of Read et al. (2003).

The data highlighted that the different aspects of the students' habitus as defined by Wacquant (2014a), specifically, the cognitive and affective aspects were misaligned. In terms of the affective aspect of their habitus, the students were responding to the dominant discourse. They were fully invested in the game and were aspiring to better lives. Their unsophisticated approach to engagement with the higher education sector, coupled with their desire to retain the comfort of the familiar while aspiring for a different life however, was indicative of the on-going constraints of their primary habitus.

5.2 - The Working-class Habitus in the Dual-sector University

In this section I consider the students' reflections on their first year in the context of the literature. I explore in turn, the students' initial reactions to the institutional habitus as they attempt to navigate this new world, their sense of moving between the different worlds of home and university as they begin to adapt and any evidence emerging of habitus transformation. I reflect on Bernstein's (2000) recognition and realisation rules and Wacquant's (2014a) conative aspects of habitus, discussing these in the light of the students' educational histories. In each of these sections, I consider the degree to which the institutional habitus of the dual-sector university influenced any deviation from the findings of previous studies.

5.2.1 How traumatic was the transition to University?

The students adapted at differing paces to the university environment. Their ability to develop the competencies required to respond effectively in the academic setting reflected their educational history, their level of confidence in the academic setting and their established locus of control. Those students who adapted quickly had strong learner identities and were most confident. Those students who lacked the confidence to participate actively in class struggled more. Moreover, the weak framing of learning at the University mean that passive learners were not challenged. These findings were aligned with those of earlier studies.

Almost all of the students gave reports of the painful disjuncture they experienced in the early days, as is reported frequently in the literature (Reay et al 2009b, He Li 2015). Echoing the findings of these earlier studies, the students used language that highlighted the emotional impact of the early days. They spoke of 'fear' and 'panic' and 'stress' all underpinned by a sense of 'not being good enough' and of fear of being found out as an imposter (Reay 2001).

For most of the students this sense of disjuncture was linked to a fear of the unknown and a lack of preparedness for the world of higher education. Where the findings differed from those of earlier studies was in the lack of reference

made by the students to a sense of cultural misfit (Lehmann 2009b, He Li 2015). I found it useful to draw upon the work of Crozier and Reay (2011) in analysing the students' reported strategies employed to overcome the academic challenge they faced.

Crozier and Reay consider their data in the light of Bernstein's pedagogic device (1996), using concepts of classification and framing to interpret the students' responses. Issues of framing, in terms of the degree to which the students felt in control of the pace and sequencing of their learning were useful. This gave me insight into both Amanda's fear in tackling the statistics module, and the comfort Pamela derived from the wall timetable organising her studies according to specific module and half-day periods.

As used by Crozier and Reay, Bernstein's recognition and realisation rules were helpful in interpreting the differing practice and emotional responses of Ken and Susan. Ken quickly grasps the differing academic contexts and the relationships between them. He understands the part the lecture plays in his studies and the role independent study has in his learning. Furthermore, Ken explains how he cannot understand how others have not grasped the rules.

Ken also has the required habitus with which to realise the substance of the rules, developing the academic skills he requires. He values and is excited about his learning experience, he is industrious and increasingly confident in his ability to interact in academic fora. Ken has a strong learner identity. He reflects on his academic ability recognised early in his school life and he reveals his internal locus of control when he attributes his earlier lack of attainment to his own lack of application.

Susan however, struggles to understand the University's expectations. The rules make no sense to her and she experiences panic, partly brought on by this lack of understanding and partly due to her history of academic difficulty.

The degree to which the students understood the learning environment and the purpose of lectures, tutorials and essays varied. Some of the students were consciously grappling with the rules of the game and were working on their mastery of academic behaviours in various contexts. With echoes of Crozier and Reay's (2011) student at Southern, critiquing the class's performance in seminars, Gary, for instance, explains how his understanding of what is required

in an academic essay has developed. He has reflected on what is required, interrogating the feedback he is given and worked to apply that to the next assignment. This contrasts with Susan's accounts which suggest she is overwhelmed by the distance between what she believed was required and her grade and is struggling to deal with the emotional impact.

Those students who were able to overcome their initial fear of the unknown and fear of being exposed as an imposter in the University settled in faster and quickly began to not only recognise what was required of them but also develop the required skills to respond accordingly. Gary for instance gives himself a talking to and consciously tackles his fears head on. Katie describes a similar approach. Kirstie however, is unable to overcome her fear of participation. She has a strong learner identity and achieves good grades but is still unable to develop any sense of belonging while she behaves like a silent observer on the periphery. In this way, Kirstie mirrors the behaviour of He Li's students (2015).

Crozier and Reay (2011) make use of Bernstein's concept of regulatory discourse (rules of social order) and instructional discourse to explain the strategies used by universities to embed the institutional culture in their students by social and academic means. They compare, for instance, the weak framing of learning at Northern University where the students express little sense of urgency in relation to their learning, where there is low expectations of extensive independent study and where required attendance is limited, with that of the experience at Southern University. At Southern, the academic demands are intensive, expectations of rigour in independent study are high and there is close supervision. Crozier and Reay suggest that if students arrive with a lack of understanding of the university and how it operates, this weak framing of learning can exacerbate matters. Kirstie's experience resonated with these earlier findings. I considered that had Kirstie enrolled at a university with a stronger framing of learning, she could well have become more embedded and overcome her fears and sense of being an outsider, much faster. As it was, this University provided an environment within which it was possible to be a passive learner.

As discussed in section 4.3.2, opportunities to interact socially at the University were restricted by the nature of the students 9-5 or on-line mode of attendance. Social facilities, apart from café spaces, were limited to informal seating or

collaborative learning spaces in the Learning Resource Centre. There was no student union. The students did however make reference to induction excursions, and residential experiences in their interviews, endorsing the opportunities these provided to interact with others on their course. Pamela also discusses collaborative assignments worked on through the videoconferencing network. These experiences were, however, a far cry from the intensive residential immersion described by Crozier and Reay at Southern (2011). This environment did not offer the same opportunities for students to become completely immersed in their experience and indeed, the 9-5 mode of attendance enabled the students to continue to compartmentalise their university and social lives.

In Crozier and Reay's (2011) article, they shift the focus, as does Thomas (2002), away from what Thomas terms the 'victim blaming' of the working-classes for non-participation and withdrawal from higher education to consider the role and responsibilities of the institution in this regard. Thomas lists a range of factors that are relevant to students' participation and persistence in higher education, many of which are inter-linked. She includes the degree to which the institution is inclusive and accepting of diversity in this list, explaining the need for the students to feel accepted but not patronised. She also discusses the relationship between staff and students, the level of understanding of their needs and staff commitment to teaching.

Several of the students commented on the supportive approach of lecturers who would make use of anecdote to highlight their experience of working with students who initially struggle to understand the university world.

Thomas's descriptions of an institution that promotes informal supportive relationships with students, where everyone is on first name terms and students turn to staff for welfare support, contrasts with Crozier and Reay's discussion of professorial space. In the latter, Crozier and Reay explain the deliberate distancing of lecturers and students to bring status to the knowledge to be gained. They explain this is with the intent of 'making the unattainable more desirable' (2011:151). Crozier and Reay use this aspect of Southern University as one example of the contrast between the strong framing of learning between an elite residential university with a Post-1992 university where the framing is much weaker.

The UHI students discussed the relationship with their lecturers in warm terms. They used first names and welcomed the personal nature of the interaction. This was not an institution deliberately creating the 'professorial space' described by Crozier and Reay (2011:151).

To summarise, most of the students were adapting to the University environment, albeit some faster than others. The students' ability to adapt reflected their level of confidence in formal learning environments and was a product of their learning history. Some students made conscious effort to overcome their established dispositions and in tackling their fear of participation head on, made good progress. Although the University provided a welcoming environment that was inclusive and friendly, it allowed students to adopt a passive approach to their learning. Because of this, developing an active learning style and the pace of progress became the responsibility of the student, rather than a shared responsibility between student and institution.

5.2.2 Were the students operating across two worlds but belonging to neither?

The degree of disjuncture working-class students experience as they move into the middle-class world of the university is well-reported in the literature (Baxter and Britton 2001, Aries and Seider 2005, Crozier et al 2008b, Reay et al. 2009b). Moreover, the literature reports the consequent difficulties students experience as their habitus evolves in line with the academic environment, leaving them with a 'fragmented self' and 'uneasy in their old and new identities (Aries and Seider 2005:89).

The experience of the students at the University of the Highlands and Islands mirrored some of the findings in the literature but not all. Although the students experienced a culture shock on arrival, this was in relation to their difficulties in understanding the 'regulatory rules' (Bernstein 1996) of the university rather than feeling socially set apart. Furthermore, studying from home provided a degree of continuity in relationships with family and friends that mitigated the potential negative impact of their evolving habitus on established relationships.

On arrival at the University, the students did not report being newly conscious of their embedded dispositions in the way the literature reports (Reay et al. 2009b, He Li 2015). Although they experienced a sense of disjuncture in the alien environment of higher education, this did not relate to the same sense of being classed as 'other' reported in previous studies. The students for instance make no mention of feeling in any way set apart from the other students, even when this was questioned directly.

Kirstie alone displays some awareness of her difference when she tries to modify her language during the interview and fails in her attempt to abandon her use of dialect and modify her accent. It is also Kirstie however, who describes how her lecturer's multi-coloured hair and dress sense perfectly matches her own and that she realises that she had no need to tone down her hair colour and dress more conservatively in order to fit in.

None of the students mentions any difference between themselves and the other students in terms of appearance, cultural references or wealth. Their experience differed from that of the students reported by Lehmann (2009), Reay et al. (2009b) He Li (2015) in that there was no evidence of the students feeling set apart from the rest of the student cohort.

Neither did their experience reflect that described by Morrison's students who were 'too comfortable' studying higher education in their further education environment, or those studying at the Post-1992 University of Eastern College reported by Crozier et al. (2008b). There was no sense of the students enjoying the comfort and ease of being 'spoon-fed' for instance. On the contrary, discomfort with the initial academic challenge as they made the leap to undergraduate study was a common thread running through the interviews.

Moreover, the students did not take a casual approach to their studies. Many of the students, for instance, Kirstie, Susan, Gary, Pamela and Amanda, described feelings of anxiety and concerns about not belonging in the academic world. Like the working-class students described by Reay, they were 'outsiders on the inside' seeking the advantages of higher education but not having 'ownership' of it. Although these students did not regard themselves as 'other' in relation to the other students, they were concerned about not being good enough for the university environment. This impacted their practice as they worked to minimise the risk of exposure.

While the students struggled with their feelings of not belonging, they adopted strategies to protect themselves from exposure as fraud and imposter. For some this meant maintaining a silence in class. Kirstie's reports of being silent in class for a whole year, reflect the findings of He Li (2015) and Lehmann (2009). In the withdrawal from interaction, for instance, as described by Gary and Kirstie, they mirror the findings of Keane (2011), and their lack of interaction exacerbates their difficulties and minimises any opportunity to acquire either the social or cultural capital they lack.

Not all of the students though, choose to be silent and participate from the periphery. Just as Watson describes (2013), the students reacted in differing ways to the University with some fitting in (for instance Ken and Katie), others adapting to the new environment (Rhona and Pamela), some resisting (Amanda) and in Watson's study one was eventually excluded. Susan, struggling the most to adapt to the University and cope with under-graduate study challenges the received wisdom as it relates to academic writing protocol, demonstrating the resistance described by Watson. Amanda, challenges further questioning the validity of her low grades and attributes this to lack of professional skill on the part of the University lecturers. Amanda, at the end of the first year self-excludes and transfers to another course.

