"'NEETS': perceptions and aspirations of young people Not in Education, Employment or Training"

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Abstract

The increasing emphasis on the relationship between participation in education and social inclusion through employment views non-participating young people negatively by what they are not, exemplified in the label Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET). The UK's strategy to reduce the numbers of NEET young people includes the provision of government training courses resulting in their increased attendance at further education colleges. This study was motivated by a need to understand these young people in order to work with them and to inform my professional practice. By engaging in purposeful conversation with a group of 14 young people, aspects of their lives, their experiences and perceptions of education, and their aspirations for the future are unfolded through the stories they chose to share. A consideration of the impact of forces of globalisation on opportunities for employment along with a recent history of youth training schemes sets the scene here for the analysis and discussion of these stories. Providing a fair account of stories in a way that allows the teller's voice to be heard follows an uncharted course employing methods drawn from ethnographic, phenomenographic and narrative inquiry and resulting in a dissertation that blends theory, research and policy with the stories heard. Hearing such stories and considering their implications for working with these young people had a significant personal impact whilst confirming my conviction that in order to work successfully with such young people it is necessary to go beyond the label of NEET to understand something of their lives. Reflective and reflexive discussion around the methods adopted in this study consequently forms a major part of this dissertation as does explicit attention to the research journey travelled. The analysis of the stories of the young people centres here on notions of wellbeing and flourishing using a capabilities approach as a framework. By mapping themes identified in the conversations recorded in this study onto Martha Nussbaum's list of central capabilities a re-framed version of her capabilities list, contextualised to NEET young lives is presented. It emerges that the perceptions of education and training and aspirations for future employment and wellbeing amongst this particular group do not justify the frequently negative connotations of the NEET label. Individual's expressed anxieties around contemporary youth culture, their attitudes towards schooling and education and their hopes for their lives lead, in the final chapter of this study, to suggestions for ways forward for schools and colleges working with such young people. Here I emphasise the need for teachers to make space to understand the people behind the labels, to see them as individuals who may flourish more successfully if we are able to construct more compassionate institutions that allow young people to do and to be, to develop the capacities to lead the meaningful lives they desire and will have reason to value.

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Author's Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own work and has not been published or submitted in support of any other degree or qualification.

Sandra Sweenie

Chapter One

Introduction

Background

Young people who leave education at the earliest opportunity with no immediate prospect of employment or training and with no alternative source of support have been given the label of NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training). Although the NEET acronym has been criticised for describing young people negatively as what they are not, NEET now appears as a common term in the discourse around young people who are not participating in work or learning. NEET, usually capitalised but sometimes 'Neet', is used as both a noun, with the plural NEETs, and as an adjective. This research is about reaching out to understand the young person behind the NEET label, about looking beyond the label to discern and better understand the experiences, views, values and aspirations of a group of young people in transition from school to work.

This chapter introduces my project: an engagement in conversation with a group of NEET young people that draws from and on relevant theoretical, research and policy literature to move towards a better understanding of these young people's lives. Initially, in this chapter, I describe the confusion derived from the different views publically expressed concerning today's youth and explain my professional interest in unravelling this confusion as a first step towards identifying and meeting their needs. Here I argue that while numerous studies exist around the issue of NEET, they do not yet answer the types

of questions that concern me. These are questions that focus on the views and voice of NEET young people. Thereafter, I present the research questions that this study sought to address. Next, I discuss the theoretical, methodological and conceptual framework that supports this study and introduce the idea of adopting a capabilities approach in moving towards my goal of understanding NEET lives. Finally, I discuss the structure of this dissertation and provide a brief outline of the purpose and content of its chapters.

There are many questions that might be asked about the role of education in social justice and welfare and many more that might be asked about the role of the educator in promoting the capacity for learning. For many learners, education can be a positive, fulfilling experience; a springboard to a prosperous secure future. For others, it can be disappointingly negative; a precursor to low-paid menial work or periods of unemployment. The relationship between education and opportunities for prosperity is centred on engagement with employment in its many varied and tenuous forms. Against this background, the relationship between learners and teachers is fragile; ideally centred on trust, respect and caring. So it seems that we should do as much as we can to understand the circumstances that enable that relationship to be positive for teachers and learners alike. Asking how educational opportunity can afford future flourishing may require a better understanding of success or failure in the relationship between teachers and learners, between learners and their own experiences and views of education.

Initial investigations designed to provide background awareness of NEETs revealed the issue of NEET to be a perplexing phenomenon that is subjected to various opposing and often contradictory schools of thought that can result in both positive and negative discourse. The negative discourse attests that their unemployed status is a matter of choice and is likely to be influenced by their family's acceptance of life on welfare benefit; that disengaging with education is an act of defiance and rebellion against authority and that their idleness lies at the heart of youth crime and anti-social behaviour. A more sympathetic discourse sees today's youth as victims of a selfish, individualistic society; damaged by family break-up, unprincipled advertising, income inequality and too much competition in education. Education, by implication, may be cast in the role of the villain exemplified by Leadbeater (2008, *New Statesman*) who suggests that 'the scale of the Neet[1] problem is the most telling indicator of the social challenges our education system faces and the inability of conventional schooling to respond' and that it is 'an indictment of

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[1] here I have retained the uncapitalised version as it appears in Leadbeater's article

our education system that it produces Neets in such numbers'. As an educationalist, this indictment bothered me and the conflicting opinions expressed by the media added to my confusion. I will illustrate this by quoting excerpts from two newspaper articles exemplifying the received wisdom surrounding NEETs. The first hits hard on NEETs as a lazy lot, happy to continue claiming benefit and currently facing tougher competition in the labour market because of the arrival of skilled, enthusiastic immigrants from Eastern Europe.

> The Neets, the idle young, are a huge drain on welfare and with immigrants keen to do the jobs they won't, they will remain so. [...] The Neets are the yobs hanging around off-licences late into the night. They are the graffiti artists who cannot spell and the drug-dealing pit-bull owners. They are also the Vicki Pollard[2] types who become single mothers. Not all Neets fit the caricature. A young mother in a stable relationship bringing up children at home would be classified as a Neet. So could somebody temporarily out of work, such as a university graduate looking for their first job. In many cases, however, Neets do fit the caricature and are responsible for more than their fair share of crime and antisocial behaviour.
> (Smith, 2007, *The Sunday Times*)

Prior to embarking on this study, reading the UNICEF report (UNICEF, 2007) that placed the United Kingdom bottom and the United States second bottom of an international league of child-wellbeing in rich countries, was salutary. Although the UNICEF findings invite debate over the validity of measuring and comparing child wellbeing in different countries on the grounds of language and cultural distortion, the persistently low ranking of the UK and the US across the dimensions measured constitutes an inconvenient truth that should not be ignored or effaced. Along similar lines, the Good Childhood Inquiry (Layard and Dunn, 2009) has more recently called for both a change in social attitudes and policies to counter the damage done to children by society and a debate as to why a million and a half British children are unhappy and why young people's emotional health appears to be worsening. The second excerpt, below, taken from Moore (2008), focuses on the 'endless' discussion that tells us that our children are awful and that to be a child in Britain is to be in a pretty bad place.

> Why are our young people so unhappy? Because we have become a society that fears, demonises and silences them. The fault is ours, not theirs. [...] We have the unhappiest children in the world. Makes you feel proud doesn't it? [...] As social mobility has ground to a halt, what will differentiate one person from another is not only formal education, but social and personal skills. And how do you get those skills? You pay for them. The middle classes purchase

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[2] Vicky Pollard is a UK television character portraying a teenage delinquent. See http://www.bbc.co.uk/comedy/littlebritain/characters/vicky.shtml

> activities that will enhance their children's development. Poorer kids commit the crime of hanging out in unstructured environments. […] Those that cannot be contained indoors or via extended school activities may have the audacity to go outside, to inhabit public spaces, to call the streets their own. This in itself is now seen as anti social. One of the most mind-blowing statistics I read was in the British Crime Survey of 2004/2005, 1.5 million people said they had considered moving or leaving the country "mainly because of young people hanging around". With any luck, they can emigrate to countries where children are culled at puberty.
> (Moore, 2008, *New Statesman*)

At the heart of this debate is the apparent assumption that education is failing to prepare young people to make a successful transition from schooling to the world of work although an alternative viewpoint alludes to theories of globalisation and the restructuring of labour resulting in a lack of appropriate employment opportunities for young school leavers. Unemployment, or under-employment, is a social problem that breeds low self esteem and poverty and functions in opposition to the political goal of economic growth. The growing number of young people leaving compulsory education at the earliest opportunity with no immediate prospects of employment or lapsing into repeated spells of unemployment that portend a future of poverty and social exclusion now constitutes a social, economic and educational crisis. Indeed, the government's strategy for tackling youth unemployment nationally has spawned a series of training schemes and welfare to work initiatives that appear to have been ineffective in reducing the number of NEETs. As background to this study, I examine historical trends in youth unemployment and political strategies in Chapter Three but, briefly here, at the start of this study it was estimated that in Scotland 13% of young people were Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) - some 34,000 lives (The Scottish Government, 2008a). Two years later, the economic downturn appears to be having a significant impact on young people with the number of NEETs set to rise amid claims that one in six young people do 'nothing' (Garner, 2009, *The Independent*).

Unpicking the issues around NEETs is not an easy project. There already exists a considerable volume of research into the subject. But the major works mainly draw from large-scale longitudinal studies and although I refer to such studies throughout this dissertation and build on their findings, they do not provide answers to the kinds of questions that are of particular interest to me. Those questions centre on the young people themselves. Do they identify themselves with a crisis? Do they deserve the 'lazy lot' label adhered to today's youth or do they see themselves as victims of an unjust or inadequate system? How do they perceive their present and future position in society and in life; are

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they unhappy, demonised, silenced and damaged?   What are their perceptions and experiences of education and how has this affected their decision to leave school? How do such experiences impact on their view of education now? Are they able to influence the decisions made about them with regard to leaving school? Do these young people refuse to participate in opportunities for change or is the reality that these opportunities do not actually exist? Is the effect of familial welfare dependency so strong as to imply resistance to change in an already predicted life course trajectory? What do they think a good life might be?

The motivation for such questions and for this project derived from my twenty years experience as a lecturer in a further education (FE) college and my awareness of the shifting nature of further education as it attempted to accommodate growing numbers of unemployed young people on government training schemes. I was aware that my professional practice might require to shift in order to better accommodate their needs. Most of my teaching to date had been at an advanced higher education (HE) level and had involved motivated, mature adult learners but, with reduced demand for advanced courses in my area, their place was being taken by young school leavers on government training schemes and apprenticeships. Working with adults who had made a positive decision to return to education in order to enhance their opportunities for future prosperity was the most rewarding aspect of my work and I found the prospect of working with potentially disinterested 16-17 year olds personally and professionally challenging. Their language, their dress and what I thought of as their loutish behaviour were alien to me and I heard my colleagues speaking disparagingly about their experiences in class. But the irony of my situation then is now clear. Many of the adult returners for whom I have so much respect and with whom I enjoy such fruitful learning experiences are, by their own admission, the NEETs of yesterday having failed to engage with education successfully first time round. What matters to me is that I can find ways to relate to the NEETs of today and offer them the same opportunities for success that I am able to offer my mature learners. It appears that developing a better understanding of them as individuals is a necessary first step towards identifying their needs and moving towards accommodating these needs through my professional practice.

Aims
The political salience of the issue of NEET is evidenced by the numerous studies into the phenomenon designed to inform policy decisions. My own work draws from these in

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Chapter Three to provide a background to the NEET crisis; building on the findings in subsequent chapters to develop a deeper understanding of the young people to whom the NEET label is adhered (Raffe, 1984; Croxford and Raffe, 2000; Raffe, 2003; Spielhofer et al., 2009). Many of the studies reported emanate from large-scale longitudinal postal surveys and seek to quantify the problem and to assign NEET young people into various categories according to their social and educational background. It appears that much of the research and literature surrounding the problem of NEET is so pre-occupied with characterising, quantifying and categorising that it often fails to provide a vivid picture of the realities of NEET young lives. By contrast, this project focuses on individual cases in which I engage in conversation with a group of 14 NEET young people who have embarked on a government training scheme that brings them into a further education college for vocational training and skills enhancement. In studying the 'poor end' of education, the point where we appear to fail in our mission to prepare young people for adulthood, my personal struggle to understand why young people do not take full advantage of the educational opportunities offered to them is highlighted. Do they fail to learn, do they learn to fail or do we fail to teach? Is there a dichotomy between their needs and the aspirations stressed in our education system? Has the massification of education and concomitant 'qualification inflation' exacerbated the employability gap? Is the relationship between employment, earnings and academic achievement now seen as offering nought but empty promises thus rendering education pointless in the view of the young people I worked with? This study will provide a window into the individual circumstances and experiences surrounding NEET young people who have been referred onto a government training scheme either from school or from the Careers Service; that is, those young people I am most likely to meet in my classroom. It follows that my research findings are limited to those young people who participate and I acknowledge these limitations throughout this dissertation. No claim is made that the findings are generalisable. Nevertheless, the study sets the stage for future inquiries and may provide a working model for further research with similar groups of young people.

The overall aim of this research is to gain a better understanding of the lived experiences of NEET young people, their perceptions and aspirations, and to find ways to allow their views to be heard. Focusing on the young people themselves, listening to the stories they have to tell, may help us to understand the salient features of their lives and the impact of that experience on their decisions and behaviours. This, for me, is a necessary first step

towards meeting the needs that may be expressed through these behaviours. From this aim the following research questions were derived:

- What is the perception of schooling and its relevance to their lives and aspirations for the future?
- What is the perception of training for work and its relevance to their lives and aspirations for the future?
- What do young people value in life and what anxieties, concerns and fears do these young people experience?
- What are their aspirations for the future?

In the final chapter of this dissertation, I return to address these research questions having told, in the intervening chapters, the story of the research journey that took me to the position of being able to do so. The structure of this dissertation is provided at the end of this introductory chapter and I now turn to discuss the theoretical, methodological and conceptual frameworks through which I move to develop an understanding and use to explain the complex phenomenon of NEET.

Framework Supporting this Inquiry

Theories of globalisation, welfare and exclusion permeate the discourse of NEET and so, prior to moving to develop a deeper understanding of the individual lives of young people, it seems necessary to understand the social, political and economic landscape in which these lives are lived. Here the work of Castells (2005), Olssen et al. (2005) and Spielhofer et al. (2009) affords the claim in Chapter Two that global interconnectedness has effected a decline in manufacturing that historically provided employment for many school leavers. By exploring and contextualising theories of meritocracy, and the historical shift in welfare policy, I suggest here that young people leaving school with low levels of attainment are less likely to make a successful transition to work and are therefore more likely to become NEET.

Methodologically, this research involves interviewing or, as I prefer, purposeful conversation, as a method of collecting stories of young people's experiences. Chapter Four provides details of the tools and approaches used in the collection and analysis of these stories and there I explain that there is no single, prescribed approach but rather a pragmatic collection borrowed and adapted carefully from narrative, ethnographic and

phenomenographic research. Moreover, the approach chosen is designed to be flexible and responsive to the lessons learned from the data. As I explain in Chapter Four, the research process was adapted to respond to the themes emerging from the data and to situations that were not predicted. Themes emerging from the interview data allowed me to re-enter the literature to expand my understanding while my reading informed the direction of the research and usefully fleshed out theories, policies and statistics. I note, in Chapter Four and again in Chapter Six, that listening to the stories of the young participants was an emotional experience and offering an account within the constraints of an academic dissertation a challenging and messy task. The account that I do offer in Chapter Five engages with the concepts of wellbeing and flourishing that I introduce here, below, and develop further in that chapter within the framework of a capabilities approach. There I use the topics and themes identified from the interviews in a way that seeks to allow the voice of the young person to be heard while, at the same time, engaging with literature and research around each theme.

Conceptually, human flourishing, as I indicate below and expand in Chapter Five, lies at the centre of this project and my conceptual framework circles around issues of wellbeing; embracing the link between education and employment that is deemed to enhance opportunities for flourishing. What wellbeing and flourishing actually mean and entail is not easy to establish and neither are the closely connected concepts of 'quality of life', the 'good' life or 'happiness'. Each of these concepts is the subject of deep philosophical theorising and debate: no single definition prevails and it is futile, here, to suggest otherwise. What matters is capturing the spirit of wellbeing and flourishing as an individual and highly personal concept concerned with people being able to live the type of decent, dignified life that they choose to live. Martha Nussbaum helps us to think more clearly about the difficult problem of different types of flourishing by suggesting a set of entitlements that 'can be agreed by reasonable citizens to be important prerequisites of human flourishing' (Nussbaum, 2006:182). The set of entitlements is presented in a single list of central human capabilities and uses the notion of a threshold level of each capability beneath which a decent, dignified life is not possible. The list is single, she tells us, not because ideas of flourishing are single, but 'because it seems reasonable for people to agree on a single set of fundamental constitutional elements that provide the underpinning for many different ways of life' (2006:182). Nussbaum presents a list of ten central capabilities in her book 'Women and Human Development: the Capabilities Approach' (Nussbaum, 2000). This work forms the backbone of the conceptual framework

supporting this dissertation and, in Chapter Five, provides a deliberative space within which I seek to develop a deeper understanding of NEET young lives. Mapping the experiences told to me during the interviews onto Nussbaum's normative list provides a useful analytical starting point and enables me to step back from my own values and assumptions to reach a better understanding of the lives of the young people who participate in my study. From this mapping exercise I am able to identify what I consider to be the salient values in the NEET young lives that I encounter and, in the second part of Chapter Five, I suggest a re-framing of Nussbaum's list within that NEET context and informed by their stories.

The Dissertation

This dissertation is not the document I imagined at the outset. For, as will emerge more fully from Chapter Four where I describe the research design and the methods used, the interview process was a very illuminating and emotional experience that provided a rich insight into the lives of the young participants and revealed my previously unexamined assumptions about today's youth. While encouraging young people to engage in dialogue is central to my research methodology, research methods around voice and narrative warn of the dangers of subjectivity, interpretation and ethical representation when speaking of or speaking about others and I have written openly here about the messiness, the emotions and the complexity of my research in practice. Initially, the language style of the young people was problematic and I explain in Chapter Four how I decided that excerpts from the interviews should remain as true as possible to their spoken words and so I have tried to write in a way that is responsive to the reality of that experience within the constraints of producing a doctoral dissertation. Using excerpts as I work between literature and transcript was useful when trying to understand and make sense of the data and is crucially important to my objective of giving voice. But fragmenting the conversations in this way is not ideal as it dilutes the reader's perception of the young person as an individual and risks interpretive bias in the choice of the excerpt. It is not appropriate to position complete transcripts within this academic dissertation and the linearity of this document problematises their inclusion. What I include, in Appendix A, are 'little stories' from each interview that are designed to allow the reader to see a snapshot of the person behind the story. As I emphasise in Chapter Six, re-telling a 'chaptered' version of the research story may imply a procedural linearity that fails to reflect the cyclical, iterative nature of the inquiry; this linearity imposed by the constraints of writing a research dissertation. Further, it should be noted that the chapters do not follow a standard format such as could

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be expected in a traditional doctoral dissertation although the standard content is written into the document in what I deem to be appropriate places.

Structure and Chapter Outline

This dissertation is structured into six chapters and I provide, below, a brief outline of the content and purpose of Chapter Two through to Chapter Six. My research begins from the supposition that in order to accomplish a deeper understanding of NEET young people I need to know more about the social, political and economic environment in which they attempt to flourish. Without this my only point of reference is my own experience and perception of their condition. In Chapter Two, I explore the idea of globalisation and its impact on the structure of the labour market. Here I argue that, partly due to the decline of manufacture in the UK, opportunities for young people without qualifications are limited. Hence, via a discussion of the theory of meritocracy, I express and justify the view that NEET young people are exposed to multiple sources of disadvantage, exclusion and inequality.

In Chapter Three, I examine the literature and research surrounding NEET and the history of political intervention designed to tackle youth unemployment. This chapter examines trends in youth employment since the late 1970s and provides an in-depth description of the circumstances surrounding the introduction and expansion of government training schemes and the strategies designed to address the crisis of NEET that are salient to this study.

Chapter Four provides explicit detail of the methodological approach and of the various methods and techniques employed to address the research questions. The rationale for choosing this predominantly qualitative approach is explained and justified and then I show how the theory was translated into practice. The chapter then discusses various issues surrounding the analytical and interpretive framework that emerge from the interview process and that shift that activity beyond its initial conception of data collection.

Chapter Five returns to the data to move towards a deeper understanding of NEET young lives and provides the theoretical background to critically understanding the concepts of wellbeing, human development and quality of life. It explores the relevance and acknowledges the difficulties of applying a capabilities approach to this study and goes on to examine the lives of the participants by mapping their stories to Nussbaum's list of

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central capabilities. This mapping provides opportunities to engage with literature to flesh out the topics discussed and to recontextualise Nussbaum's specifications in light of the interview conversations. From this mapping exercise, a re-framed version of Nussbaum's list, informed by the stories of NEET young people and adapted to the context of this study, is offered.

Chapter Six moves this inquiry towards a conclusion on paper. Initially, and briefly, the research story is summarised and discussions postponed from previous chapters are revisited. The second part of this chapter asks questions of the data collected during interview and from the interview process itself - what has been learned from listening to these stories and what can be gained from re-telling them? Here the research questions established in Chapter One are addressed before proceeding to discuss issues around giving voice to NEET young people who appear hitherto unheard. In the third and final part of this chapter, I move to consider how the knowledge and understanding gained through the experience of this study has changed my perspectives on NEET young people and how this study might serve to improve the lot of other similarly placed young people.

Chapter One has introduced my project: an engagement with a group of NEET young people and with relevant literature intended to move towards a better understanding of these young people's lives. This choice of topic was not made as a distanced academic decision. Whilst influenced by the current discourse around the crisis of NEET, it evolved from reflection on a personal dilemma around my professional practice that called for change in order to accommodate the needs of the increasing number of NEET young people being directed towards further education colleges. Here I have charted my journey from confusion, through questions, readings and conversations, to position the subsequent chapters of this dissertation within the context of the phenomenon of NEET. Although new understandings and changed perspectives are difficult to communicate, it is intended that these become evident from reading the subsequent chapters.

Chapter Two

The Social, Political and Economic Landscape of NEET

In this chapter, I examine the complex relationships between education, employment and training as they apply to NEETs. I analyse, as my starting point, a perspective on the shifting nature of work and the restructuring of the labour market in response to a changing global economy. I then move to the political interventions aimed at reducing unemployment, and thus welfare dependency, through retraining of the workforce with the skills demanded by this new global economy. By engaging with the policies and political ideologies driving these interventions, I highlight those historical waves of social, cultural, economic and political change that impact on young people's lives in the early 21st century. The argument I advance is that while, on the one hand, centre-right ideologies applaud the individualisation of a competitive free market that produces winners (and losers) and, on the other hand, centre-left ideologies aim towards levelling the playing field by raising skills through education and training, the reality may be that, for many school leavers, opportunities for sustained employment are being lost to automation and subjected to the vagaries of the present economic climate. Thereafter, this chapter examines the role assigned to education in the political struggle against exclusion and inequality where, through an exploration of relevant literature and recent research surrounding meritocracy and social mobility, I discuss the mediating role of education in closing the opportunity gap. Finally, the discussion moves towards the application of a capabilities approach to the study of NEET young lives which is further developed in Chapter Five of this dissertation.

As I have already stated, the aim of this study is to develop an understanding of the perceptions and aspirations of young people not in education, employment or training (NEETs) by hearing the stories of their lived experiences and interpreting the individual, personal and private factors that influence their behaviour and their decisions. Crucial to this search for internal thought and voice is an appreciation of the external influences that colour the landscape in which their lives are situated. By this I mean the social, cultural, economic and political forces that have shaped education, employment and training since the middle of the 20th century; the shift from the ideological 'cradle to grave' welfare state[3] to the rethinking of society and community predicated on the vision of human beings as autonomous, self-reliant, independent individuals (Beck et al., 1994; Giddens, 2000). The post-industrial transformation of society, according to theorists such as Castells (2005), replaced the manufacturing of goods with knowledge-based, service industries producing a global change in the structure of labour. Simultaneously, casualisation of employment assigned a central, strategic role to education in promoting the political aim of improved global economic order.