Ken, Pamela and Gary report emerging tensions in their relationships with their close families that mirror the findings of Aries and Seider (2005) and Lee and Kramer (2013). Unlike those reported in the literature, particularly in relation to the experiences of working-class students in elite universities, these were however relatively minor. Just as is reported in these earlier studies, Pamela and Gary adopt strategies of compartmentalisation, attempting to keep separate the conflicting aspects of their lives and having initially tried to share their experience, find silence at home a better option.

Ken struggles most with feelings of guilt. On the one hand, he strongly identifies as a 'typical highland working-class male' spending the evening in the pub with his mates discussing the football and the movies. On the other hand, he is evangelical about the new world that has opened up for him at university, changing his perspective on life and giving him a new world-view. More at home in the University than in the pub where he has to restrict his conversation to suit the established norm, Ken develops a growing sense of superiority that causes

him discomfort. Ken needs to reconcile his evolving habitus and newly developing dispositions with his working-class need for authenticity. With echoes of Stahl's (2015) egalitarian habitus, Ken attributes his academic success to his working-class work ethic. Ken presents himself as ordinary and 'sensible' and he attributes any difference between him and his mates to the effort he is putting in.

Katie and Mary reported being unaware of any additional tension at home and were not making any conscious effort to compartmentalise their experience. These were the most middle-class students in the group. They were also two of the most mature students and both had practiced reflexivity prior to enrolling.

The students demonstrated aspects of the cleft habitus recounted in the literature and were aware of operating across two worlds but fully belonging to neither. Despite this, there was no evidence of the students developing a sense of 'otherness', in relation to the student cohort. This was perhaps unsurprising given that this was both their local University and a further education college familiar to their families. The degree of discomfort experienced varied with levels of academic preparedness and levels of confidence. The students reported an increasing distance from family and friends at home, as they developed new academic dispositions. However, the students played down this emerging distance and growing sense of superiority.

5.3 Belonging and Becoming

In this section, I explore the extent to which the students developed a sense of belonging in the dual-sector university and the extent to which this differed from earlier studies. I ask whether this novel University environment was sufficiently strikingly different to support the evolution of the students' habitus. The 9-5 nature of the students' engagement with the University limited their opportunity to interact and bond with other students. However, unlike earlier studies, the students reported several means by which the University was supporting the development of bridging social capital and thereby their on-going development.

5.3.1 Did the students belong in the University setting?

As was found by Watson (2013), even where the students' habitus on arrival at the University was out of kilter with that of the institution, most were able to adapt and were achieving academically. The speed at which they settled in to the University world reflected their differing levels of confidence and the strength of their learner identity. The more confident students responded positively to opportunities to acquire educational or cultural capital. The acquisition of one form of capital enhanced the students' opportunities to accrue other forms. In this the findings resonated with those of Watson (2013).

Watson concluded that those whose habitus was 'closest aligned to the pervading culture of the field, held the strongest portfolios of capital and therefore the strongest position in the field' (2013:428). Immediately pre-entry, Ken was living with his girlfriend who was on the point of achieving a First from another university. Through his interaction with his girlfriend, Ken accrued cultural capital that informed his preparation for and early experiences of university, giving him a very strong position in the field of higher education, relative to the others. Ken quickly developed a sense of belonging.

The students' practice variously illustrated the advantages that could spring from bonding social capital which was sometimes used to compensate for dispositions that constrained. Kirsty for instance, makes an initial choice of course and university on the basis of her being able to follow a friend and avoid being alone when she gets there. In doing so, Kirstie's practice exemplifies Holland's finding of the use of friendships as a valuable 'coping resource' supporting young people through difficult transitions (2008:12).

Some of the students developed bonding social capital that helped them develop a stronger learner identity and adapt quickly to the university environment. Katie took a very instrumental approach to this, proactively seeking out a like-minded other to become a study-buddy. In adopting this strategy, Katie illustrates the instrumental approach to development of social capital of the middle-classes. Amanda mirrored this practice, taking a deliberate approach to development of social capital. She identifies another retired professional to

spend time with, finding comfort in no longer being the outsider who could be mistaken as a 'cleaner or a lecturer'.

Rhona also develops bonding social capital having been encouraged into a friendship group of three women, all of whom share an interest in birds. As part of this group, Rhona is able to share her experiences as learner and gains in confidence.

The bonding social capital these students were able to develop helped them 'get by' (Holland 2008) in the University. Not all of the students however interacted sufficiently with others in the University setting to develop bonding social capital that bolstered their learner identity. Kirstie, Gary and Susan remained isolated in their studies, either through their mode of study or through their lack of sociability. These students remained heavily dependent on their families and home community for support and means of 'getting by'. Their reliance on home and ability to survive the transition to higher education, illustrated the strength Holland identifies in the bonding social capital to be derived from the close-knit families and working-class communities.

In differing ways therefore, the findings supported those of Holland (2008), Watson (2013) and Jensen and Jetten (2015), in illustrating the supportive resource that could be deployed by students through development of bonding social capital. The students benefited from living at home while studying in that it provided them with a strong basis from which they were able to meet the challenge of the alien environment of the University. Some were able to take advantage of opportunities to develop bonding social capital in the University setting itself and there was evidence of this bolstering their learner identity. Some adopted an instrumental approach to the acquisition of social bonding capital.

5.3.2 Was the students' identity changing?

While I understood that development of bonding social capital could be advantageous in strengthening the students' identity as learners and help them to 'stay in' the University now they had 'got in', previous research identified this form of social capital as inward-looking (Putnam 2000, Holland 2008, Jensen

and Jetten 2015). Consequently, I was equally interested in exploring in the data, any evidence of the students developing bridging social capital that could help them grow (Holland 2008).

Jensen and Jetten in their 2015 study, identify opportunities to develop bridging social capital in the students' interactions with their lecturers. Ken's descriptions of his interactions with his lecturers reflect Jensen and Jetten's findings. Ken is in awe of the ability and passion of his lecturers for their subject. He also feels personally validated by the feedback his lecturer gives him that his first essay was of 'third year standard'. This endorsement contributes to Ken's growing confidence as a university student and helps him form an identity as an academic.

Katie discusses the one-to-one interactions she has with her lecturers who take an interest in her future career options and build on what they recognise as her established professional knowledge as a nurse. In doing so, they validate her position in the University and give Katie sufficient confidence as a university student to see beyond under-graduate study to a post-graduate specialism. Both Ken's and Katie's experience mirror the findings of Jensen and Jetten (2015), illustrating the impact of evidence of lecturers valuing students' academic input on the development of students' academic identity.

The University habitus was aligned with the instrumental approach to higher education of the students. This was evidenced through the applied nature of many of the courses on offer. Although some traditional humanities courses were offered, for instance, History and Literature, many others were vocational in nature such as, Architectural Technology, Child and Youth studies, Psychology, Environmental Science, Accountancy, Forestry and Coaching and Developing Sport.

The University also took a proactive approach to support the students' transition to positive destinations post-graduation by engaging in early discussions regarding employment opportunities. Several of the students referenced these discussions. Katie, as discussed above, is encouraged to consider a range of careers that build on her health-related experience. Pamela is introduced to alternatives that take her beyond the assumption of primary school teaching,

with which she arrived. Both Ken and Rhona reference industry-specific fairs that are organised by the University that the students are encouraged to attend. Ken grasped the importance of these activities, understanding the value of bridging social capital.

Some of the students also refer to the encouragement they are given to undertake industry-specific voluntary work. Pamela explains that she has not yet acted on this but is about to, having taken time to firstly ensure that she can cope with the additional work load this would entail while maintaining her study schedule.

Rhona was encouraged to participate in voluntary activity in the field of conservation through her course friendship network. She explains that she would never have done so otherwise.

In their study, Jensen and Jetten (2015) conclude that bonding social capital can impede the development of bridging social capital. If, they argue, students have well-developed bonding social capital and consequently have well-developed social networks and identify strongly as a university student, this can reduce the likelihood of interaction with lecturers and others from whom they can develop bridging social capital. They propose that in developing a strong identity as students through development of bridging social capital, the perceived distance between student and lecturer is more pronounced, inhibiting interaction. Furthermore, the students are less likely to engage in alternative activities that are more outward-looking and stretch beyond the homogenous student group.

In contrast to Jensen and Jetten's findings, Rhona's practice demonstrated how bonding social capital created the means by which she was exposed to bridging social capital. Only through her link to Mary and her friendship group is she able to overcome her lack of confidence and participate in volunteering. Once established in the role, she is exposed to others working in the field. Just as Watson (2013) finds, the bridging social capital to which Rhona is exposed (in Watson's terms professional social capital) and her academic capital are mutually reinforcing. As she is exposed to professional practice, she is able to apply her knowledge which reinforces her understanding whilst also enabling her to anticipate a future professional role.

Bourdieu maintained that the individual 'is always, whether he likes it or not, trapped - save to the extent that he becomes aware of it' (2000:126). So how aware were the students of the constraints of their habitus? Some were more reflexive and aware than others and this correlated with age, with the more mature students more inclined to engage in reflexive practice, though not exclusively so.

Some of the students suggested a degree of awareness of the constraints of their primary habitus. Ken, for example, has a grasp of the structural inequalities that have impacted his own life as well as that of his parents. He comments on his lack of confidence and dependency on his family at the time of leaving school, although he does not attribute these character traits to class membership but rather to his particular circumstances. He discusses the additional barrier created by a lack of economic capital and the need for universities like UHI to make higher education accessible in remote areas.

Mary, like Ken is sufficiently reflexive to be aware of the impact of structural disadvantage. She reflects on the constraining influence of the primary habitus (albeit not in these terms) and the need to escape from home to be a success. Reflecting on friends she has stayed in touch with from growing up in a Northern UK town, Mary explains that those who moved away have had good careers but she would expect little of those who stayed in her home town and got married.

Rhona, as discussed above, is increasingly aware of her need to push herself to try new experiences, despite the discomfort she feels in doing so. Each of these students however, revealed only partial understanding of the continuing 'pull' of their working-class habitus.

In this chapter I discussed the experience of the students in the dual-sector university environment. The students bought into the dominant discourse and were actively seeking the graduate premium. They were doing so on their terms however, rejecting the traditional residential university experience in favour of one less disruptive to their lives. Most of the students, having overcome their initial discomfort and anxiety in the academic setting, demonstrated an ability to adapt. Most were making progress in their understanding of the regulatory rules (Bernstein 2000) of the University and this was reflected in their academic achievements.

Although most experienced initial feelings of anxiety, fear and stress, these emotions were dissipating and were being replaced by feelings of pride in their achievements and growing levels of confidence in their ability to succeed. In their interactions with those at home, the students experienced a growing awareness of distance between themselves and family and friends, although the students presented these instances as minor in nature and manageable. The students were to a degree renegotiating these relationships but overall there was a sense of continuity rather than disjuncture.

The University presented some limited opportunities for acquisition of bonding social capital, within the constraints of the students' 9-5 mode of engagement. For some students, this helped create a support network that helped them develop a stronger learner identity. Those struggling most remained dependent on their close family members for support. Studying from home made this continued parental support and their continued participation, possible.

The University was focussed on post-course destination and created mechanisms that provided opportunity for the students to build bridging social capital. This was helping some students to formulate career plans, albeit modest in nature.

5.4 Working with Bourdieu's concepts: the challenges

Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, capital and field provide us with heuristic tools with which to reflect on and analyse both the reproductive tendencies and transformational potential of the education system. Habitus, as the sub-conscious embodiment of a set of dispositions structured by historical experiences and structuring present practice, brings insight to the particular experience of the working-classes in higher education. The dispositions generated by the working-class habitus limit opportunity to acquire capital of value in the field of higher education. The choices of the working-class young person leaving school are constrained by their lack of social and cultural capital and are further impeded by the constraints of a lack of economic capital. These are the 'contingent choosers' identified by Ball (2006:222), applying pragmatism to the decision-making process and making the most of the hand they have been dealt. The tendency to choose local institutions where there are people like themselves, further reinforces embedded dispositions creating reproductive tendencies. Contrastingly, those exposed to opportunities to acquire valued social and cultural capital find themselves more able to move with ease in the

academic world. These are the 'embedded choosers' of the middle classes, whose route to university, and often to a specified career, is a given (Ball 2006: 222). The relationship between habitus and capital for each group is mutually reinforcing.

Although Bourdieu's concepts illuminate the reproductive tendency of the education system and highlight the meritocratic myth embedded in the dominant discourse, presenting education as the route to social mobility with equality of opportunity, they leave gaps still to be filled.

For instance, Bourdieu's thinking tools present a binary picture of middle and working-class groupings, which belies the heterogeneity within these class groupings. He also spends little time exploring cross-cutting factors such as age, gender and race, leading researchers, according to Atkinson, to invent new concepts to 'make sense of it all' (2011:332).

The development of the concept of 'institutional habitus' (McDonough 1997, Reay 1998), is illustrative of the way researchers continue to develop Bourdieu's thinking tools. The development of the concept of habitus to encompass the collective in the 'institutional habitus' introduces a means of analysing the differing impact of differing educational institutions on the student experience. This takes us a step further, addressing McDonough's concern with Bourdieu's 'underspecified vision' of a homogenous education system (1997:107).

As the higher education sector continues to evolve, not least with the development of the dual-sector university, the concept of the collective 'institutional habitus' provides us with the means to reflect on what Watson sees as the role and responsibility of the institution in breaking down barriers faced by non-traditional students (2013). It offers a framework within which we can discuss the durable but evolving habitus of an institution that is more or less inclusive and accepting of diversity, more or less academic, more or less aligned to the habitus of the working-class student.

Institutional habitus is however a contested concept. Atkinson (2011) raises three concerns that he relates to issues of substantialism, anthropomorphism and homogenisation in turn. Each issue has been addressed by Burke et al. in response (2013). Having worked for many years in the sphere of organisational development I would tend to come down on the side of Burke et al. in that I

would defend the collective habitus as a concept. Like Burke et al., I would argue that it is difficult to consider the dual-sector institution in anything other than a relational sense, drawing on its difference to other institutions within the field of higher education. Its habitus, like the embodiment of dispositions in the human form, is revealed, I would argue, in the 'way we do things around here', with common values, attitudes and aspirations structuring practice across the institution. Its corporate history and corporate myths impact, for example, on risk appetite as well as creating a sense of belonging amongst its members. Along with Burke et al., I would argue that the institution, through these aspects, has a corporate habitus created from the collective habitus of its members and evolving (albeit slowly) as its members interact with it. Far from being homogenous, within the institution, there will be those who resist and challenge and, as argued by Burke et al. these few often remove themselves from the institution. A degree of dissent and challenge however, I would interpret as being part of the institutional habitus' evolutionary process.

Researchers have also however, drawn on the work of other theorists, working with less nebulous tools to offer means by which we can gain deeper understanding of the struggle working-class students encounter. Bernstein's rules for instance, provide a means of exploration of the role of the institution in creating a learning environment and the impact on different learner groups. Bernstein's tools help us to see beyond the disjuncture experienced by the working-classes in the middle-class environment of the university and their difficulty in navigating the opaque norms of academia to consideration of how an institution can make these understood and the environment accessible.

Bernstein's (1996) rules of social order give us an opportunity to consider different means of binding students in to the institution, helping students to develop resilience and persistence in the world of higher education. Through application of Bernstein's rules of instructional order, we have the tools to reflect on the differing strengths of framing of learning and consider that in being flexible and accommodating of competing demands for our students' time we are also lowering our expectations of students' commitment and immersion in their studies. Institutions with a weaker frame of learning are expecting so much more in terms of self-discipline and independence in study than those with strong frames of learning. We are then expecting those least well-aligned to the

world of higher education to survive with the weakest learning framework. Consideration of the differing strengths of framing of learning across institutions, highlights the structural inequalities embedded in the higher education field. The stronger framing of learning at the elite, ancient universities is underpinned by the higher level of resource available to them. The students attending, are more able, due to their levels of economic capital, to cope with the requirement not to seek employment during term time and engage more intensively with the university.

The development of the dual-sector university prompts consideration of the purpose of higher education. This was another area in which I would propose it is helpful to draw upon alternative theoretical approaches. In a discussion drawing on Foucault's theories of governmentality, Dwyer (1995) describes how higher education has become a conduit for the Government's agenda, conflating the aims of study to be exclusively economic. Universities, Dwyer claims, self-govern in relation to this agenda and now prepare students for the workplace rather than for life. The university he argues responds to the Government agenda, becoming a compliant group of practitioners producing a compliant group of graduates for the workforce. It could be argued that in incorporating the vocational skills development of further education into the university, this absorption of the Government's agenda is enhanced.

This argument then has particular pertinence in the context of a dual-sector institution which brings together the aims of further and higher education. The dual-sector environment could legitimately be regarded as an exemplification of Foucault's heterotopia, bringing together the incompatible and different higher education and further education spaces of the post-compulsory education world with the 'potential for disrupting and disordering the world in which they sit' (Grant and Barrow 2013:308). The dual-sector institution fulfils Foucault's principles of heterotopian spaces, as described by Grant and Barrow (2013) featuring people at a turning point namely, working class students moving into higher education study and college lecturers and managers being incorporated more and more into university life. It has functions that have changed over time (shifting from vocational skills development to a hybrid form that encompasses more abstract learning and research), and mixes several incompatible spaces (not least the practical trades workshops of the joiners and bricklayers with

science laboratories and lecture theatres). At the same time it could be seen to present an illusion of unity and seamless integration in comparison to the strange divisions of the established post-compulsory education sector elsewhere.

The dual-sector institution could be argued to be producing its own version of 'docile bodies' bringing together lecturers from both further and higher education sectors in a single induction process and by inviting active participation in fashioning a strategic and operational plan to meet the government agenda focussed on post course destination, curriculum alignment with industry need and an ultimate aim of economic transformation. In the dual-sector institution, the further education lecturers could be argued to exemplify Foucault's docile bodies, comprising 'a compliant body of practitioners competing against each other for the training dollar' (Dwyer 1995:472). While the higher education lecturers through institutional practice are encouraged to adopt this discourse, the further education lecturers become imbued with the institutional need to create pathways and progression to maximise the 'processed group of graduates who measure up to behavioural objectives'. The heterotopia of the dual-sector institution brings together the further education acceptance of competition and the higher education spirit of truth seeking through inter-institutional collaborative research and scholarship.

While I found Bourdieu's concepts gave me a way in to the consideration of the experience of the working class students in a dual-sector institution, I found it helpful to reflect on the work of other theorists to gain a more rounded understanding of the different factors at play. I would argue that far from becoming the 'docile bodies' proposed by Foucault, the lecturers in the dual-sector University were providing their own challenge to the Government's agenda. They were not exclusively developing skills for the workplace but were also instilling a passion for their subject for its own sake. The students may have entered the institution with highly instrumental motives to get a better job but even after the first year some were engaging with the University at a higher level.

Chapter 6 Transformational Opportunities or an Anchor to the Past?

My aim in carrying out this study was to investigate the experience of working-class first year under-graduate students in a dual-sector university setting. I was seeking to establish whether the dual-sector institutional habitus of the University eased, or added further challenges to, the difficulties that had been repeatedly reported in the literature.

I found that the students were all invested in the game of education, and that UHI provided them with access to the higher education experience they sought. The students were seeking a higher education experience but on their own terms and in doing so, most were proactively rejecting a traditional residential university experience. Most were consciously balancing the risk of participation against any potential return on their investment.

In providing higher education through a network of further education colleges and specialist research institutes, the University created opportunities for working-class students to access higher education while benefiting from the stabilising security of their home environment and indeed for the mature students with family responsibilities, it was their only means of participation. In this, the findings reflected those of Clayton et al. (2009). The bonding social capital (Holland 2008) provided by the students' families and communities provided the supportive resource to enable the students to survive the transition to the alien university environment.

The students were instrumental in their approach but rather than displaying an empty credentialism, reported by some studies (see Reay et al. 2009a), most, by the end of their first year, were seeking meaning and purpose in their future employment and several indicated a deeper connection with their subject than their instrumentalism would suggest.

Reflecting on their experiences, the students confirmed that they initially experienced some anxiety and stress when adjusting to the challenge of under-graduate study. Most of the students adapted well however, and were able to evidence achievements that indicated academic progression as well as aspects of personal development such as higher levels of self-confidence and independence.

The dual-sector University environment provided a 'safe and supportive' place in which the students were able to overcome the challenges provided by the middle-class university field. The data revealed warm and caring relationships with staff, an understanding of the students' challenges and encouragement to succeed, reflecting the inclusivity and acceptance of diversity described by Thomas (2002) as being required to create opportunities for transition that did not require the students' rejection of their own culture and values.

The relative ease with which most of the students coped with the transition was reassuring in that evidence emerged to confirm the inclusive habitus of the University. It also however, raised some concerns. Specifically, I was concerned that the absence of any suggestion that the students experienced a sense of 'otherness' suggested a lack of diversity in the student cohort. It suggested that both the learning environment and the habitus of the student cohort was not perceived to be out of alignment with the students' working-class habitus. This led me to question whether the University environment was sufficiently distinct to support transformation.

To a degree, the students' reflections were indicative of a sense of continuity rather than dramatic change, except in terms of the new academic challenge they faced. Nevertheless, the students' accounts revealed evidence of habitus evolution through the development of new dispositions. To explain the students' development of new dispositions and any changed perspectives on the world and their position in it, I turned to the learning environment the University provided and the framing of learning within it.

The literature identifies a clear distinction between framing of learning in different institutions (see Bernstein 2000) as discussed in more detail in section 2.3.2 and 2.3.3. Bernstein (2000) in differentiating between strong and weak framing of learning, explains that an institution with a strong framing of learning will make high demands of the student in terms of conscientiousness and industriousness. The institution will have strong controls over the sequencing and pace of learning (the instructional discourse) maintaining a level of intensity. There will be clearly defined expectations of behaviours and a culture that the student absorbs. An institution with a weaker framing of learning on the other hand will make fewer demands of the students and as Crozier and Reay (2011) discuss, what is gained in terms of flexibility and tolerance in the

name of inclusion, can be lost in terms of intensity of learning and immersion in the experience. In this way the potential for transformation can be lost.

The students in this study were engaging with the University on either a 9-5 basis, or were studying on-line and therefore a further step removed from the physical learning environment. Living at home, the students were able to compartmentalise their university experience, one of several strands of their life, alongside employment and family responsibilities and in doing so limiting their ability to immerse themselves in their studies.

Despite the 9-5 or on-line nature of the students' engagement with the University in the dual-sector environment of Inverness College UHI, some of the students gave accounts of experiences that evidenced a level of engagement with their learning that exceeded that detailed in earlier studies in newer and less prestigious universities (See Crozier et al. 2008b) with weaker frames of learning than the elite institutions. Although the students described few opportunities to develop bonding capital that would bolster their identity as university students, several evidenced acquisition of bridging capital through which they were beginning to develop a professional identity or strengthening one that was already emerging pre-enrolment. These students were experiencing a level of immersion in their learning through exposure to vocational settings that enabled them to apply their learning.