The New Labour Market Economy: changing structure, different opportunities
Global interconnectedness is not a new phenomenon. Since ancient times people have sought to broaden their horizons and explore new territories with both peaceful and aggressive intent; this connectivity becoming the basis of expanding economic, political and cultural exchange. What characterises contemporary understandings of globalisation and its cultural, political and economic facets, is the unprecedented speed and extent of its spread which many theorists attribute to the relentless progress in the development and use of information and communication technology (ICT) (Castells, 2005; Olssen et al., 2005). That the dissemination of information supporting financial and commercial decisions is no longer subject to political and geographical boundaries is central to the ability of multinational enterprises to shift their investment and the locus of their production so as to maximise profit, thus reducing the power and threatening the autonomy of the nation state. In Held's words, globalisation is 'hollowing out' states, eroding their sovereignty (Held, 2002:7). Pilger, in contrast, shuns the view that big business alone is shaping the new world order and claims that the state is more powerful than ever. The 'illusion' of the weakened state, he claims, allows the argument against globalisation to be depoliticised

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[3] This phrase is generally attributed to Clement Attlee (1950) but may previously have been used by Winston Churchill

and affords 'the rejection by the state of its social functions in favour of repressive ones' (Pilger, 2001). Whilst taking a stand in the debate on globalisation theories is not the central issue here, the focus of this section is to demonstrate the complex forces that manifest themselves in the changing nature of employment in a global economy and subsequent reforms in education policy introduced by governments in order to survive in a competitive global market. Here I draw on the extensive work of Castells (2005) in his comprehensive and detailed analysis of the transformation of work and employment in advanced capitalist countries in their shift from agricultural to industrial and then to post-industrial or, as he prefers, knowledge or informational economies, in recognition of the increased importance of occupations with a high knowledge content in their activity. Based on available data from the group of seven industrialised nations of the world, the so-called G-7[4] countries: Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America, his analysis identifies commonalities and differences in economic activity over two distinct periods: first, the half century from 1920 to 1970 which he identifies with the shift from agriculture to manufacturing and second, the two decades 1970 – 1990 which saw a decline in manufacture and growth in service occupations. Although he is keen to emphasize that while there is a common trend, there are historical variations between the evolution of employment structures across countries according to specific institutions and following specific policies and strategies based on social, cultural and political environments.

Castell's account of the new global economy tells us that historically traditional, heavy, mainly steel-based industries like shipbuilding and car manufacturing have declined in the UK, apparently drifting eastwards to experience phenomenal growth in South-East Asia, India and China. Decisions taken in one continent can mean the closure of a factory or the creation of thousands of jobs in another with the result that many UK jobs have been transferred to providing services for manufacturing. This is consistent with the findings of recent research reporting that areas in England with the highest proportion of NEET relate to a historic local decline of manufacturing industry and a reduction in the number of related manual occupations that 'provided a clear post-16 destination for many school leavers' (Spielhofer et al., 2009:45). These findings are as pertinent in Glasgow and Scotland as elsewhere and are evidenced by the dismantled shipyards, steelworks, coalmines and factories that were the sources of mass labour half a century ago. Further,

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[4] G-7: meeting of finance ministers from a group of seven industrialised countries not to be confused with G-8 the meeting of heads of government of G-7 countries plus Russia

former manufacturing occupations have not necessarily been replaced by comparable levels of employment opportunity and so, noting Furlong's comment, 'NEET status should not be regarded simply as a consequence of personal deficits, but rather as an indication that the economy is failing to provide the opportunities for the long-term security of young people in some areas' (Spielhofer et al., 2009:45).

The essence of this debate is epitomised in Rifkin's (1997) claim that even those jobs that have been relocated abroad are being lost to automation and are never coming back. Politicians, he tells us, are avoiding the real problem which is that the projected new jobs in the knowledge sector represent a shift from mass labour to a small elite highly skilled workforce and every nation 'will have to grapple with the question of what to do with the millions of young people whose labour will be needed less, or not at all, in an even more automated global economy' (Rifkin, 1997).

Politics, Society and Workfare

This changing structure of work and employment opportunities, emerging from an increasingly globalised economy, has its origins in the rise in popularity of neoliberal ideologies in the 1980s and 1990s that promoted and defended the notion of a free market; its popularity fostered by a perceived need to reverse the unsustainable growth of the post-war welfare state. Previously, with the UK recovering from the horrors of two world wars and the depression of the 1930s that followed the collapse of the stock market, the middle decades of the 20th century rendered reliance on a capitalist market economy unsustainable and justified the extended role of government to protect the social needs of the people. The Welfare State, through the implementation of policies grounded in Keynesian economic principles, committed to full employment, free universal secondary education and free health provision also brought financial support for families and for the unemployed. Central to Keynes's economic theory was advocacy for the end of *laissez-faire*, the control and management of capitalism and an acceptance of a wider role for government in economic planning. It is no accident, then, that this period saw extensive nationalisation of industries and utilities and the growth of provision of civic services such as libraries, transport and housing and enhanced employment opportunities through public works and the rights of workers secured through the power of the trade unions. Effectively, the welfare state spawned a spirit of community that promoted social justice whilst respecting and protecting the rights and freedom of the

individual. In essence, an era where the social security and wellbeing of the people appeared to be the primary concern of the state as observed through the introduction of a comprehensive system of welfare support.

Welfare policies in the UK altered radically during the 1980s. The social and economic milieu in which the 'new right' administration of Margaret Thatcher came to power in 1979 legitimated the insertion of neoliberal policies that could be described as a broad alliance between economic liberal and conservative interests. Battling rising inflation, growing unemployment and social unrest, the Thatcher regime set out to remove power from the trade unions and restore confidence in the sanctity of the market as a mechanism for economic growth. Challenging Keynesian demand management and the left-wing drive for full employment, Thatcherism systematically dismantled the welfare state and sought to reduce supplementary forms of benefit to a minimum safety net. While espousing the need for minimal government intervention, there followed a raft of reforms designed to transform the state and all forms of public administration in what could be described as 'social engineering'. Of particular relevance to this study is the emergence of various strategies aimed at addressing rising youth unemployment via government youth training schemes while at the same time, growing a workforce with the skills and attitudes necessary to compete in the new economy. I now turn to focus on the evolution of these workfare initiatives from the beginning of the Thatcher years in 1979.

With over two million unemployed, a quarter of whom were young people, the then existing Youth Opportunities Program (YOP) was seen as ineffective in tackling youth unemployment in actual terms and regarded as simply a political strategy to keep unemployment figures artificially low and control the discontent of the young long-term unemployed. Harsh criticism was directed at the work experience offered to YOP trainees as exploitation and 'cheap labour' – a 'skivvy scheme' that had little credibility with the young trainees, the trade unions and even with employers. In 1981, the Youth Training Scheme (YTS) sought to redeem this situation and was a significant departure from the Conservative *laissez faire* paradigm yet condoned neoliberal political intervention and regulation in order to promote the 'competition state' and increase individual self-reliance in the face of mass unemployment. This 'New Training Initiative', the strategically manipulated Active Labour Market Policy (ALMP), focussed on the supply side of the employment market and established the need for a skilled, versatile, flexible, trainable workforce to meet the needs of a globalised economy as its core policy value. The

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Technical and Vocational Education Initiative (TVEI) was introduced by Thatcher in 1982, unannounced and with no consultation or legislation. The ambitious aims of TVEI were to combine general and technical and vocational education in schools and colleges through a more practical and relevant curriculum and provision of a period of work placement in order to equip young people with the knowledge and skills for success in adult working life (Callear, 1992).

Taking a broad view of the contrasting conceptualisations of 'the individual' and 'the people' through the changes in government and the welfare state, we see a shift from the welfarist 'ends' to the neoliberal 'means to an end' which inevitably relates to promoting the political aim of improved global order. Thus, we have seen a shift from the leftist social welfare perspective of the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s to the right-wing neoliberal perspective that persisted through the 1980s and 1990s to be followed by a third perspective that claimed the middle ground and blurred the left-right dichotomy. Labour's landslide victory in 1997 brought a 'new politics': 'New Labour' and the 'Third Way' promise of social democracy which, critics suggest, was a continuation of the Conservative neoliberal model with some concern for social inclusion and a form of communitarianism (Hall, 1998; Faux, 1999; Ryan, 1999). Prime Minister Blair's flagship 'welfare to work' initiative – the New Deal for Young People – was launched in 1998 as 'set to revolutionise the path from welfare to work' (BBC News, 1998).

It is important to note that the New Deal was a national multi-agency initiative delivered through the Employment Service to meet Labour's election pledge to get 250,000 young people off benefits and into jobs. Within the New Labour worldview of individual responsibility to adapt to a changing labour market, the young unemployed target group were 'compelled/impelled' to take up the offer of help to find employment and no longer had the option of a life on full benefit (Brown, 1997).

In Scotland, New Deal was reformed into several workfare initiatives each targeting particular groups of people: Get Ready for Work (GRfW)[5], Training for Work, Skillseekers and Modern Apprenticeships. Get Ready for Work, the main route for young people not ready to enter full time employment, is today marketed by the Careers Service as 'an innovative, client led, national training initiative aimed at meeting the needs of young people (16 – 18/19 year olds) who are not ready to go into work for a variety of

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[5] sometimes GRFW

reasons' and is wholly integrated with the benefits system. The 'client' and his/her advisor work together to develop an 'Action Plan' and identify which strand of the initiative best meets the client needs whether this be Life Skills, Core Skills, Personal Skills or Vocational Skills. In this multi-agency partnership initiative, the education system, and the further education sector in particular, are seen as potential providers of skills training in competition with private providers and employers. It is worth noting the extent to which this approach to providing vocational training reflects the priorities of the current political economy in its drive to minimise welfare costs, reduce youth unemployment rates and nurture a culture of financial autonomy and self reliance. Further, it reflects the changing attitude towards vocational education within a system of comprehensive schooling that was introduced to remove discrimination on the basis of class by abolishing selection through the 11-plus exam and the subsequent academic/vocational divide in order to allow all children an equal opportunity to the same state education and an equal opportunity for future flourishing. Whereas, previously, vocational education might have been associated with a lower level of learning and thus stigmatised as an activity of the lower social classes, with the present focus on global economic competition wherein success relies on a skilled, flexible and malleable workforce, government is increasingly investing in vocational education and training as evidenced in the diversity of subject areas now embraced by Modern Apprenticeships. It may be logical to assume that the political priority to reduce youth unemployment rates and the apparent emphasis on identifying and addressing individual needs within workfare initiatives must effect an improvement in the incidence of NEET. However, the persistence of the NEET phenomenon suggests that different approaches to tackling the situation might be more effective and require to be investigated.

Education, exclusion and inequality

Tony Blair's 'New Labour' mission promised to battle exclusion, inequality, social injustice and poverty by providing the means for more people to become 'middle class' (Blair, 1999). Work was seen as the route out of poverty and education was to become the driving force in taking people into work and also the springboard in facilitating upward mobility. During his early years in office, Blair made frequent reference to social mobility through the use of the term 'meritocracy' by declaring that the Britain of the elite was over and 'The new Britain is a meritocracy' and then later in 1999 'The old Establishment is being replaced by a newer, larger, more meritocratic middle class' (Flintoff, 2007, *The Sunday Times*). As Flintoff points out, it is difficult to argue against merit and the notion

of a society where ability floats to the top irrespective of an individual's background; where privilege is earned and deserved. But many do argue against this and warn of its dangers, including the author who coined the word 'meritocracy' in his 1958 book 'The Rise of the Meritocracy' (Young, 1958). Writing shortly before his death in 2002, Young (2001, *The Guardian*) confessed to being disappointed by his book and by the way his term 'meritocracy' has gone into general circulation; particularly in the speeches of Mr Blair. His book, he reminds us, was a satirical warning of the dangers of meritocracy – not a celebration of its worth. 'It is good sense to appoint individual people to jobs on their merit' he writes. 'It is the opposite when those who are judged to have merit of a particular kind harden into a new social class without room in it for others.' Young goes on to make reference to many of the predictions he made in his 1958 book that have already come about.