The institutional habitus of the University was aligned to that of the students through its instrumental focus. The University's strategic Plan for 2016/19 declared its aim to have a transformational impact on the region by being responsive to the economic development needs of the region (University of the Highlands and Islands 2016). Many of the courses provided by the University were of an applied nature and therefore in keeping with the instrumental aims of most of these students. Furthermore, the University encouraged the students to apply their learning from a very early stage in their course in a vocational context. Those who acted on this encouragement were exposed to professionals already working in the field and began to anticipate future professional roles. They were exposed to the embodiment of the dispositions that sprang from a 'professional habitus' by interacting with those working in the field.

These students were the most comfortable in their identities as university students and were engaging in role anticipation, visualising their future

professional selves. They were showing emerging signs of habitus evolution and were developing new dispositions such as growing independence, confidence in their academic ability and 'place' in the University. Some were becoming reflexive and aware of the constraints of their habitus and were consciously challenging themselves to engage in different practice.

As Watson (2013) described in the literature, the students' learning in the vocational setting and in the formal learning environment of the University was mutually reinforcing. The University sought to reach beyond the boundaries of the institution engaging the students beyond the 9-5, while working with, rather than against, the students' instrumental disposition. Unfortunately, the University's weak framing of learning meant that students could choose to take a more passive approach. Those who did so were demonstrating fewer signs of development or transformation.

Although the higher education experience provided by the dual-sector University provided these opportunities for a deeper level of engagement with their learning than studies reported in Post 1992 institutions (see Crozier et al. 2008b), the data evidenced only modest ambition on the part of the students. Almost all of the students intended to stay local after they graduated and were aiming for relatively modest jobs. Some used their intention to give something back to their community to justify their participation and development of new dispositions that distinguished them from their family and friends at home. As Granfield (1991) concludes, in doing so, they rationalised their success and the guilt they associated with their achievements, in terms of it being the best way of making a difference to the lives of those left behind. However, in doing so, they inadvertently constrained their opportunity to be exposed to different ways of being and ultimately to transformative opportunities.

Outward migration of young people in the Highlands and Islands and the increasing demographic imbalance caused by this depletion of population in the younger age groups is a recognised issue. Young people who leave to go to university elsewhere tend not to return. A key aim underpinning the development of the University of the Highlands and Islands was to prevent the outward migration of young people to universities in the central belt of Scotland by providing local access to higher education. Although this study evidenced success on the part of the University of the Highlands and Islands in providing an

environment that supported young working-class people through the difficult transition to higher education, in encouraging young people to stay local, opportunities for them to increase their exposure to diverse social groups and different practice were reduced. For some students, the University of the Highlands and Islands provides an environment that supports, as Lawler (2000) describes, educational attainment that stops short of transformation, that finds itself somewhere between escape and holding on.

Evidence emerged in the study of the potential impact of extending the students' learning into the vocational arena. However, this practice was voluntary and although promoted by the University, it was not a mandatory course component. Furthermore, the University in its provision of careers guidance, seemed to be no more ambitious for its students than they were for themselves.

This dual-sector University was drawing upon its strength of strong industry relationships and a curriculum aligned with regional economic need. Its strategy was aligned with the instrumental approach of its students and those who responded to the prompt to engage with industry from an early stage were developing new dispositions, gaining confidence in their developing identities, developing self-esteem and visualising a successful future. At this point in their university careers however, there was evidence of the continued 'pull' of the students' primary habitus, anchoring them to the past and their ambitions remained modest. I was left wondering about the potential for transformation should the University adopt a stronger framing of learning that incorporated this vocational element and challenged the students to aim higher.

This was a study that captured the students' reflections towards the end of their first year of study. Recommendations for further research would include further exploration of the dual-sector context in supporting transformation working with final year students considering whether the balance between the pull of the primary habitus and that of the University changes over the students' university career. It would also be interesting to explore in more detail, the relationship between academic learning, vocational application of knowledge and the development of learner and professional identity.

At the beginning of this journey I was interested in investigating the potential contribution a dual-sector university could make to the development of a more just higher education system. The dual sector environment with its different cultural references and history, I believed offered something new. As would be expected, in working with people and uncovering their perception of the world and interpreting their experiences, I was at times surprised by the data I gathered and had cause to question assumptions I had previously made regarding the nature of the relationship between university and student. Undertaking this study provided me with findings I was keen to explore in a professional dialogue with colleagues with the aim of maximising the advantages, a dual-sector institution might have in facilitating access for working-class students (for example its applied programmes) while being aware of any potential disadvantages (for instance its weak framing of learning).

Through the students' descriptions of their practice in the university environment, they revealed a choice afforded them in regard to their approach to learning. Although students were encouraged to extend their learning beyond the classroom and apply concepts learned in vocational contexts, this was not mandatory. Furthermore, the students' ability to adopt a passive approach to learning whereby they could choose not to actively engage in classroom question and answer sessions or academic debate. In allowing this degree of passivity, the University seemed to be operating under the assumption that some of these students were too vulnerable to be challenged in a formal academic setting and in doing so disadvantaging those lacking in confidence. Similarly, the University was flexible in terms of attendance. This was an institution where part-time work and also family responsibilities such as child-care concerns were the norm. There was evidence in the data however that some of the younger students took advantage of that flexibility and could choose to take a less conscientious approach absenting themselves for social reasons. Again, such an approach disadvantaged the students concerned.

Just as I was led to consider that reduced opportunity to bond with fellow students (given their 9-5 attendance pattern or on-line mode of study) was not necessarily the disadvantage I initially believed it to be, the potential disadvantage created by the weaker framing of learning described above, led me to question assumptions made about the supposed 'required flexibility' of the

institution. Moreover, I was prompted to reflect on how these assumptions that appeared to be underpinning institutional practice extended to expectations regarding the students' future careers.

The University was engaged in the development of work-based learning pathways that spanned further and higher education. The introduction of Graduate Level Apprenticeships (GLAs) were a very new development bridging the vocational/academic pedagogical gap. Inverness College had introduced the first GLA in Civil Engineering in 2016. Given this context, the experience of the students in this study was particularly pertinent in terms of the positive impact recounted of application of academic context in the voluntary vocational setting. The relationship between academic learning and its practical application was one I was keen to explore further with those delivering and developing work-based learning pathways and the dual-sector University provided the ideal setting to do so.

What emerged clearly in the findings of the study was the resilience displayed by many of the students as they recounted repeated challenges overcome prior to enrolling, and indeed, their persistence and courage when initially interacting with the university environment. The Dual-sector university environment provided opportunities to counter the embedded discriminatory practices of higher education but I concluded that these opportunities could be further enhanced if the university engaged staff in a professional dialogue regarding assumptions underpinning their professional practice and made more demands of those enrolled.

Appendices

Appendix A - Ethics approval



University
of Glasgow

College of Social
Sciences

Application Approved

Ethics Committee for Non-Clinical Research Involving Human Subjects

Staff Research Ethics Application

Application

Postgraduate Student Research Ethics

Application Details

Application Number:	400150114
Applicant's Name:	Diane Rawlinson
Project Title:	Dual-sector institutions and the first-in-family participant

Application Status:	Approved
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Start Date of Approval:	29/03/16
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End Date of Approval of Research Project:	03/09/17
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Please retain this notification for future reference. If you have any enquiries please email socsci-ethics@glasgow.ac.uk.

University of Glasgow
College of Social Sciences
Florentine House, 53 Hillhead Street. Glasgow G12 8QF
The University of Glasgow, charity number SC004401

Appendix B - Participant information sheet



University
of Glasgow

College of Social
Sciences

Study: Dual-sector institutions and the first-in-family participant

Researcher: Diane Rawlinson

Participant Information Sheet

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. If after reading this there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information please feel free to contact me by e-mail at diane.rawlinson.ic@uhi.ac.uk. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

Thank you for reading.

This study forms part of a Doctorate in Education course I am undertaking. The research is investigating the experience of students at Inverness College UHI who are first in their family to go to university. It focuses on how students reached their decision to go to this university as well as student reflections on their experiences in the first few weeks and months. Although the experience of first in family students at university has been well-researched, there is little knowledge of students' experience in a dual-sector institution (a university that is also a college and a provider of further education). This study will potentially help us to better understand the experience of first in family university students in an institution such as Inverness College UHI and help us create a supportive environment for future students.

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary and although I would very much like to hear about your experiences, you are under no obligation to take part. Deciding not to take part will not reflect negatively on you or in any way have a detrimental impact on your studies.

If you decide to take part, you will be invited to an hour-long interview in a meeting room in the main College buildings at Inverness Campus, during which you will be asked to reflect on how you made your decision to enrol on your course at Inverness College UHI and what the first few weeks and months were like. A series of questions will be used to help you reflect on this.

To get you thinking beforehand, you will be asked to make some notes on a timeline that will be provided, to indicate key events or interactions with people that influenced your decisions.

To help the transcription process and analysis of responses, the interview will be audio-recorded.

At any point in the interview you can change your mind and decide not to take part without giving any reason, at which time the recording will be deleted. After the interview the transcript of the interview will be returned to you by e-mail for you to verify for accuracy.

To protect your identity, your responses will be referred to using a pseudonym, a fake name agreed with you. The key to the fake names will be known only by the researcher and once the study is submitted this key will be destroyed. Although every effort will be made to preserve the

anonymity of students who participate in the study, due to the small numbers involved (10 participants), there is always a risk of students being identified.

The interview transcripts will be stored electronically and password protected, accessible only to me and the transcriber. This information given will be used to inform my dissertation to be submitted for my Doctorate in Education course. The anonymous transcripts of the interviews may be used further in articles written for academic journals and may be shared with other genuine researchers and in line with University of Glasgow regulations, will be retained in a secure location for 10 years after which they will be destroyed.

This research will inform my dissertation for a Doctorate in Education. The dissertation once complete will be made available to participants through the Inverness College UHI library.

Please note that assurances on confidentiality will be strictly adhered to unless evidence of wrongdoing or potential harm is uncovered. In such cases the University may be obliged to contact relevant statutory bodies/agencies.

This study has been considered and approved by the Glasgow University Ethics Committee and the UHI Ethics Committee.

Should you have any concerns regarding the ethics of this study or should you wish to pursue a complaint, you should contact:

Dr Muir Houston, College of Social Science Ethics Officer, email: Muir.Houston@glasgow.ac.uk

Appendix C - Consent form



University of Glasgow

College of Social Sciences

Title of Project: **Dual-sector institutions and the first-in-family participant:**

Name of Researcher: Diane Rawlinson

Supervisor: Dr. Mark Murphy, Reader, School of Education, Glasgow University

- I confirm that I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.
- I consent / do not consent (delete as applicable) to interviews being audio-recorded.
- (I acknowledge that copies of transcripts will be returned to participants for verification.)
- I acknowledge that participants will be referred to by pseudonym.
- I acknowledge that there will be no effect on my grades arising from my participation or non-participation in this research.
- I understand that the data collected from this research will be stored securely with my personal details removed and agree for it to be held as set out in the Participant Information Sheet
- I agree that the data collected in the course of this research may be shared with other genuine researchers as set out in the Participant Information Sheet.
- I agree to waive my copyright to any data collected as part of this project

I agree to take part in this research study

I do not agree to take part in this research study

Name of Participant Signature

Name of Researcher Signature

Date

Appendix D - Interview Schematic

The Introduction and Scene setting

Interviewer check on consent

Opening statement regarding interviewer higher education participation

Interviewer summary of research aims

Background questions:

1. Where are you from? (explore whether local, where they live, who they live with, how long they have lived there)
2. What do your parents do for work? What do your siblings do?
3. Who in your family has been to university? (If any, where did they go and what did they study?)

As described above, the interviews were structured in three parts:

Part One: Choice-making

This part of the interview investigated how the student came to be enrolled at Inverness College UHI on an undergraduate programme, taking the student back to pre-enrolment choices and decision-making, exploring the variety of factors that influenced their decision to embark on this journey.

4. At what stage can they remember first thinking about university as an option for them?
5. Can you talk me through the timeline you have brought with you pointing out who or what influenced your decision? (Explore the key influences(ers), were there any key role models who were the encouragers for instance at school/family/friends/acquaintances). Were there any detractors, at school/family/friends/acquaintances)
6. Did you give any thought to why you wanted to come to university? (Alternatively, was it just a foregone conclusion?)
7. Did you have any concerns or worries about going to university? Did your family or friends?
8. Did you consider other options, such as vocational education, work?
9. What made you decide on Inverness College UHI?

10. What did you know about Inverness College UHI before you got here? (Did you know students here? Did you expect to fit in? Did you know it was a college and a university? Has this made a difference?)

Part Two: Cleft-ness

In this part of the interview, the student was asked to reflect on the early days, weeks and months at University. It explored the extent to which the student experienced a sense of disjuncture with earlier experiences/culture and values/identity. This part of the interview focused on the extent to which the student was conscious of a developing self-concept, the challenges this posed and any coping strategies they employed.

11. Tell me about your first few days and weeks here? What was it like? (explore their level of comfort/discomfort, aspects that confused or caused anxiety, enjoyable parts, was it as they expected? How well prepared academically were they? What did they do to cope with this?)
12. Have the rest of your class struggled with the same aspects of the university experience or have some found it more difficult than others? (If so, why do you think that is?)
13. Did you fit in with your class group? (explore aspects of difference and similarity, degree they feel embedded in the group or isolated)
14. Can you tell me about the type of activities you have been asked to take part in in your classes? Which activities did you enjoy the most? Which did you least enjoy? At which points did you feel out of your comfort zone? (explore the extent to which the student is comfortable in HE academic practice, encouragement/discouragement to be actively contributing, extent to which they believe their contribution is valued).
15. Before you enrolled, what did you think your relationship with your lecturers would be like? Is that how it is?
16. What do you think you have learned about yourself while you have been here?
17. Do you think you have changed at all in the last year? (If so in what way? Did they identify these changes or were they pointed out by others? How do they feel about these changes?)
18. How do your family and friends from pre-university days react to you being a university? (Are they supportive? Has their relationship changed?)

Are there tensions that weren't there before? How much of the student's university experience do they share with their family and pre-university friends?)

Part Three: aspiration, ambition and career mapping

In this part of the interview, the student was asked to reflect on their career aspirations. The questions were designed to explore the approach the student has taken to university, the degree to which they are compartmentalising the experience or becoming immersed in university life and the opportunities they are aware of for preparing themselves for a future career. This part of the interview links back to the first section of the interview in terms of the students' original reasons for enrolling in higher education and in terms of the risk/benefit analysis they are undertaking in doing so.

19. Is university a 9-5 affair for you or has it impacted on every aspect of your life?
20. Do you spend time with fellow university students out of class? (Explore the degree to which they are tied in to university life and the degree to which they are forming new friendships, trying out new activities, broadening horizons).
21. Do you think there is a difference between a university student and a college of further education student? Can you explain that?
22. Do you know university students studying at other institutions? Has their experience been the same?
23. How do their friends studying elsewhere regard your choice of university and your experience?
24. Have your life and career aspirations changed at all during the last year? In what way? If so, what has caused you to rethink these aspirations?
25. What opportunities do you have here to prepare yourself for your future career? (are they thinking about this now, taking part in preparatory activities, networking, work experience?)
26. If you were able to go back in time and meet your younger self, what advice would you give yourself?

Appendix E - Example transcript

D: How about you, tell me where you are from?

K: Well I am (names a place) born and bred. Lived here pretty much my whole life apart from 10 weeks away at a job that didn't really work out. I just, I can't really imagine living anywhere else. I think the good thing about the Highlands is you are two hours from London, three hours from the central belt but you are an hour and a half from just the best scenery in the world. So, I just feel completely at home here.

D: And several generations up here?

K: Yeah, well my mother's side of the family are from the Western Isles and my father's side are all from (names a place). They have always been in and around (names nearby towns) There are some farmers in (names nearby town) but, yeah, so all Highlands.

D: Was farming your parents background?

K: No, no my father was a mechanic. He was a motor mechanic and my mother was a nurse. It was the generation before that were farmers and my dad kind of avoided it. He got into cars and that was him happy so. So yeah we have, there is nothing been really land based and I am doing a geography degree here. Yeah, everyone has always been in the Highlands.

D: And brothers, sisters?

K: Two younger brothers yeah. One is like me, the youngest one. He's, he did have a year in Spain with a girlfriend but he came back as soon as that finished and he has been in the Highlands all his life apart from that but the middle one, he is in Jersey. He has lived there for about 14 years now.

D: He is where sorry?

K: In Jersey. He decided to leave (names town) after a relationship breakdown and he worked with Norwich Union at the time and he was offered posts in Perth or Jersey and he thought if he moved to Perth he would be back and forth. Its 2 hours on the road so, he decided to make a big leap and went to Jersey.

D: And did they both leave school and go straight into employment?

K: Yes, my brother who is in Jersey he was first. His first interview was with an insurance company in (names town) and he got it straight away and then he had one other interview with Norwich Union and he has been in insurance his whole life and he has not even done his insurance exams. I don't know. He just keeps managing to get jobs where they are not too bothered about that. So yeah he went straight into that. Youngest brother, he did some college. He did sports at college but it was basically because he was a sporty type but he didn't really have any kind of direction or that it was just the only thing he knew he was good at and he never, he did pass his course but he didn't progress with it. He had a few jobs in and around (names town).

D: Was it this college he went to?

K: Yeah this College yeah yeah, down at the Longman and so then yeah he actually went back to do an adult apprenticeship in plumbing and engineering so he is qualified at

that now.

D: So you've chosen a completely different path to the rest of your family. Can you talk me through your time line and tell me when you first thought about maybe going to University?

K: Right so this is quite a big one, 18 to present so.

D: Right there, so it never occurred to you before then.

K: Well.

D: Or you were just saying how old you were?

K: Yes.

D: Yes right sorry.

K: It's a big chunk that one yeah. Eh, certainly in primary school it was never really a consideration. My auntie did set up a savings account for me after a primary three report because that teacher told my mum and dad that I was kind of University standard.

D: Wow in primary three!

K: Yeah and we kind of knew that we wouldn't be able to afford it as a family but if it did come to be but this is all above my head I didn't realise that this was the purpose of the savings account being set up or that, it was never really discussed or that. So I guess, in secondary school, there is a focus there isn't there. You do your first couple of years in secondary school and then you chose your subjects and then I think even back then we had guidance teachers and they were, we were kind of encouraged to decide what we were looking to do after school when we were making our subject choices for third year. So probably that's the first time I started to think about what I was going to do after school. I had enjoyed technical drawing so I actually thought about becoming an architect and my mum and dad they went up to the parents' night in second year.

D: Which school were you in?

K: (names local school) and I was getting good marks in technical drawing and it was something I really enjoyed. I kind of had that. I wasn't arty but it's kind of more analytical and it's all protractors and set squares and all that and you don't have to be arty for it so. I was quite good at it and my mum and dad went up to the parents' night and the technical drawing teacher said that if I wanted to become an architect I would need a language to get into University. So he (explained), the choices at the time. There was technical drawing in with French and German, and he says that if I wanted to be an architect I shouldn't do technical drawing. I should make sure I get my language and so I gave up on technical drawing then and did French and I never got, I never kind of considered it again and I didn't get my language either. I got a standard grade but not an 'O' grade but so that was the kind of first, around the time making your choices for your subjects that kind of when I started thinking about University. I think by the time, going into the 16 to 17 age group which was, I mean I stayed on and did fifth and sixth year in school but I didn't, I wouldn't say that I applied myself properly. My parents were probably quite exasperated by it because they knew I was capable of

getting the grades that would be, like would get me a kind of place in University and certainly in fifth year, in fourth year and fifth year I didn't really apply myself and...

D: What subjects were you doing?

K: Well, I, for fourth year I got standard grades in Maths, English, Chemistry and another one, I failed Physics, I failed Geography. I am doing the Geography degree now.

D: Ironic.

K: Yeah, it was the teachers you know. The teachers don't get your attention and then...

D: Just your Higher, what subjects did you do at Highers?

D: Just your higher, what subjects did you do at highers?

K: So for Highers, the fifth year I only did, well I did English and Maths Highers. I got the English Higher. For the prelim in maths I got 7% and 9% and was encouraged just to do some SCOTVEC qualifications for the remainder of the year rather than sit the test. And then in sixth year I got Higher Economics, Higher Maths and Higher Physics. I sailed through the higher maths with a different teacher again, it was, it just showed. The teacher in fifth year he just stood at the projector and he talked right through the lesson. There were no questions and that so if you didn't get, if you didn't grasp the basics you were left to sink and the sixth year teacher was really hands on, he would come down and sit down with you and go through stuff with you and it shows you the difference in the different teachers. So I got four Highers but I don't think they would have really been the grades to get me into University. But at the time, looking back I would say I wasn't prepared to leave here and look after myself.

D: What held you back from that?

K: Probably just being over-mothered. Like I didn't feel I was, like I could cope with cooking, washing, like washing clothes and all that and there was a business administration course in the College and I had the grades for that and I thought I am, well after fifth year I only had the one higher anyway, I didn't think I would get another three in sixth year so. I kind of, I decided I was going to try and stay and, then possibly in a couple of years if you get an HND then you have got the opportunity to onto University so I thought just give it that couple of years, mature a bit. I just, you know, loads of kids do it but I just didn't feel I was ready to go and live in the big city.

D: You went to the College?

K: Went to the College yeah. Well it was an annex for most of it, the annex building, we only went down to the main building for the spreadsheets class. Yeah I did two years, did my business administration and it was actually the first time, the class I was in with. Some of them actually went on to do the degree. It was the first degree that was offered by the College. But again, I, I passed it but at the, you need to get a certain amount of merits I think it was rather than just passing to get onto the degree course. Again I just didn't apply myself, I didn't, I mean I remember doing reports the night before, up till three or four in the morning, starting it the night before and just coasting I guess. Coasting is a good word actually. I had a full time job and a social life and...

D: While you were studying?

K: Yeah, so yeah college was kind of my third priority. But it's a shame, you don't realise what you have got when you are that age I don't think. And I kind of see that now. Having gone back and see people at that age the way they are. You don't, and we are even luckier now we are getting our fees paid and that, you know? There are a lot of us just take it, take it for granted. So yeah, that was me.

D: So did you leave with an HNC or an HND?

K: An HND. I got, yeah, we did that over the 2 years and then, the full time job I was in was actually in the local cinema at the time and over that summer, I think I did the, I think I did get some merits. I think it was 10 merits you were needing to get on to the degree course and I did get some but not 10. And I was going to go back after the summer to speak to them about it but during the summer I was offered a position as assistant manager at the Cinema because it was business administration that I had done so, I took the job and it was £6,500 a year. Something like that but that was money at the time you know. That was kind of what swayed it you know so that was me out of the education game for a while.

D: And did you stay in there for a while?