> I expected that the poor and the disadvantaged would be done down, and in fact they have been. If branded at school they are more vulnerable for later employment. They can easily become demoralised by being looked down on so woundingly by people who have done well for themselves. It is hard indeed in a society that makes so much of merit to be judged as having none. No underclass has ever been left as morally naked as that.
> (Young, 2001, *The Guardian*)

Young directs much of his criticism toward education and education selection that concentrates ability within the new meritocratic class providing the means whereby it reproduces itself. Education, he believes, has 'put its seal of approval on a minority, and its disapproval of the many who fail to shine' according to education's narrow band of values and with 'an amazing battery of certificates and degrees at its disposal'. The dangers of meritocracy to which he alerts us stem from the belief that meritocrats attest that they deserve whatever they can get. 'They can be insufferably smug – so assured that there is no block on the rewards they arrogate to themselves. Salaries and fees have shot up. Generous share option schemes have proliferated. Top bonuses and golden handshakes have multiplied.' Young's message has even more salience today as we witness the downfall of the financial sector and learn of the high salaries, pension payments and share option schemes awarded to those now deemed responsible for its collapse; all of which contrasts with the loss of jobs and earnings, without adequate recompense, of hundreds of employees. Of particular relevance to this study is the fact that, after a year of job-market recession, youth unemployment at 16.6% amongst 18-24 year-olds at June 2009, is at its highest rate for 15 years making it particularly difficult for young school-leavers to find employment (Barber, 2009).

Promoting an open and free society facilitating freedom and opportunity for human flourishing is an admirable intent and demonstrative of New Labour's confidence in the renewal of Social Democracy through its Third Way agenda. It is somewhat confusing therefore, that Tony Giddens, advisor to Blair and prominent advocate of the third way approach, considers the neoliberal model of equality of opportunity, or meritocracy, to be untenable, unrealisable and self contradictory. It is self contradictory, in his view, because the elite will find ways to confer privilege on their children thus destroying meritocracy. It is untenable and unrealisable because 'not only would groups be at the bottom, but they would know their lack of ability made this right and proper: it is hard to imagine anything more dispiriting' (Giddens, 1998:102). Giddens also points out that, as in other countries with lengthy periods of neoliberal government, the UK has shown greater increases of economic inequality than others so that the gap between the highest-paid and lowest-paid workers is wider than it has been for at least fifty years. His notion of equality focuses on inclusion and an idea of 'limited meritocracy' where access to work and education are considered the main contexts of opportunity positing acquisition and updating of skills and help with raising confidence and morale as absolutely essential in improving employability in the poorer groups. Work, Giddens asserts, has multiple benefits: it generates income for the individual, gives a sense of stability and direction in life, and creates wealth for the whole society. However 'Leaving people mired in benefits tends to exclude them from the larger society' while 'Reducing benefits to force individuals into work pushes them into already crowded low-wage labour markets' (Giddens, 1998:110). Much of Giddens' writing mirrors the caution expressed by Young that, while the idea of an equal meritocratic society is good; unrestrained, polarised and uncontrolled meritocracy risks creating an elite, nepotistic, self-reproducing ruling class and an excluded, disaffected underclass.

Emerging from this discussion is a tension in the role attributed to education in tackling exclusion and inequality. While Young appears to view education, or at least the value placed on educational qualifications, as a catalyst in the creation of an elite social class, others, including Giddens and Blair, attach a more positive meaning to meritocracy more in line with New Labour in its assumption that equal access to education is necessary to remove unfair, ascriptive influences. American sociologist Daniel Bell believes that meritocracy is the best way to run a society and that any inequalities that result are fair. In fact, in rejecting inequality as a valid charge against meritocracy, he claims that populists

are simply having an envious gut reaction to the higher status of the most competent few with no regard to justice (Yu, nd). Bell's perspective of meritocracy is founded in his study of the post-war transformations in the structure of occupations and the high educational attainment of the elite professional and technical labour force in the expanding service economy. Thus, Bell's analysis of post-war mobility leads him to consider educational attainment to be an adequate indicator of merit and crucial when competing for the best occupations and improved social standing.

In his critique of the relationship between education and social mobility, Themelis (2008) explores the findings of various research studies in order to compare and contrast these two different perspectives of meritocracy - that is, Young's definition of merit as IQ (intelligence) plus individual effort and Bell's view which emphasises educational attainment and qualifications above any other influences. Themelis' findings are noteworthy. First, based on his analysis of the work of Saunders (1995, 1996, 1997), an advocate of Young's approach, he reports Saunders' findings that people can work their way out of their low social class position if they are sufficiently able and motivated. Thus, according to Saunders, higher social class destinations are justified so long as those who secure these positions are the ablest amongst all the participants in the competition and the reproduction of social class is justified and compatible with a competitive, market-driven society. Further, Saunders' findings lead to the conclusion that:

> The middle class manage to secure for their offspring the same class position because their children are equally able and motivated. Conversely, the working class lack in ability and motivation, and this is why they stay behind in the class advancement process. (Themelis, 2008:433)

Second, by way of a contrast to Saunders' views, Themelis quotes the work of Machin (2003), an advocate of Bell's view of merit as educational qualifications: 'Rather than acting to equalise the chances of people from lower income backgrounds, the education expansion has actually acted to reinforce and increase inequalities across generations' (Machin, 2003:197 cited in Themelis, 2008:433). Machin's (2003:280) argument, which he supports with research evidence, is useful in understanding the debate surrounding the perpetuation of social inequalities and the role of education in social mobility. We can summarise his findings thus:

- there is currently less movement across social classes than there used to be until the early 1980s

- any movement in these early post-war decades was never the result of decreasing inequalities between the advantaged and disadvantaged social classes but was mainly due to occupational restructuring and the concomitant structural mobility

- achieved characteristics (such as educational qualifications) are important but not sufficient in securing access to a better social class position as ascriptive factors such as family income and cultural capital have significant affect on the destinations of children from wealthy families

Much of the discourse on merit and meritocracy is founded on the analysis and interpretation of social mobility from large-scale data banks such as the National Child Development Study, the Nuffield Mobility Study, the British Cohort Study and the British General Household Survey and so it follows that, while many of the findings are inclusive of and relevant to Scotland, there are some facets of Scottish education and culture that should be noted as different. In particular, Scotland has a relatively small proportion of private schools and the introduction of comprehensive schooling in state schools has been more successful than south of the border. Moreover, issues of school selection practices, parental power over curriculum, qualifications and school choice are less divisive and confrontational than south of the border (Croxford, 2000). Focusing their research on Scotland, Ianelli and Paterson (2005) selected four birth-cohorts (the earlier two cohorts having experienced a selective education system and the later two a comprehensive system) from the 2001 Scottish Household Survey to analyse whether educational expansion and the development of a comprehensive educational system have reduced inequalities and led to greater social fluidity. Ianelli and Paterson's analysis of educational attainment shows that the percentage of people who did not acquire any qualification declined from 40% in the earliest cohort (1937-1946) to 12% in the latest cohort (1967-1976). Conversely, the percentage of people with degrees rose from 15% in the earliest cohort to 26% in the latest; although for the middle two cohorts (1947-1956 and 1957-1966), the earlier of which experienced a selective education system while the later experienced a comprehensive system, the percentage acquiring degrees was 24% in both cases. The analysis of educational attainment by class of origin presents interesting statistics that, from those with origins in professional or managerial classes, 6% acquired no qualification whereas of those with origins in the unskilled manual class, 37% acquired no qualification. Within the same context, 47% from professional and managerial backgrounds acquired degrees compared with 8% from the unskilled manual class. The conclusions reached by Ianelli and Paterson largely confirm the findings of previous

studies mentioned above. That is, in Scotland, while educational attainment has increased, social class differences have not been reduced. Further, while there is some evidence of upward mobility, the chances of people from working class backgrounds entering top-level occupations is much lower than it is for the higher social classes. Moreover, there is still a strong direct effect of parental class on individuals' achieved class that is not mediated by education.

Discussion

The social, cultural, economic and political forces that have shaped education, employment and training since the middle of the 20th century are complex and nuanced and expose various tensions. The language of the debate promotes issues such as educational attainment and achievement, social class, social status and upward social mobility as proxies for merit. What is clear is that people excluded involuntarily from education, employment and training are socially, culturally and economically disadvantaged. Moreover, they are the subject of intense political intervention designed to reverse their excluded status. Before moving on, it is useful to summarise the main threads of this discourse. First, as a result of post-war changes in the structure of occupation and employment, manual occupations were replaced by service-based occupations and, although initially many lower status workers moved up to higher positions, this upward mobility has slowed leaving less 'room at the top'. What seems to have evolved is a working class with no work. Second, although a comprehensive schooling system was introduced to remove inequalities and selective practices by providing every child with equal access to education regardless of their background, there is evidence that the gap in achievement and attainment between children from higher income families compared to lower income families is widening (Croxford, 2009). This suggests that families with access to additional resources such as higher income and social networks can influence the educational outcome, and thus the occupational opportunities, of their children in order to maintain their social position. Returning to Moore's essay (Moore, 2008, *New Statesman*) in which she attests that, of those born in 1958 and 1970, personal and social skills '[…] became 33 times more important, between generations, in determining earnings in later life', we are provided with further evidence of factors other than access to educational opportunities influencing achievement. Moreover, she argues that the middle classes are in a position to purchase personal and social skills that will enhance their children's development while those with little money have few opportunities to act

similarly. Third, the rise of meritocracy as a political goal and the debate around equality, social mobility, social justice and the mediating role of education raises unanswered questions regarding the effectiveness of social democratic policies in narrowing the gap between the haves and the have nots. From the discourse surrounding meritocracy and social mobility it is clear that the underlying tenet of human capital theory - the vision of 'homo economicus' and the perception of man as a self-maximising individual - is relevant to the goals of social democrats to the same extent as it was central to the goals of the New Conservatives in the political struggle for global economic advantage. That is to say, the human resource, like any other resource, is exposed to market forces and competition. In order to survive and accumulate wealth, people have to become more enterprising and competitive and view themselves as personal capital that requires investment in order to participate in society.

I find this discourse disconcerting in its conception of people as a means to a political and economic end and not as an end in themselves. While the argument around equality of opportunity will continue to dominate this debate, the question of equality of outcome appears more troublesome. In the context of NEET young lives, we need to ask not only about the equality of opportunities open to young people but whether these are truly fair opportunities. That is, to what extent does social, economic and cultural background constrain young people's ability to convert these opportunities to their own advantage. In short, we need to ask, as Martha Nussbaum (2000) does, what people are actually able to do and what should politics be pursuing for each and every individual before we can think well about economic change. On Nussbaum's view, in a fair and just world, we have a collective responsibility to ensure that all human beings have what they require – a set of basic human entitlements – to live a richly human life. Thus, by focussing on equality of outcome rather than equality of opportunity, her approach moves to confront the divisiveness of meritocracy as discussed above. Further, it confronts the contractarian notion of cooperation only when as a contract for mutual advantage by advocating that the situation of the least well off be improved, at least to a minimum of what justice requires for all.

To my reading there is a crucial thread of discussion missing from this debate evident from the central position it gives to upward social mobility– that is, the element of individual choice and preference. By individual choice and preference I mean the right and the

freedom to lead the kind of life to which one aspires and that one has reason to value and I develop this discussion later in relation to Nussbaum's take on choice, opportunity, political entitlement and capabilities in Chapter Five. I am not advocating the right not to participate in society or to choose a life dependent on welfare benefits. I do, however, question the persistent expectation that one should seek to better one's self by chasing higher social status. This appears unrealisable; certainly unsustainable. It suggests that there is something unacceptable about working-class status given the implication that 'everyone' from working-class, manual backgrounds ought to seek to escape their 'working class' status. A meritocratic society would assume that high income was proof of merit and low income a lack of it but Lister (2006) believes that much real merit goes unrewarded as in the case of skilled, committed workers carrying out work of value to society. 'We have a vicious circle' she claims. 'The low value attached to care work means it is low paid, which in turn encourages it to be lowly valued'. She proceeds to criticise New Labour for not providing proper rewards for menial and low-skilled workers and quotes Toynbee (2002) to emphasise that what a person is paid signifies their worth and is of primary emotional and social importance: 'Low pay is low status […] Just as pay is a cause for boasting among fat cats, it is equally a source of humiliation for the low paid, seeing how little one hour of their hard work is valued at' (Toynbee, 2002 cited in Lister, 2006:235).