K: Yeah I did. You can see the new cinema from here (but) it was the old cinema (I worked at), I don't know if you are from here but.

D: I am not, I have only been here three years. That was before my time.

K: Yeah it was on xxxxx lane, there. Its flats now, you know up to (names a shop).

D: I know where you mean.

K: Yeah well that was the old cinema there but unfortunately it didn't succeed when that place (the new cinema) opened up so, after that I got a job in an office with a big phone company as an operator and from there I got my job in the public sector and spent 13 years there.

D: What a varied life you have had.

K: Yeah, but it, I mean that's what I say to people and its one of the reasons why I have come back to studying is, there was the cinema which was a lot of, well it was back shifts, a lot of weekend work. The phone company service was a 24/7 service so it was all shifts and then the public sector job was 12 hour shifts, day shifts or night shifts, weekend work so I have never had a Monday to Friday 9 to 5 job.

D: Was that your motivation for coming back?

K: We part of it, I mean...

D: Because it's quite hard to leave once you are on that job path isn't it? Because it is quite hard to give the wage up.

K: Yeah I mean that's the biggest sacrifice. I mean, I don't, with the shift allowance I was probably only around £26,000 or £27,000 a year and for the HND Business and Administration it, I am not saying it's not a good qualification, but there is a lot of people have it, so realistically you are not going to get a job on similar wages with the qualifications I had. So I did start thinking then well how am I going to get a job with some more wages and from that I started thinking what kind of job would you want. I have always said I would like to try a Monday to Friday, 9 to 5 job, I also just, the last probably 4 or 5 years I have just kind of, it's when I have really started exploring the Highlands properly. I mean have driven through and all that but I have taken to hillwalking. And just, well, not just hill climbing but just walking in general and I just kind of, I feel I belong to this area and this land and I just thought it would be good to get into something where I could put something back into to this land, work 9 to 5 and hopefully get the similar wages. At the end of the day, if I get a job doing something I love, doing that hours and it's not the same wages, well I can live with that. Its, the wages are the third, kind of third priority because if you are doing something you love then everything else kind of hopefully falls into place.

D: And were these thoughts just sort of buzzing around in your head while you were working the last few years or did something trigger the move?

K: Yeah, I mean I had been unhappy with the public sector job for a (while). I wouldn't say I was ever really satisfied in the job because of the constraints with the resources. I mean it's like anywhere in the public sector, they are cutting back and cutting back and expecting the same level of performance.

D: Did you have to go and train for that job?

K: Yeah it was, we did one week for a call taking course and 2 weeks for the dispatching.

D: So you didn't have to do specialist training?

K: No, no, we did a 3 hour basic course (and then discusses the specific routine of the job).

D: So when you got to the point where you were thinking, right, ok I need to do more training, I need to go to University, what was your choice making process - what did you consider?

K: Well I have got an 11 year old daughter so really it was here or nothing when I started looking into it. I didn't look at any other prospectuses, I didn't consider any other Universities. I just thought I would have a look at UHI prospectus and see if there is anything there for me because I knew I was going to take a hit in the money I was going to be earning and I thought I can't do that and move away as well. I was willing to give up the money but not the time with my daughter. So, yeah so I just got on to the University website, had a look through the courses and I, to start off with I was probably looking to do something that was more definitely land-based, like forestry, something where I would be outdoors all the time. But the Highlands can be pretty harsh. It's all very romantic working outdoors in the best of the weather but when you are working outdoors all of the time, it's going to take its toll as well. I started thinking about, I mean I want to work with the land, like to benefit this area as well. So that, then I started looking at the sustainable development degree and the geography degree, that's the two I was down to and the reason I chose geography over sustainable

development just because it's the three year accelerated course, that's what swung it for me. I think I would have been happier doing either having, well we have actually done a sustainable development module which I found really interesting but I think the geography degree is more likely to get me a job in the Highlands than sustainable development I think.

D: Do you have an idea of the kind of job you might go into?

K: I think, if I am going to be closed and say I want to work in the Highlands I think it would probably be in renewable energy or flood defences. Or it's probably going to be working for like a government agency like the Scottish Natural Heritage or Scottish Water or possibly getting into planning, I think if you are willing to go further afield, we are doing modules on glaciation. You can go on to do Masters and mountain studies and volcanoes and you know I think it's a brilliant springboard for the younger, my younger colleagues. But for me, when I come out, Sophie will be 13 or 14 and I will probably still want to stay here at least until she gets through her school age. So that's the reason why I say geography is probably better for me than sustainable development. I think sustainable development is more globalised whereas geography you can do it anywhere.

D: So it was all really about location here?

K: Yeah.

D: How did you feel about this being a College and a University? Did that put you off at all?

K: No, no, I remember when I went to college to do the Business Administration part then, there was a bit of a stigma within the College amongst the people who were going to University, or when we were in school about it, and it never put me off. Yeah they used to call it, because it was more a technical college at the time and they (the College) were kind of branching out into Business Administration and that was kind of, kind of looked down upon, but it never swayed me then and it certainly didn't sway me now. It's, because it's, now as a mature adult that, people's perceptions of it has even less impact on me you know.

D: Do you think people's perceptions are the same?

K: No, they are not the same. I mean, you still, you still hear a lot of people saying oh is that the college in town? They still don't recognise it as a University but it's not a, like when we were in school it was called the deecy tech college.

D: Deecy tech?

K: Yeah, so it was just like, it was really, it was trades, a trades college really you know but...

D: And part of it still is.

K: Yeah, so I knew from my time before that I knew that they were trying to develop and they were, they had been doing degrees for, must be over 20 years now. So I think people realise. They don't kind of, they don't classify it as a University yet I don't think but possibly since the move, the move out here it will change. It will start changing I think.

D: How about the view employers have?

K: I think, I remember at the, at our induction, one of the lecturers saying how, how well this University was doing in regards, you know in regards to the University results and the University tables. So I mean, I don't really know how employers would, would categorise the University other than by looking at those statistics and I think the lecturer at the time said we were the most improved University and there was still some way to go but I think we were on an upward trajectory. So it's hard to kind of say what the employers perceptions are but I think by improving these statistics that's the way you are going to improve employers perceptions so.

D: Ok, see if we move on to what it was like when you first came. Now you were at the annex before. Very different from here. What was it like those first days and weeks on your course?

K: I think, well the first day we came, we went down to the Cairngorms for a field trip. But I remember standing in the front reception and I just thought, like the opportunity! I was just like I was so glad that I had taken it and made the move. And I just thought it's so appealing the building and I thought this is a place where you can really, you can learn and if you can't, if you are not going to. If this isn't going to inspire you then I don't know what will you know. I remember the old building and it was much like a school but it had 4 floors but it wasn't, its chalk and cheese. You look out around here it's like....

D: I feel very lucky with that view outside my room. Yeah ,it is amazing. Were you nervous at all that day?

K: I was, yeah I was nervous. Not like before and not... I mean we formed as a group and then went out to the Cairngorms. And, I think that, yeah the, I don't know if I would say nervous but you just kind of want to get on with your colleagues and that. So, there was an apprehension going in but by the end of the day we had a day in the Cairngorms and then we came back and we had a few seminars in the evening and by the end of that we were just dying to get going, dying to get started.

D: When you said it's not like before, did you mean you were more nervous when you first left school and went to College?

K: Yeah, yeah probably just cos of age, life experience. You don't, you go into, when I went there you don't realise that everyone else is in the same boat you know and like with maturity you get, I was going in. I was coming in the first day here I thought well everyone else is meeting everyone for the first time as well you know so, so the, there is, you still have butterflies and that but it's not, it's not the same. It different if you are going into a job interview with a panel, they are all in one position and you are the kind of new entity but when everyone is in the same boat you just kind of try and get to know each other as quick as possible.

D: And were they what you expected, the other classmates?

K: I had kind of, I had been hoping there would be a few more mature students. There is one guy who is 29 and the rest are school leavers. And I had kind of been hoping there would be more people my age group but I mean, it, myself and Neil get on really well. Neil is the 29 year old and we have never, I have never felt ostracised or that, we have all got on you know and we have got, different goals in life, different

responsibilities and that but as classmates there has never been a problem. I have never kind of felt out of it or that you know.

D: How do the goals in life differ?

K: Well, I mean, our scheduled classes are 12 hours a week and like I am in most days from nine or ten O'clock until four or five. And most of them have got their 12 hours (to do)but they come in and do their 12 hours and then they get out. But they have got, it's like when I was back in college they have got their lives to learn, their social lives. They have got classes, like training classes. They have got jobs to do and that. I am in a lucky position where I don't, I have not worked the whole year, I am still on the bank with my old job so if I needed money I could have gone back and done shifts. But I just decided that I was going to throw myself into the studying and unfortunately they see that they have got to have jobs to have social lives and that. And fortunately I am passed that now so but like I see them now and I see exactly, because when I was in College 20 odd years ago

D: Interesting isn't it watching it? So you had that fabulous trip down to the Cairngorms. If you are going to geography what better place to do it? Yeah I get that. How about the rest of the experience? Did you feel prepared for the academic side of the course?

K: Yeah, I mean I guess I felt prepared before the field trip because there have been a lot of, well actually looking back now probably over prepared because I had downloaded programs on to my laptop for video conferencing. I had made, we have got optional modules and I had made that choices and I had actually started. We have got this, I can't remember what it's called, but it was like University resource that it just helps you with academic writing, with just all aspects of University and I had gone through all that. I had actually, I had a couple of weeks between finishing work and going to University so that couple of weeks I had thrown myself into it and like the video conferencing programme I put on my laptop. I didn't need (it), the likes of, I suppose it's like for you know when there is video conferencing and we all go into the class, people can do it from home on their laptops and all that but I have never used that. But it's better to have it ready to go than not so. So yeah, I, yes I was satisfied with my preparations definitely. I was ready to go after that first day. I think we had to go back on the Saturday morning as well and it was just like to, the head librarian was going through the library resources. I can't remember what else we did but I remember leaving on the Saturday and I knew I was going in on the Monday and I was wanting it to be Monday you know just to get started.

D: Wow so you were really looking forward to it?

K: Yeah yeah.

D: Were the sessions interactive?

K: The induction?

D: You said you came back for a few seminars and even the first few weeks, were your lectures, I mean I don't know if you had smaller group classes, any tutorials?

K: Well the seminars at the induction, there was like icebreakers and that and was good because we were in amongst the lecturers as well as the students. And there was a lot

of the on-line masters students were there as well so you kind of got to know a lot of people and you were speaking to people who had already succeeded you know. So that was good. The, our class time, our classes are a group of 16 anyway so really, the first few lessons, although we had like lesson plans, they were really just kind of getting to know each other, getting to know what our lecturers expectations were of us, what we were entitled to expect of the lecturers. I mean we have only got one lecturer in this College who, that does all our tutorials. There is, we do three modules at a time and there are three different module leads but we have only got the one lecturer so in a way that's good because we have really got to know her and we get to know the other lecturers as well. There is, (lecturer name) did video conferencing from another College so, we got to know him as well so but yeah we knew what was expected of us.

D: Is the lecturer/student relationship as you expected it to be?

K: I didn't really know. I think, I think it is more personal but I think that is because of the size of the class. And I think things like the field trip help that as well. You know we spent a day with Anne-Marie and Michael in the Cairngorms so straight off it's like it's not in the classroom with her sitting at the front preaching or teaching or that. It was like, that introduction right away you know and from that day you could tell her passion for the subject, straight away and you think well if these people can't teach me then who is going to teach me you know? You could see, (lecturer name) is more a human geography whereas (lecturer name) is physical geography and like the things she was picking out like from the scenery we were standing by we were just like wow! Everyone would have walked past it you know. And it just, it just, it made me more confident that I was doing the right thing because you could tell the knowledge they had and, not just the knowledge, anyone can have knowledge but they had the feeling for it you know, like they wanted to impart all this knowledge they had on you, you know? So yeah, I was just dying to get going, dying to get into it.