This leads to my final point, which concerns the equal distribution of opportunities from a perspective of social justice and the varying abilities of individuals to capitalise on these opportunities. The role of choices, preferences and aspirations in influencing social mobility is morally troubling, claims Swift (2003) if we consider the inequality that tends to be reproduced by those choices. A person may not achieve an outcome that they have the opportunity to achieve and may not even try to achieve it. If people know that the mechanisms for allocating jobs is biased they may make the rational choice to pursue different strategies. Swift calls this adaptive preference formation – adapting preferences to the perceived opportunity set because of perceived obstacles. Adding that the role of choices and preferences in generating immobility has been underestimated and suggesting that we need a better understanding of where preferences come from, how they interact with beliefs and resources to generate choices, when they are adaptive and so on. This, he believes, would help us assess the causal processes at work, the policy interventions most likely to make a difference, and the justice or injustice of the outcomes to which they lead (Swift, 2003:212). Although, here, Swift directs his focus towards the influence of

preferences and aspirations on social mobility, these ideas resonate with Nussbaum's writing on adaptive preferences and capabilities (and appear to be drawn from her work but he does not say this) that I develop in the context of this study in Chapter Five.

From this I take direction for my project. As has already been pointed out, the educational achievement and attainment of young people from poorer families is lower than that of children from wealthier families whilst educational qualifications may be more significant to the future of those young people who have no other form of advantage available to them. It seems logical to suggest that young people leaving education with no immediate prospect of employment or training and no alternative form of support are at risk of a future of poverty and exclusion irrespective of the argument that they have been presented with the same opportunities as many others who have had more favourable outcomes. As I have suggested above, and continue to note throughout this dissertation, the issues affecting this inequality are complex and nebulous but, nevertheless, constitute a moral obligation to improve the lot of the least well off. Here I agree with Swift (2003) that we need a better understanding of perceived opportunities and the role of choice and preference formation that influence the behaviour and decisions of those young people. Further, I believe that this deeper understanding can be facilitated by communicating directly with these young people rather than from the analysis of cohort data. Thus my project engages directly with NEET young people; hearing the stories of their lived experiences and interpreting the individual, personal and private factors that influence their behaviour and their decisions. The main line of inquiry adopts the notions of choice and preference formation in the uptake of opportunities drawing on the concepts of capabilities and functionings through the capabilities approaches developed differently and separately but collaboratively by Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum. In many ways the capabilities approach contradicts the idea of meritocracy in that it evaluates worth not on measures of income or access to resources, but on what people are actually able to be and do – not just on opportunities but on real freedoms to act in the way they choose and to live the life they have reason to value. This would suggest that while the analysis of large-scale studies provides useful statistics on the relationships between education, employment and training, before we make assumptions about effective interventions, we should consider the real opportunities open to young people. That is, the extent to which they are actually able to take up these opportunities by examining further the individual, personal and private factors that influence their choices and their decisions. This to me seems a better way to measure human development or flourishing or wellbeing (however we choose to

understand these) compared to accumulated financial rewards or educational certificates. When we have developed a better understanding of what young people are actually able to be and do, (see Chapter Five), we might then be in a better position to understand the barriers to progress that NEET young people face. In the following chapter, I provide a review of the literature surrounding the issue of NEET and the political interventions designed to eradicate the problem as a useful further step towards understanding young people who have become, or are at risk of becoming, NEET.

Chapter Three

The Crisis of NEET

In this chapter, I examine the research literature surrounding the crisis of NEET and the history of political intervention designed to tackle youth unemployment. In addition, this chapter provides an in-depth description of the circumstances surrounding the introduction and expansion of government training schemes and the strategies designed to address the crisis of NEET that are salient to this study.

Young people who are not engaged in education, employment or training (NEET) occupy a liminal space characterised by ambiguity, indeterminacy and otherness; betwixt and between dependent child and independent/capable adult; between effective contributor and social liability. Moreover, I have already noted that as adolescents they are perceived as both perpetrators of anti-social behaviour and vulnerable victims of a society that demonises them. For many, the turmoil of the adolescent years is exacerbated in the struggle to make a successful transition from school, or from welfare, to work in a society where identity and status are defined by who one is, with that identification often focussed on how one earns a living. Transitions can be complex and may involve repeated spells of unemployment and low-paid, unrewarding work or ventures into unfulfilled courses of training. The rewards of paid employment go beyond the economic to offer purpose, respect, prosperity and the opportunity to live the life one chooses to value. In the previous chapter I explored the external influences affecting contemporary youth in their transition

to the world of work, drawing on the theoretical work of Olssen, Castells, Giddens, Young and Rifkin to highlight the barriers and inequalities many face. In this chapter I narrow my focus to concentrate on the research literature surrounding NEET young people to identify and discuss the nature, the scale, the cost and the policy salience of the problem. Where possible, I concentrate on the situation in Scotland. The research literature provides a useful description of the characteristics of the NEET group while emphasising the fact that they are not, of course, a homogeneous group but have individual and varied needs and require different levels of support. Next, I explore relevant aspects of the Scottish government's strategy 'More Choices, More Chances' (commonly abbreviated to MC2 or MCMC) introduced to tackle the issue of NEET and also the government training schemes that have been developed under their skills development strategy. What emerges from this engagement is a deeper understanding of the perception of NEETs as collectively constituting an economic liability, a social burden on welfare and a drain on government expenditure. At the same time, the group seem to deserve an understanding of how their individual needs can be met and what strategies and interventions might be most effective in meeting these needs.

I take as my entry point the dramatic rise in youth unemployment in the late 1970s that spawned a series of training initiatives ('schemes') targeting the young school leaver without a job. In response to the need for up-to-date information on the effectiveness of these schemes along with personal, social and educational characteristics of the young people most at risk, biennial surveys of Scottish School Leavers (SSLS) have been conducted since 1977. Subsequent analyses of these data have informed major policy decisions and have been the source of many longitudinal research studies around the transition from school to work in Scotland; most of which was government funded (Main and Raffe, 1983a, b). Considering that the early years of the biennial surveys spanned the ousting of a Labour government by the Conservatives it is interesting to note some of Raffe's findings from that era (Raffe, 1984). Using SSLS data from 1977 to 1983, he describes this period as one of deepening recession, referring to the collapse of employment between 1977 and 1983, and presenting the changing pattern of destinations of school leavers replicated in the table below:

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Table 1. Destinations of school leavers when surveyed

| Year of leaving school | 1975/76 | 1977/78 | 1979/80 | 1981/82 |
Year of survey	1977	1979	1981	1983
Full-time education	*16.0*	*16.7*	*19.7*	*24.1*
Full-time employment	*65.3*	*65.9*	*49.1*	*36.3*
Unemployment	*12.0*	*8.6*	*15.1*	*16.4*
Schemes	*3.7*	*6.2*	*14.8*	*19.2*
Others/not known	*3.0*	*2.5*	*1.2*	*3.9*
Total	*100.0*	*99.9*	*99.9*	*99.9*
Unweighted n	*(6946)*	*(6637)*	*(4000)*	*(4895)*

Source: Raffe (1984: 251) Destinations as a percentage of total school leavers

The table clearly shows the increasing percentage of young people engaged in full-time education while the percentage in full-time employment decreased. While the number in government training schemes increased dramatically over this period, that figure is not included in the number defined as unemployed. Raffe's interpretation of this data brings him to some interesting conclusions. First, youth unemployment (at least among recent school leavers) is no longer significantly connected with patterns of subemployment or frequent job-changing. Secondly, unemployment has not fundamentally changed the 'selective function' of education; credentials have retained their labour-market value in relative if not in absolute terms. Thirdly, he attests that the rise in school-leaver unemployment is very largely a result of the recession of that time – the decline in the aggregate demand for labour – rather than of underlying structural changes that disadvantage young people. Most recent changes in the transition from school to work, he suggested, would in principle be reversible if the recession were to end (Raffe, 1984:247).

Two decades later, at the time of the election of the New Labour government (1997), youth unemployment had decreased [6] and by the turn of the century in Scotland, as in other parts of the UK, young people not engaged in employment, education or training continued to be the focus of concern and had been assigned the somewhat stigmatising label 'NEET'. Reflecting growing political activity to address social injustice and exclusion, the newly formed Scottish Executive commissioned an in-depth analysis of SSLS data to inform its Social Justice strategy. This research (Croxford and Raffe, 2000; Raffe, 2003) examined the scale of the problem in Scotland and attempted to describe the backgrounds and activities of NEET young people in Scotland. Its key findings are summarised below:

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[6] National UK statistics suggest a fall from approx 1,400,000 to 912,000 at this point but it is difficult to find comparable figures due to reclassification

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❑ NEET young people do not form a homogeneous group; for many young people, NEETness is a short-term temporary state as they move into and out of employment or wait for a full-time course to start. More than three in ten (31%) young people surveyed were NEET at some time during the three years after the end of compulsory schooling. More than half of these were unemployed. The proportion who were NEET at any one time varied from 5% to 16%.

❑ Between four-tenths and two-thirds of young people who were NEET at a given point in time were still NEET six months later.

❑ On average, NEET young people had lower educational attainments, had truanted more and had less favourable attitudes to school.

❑ For some young people NEET status could be viewed as a positive choice to travel, take a gap year or experience part-time or voluntary work that is neither associated with a disadvantaged background nor leading to future disadvantage. For others, being NEET is part of a wider pattern of disadvantage and powerlessness rendering them vulnerable to further spells of NEET. Thus, a narrower definition of NEET includes only those who are unemployed, sick or disabled, or looking after a child or the home.

❑ Young people who were unemployed or looking after child or home tended to have less advantaged social and educational backgrounds, to be NEET for longer, and to be vulnerable to further spells of NEET.

❑ Females remained NEET for longer; more females looked after children or home, or took part-time jobs, but fewer were unemployed.

Recent research (Spielhofer et al., 2009) commissioned to inform the debate over the proposal to raise the school participation age to 18 produced similar findings to Raffe's earlier work. Spielhofer's study used latent class analysis[7] of Youth Cohort Study (YCS) data to segment young people who were NEET or in jobs without training (JWT) and tested the validity of the segmentation by carrying out interviews with young people. Confirming that the NEET group is not a homogeneous group, three segments were

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[7] A statistical technique used to cluster or categorise data into groups

identified: the largest subgroup (about 41 per cent) included those who were 'open to learning NEET'. These young people were most likely to re-engage in education or training in the short term and tended to have higher levels of attainment and a more positive attitude to school. The second largest subgroup (38 per cent) were those who were 'sustained NEET'. They were characterised by their negative experience of school, higher levels of truancy and exclusion and lack of educational attainment. This group were most likely to remain NEET in the medium term. The third group (22 per cent) were the 'undecided NEET' who were similar in some respects, for example in their attainment levels, to those who were 'open to learning NEET'. However, they seemed to be dissatisfied with the available opportunities and their ability to access what they wanted to do. It is important to note that while these categorisations provide useful and interesting insight into the subgroups of NEET, not all NEET young people display the common characteristics of any group and many shift into and out of NEET status over time. So, we should not risk generalising or stereotyping on the basis of these characteristics. It is for precisely these reasons that my study endeavours to treat every young person as an individual and seek to look beyond any label adhered to them and not to add to existing classifications. What is useful, however, is the evidence that suggests that many NEET young people remain receptive to education and training although they are likely to have left the compulsory sector at the earliest opportunity and so I return to develop this idea further in the final chapter of this dissertation and in the questions on attitudes to school.