D: What was the first written assignment like?

K: Eh, I can't believe, I can't believe how well it went but I took my time to it. I had done a lot of reading coming up to the starting University, I am trying to remember what the first assignment was. Yeah it was a 15,000 word essay but we got, we already had that University resource that I told you I had looked up before I had even come up to the induction and we were also given a...

D: Was that produced by the University?

K: Yeah.

D: It was, right.

K: Yeah and we were given a previous anonymised assignment that got about 80% and that really helped. That really helped. It was on a different subject but just seeing how it was set out and the referencing and all that. But my girlfriend at the time, she doesn't, she knows nothing about geography but she has actually just got a First in social work.

D: Did she do that here?

K: No in Aberdeen yeah. So I, I wrote my assignments and then I got her to check it

over and like, she made a few kind of, observations, not to do with the content but just the way I had structured it and that and I put it in an there was, yeah I hadn't formatted the assignment right. I was, not formatted, I didn't, I just wrote it and I didn't consider that it would get printed off and I thought they would just read it off the screen myself you know. So I didn't kind of consider the presentation of it. We had a, a front page that we had to fill in anyway with all your details but I didn't think of putting like a cover page as well. And just small things like that. But the good thing is you are getting feedback for every assignment you know. So as long as you are taking the feedback on, you will improve every assignment so but it, it went really well. I got an A for it and I was told it was worthy of a third year so I was just over the moon. But, I put in the time. I put in a lot of time and it taught me what to do. I have got to prepare. I have got to do the reading around the subject, you know. It's all very well you knowing what they are asking for, because they have told you it but you have got to go and source that information and you have got to reference it.

D: How did you know that?

K: I think, just from the lecturers you know and from paying attention to the lecture. Because we got an assignment back just this week here and one of the criticisms for the group in general was people were still using Wikipedia as a resource and referencing it and I remember before the first assignment, him saying that's an absolute no no you know. So I am thinking well why are they still doing it even now? But so as long as you are paying attention to what they are telling you, you will get the information that you need. But yeah you have got to... Its easy, it's easy to criticise but the attendance, the class attendance isn't good and like I have, I think I have missed two classes this semester and I have missed 2 the semester before that with genuine reasons. And it, some people are, I think some people are going to work for money rather than coming into classes and that and it's amazing what you miss in just one class. Just one small piece of information. Its crucial you go to every class because you don't know what wee bit of information you are going to miss and it might not even be in relation to this subject. It might be in relation to, I mean....

D: So not everyone is doing as well as you on the course then?

K: No, but I think, I think they are probably all as capable if they dedicated themselves like I am doing.

D: How do you judge that?

K: Well because they are all here on merits, just the same as me. So I wouldn't say they are better than me or I am better than them but I know that I am putting in the time and they are not and that its reflected in the results which is a good thing. Because it means the people that are putting in the effort are getting the rewards.

D: And those that aren't, do you think that is because they are out working?

K: Well not necessarily working. I don't know what they are doing. I know, FaceBook leaves you wide open. I know people have been at work when there has been classes and I know people have been on day trips when there has been classes, away on day trips with family and that and I just think...

D: Are they getting by?

K: I don't know what their results are but yeah, yeah I mean, the weeks before deadlines. It just bamboozles me. The deadline is 5 o'clock on the Friday and sometimes were are in on the Wednesday and they are saying, "Oh I had better get this started" and like I will have put mine in already and I have done like weeks. And like some of them are doing it that way and getting 'A's and others, I don't grudge it at all but it's just not the way I would do it. I couldn't do it that way because you can't look at yourself in the mirror and say I did my best if you don't get a 'A'. I think well you got what you deserved.

D: That's some achievement though, doing it at the last minute and getting an A?

K: Yeah but then again sometimes you think, it's like, because of the age and immaturity sometimes you just think maybe sometimes people are trying to be cool, keep in with the crowd and say oh I am just going to start. And you don't really know. You can take their word for it or not you know.

D: Do you think there is a bit of that still going on, where it's not cool to study even though they are at University?

K: Yeah, its strange. I was speaking to someone at the weekend who was saying their kid is in secondary school and he was saying that in that secondary school everyone is really sticking in, trying to do their best. And it's like, he couldn't understand how it's cool to have really good grades and all that in this school. But I mean I, in our tutorials myself and Neil, the two older ones, are the two talking the most. Most of the others have to be coaxed into giving any response you know and when they are coaxed like what they are saying is perfect most of the time. They know their stuff. They just don't want to be seen to be volunteering it and you think, come on you know? You just want to shake them but I guess that's what people were like with me when I was in college.

D: And it's not nervousness on their part?

K: I think some of them are nervous. I think I mean some of them are confident amongst the group outwith the academic stuff you know. Like even when the lecturer is there it's not just, like they are confident when we are waiting to go into class but they are confident as well like in kind of less, just like when we are maybe not concentrating on the actual work you know. They are confident enough to speak up and that but just when it comes to it they won't come up with anything unless they are prompted and then they are promoted and its fine what they are saying you know? Maybe it is just they don't want to say the wrong thing and they are not sure, but hopefully. But we do discussion boards as well and it's the same.

D: So it's not just when it's out loud? Are there any part of the course that you have found a bit of a challenge?

K: I would say that's the most challenging. I would like to be in a class where everyone is giving 100%. Where everyone is turning up. If you are sick or that, I know you are not obliged to come in but you are taking up a place someone else could have.

D: It's just interesting. Have you learnt anything about yourself while you have been here?

K: Being more confident in myself. I mean I would never have thought I would have

been able to do the quality of work I have done. A lot of people have said to me you are intelligent enough to go to University and I have just kind of....

D: Who used to say that to you?

K: Friends, family, yeah, like I would be having a moan about my work and people would say go and do something else.

D: Are these people who had been to University?

K: No.

D: They just saw you, did they see you as different?

K: I don't, I mean I have never done any job where... I guess I am sensible. I would call myself sensible, now. Not when I was in College. But you can have all the common sense in the world, you have still got to get your head around the subject matter. Common sense and intelligence are two different things.

D: I suppose I am just curious why they would say to you, you are clever enough to go to University. What was in their mind when they were saying that?

K: I don't know. I don't know, and that's why I am saying I should be more confident in myself you know.

D: Do you think it has changed you at all this year? Or do you think you have changed?

K: Yeah definitely. The Geography degree, one of them said it is just one big guilt trip, we are doing about climate change. We are doing about sustainable development and just we are left right and centre being told what we are doing wrong in life as individuals and as societies and you know. So yeah, my perception of the world has changed just. It's just chalk and cheese from this time last year. And the land as well, some of the stuff we have learnt is absolutely mind boggling you know. The hills in the Highlands were once the same height as the Himalayas and you just think. And like some of the, the earth has been here for 4.5 billion years and you just, you just take everything for granted you know. You don't, you think this is the way it has always been. There has been technological progress but I mean really it's the last 300 years there has been technological progress but before that everything was pretty much the same. Like there is ice ages that changed the face of the earth, moulded the mountains but there is all these kind of really long drawn out physical processes and then we just started tampering with the world and it has gone to pot. So yeah my view of the world is, I have said to my Dad that he should be reading some of my books. My Dad is retired, he is 67 you know. But like he would find this, like the stuff I am learning about and I tell him about, he finds it fascinating you know. Like I will say to him why don't you read some of the books that I have got? And he is like no no no. He is happy watching documentaries on TV about it but just doesn't, he would just never consider picking up a book and reading about it you know?

D: But he would listen to you and have a talk with you about it?

K: Yeah and he knows about it. That's it. And maybe I am like him, like you are so intelligent you could have done it, he worked in well in motors all his life you know.

D: Does he believe you?

K: That he could have done it, I don't think he likes to consider it. There would have been no opportunity for him to do it anyway. He didn't apply himself in school, I think he left and got in to a trade as soon as he could you know. He could have certainly done what I am doing, no bother.

D: Has it impacted on your life way beyond the University days themselves?

K: Yes it has given me, it has given me a better quality of life definitely. My old job we were doing 12 hour shifts but we would do two day shifts followed by two night shifts and be supposedly off for four days. But the first day off you were finished at half past seven that morning. So that wasn't really a day off and then my other days off I would have my daughter over with me so I would be getting up at half seven to get her ready for school. So I would be going back to work at half seven on my first day shift. I would be just as tired as I was when I was finishing so while we had four days off it wasn't a rest. It wasn't four enjoyable days off so really. I was just getting by for my annual leave. I had plenty money to enjoy the annual leave but eventually there comes a point when you realise that there is more to life than just having a few good weeks off a year if the rest of the time you are just getting by and that's it. So, yeah I have definitely got a better quality of life. I love the Monday to Friday stuff so yeah, I mean I look forward to getting a Monday to Friday 9 to 5 job. Because the thing about a Monday to Friday 9 to 5 job that you don't get a in a 12 hour shift is that you still do have some of that day to do stuff. If you are working from half past seven in the morning to half past seven at night, like I was leaving at twenty to seven in the morning, getting home just after 8 o'clock at night and if you are working the next day, you are just going to bed to get up at 6 o'clock again. And then you are going on to the nightshift the next night so you maybe have a long lie the next morning so you are ready for your first night shift.

D: So you are more around than you were as well, less tired but happier. How about if I asked your daughter or your girlfriend, has he changed over the last year, what would they say.

K: Yeah, well my girlfriend has dumped me so...

D: Oh sorry.

K: That's alright, yeah, well for my daughter, my daughter was up with me all my days off so I probably spend about the same time with my daughter. However the way, where I was at work it was like an eight day period where we would do our two on two off and then off four so it would be like, there would be a run of weeks where I would have Sophie maybe Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday. Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday. Wednesday, Thursday, Friday. So I wasn't seeing her much at the weekend for 4 or 5 weeks but now the arrangement we have is Sophie is with me for the whole weekend every second weekend. So the amount of time we spend together is about the same but the quality of time we spend together is much better.

D: Those friends who would say to you, you are clever enough to go to University, you should go to University, do you still interact with them? Do they see a difference?

K: Yeah we still interact in the same way but we are kind of typical Highland males is

probably a pretty good way of putting it. We just we meet up occasionally at the weekends and sit in the bar and talk about football, movies and...

D: Do you not tell them about all the stuff you are learning?

K: Not really no. I go home at times and my family will say how is your friend's kids doing, or how is their job going? And I am like I don't really know. We weren't talking about that. It's just like a kind of, a release you know. You just go. You have a laugh and play pool, watch football, do bets and that you know. It's, so yeah we don't, I mean there are times when I do start talking about it and they are not interested you know. In the same way as like one of my mates is a joiner. He started telling me how much it is getting to get joist in for roofs. I would be saying, we are here for a day out so...

D: And you see one, would it be seen as one just equating to the other then? They would just regard it as you talking about your job?

K: Yeah it's just your day to day life yeah.

D: They don't regard you any differently?

K: No definitely not. They might when I end up being a teacher for one of their kids!

D: There is a thought. So do you mix with any of the students you are here with outside?

K: No not really no. But there is not much interaction goes on really, I think there has been a couple of times the girls have suggested nights out and I think like four or five of them have gone. But that's been about it really. But I think that will change next year when the Halls of Residence are here. There is three people in our class from the central belt and I think one of them stays out in Balloch, one of them stays in Dalneigh, don't know where the other one stays and they don't seem to really interact and that. And I think to myself, if they had been in the Halls of Residence this year, they probably would be best of mates so I think the Halls of Residence will change things in that respect.