Because of the changing typology of published statistics it is difficult to find comparable figures about the scale of NEET in Scotland over an extended period of time. However, it is noteworthy that 2008 statistics on school leavers from 2006/2007 show 87% to be in positive destinations and, since positive destinations include higher education, further education, employment, voluntary work and training, it is reasonable to deduce that the remaining 13% categorised in 'other destinations' include the latest additions to the NEET group. It can also be observed that, while the percentage of school leavers making the transition to employment (34.4%) is comparable to the 1983 figure of 36.3%, full-time further and higher education now accounts for 50% of destinations compared to 24% in 1983. It is not certain, however, whether this growth in the uptake of full-time education is reflected in the destination of 'Training' sitting at 4.4% or whether that is comparable with the 1983 figure of 19% under 'schemes'. While various interpretations may be placed on these figures and multiple conclusions drawn, and regardless of how we refer to the young unemployed people in our society who are not participating in education or training, it

appears that the scale and intractability of the problem persists to more or less the same extent (Raffe, 1984; The Scottish Government, 2008a).

While not underestimating or ignoring the individual social cost of exclusion, I turn briefly now to explore attempts to estimate the financial cost of being NEET since this plays an important role in driving government policy. Although the work carried out at the Social Policy Research Unit is based on the situation in England, its findings have relevance to Scotland and the rest of the UK (Coles et al., 2002; Godfrey et al., 2002a, b). The aim of this research was to estimate the additional costs of the NEET group compared to the hypothetical situation that these young people had the same current and future experience as the rest of their non-NEET peers, taking as its starting point the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) estimate of 157,000 at the end of 1999 and 170,000 (9%) 16-18 year olds in England identified as NEET at the end of 2000. From a review of the major data sources and research literature it appeared that several groups were over-represented. These included: young people in care - estimated at over 55 thousand; teenage parents and young carers; young people with long-term health problems; young people having a special educational need; those attaining no qualifications or low level attainment often associated with truancy and exclusion from school; young people experiencing family disadvantage and poverty; and, finally, young people involved in crime. After identifying and quantifying these risk groups, estimates of the additional costs to individuals, their families and to the rest of society across the lifespan of the group were provided although it is made clear that these are conservative estimates and not all effects could be quantified (Coles et al., 2002; Godfrey et al., 2002a, 2002b). For the items where costs could be identified, the average per capita total present value costs over a lifetime are £45,000 resource costs (opportunity costs) and £52,000 public finance costs (balance between revenue and expenditure). The significance of these costs is made apparent in the claim that if 10,000 people (less than 10% of the estimated English NEET population of 157,000) were removed from the NEET group, total current savings would be £450 million in resource costs and £520 million in public finance costs.

Thus we see an economic imperative for governments to reduce the number of young people classified as NEET as well as assuming both a social and a moral one. With education assigned the task of reform there appear to be two thrusts to the strategy. First, in the compulsory pre-sixteen school sector there is a drive towards re-engaging young people in learning; to improving attainment and achievement and to preparing young

people for a successful transition from school to further and higher education, employment or training. Beyond the age of sixteen, there are financial rewards for many who choose to continue in education or training (Education Maintenance Allowance – EMA). In addition, the review and expansion of government training schemes provides support for the transition to work and the introduction of modern apprenticeships aims to enhance opportunities for achieving vocational qualifications. The direction of both the pre and post-16 thrusts is clearly aimed at stemming the flow of school-leavers into the NEET group by providing increased opportunities for positive destinations.

Offering more opportunities to young people lies at the heart of the Scottish Executive's NEET strategy 'More Choices, More Chances' (commonly abbreviated to MCMC or MC2) introduced in 2006 (Scottish Executive, 2006). Setting a national priority 'to eradicate the problem of NEET the length and breadth of Scotland', this strategy provides a detailed analysis of the NEET group on which to base its action plan. Of particular interest is the table displaying estimates of the size of the NEET population in Scotland from 1992 to 2004 confirming the persistence of the problem involving '35,000 lives' (Scottish Executive, 2006:56). Of this 35,000 headline figure, an estimated 20,000 'hard core' NEET individuals require support and the report makes reference to the estimated £45,000 additional resource cost (representing the cost to the economy as a whole of failing to help a 16 to 18 year old out of the NEET group) and the estimated £52,000 additional cost to government of a NEET individual [8] (p.14).

The overarching aims of the More Choices, More Chances strategy's approach is to stem the flow of young people into the NEET group by having a system-wide pre and post 16 commitment and to prioritise education and training outcomes to improve their low levels of attainment as a step towards lifelong employability. The action points are ambitious and far-reaching. In pre-16 schooling, there is a call to transform the learning environment to focus on outcomes for all children; to provide flexible, personalised learning opportunities tailored to individual needs and to better prepare young people for the world of work. Here the 'Curriculum for Excellence' (Scottish Executive, 2004) is introduced as representing a radical restatement of the purpose of education, with the young person at the centre of a curriculum, tasked with enabling the four capacities of education: successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors and leading

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[8] Note that these figures should not be added as that would lead to double counting.
Sources: from 1992 – 2002 Labour Force Survey; 2003 – Annual Scottish Labour Force Survey; 2004 – Annual Population Survey

to the achievement of positive outcomes on leaving school. In the post compulsory sector there is a call for a cohesive approach from education and training providers to engage with public and private sector employers to improve employment and work-based training opportunities for young people. The emphasis is to support and encourage engagement, or re-engagement, with employment, education and training of NEET young people or those at risk of becoming NEET. Our national training programmes, Skillseekers, Training for Work and Get Ready for Work (GRfW[9]) play an important role in tackling NEET although it appears that there are significant regional variations in GRfW in terms of target client group, performance, delivery of Lifeskills and the availability of suitable progression routes. Possibly in response to these variations, the GRfW policy context has undergone a review to take account of the commitments made in the skills strategy (Skills Development Scotland, 2008/9). To my reading, this commitment is to make an offer of learning post-16 to all young people well in advance of their school leaving date reflecting the government's wish to smooth transitions between and through learning and to encourage young people to stay in education and training post-16. Moreover, it appears to be working towards a single, simplified cohesive structure to improve vocational pathways pre and post-16 that promotes parity of esteem between academic and vocational learning.

Studying these research and policy documents raises one's awareness of the direction of impending change in the role and structure of education. The absence of any reference to the term 'NEET' in the more recent policy documents reflects government's wishes to replace that stigmatising acronym with MCMC (or MC2) to indicate their strategy to provide 'More Choices and More Chances' to NEET young people. Moreover, the repeated references to a cohesive structure and a simplified pathway through learning are significant; as is the guarantee of a place in education or training beyond the compulsory school-leaving age of 16. It may be easy to see this as a softer, more feasible response to the call to raise the school leaving age to 18 that still conveniently re-categorises NEET as EET (in education, employment or training) but there is inconsistency and confusion that cannot be ignored. I have noted, in Chapter Two, that opportunities for employment are declining and those young people leaving school without qualifications are most at risk of losing out or of taking low-skilled, low-paid and insecure work and so there is common ground for arguing for a commitment to give everyone the same opportunity to achieve their goal in life. But I would also argue that, even where we appear to be giving equal opportunities, individuals have varying abilities to convert these opportunities in their own

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[9] sometimes GRFW

best interest. In addition, we need to think about why there is such a chasm of educational attainment and whether, if disengagement and non-attendance are the main reasons why young people do not stay in education even until the age of 16, offering 'more of the same' for two additional years will deliver the social and economic payback from the investment or whether it will result in the further alienation of the young people it aims to help. Crucially, we must understand the needs and aspirations of NEET young people, be realistic, honest, and appropriately informed about the opportunities open to them and be prepared to invest thoughtfully, carefully and with sufficient resources towards a curriculum that can deliver its promises. If we do not understand the issues faced by these young people, attempts to design policies to provide personalised learning opportunities tailored to their needs as we perceive them, may be futile. By exploring the perceptions and aspirations of NEET young people as individuals, this study represents a modest first step towards identifying and understanding these needs.

This chapter has provided valuable insight into the social, political and economic issues that problematise NEET status and the political interventions designed to eradicate it. While engagement with research and policy documents adds a useful layer to the foundations of my understanding, it cannot give me the kind of answers I need if I am to reach an understanding of individual experiences and circumstances. The next stage of this inquiry aims to identify the individual needs of NEET young people and to develop an understanding of their perceptions of life and their aspirations for the future by speaking with them and listening to what they have to say. In the following chapter I describe the methods and approaches taken in my research study and discuss the challenges faced during the experience of listening to young people's stories and in attempting to give an account of what was heard.

Chapter Four

Methods

1. Introduction

The number of young people in Scotland who are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET), is presented vividly as an economic and social crisis through the graphs, charts and statistics of the publications that underpinned the discussions in the research and literature reviews of the previous chapters of this dissertation. Although much useful information can be gleaned from such secondary data, it is limited with respect to the understanding of individual experiences, perceptions and aspirations compared to the rich primary data potentially available through engaging in purposeful conversation with these young people. This study builds on the published quantitative data, drawing from its analysis and categorisation of NEET young people in an attempt to develop a deeper understanding of the individual factors influencing some young people who leave school with no immediate prospects of sustainable employment and no alternative means of financial support.

Chapter One highlighted the perceived wisdom surrounding NEETs as both victims of unjust treatment and perpetrators of anti-social behaviour and thus complicates the planning of a research project that endeavours to engage in conversation with them. The success of such a project depends on the ability of the researcher to build a relationship of trust and confidence with a young stranger in a very short period of time in order to

conduct a fruitful research interview. So, as a pre-cursor to this project, and because I was anxious that the participants might be unwilling or unable to engage in conversation or might refuse to have the conversation recorded, I used one of the Research Methods courses in the EdD programme to trial and evaluate various interview techniques. I then adapted and improved these earlier methods, building on the experiences and lessons learned from that trial in planning the research study proper.

This chapter is organised as follows: Section 2 gives a procedural overview of the inquiry process; Section 3 describes the approaches used in the inquiry and evaluates these reflectively within the context of the actual conduct of the research. This section also explains the procedures carried out in transcribing the recorded interview conversations and describes how recurring themes were identified and prioritised for later analysis. Section 4 addresses the salient issues emerging from the interview process and discusses the process from various viewpoints, that is, interview as portrayal, narrative, voice and as inter-subjectivity. A discussion of interview as reflexivity appears in the final chapter. Section 5 reflects on the transformative experience of the interview process and its success in looking to find the young person behind the NEET label. As a consequence, subsequent chapters of this dissertation seek to portray and give voice to the realities of NEET perceptions and aspirations and use a capabilities approach to develop an understanding of these young lives.

In order to meet the aims of this study, the purpose of engaging in conversation is to listen to the stories of lived experiences and to elicit perceptions and aspirations; not to present the participants with a pre-set list of questions or to prod beyond what the young person feels comfortable to discuss. This required developing a research strategy sufficiently flexible and reflexive to allow a continual reframing of the issues as these would be heard from the participants; designing and conducting a 'voiced method' of research. The reasons for this approach are provided later in this chapter along with a theoretical description of the methods considered and those selected as most appropriate for the purpose of this study with a discussion of their effectiveness in practice within the context of seeking out, hearing and reporting student voice. Due to the context of this study, there is no single definitive approach; no set of standardised procedures; and what emerges methodologically is an interplay between several approaches drawn from ethnography, phenomenography and narrative inquiry. This informed choice is based on the researcher's ontological, epistemological stance and I endeavour here to give an account of

the content of the interview conversations with particular attention to researcher positionality and the ethical issues that arose during the interview process. Finding resonance with Kvale's (1960) description of qualitative research interviewing as an attempt to understand the world from the subject's point of view and to unfold the meaning of people's experiences, his foundational work informed the research design and the interview process of this study. In order to develop rapport and encourage dialogue, the interview conversations were enhanced using projective and enabling techniques comparable to those presented and explored by Will et al. (1996) and Wilson et al. (2007).

After transcription, the analysis of the interview data followed two complementary paths: first, drawing from phenomenography (Marton, 1981) and Template Analysis (King, 1998), the interview transcripts were searched for themes. Secondly, the search for themes was refined and re-focused to link with notions of capabilities as proposed by Nussbaum (2000) and discussed in Chapter Five. These two paths overlapped and intertwined throughout the research process to inform the final narratives of the storied lives I was privileged to hear and to illuminate my understanding of the salient messages emerging from the conversations. To describe the interview process as 'data collection' is to gloss over the attendant issues that include emotion, representation, voice, the role of the researcher and the nature of the relationship between the researcher and researched that emerged as critical aspects of this study. So, here I reclaim the term 'data collection' away from the realm of scientific detached experimentation to embrace the collection of storied data from research conversations and return to discuss issues around such approaches to data collection in Section Four.