D: You not moving in?

K: No, I don't think I would get Sophie in as well. I think it's great but no.

D: No I understand that. What do you think the difference is between a college student and a University student. You have been both?

K: I think it's the subject, I think eh the subject matter. Well that's not the difference between the students but, you have got to be interested in the subject matter and you can have all the Highers in the world but if you want to cut hair or be a beautician or get into trades then you will go to College. I think, I think, well I was one myself. I was a College student because I didn't quite get the grades for University so I wouldn't say as a generalisation University students are cleverer than College students but they have shown that they can attain more academically than College students.

D: Your girlfriend, sorry for bringing her up again, she did her social work degree in Aberdeen. How did her experience compare with yours? Did you ever swap notes?

K: Yeah I think pretty similar. She used to get annoyed by the contribution of the younger students as well.

D: So she was a mature student?

K: Yeah, I think that, it was good that she had been through that experience. Because even in the group work I have learnt that you still get out what you put in. So even the people who aren't pulling their weights in the groups, you, whatever you put in you will get out. And I think that is probably, I have realised that this early as a consequence of her having gone three or four years with it. And she came out with a First even though she used to get annoyed by the contribution of her, like when they were put in group work and that. So hopefully it's a benefit that like I have not fallen into that like trap of letting it kind of get me down, you know. It is, it would be better for everyone if everyone contributed because that is the whole point in kind of group learning isn't it, kind of bouncing ideas off each other and that? And if there is only a couple of people giving opinions then that is kind of going to be the dominant opinions even though it might not be the right options you know that's the whole point in group work. But as long as you are doing the reading and putting the work in then you are still going to get a good amount out of it, your fair, just rewards hopefully. So hopefully I have learnt that early from her experiences.

D: If someone in the pub asks you what you do, how do you describe yourself?

K: I would just say Uni, I have gone back to Uni and then like I don't, I don't say what I am doing at Uni and that and just let them go from there you know. And it's quite a mix, like a lot of people, I have got a lot of friends in the public sector you know and they are, they're jealous. I think if you get into the public sector or that you are getting yourself on a good wage if you don't have the opportunities that degree gets for you. And a lot of people are getting into mortgages and on the back of good wages but there is no career advancement and there is no pay rises and they are trapped in it. And I was fortunate I didn't have a mortgage and I had the opportunity to get out. To get out of that trap and do something about it. And I, I guess that's why, that's one of the main reasons why I am in here from 9 - 4, 10 - 5 rather than in for two hours at a time.

D: It's a courageous step?

K: Yeah, I do say to people when people say that it's a courageous step, but it's a no brainer as well in a way. It did take a bit of courage but it also made sense.

D: Right at the beginning you were telling me that you were thinking about the type of job you want to do and you know you wanted to have an association with the land in some way and you came up with this course. While being here have your aspirations, your ambitions changed at all?

K: I think eh, I don't think I will be, I don't think I will be out on the land. I think my work with be to do with the land but I think I am going to be sitting in an office now but even if you have got to go out occasionally to survey land or just, like and if I know I am making a positive difference to the land I think that will be rewarding.

D: So if you had different thoughts while you have been here. Have you got different

aims and ambitions than before you came?

K: I guess my ambition is still to get a good job, land based job but I think my original perception that I would be out working on the land. The amount of time I would be out spending on the land has changed because I think you are going to be, it's going to be computer based. It's going to be office based, but that's how you make a difference you know. I mean there are land workers who are out doing it but this qualification is about actually implementing the change so it's kind of going to be more managerial rather than actually hands on I guess.

D: Are you doing anything to prepare for that to help that transition into work?

K: Its funny, I have got, I mean we have got 4 months off. We have got two weeks left now and then I have got four months off. So I have got to get a job in the summer. So I have applied for a job with a company called Warm Works who are, they are a company that has been set up to achieve Scottish Government standards within fuel poverty and the job will be, they will identify people whose houses are just needing to be assessed for energy efficiency. And (they) will be people of a certain income and the job would be to go and see what you can do to improve the energy efficiency in the house. And I mean it's going to be a 16 hour a week job and I said to the lady on the telephone interview that's the kind of thing I would be looking to get into when I qualified but full time you know. Because and that's rewarding on a personal level as well as on a national level and global level because you are helping people stay warm and stay. I mean people are still dying of the cold in Scotland you know and you are preventing that as well as having a positive impact on the environment so, and I did. One of the disadvantages of this three year course, I sent emails to the likes of Scottish National Heritage and all that seeing if there was any work experience opportunities over the summer and I didn't really get much feedback at all to be truthful. But there is a lot of, when you go on the University website there is a lot of internships for students going from third year to fourth year but we are not going to have that opportunity because we have got the accelerated degree. But I mean its swings and roundabouts isn't it? We are going to be out. Hopefully we are going to be qualified a year earlier rather than going into do an internship so...

D: You are going into a real job?

K: Yeah yeah, so yeah, so yeah hopefully. I would like to get a start with this company, you know that would be. I mean it's just kind of entry level job but its networking, it's getting to know people, it's getting your face out there. We are at that land conference as well a few weeks ago and when I was going up I was thinking yeah this is an opportunity to get to know people and the types of organisations I will be looking for a job for. When we were out there, my father took unwell and had to go into hospital and I had to come back so I didn't really get to see anyone but things like that are just so beneficial you know, just getting to know people and getting to know. Like I knew about SEPA and Scottish Water and all that but I didn't really know. We know them as government organisations to do with environment and to do with water but you don't really know what it is they are doing. But when you go in these conferences and see what they are doing day to day it's just gives you such a clearer picture I guess.

D: One final question from me, you will be glad to hear. And I think I know what your answer is going to be. If I could transport you back in time and you had the chance to talk to the younger Ken, what advice would you be dishing out?

K: Stop going to the (names a local pub). Just, apply yourself you know. Apply yourself while you can, that's not just College, that's school. I don't think that would have worked though. I mean that's the thing. You try and push people that age down one road and they rebel and go down the other. You push them further away rather than towards it so yeah I wish I had stuck in more. I wish I had applied myself more. But if I had said that to myself back at the time I doubt I would have taken any notice. It's just, it's unfortunate isn't it? You don't realise the importance of it you know? It's just, in a way, I sometimes (think) people who take a year out and then go back are in a better position. My ex-girlfriend, her son, he was in Edinburgh. He did his secondary school in Edinburgh and he was doing really well. He was really into English and the sciences and that and he went, he went into do a law degree at University and he did, he jacked it by, just after Christmas. He went back and then he thought na this is not for me. And he had been, he had been going to this school where everyone did well academically and there was this pressure to go to University and get on the best course you can and he did that and it wasn't for him you know? But he didn't stop to consider am I doing the right thing? He just thought right, this is what everyone is doing, this is our goal so and it wasn't for him and he is, he got a job in the leisure centre. He was staying with his Granny and he saved up three or four thousand pounds and he went off and spent three months in India. And I am sure he is going to come back from India and he is going to have a good, clear picture of what he wants do to you know. He wasn't even in like the tourist spots. He was going out to like yoga resorts and all that you know? And I bet he has just spent three months thinking right, what am I going to do with my life here? Without the pressure of guidance teachers or peers or that, you know, like saying right I am going to do this, see if you can do better. He is going to come back and he is going to know what he wants to do.

D: What is your daughter going to do?

K: Well, she wants to be a psychiatrist and I don't, I don't think it's realistic but I would never say that to her. I would never dissuade her from it.

D: Why don't you think it is realistic?

K: I don't, can't just blame her school but her reading and her literature is not up to scratch really. She is in primary 7, her reading and spelling is I don't think the standard that our primary sevens were at. But it's a different curriculum so you kind of, I don't want to push, to push her or tell the school they are in the wrong but it will be interesting when she goes. Like next year I will have a better idea if it is achievable or not. She, I mean I think it's a brilliant and rewarding thing to get into if she can but its, it's like, seven years to be a medical doctor and then I think it's another four years of training after that. So it's a long time training. But like if that's what she wants to do I will support her in any way I can but I just wonder if she will be able to do it. The thing is she has wanted to be a vet, she has wanted to be a hairdresser you know? I think, whatever she wants to do, it will change a few times I am sure. But I think it's about supporting her whatever way you can and I mean she gets homework on a Wednesday to put in on a Monday so there is always some point where I am with her and it's mostly me who does the homework with her. She is good at maths and that and she is not so good at the literature and you need higher English to get into anything so...

D: I just thought I would ask.

K: I think it will be interesting once she gets a proper English teacher in first year next year. I mean it might be that she needs to do a bit of catch up, a bit of extra lessons and then she will be at the level she is supposed to be. But I just, I don't think it's her. I think it's the teacher because it is two primary sevens in the other class that are getting more homework and they are on different levels when they were, like they were all in one class last year and they were similar.

D: Nobody raised it?

K: Yeah I think so there has been a few times Sophie has said that the head teacher has been in observing the teacher. But, the school can't get rid of her and get a more capable teacher just by clicking their fingers they have got to work with her and support her so it's frustrating but like she is a person as well who needs support and unfortunately its impacting on 30 kids, well it's not 30 kids but.

Appendix F - Ken's follow-up e- mail

Hi Diane,

I hope you have had a nice easy reintroduction now the students have returned - I'm looking forward to getting going again.

Once again sorry for the delay responding but here are my thoughts on the class system and studying - I hope they help.

1. How would you describe your class status?

I would categorise myself as working class.

2. How do you differentiate between classes? If I asked you to describe what makes someone working class or middle class, what would you say?

This is much harder to answer.

I have never given this much consideration, but I would suggest that those people classed as working class are people who have to work to maintain a basic standard of living. While they may have mortgages and credit, I would imagine that the vast majority of their income is committed to short term expenditure, with little or no opportunity for long-term investment.

Those in the middle class, while they still have to work to maintain their standard of living, would be getting sufficient wages to have extra money to invest in opportunities. This would diminish their need to work later in life, or provide opportunities for their children outwith the realistic scope of the working class.

3. Has class ever been an issue for you or others at University? If so, could you explain in what way?

I can't say that I have ever been aware of my class affecting my university life, but I would make two observations:

A) When I left school in 1992, it would have been almost impossible for me to go to university in the central belt. I could not rely on financial assistance from my parents, so if I did go I would have to rely on part time employment to fund my studies. This has a knock on effect on your studies as those who do not have to work can commit much more time to their studies and so are at an advantage.

B) Accessibility to degree courses have improved vastly since 1992, as can be evidenced by the UHI and how it serves both the local population and indeed people from further afield. OU and now the introduction of online degrees, has given a greater flexibility to studying and has allowed those in a less advantageous financial position the opportunity that was once only afforded to those who could afford to move to a university city.

4. *Has your view of your own class status changed at all? If so, in what way?*

My view of my class has never changed, and no matter how successful I become, I would never forget my roots.

Class is a starting position but does not define you as a person.

Inspirational people have emerged from the working class, while people born in a position of advantage have squandered their opportunities.

It's about maximising your potential through your life long endeavours, and if you live your life, and can look back and say you have done that, it doesn't matter what class you end up in.

There is also no need to feel inferior because of your class, and I will finish with a quote from Noel Gallagher, discussing his working class background and how it hasn't held him back. He said " I could sit with the queen and discuss all the social, political and economic topics of the day, but she couldn't tell me who back-heeled Man Utd into division 2"

Hope all this helps, and best wishes with the rest of your studies.

Kind regards

Ken

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