2. Overview of the Inquiry

In this section, I provide a brief overview of the inquiry process, highlighting the salient points of the research design while providing, in the following section, a detailed explanation and justification for this choice of approach. As is already clear from the earlier chapters, the NEET group is not a homogeneous group and its membership is dynamic. Many young people move in and out of NEET status over different periods of their lives and for many different reasons and require different levels of support and different kinds of interventions. It follows, then, that this study reaches a very limited sample of the NEET population – a sample that is accessible to the researcher within the constraints of her educational environment - those young people who attend college as part of their 'welfare to work' contract. The participants in the study are young people on the

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'Get Ready for Work' (GRfW) government training scheme designed to tackle the problem of NEET and who chose to follow the vocational strand of the initiative delivered in college. Fourteen young people participated and took part in a face-to-face, one-to-one recorded interview typically lasting 40 minutes. Access to these young people was negotiated via their training supervisors but, since these young people are only in college for a short period of time during which they go out on work placements, and because I have no access other than when they are in class, it was not possible to carry out follow-up interviews. The interviews took place over three discrete phases with initial analysis of the earlier conversations informing the second and subsequent phases. This flexible, reflexive approach allowed the interview situation to be responsive to the emerging key themes in the data that formed the basis of later analysis.

Participant voice is central to this study – listening to what individuals have to say and following leads in the conversation that open up spaces of possibility for deeper understanding of especially poignant issues was essential. Submitting an interview schedule as part of the procedure for ethical approval was useful in formulating and formalising the kind of data I hoped to collect, but, although I had a short checklist beside me during the interviews, no structured question protocol was followed. The reasons and justification for this approach are provided later in Part II of Section 3 here.

In preparation for analysis, the recorded interviews were transcribed, by me, using a word processor and backup copies were made. During the transcription process, all references to participants' names and other possible means of identification were removed. Each interview file was assigned a unique identifier which was cross-referenced, separately, to their consent form and thus to their name. These steps ensured that the ethical issues of confidentiality and security of data were addressed and ensured that the participants could not be identified from their responses. In practice, however, this became an issue that I discuss further in the final chapter within the context of producing a research dissertation and whether, in doing so, absolute anonymity can ever be assured.

3. Approaches Used in the Inquiry

The research design evolved from the notion (gleaned from my reading but not attributable to any particular author) that the design of any piece of research is at least partly shaped by the hierarchical relationship between the underlying epistemological assumptions and the methodological approach which in turn has bearing on the choice of methods adopted. In

this section I discuss the philosophical assumptions underpinning the research design: epistemology – what constitutes knowledge and how new knowledge is constructed between the researcher and the participant; ontology – what constitutes reality and the subjectivity and multiplicity of reality from the participants' perspective. Finally, from this initial position, the research methodology and methods are discussed and evaluated.

I. Methodology

In considering the philosophical stance of this project, I take as my point of departure the subjective/objective dichotomy, or continuum, about what it is possible to know and how we can obtain this knowledge. The kind of knowledge created in this study is not scientific experimental verifiable knowledge obtained following a criterion of objectivity by a detached researcher. It is the kind of knowledge constructed by listening to people's stories, hearing about their experiences and understanding and respecting their points of view. Its interpretation is subjective, value-laden and richly individual and while it is argued that we can never understand the minds of others, I would reject the solipsistic assertion that it is therefore futile to try. The kind of knowledge and understanding constructed during an intimate conversation with the 'other' goes beyond the intuitive gut reaction to brief encounters; the apperception that assumes knowledge beyond what is seen; the unfounded instant judgements we make from observations. That is to say, I am looking to create the kind of knowledge that will take my understanding and perception of NEET young people to a level beyond received wisdom, urban myth or media hype.

The multiple world views that evolve through social, political, cultural and emotional experiences cannot equate to a single, knowable reality. Nor can the relationship between the researcher and the recipient remain wholly objective, value-free and neutral. Interpretive paradigms recognise the central role of the researcher, and her values and assumptions, in the inquiry and accommodate the intersubjectivity of the relationship between the researcher and participant in building a better understanding of the phenomenon being studied. Engaging with NEET young people in order to better understand their perceptions and aspirations and to give voice to their views of the world fits well with Lincoln and Guba's (2000:116) categorisation of Constructivism. Further, following Lincoln and Guba's line of 'overlapping paradigms' and 'blurring genres', and acknowledging my goal to report NEET perceptions and aspirations in a way that highlights their, and my, 'otherness', my stance begins to resemble the emancipatory narratives of critical theory and the validity criteria of the participatory paradigm that

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'leads to action to transform the world in the service of human flourishing' (Lincoln and Guba, 2000:170). In light of the experience of conducting the research interviews, I discuss issues around my role as researcher and my relationship with the researched in Sections 4 and 5 of this chapter and I engage with the notion of human flourishing in Chapter Five.

My methodological approach borrows carefully, but not in an equally distributed way, from three methodologies: narrative inquiry, phenomenography and ethnography. The link with ethnography is the most tenuous; from it I draw on the idea of studying and learning about a person or group of people, their behaviours and cultures, but do not do so from observation or from field work (although this approach had initially seemed attractive). Narrative inquiry promised to conserve the richness of the stories I was told and am re-telling but the product of my work is not to be a single collaborative story constructed jointly with the storytellers. Working within the constraints of producing a doctoral dissertation, I use brief excerpts from the interview narratives within the body of this document and submit short 'little stories' in Appendix A. Phenomenography, drawn from phenomenology, offers a useful methodological approach designed to reach an understanding of experiences and events as told and, leaving my discussion of narrative to Section Four, I turn now to focus on this.

Cresswell and his co-authors offer useful and accessible guidance to novice researchers on the selection and implementation of appropriate methodological approaches in their pragmatic discussion of the origins, definitions, variants and procedures followed in many commonly used paradigms (Cresswell et al., 2007). Narrative research is described broadly as 'gathering stories, analysing them for key elements and then rewriting them to place them within a chronological sequence' to be applied 'when detailed stories help understand the problem' (Cresswell et al., 2007:241, 244). Phenomenology, they tell us, is appropriate 'when the researcher seeks to understand the lived experiences of persons about a phenomenon' (ibid: 241). Here the common approach is to collect data from several people who have experienced the phenomenon and:

> The researcher then analyses the data by reducing the information to significant statements or quotes, combines the statements into themes, and writes a textual description of the experiences of the persons, […] to convey the essence of the experience. (Cresswell et al., 2007:254)

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Although I find resonance in the ideas of 'gathering stories to help understand the problem' and 'seeking to understand the lived experiences of others', it is not my intention to 'rewrite them within a chronological sequence' or to 'reduce and combine statements into themes'. It is intended that the final product of this research will give a respectful and ethical account of the stories that I am told and, in their telling, that I reach a deeper understanding of the social, political and educational factors preceding NEETism. This, more than shaping my research design to fit a neat type of methodology must remain my goal and so it follows that my research methodology will include variations of narrative and phenomenological approaches. One such variation is what Marton labels 'phenomenography' and which he describes as complementary to other kinds of research yet a relatively distinct field of inquiry aiming at description, analysis and understanding of experiences (Marton, 1981). It is particularly relevant that Marton's work is founded in educational psychology and interesting that he justifies his argument on his belief that 'to find out the different ways in which people experience, interpret, understand, apprehend, perceive or conceptualise various aspects of reality is sufficiently interesting in itself' (ibid: 177-178). To my reading, though others may not agree, the essential difference between phenomenology and phenomenography is Marton's conceptualisation of first and second order perspectives: in the first we orient ourselves towards the world and make statements about it; in the second we orient ourselves towards people's ideas about the world and make statements about these. The difference between phenomenography and phenomenology and the significance of this to my project becomes clearer when we study Marton's example with reference to political power. The *phenomenology* of political power, he tells us, would refer to something that we arrive at concerning political power by means of a phenomenological investigation while the *phenomenography* of political power would refer to how people perceive, experience and conceptualise political power. It makes sense, then, to focus on phenomenography as the dominant methodology for describing NEET perceptions and experiences of education whereas a phenomenological study would refer to anything that could be said about education *per se*. From Marton's foundational work, phenomenography has developed as a mainstream research approach spawning a variety of methodological procedures for conducting phenomenographic research (Akerlind, 2002). Akerlind's presentation of a variety of accounts of phenomenography in practice has had significant bearing on my choice of approach to analysis.

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II. Interview as Method

Having articulated the methodology of this research study as drawing from ethnography, phenomenography, and narrative inquiry and having predicated its new knowledge claims on developing understanding of NEET young lives, it seems that what is required is a choice of methods that can accommodate the telling and re-telling of stories. According to Connelly and Clandinin (1990) 'One theory in educational research holds that humans are storytelling organisms who, individually and socially, lead storied lives' and 'tell stories of these lives' (p.2). The authenticity and credibility of a study of storied lives and experiences is enhanced by the accurate reporting of the words of the participant and the considered interpretation of any non-verbal communication as Sewell illustrates in her references to Patton's (1990) experience of altered responses to concerns when the reports included actual quotations (Sewell, nd). However, authenticity and credibility are contested issues that lead to questions of validity and representation in voiced research and the interpretation of meaning. Indeed the authority of the researcher to speak for or on behalf of the other is the subject of much debate. I set aside these issues for the moment in order to describe the interview process but return to address them in some detail later.

Collecting data by any means other than face-to-face dialogue, by postal questionnaire or telephone interview for example, would deny any opportunity to recognise or respond to emotional facial expressions or hand or body gestures that might enhance the understanding of the meaning of the spoken words (Sewell, nd; Kvale, 1996; Dilley, 2004). In practice, of course, expressions and gestures can be misinterpreted as can other forms of non-verbal signals such as clothing, hairstyle and makeup and they risk introducing subjectivity and bias into the inquiry. Further, while some researchers (e.g. Barbour and Schostak, 2005) might suggest that group interviews or a focus group approach to data collection have the benefit of encouraging conversation with other peers, my experience of working with similar groups of young people has, from time to time, demonstrated a level of aggression, a collision of views and a battle for supremacy that would not be conducive to the exchange of private thoughts and feelings that might be more likely in a one-to-one situation.

Planning a fruitful interaction designed to encourage and motivate dialogue around specific issues requires appropriate positioning on a structured - unstructured continuum. Adhering to a sequence of highly structured questions requiring answers that fit into neat categories denies the interviewee the opportunity to tell his/her story in his/her own words or to relate

to any other relevant experience. It also denies the interviewer the opportunity to probe for deeper understanding through further explication or to follow interesting leads in the conversation. An alternatively polemic position that allowed the interviewee to talk without restriction on any arbitrary subject would be equally fruitless. Designing a framework wherein the discussion may be encouraged towards specific topics yet allows the interviewee to talk freely about these topics and allows the interviewer to explore avenues of conversation, is my preferred model for collecting rich data about lived experiences (Sewell, nd; Kvale, 1996; Dilley, 2004; Barbour and Schostak, 2005). However, in practice, assuming an unstructured or semi-structured approach was not without consequence and it became clear at an early stage that some important topics were being missed. For example, I had not always been told about the age or stage at which the young person had left school or what they had been doing during the time between leaving school and joining the Get Ready for Work course. I was also interested to know what kind of support and direction they had had during the transition period from school and whether they truanted from school. Thus an informal checklist evolved that could be consulted towards the end of each interview to ensure that I had not missed important points.

It was not intended that the study should accommodate direct comparisons between participants in light of their gender, age or other personal characteristics or to work towards generalisable statements of cause and effect and so there were no criteria for selection other than being a participant on a Get Ready for Work course. It made sense, however, to engage with both male and female trainees on a fairly equal basis. The first group from which participants were invited were males on a construction course, the second were females on a hairdressing course and the third were following a general course where both males and females undertook studies in all aspects of construction (painting and decorating, bricklaying and carpentry and joinery), childcare, healthcare and information technology. Of the fourteen participants, six were male and eight were female. No particular individuals were targeted from these groups. My approach was to find out when in the college week they would be with their supervisors working towards developing job-seeking skills and I arranged that, when I called at the classroom, one person would be asked to go with me. As we walked from the classroom to the room I had prepared for the interview, I explained that I was carrying out a research project and would appreciate their co-operation although they were under no obligation to participate. Once inside the interview room we discussed the Plain English Statement about the project and I

emphasised that the aim of the study was to assist me, and people like me who were involved in teaching, to better understand the young people they taught in order that, in this instance, I might be better aware of their experiences and perceptions of education and their aspirations for the future. Reminded, again, that they were under no obligation to participate or to answer any questions they felt were intrusive and that they could leave at any time, a consent form was signed giving approval to record the conversation for the purposes of this research project with assurances of privacy and confidentiality.

It should be noted that no-one who was invited to participate refused. Nor did anyone object to the conversations being recorded or refuse to answer a particular question that I posed. Any anxiety that the conversations might have been intrusive or probed beyond what the young person was at ease to discuss was frequently assuaged by the participants' reactions and willingness to talk. Tellingly, on return to the classroom and in response to being asked by classmates what had been going on, a typical response was 'Nothing, we were just talking'. The idea that we were 'just talking' lies at the heart of my methodology and, on reflection, requires skills of listening rather than talking and an ability and willingness on the part of the researcher to continue calmly with 'just talking' through the shocks and surprises of the ensuing conversations. I write in detail about the complex emotions I experienced during the interviews in Section 4 of this chapter and concentrate in this current section on the methodological aspects of the interview process.

Projective and Enabling Techniques

Having elected not to follow a structured interview schedule meant that I had to consider the possibility that the young people, who might have responded favourably to the alternative approach of being asked direct questions that required shorter, less challenging responses, could find it difficult or be unwilling to engage in a lengthy conversation. According to Morrow (1999), it is crucial to the authenticity of interview research that the researcher is able to support the 'voice' of the participants by using a range of methods designed to facilitate the expression of their opinions and discussion of their experiences. Anticipating that the young people might feel uncomfortable with being the focus of conversation for any length of time and might be unwilling or unable to express their feelings or tell their stories within a research interview, various projective and enabling techniques were initially incorporated in order to encourage a more relaxed and spontaneous research dialogue.

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At the beginning of each interview I introduced a 'life grid' (see Appendix B) as an enabling technique to encourage participants to discuss events leading up to their leaving school by focusing their minds on this event (Will et al., 1996). The life grid was adapted from the work of Wilson et al. (2007:3) in their quest to 'grab the interest of even reticent young people' and supporting them to tell their stories. Completing the life grid through 'mutual collaboration', they report from that research, fostered an exchange of dialogue and helped diffuse power relations between interviewer and interviewee – a crucial factor if the data collected is to be a true representation of the participants' experiences. In addition to the lifeline, my version had three coloured horizontal lines to accommodate 'people', 'places' and 'feelings' and a fourth unlabelled line to be used in the event of some other significant aspect being introduced during the discussion. Two-thirds of the way along the lifeline was a marker labelled 'left school'; the significance of its position facilitating discussion not only on past experiences but also on future plans and aspirations. Cross referencing between the lines on the life grid; the people, the places and the emotions that play a significant role in their lives, was designed to encourage reflection on different dimensions of their lives and the retrospective construction of their narratives. The aim here was not to construct a chronological sequence of lived events but to encourage the young participants to engage in conversation and so the life grid was used to initiate conversation by making reference to the only pre-marked event – that of leaving school – and asking "What do you remember about leaving school? Can you tell me about it?" From there the conversations unfolded along various paths as we picked up on interesting features of the dialogue and noted significant facts and events on the grid.

In addition to using a life grid, two published reports were used to project the focus of conversation away from the participant. The key point about this technique is that

> respondents are asked to interpret the behaviour of others, rather than directly
> asking them to report their beliefs and feelings. In interpreting the behaviour of
> others, the respondents are indirectly projecting their own beliefs and feelings
> into the situation. (Kinnear and Taylor, 1991)

Further, this approach allowed me to ask the type of questions typical of a phenomenographic methodology, that is, questions taking the form 'why do people think …' rather than 'what do you think …', that is, the kind of questions that refer to how people perceive, experience and conceptualise the topic under discussion rather than the topic itself.

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As the conversation developed, and in response to the concern expressed earlier regarding the UK's international rating for wellbeing, reference was made to the charts in UNICEF Report Card 7 that showed the UK at the bottom of the wellbeing league for young people living in 'rich' countries. The report also showed the USA in second bottom position (UNICEF, 2007). The purpose of this was to encourage a discussion on subjective perceptions of wellbeing and to elicit the young person's interpretation of the findings of the report that, in turn, might stimulate discussion of their own feelings and experiences without resorting to intrusive direct questioning. By shifting the focus onto those young people who participated in the UNICEF study and probing what experiences and perceptions the UK and the USA respondents might have had to result in their countries being placed at the bottom of the wellbeing league, the interviewees might offer suggestions that revealed why some young people perceived themselves to be having such a poor experience of life. The results were both illuminating and disturbing. Using the charts from the UNICEF (2007) wellbeing study allowed me to focus indirectly on lifestyle issues and did encourage the young people to reflect on their own lives and what they might hope to change. Many spoke about the perceived threat of violence on the streets where they lived. Others chose to talk about the alcohol and drug problems affecting many young people. I was, however, unprepared for Gerry's response when he pulled the chart towards himself pointing to The Netherlands at the top and announcing that if that was Holland then everyone was happy there because cannabis was legal.

Adopting a seemingly unstructured approach allowed the inquiry process to be changed iteratively in response to the data being collected. For example, a second projective technique was introduced in the middle phase of interviews in response to the number of earlier references to bullying and explicit or threatened violence with the underlying assumption that this led to school avoidance. I made reference during the later interviews to news headlines surrounding the publication of a British Council survey condemning UK schools as being the worst in Europe for bullying. In particular, the situation is perceived to be worst in England where 48% of pupils think bullying is a problem in school compared to 43% of pupils in Scotland and 32% -the study average- in Wales (Lipsett, 2008, *The Guardian*). Making reference to the salience of bullying and violence as an internationally recognised problem in schools invited the young participant to relate to these issues and reflect on their experiences either as victim or perpetrator in order to try to find out if bullying was considered to be a problem and if it was a reason why many young people truanted from school. Responses to the suggestion were lukewarm with a few

participants admitting they knew someone who was being bullied and one or two suggesting indirectly that they had been actively involved in incidents where people were bullied. One person confided that they had been bullied at school but that it had stopped when their parents contacted the school; another gave an account of a young person who received injuries at school being told by the headmaster that, since he had not seen what had happened, he was not in a position to take any action. Despite the high profile given to the problem of school bullying by the media, it did not appear to be an issue that gravely concerned the young people in this study. When it did occur, the reason usually suggested was that young people seen as 'swots' were regularly targeted.

Conducting the interviews was an enjoyable, enlightening and emotional experience somewhat removed from what I had expected in that I had been anxious that the young people might not be willing to participate or that we might be unable to engage in conversation. In fact, the interviews were extremely successful in producing rich, complex and often emotional accounts of the young people's lived experiences - there was no arguing, confrontation or shouting. Further, no-one objected to the conversations being recorded; in fact, some seemed pleased that their stories were 'being taped'.

The efficacy of these projective techniques goes beyond their success in fostering conversation and eliciting young people's views. On reflection, it appears that by demonstrating the international salience of young people's perspectives and the global concern for their wellbeing, the participants had more confidence that the views they were expressing during the interview might be listened to and disseminated. I wonder whether this suggests that these young people actually appreciated, perhaps even enjoyed, the opportunity to speak freely and openly with someone who wanted to listen, without judgment, to what they had to say? I believe it does. And in believing thus, more questions are raised about who is listening to these marginalised young people? Do they have a voice and is that voice being heard? These are troubling questions with possible answers that cannot be ignored – I return to discuss these questions in the final chapter of this dissertation.

Recruiting participants, apart from the period during the move to a new college building, was generally unproblematic as I pre-arranged convenient times to come to their classroom and their supervisor selected someone to go out with me telling them discretely that I would explain what was happening. On one occasion I arrived at the classroom to find a

different supervisor in charge who, knowing why I had come, proceeded to announce to the class that I was looking for volunteers and that they would have to think very carefully about what they said to me because it was very important. It then transpired, not surprisingly, that no-one volunteered. As with any research project that engages with people's perceptions, the data are restricted to the participants; and while I make no claim that the findings of this study have standing beyond the local context, there remains a reluctant acceptance that I am not able to reflect all facets of those diverse, but unheard, views. While the data collected during the interviews was wholly appropriate to what I looked to learn from this inquiry into young people's lives, its limitations are not being ignored and are discussed in the final chapter.

On a different occasion, I was the one who chose not to engage further with a particular group after coming across some young people causing a disturbance in the lift. Recognising them as coming from the class I was currently interviewing, I chose to walk on but had to turn back when the noise became impossible to ignore and I realised we had visitors – young school pupils - in the vicinity. By this time they were jumping up and down and kicking the sides of the lift and so I had to shift into 'disciplinarian' mode and handle the situation as a figure of authority thus probably ruining any possibility of becoming engaged in a meaningful research conversation with them as I could no longer be perceived to be detached from judging their behaviour. While the decision to switch roles from researcher to professional in order to intervene was made instinctively I remain convinced that it was correct. In the following sections of this chapter, I argue that the success of the interview process was due, mainly, to the relationship that I was able to establish with the participants and that the type of conversations we were able to have would have been compromised if I had been perceived as a figure of authority. As the inquiry progressed, I set and re-set conditions and boundaries of engagement in response to emerging methodological issues so as to allow, as far as possible, a professional and ethical interview environment.

Despite these minor setbacks, I emerged from the interview process with changed perceptions of Get Ready for Work trainees and convinced that in a one-to-one face-to-face intersubjective relationship such as we were able to develop during our brief research encounter, I saw a very different side to the young person from the one they chose to present in other situations; particularly in the company of their peers. These were very articulate young people with views to express, stories to tell and aspirations to meet and

they appeared to appreciate being listened to without expecting anything from me in return. I certainly feel privileged to have had the opportunity to hear to their stories. My abiding concern is that, in interpreting and re-telling these stories in the subsequent chapters of this dissertation, I am able to do justice to the trust they have placed in me. I address my concerns in Section 4 of this chapter in a discussion of the interview process as going beyond what might crudely be considered as a method of data collection to include issues around the role of the researcher and her relationship with the young interviewees.

III. Converting Conversations: the transcription process

Throughout the research process I listened and re-listened to the recorded interviews: having noted a face, an expression, a gesture and re-living every story told; seeking meaning and expanding my understanding of the messages these oral conversations sought to convey. Eventually, these conversations had to become text in order to be analysed and reported; a process, Kvale warns us, that can transform a living conversation into a written text 'frozen in time and abstracted from their base in a social interaction' (Kvale, 1996:280). Thus we are warned by Kvale and other writers in the field (Tilley, 2003; McLellan et al., 2003) that transcribing audio recordings of interviews raises issues of authenticity and ethics that affects the accuracy of the reporting and therefore deserves more significance in the research process than it is often ascribed:

> […] it is not just the transcription product - those verbatim words written down – that is important; it is the process that is valuable. Analysis takes place and understandings are derived through the process of constructing a transcript by listening and re-listening, viewing and re-viewing […]. Transcription facilitates the close attention and the interpretive thinking that is needed to make sense of the data […]. Transcription as a theory-laden component of qualitative analysis warrants closer examination.
> (Lapadat and Lindsay, 1999:82 cited in Tilley, 2003:751)

From this quotation, I pick up on two points: the first, with which I agree unreservedly, is the notion that revisiting the audio recordings helps the researcher to make sense of the data while the second, which refers to the theory-laden quality of the transcription process and its links to analysis, warrants closer examination of the literature. McLellan et al. (2003) give an insightful, in-depth theoretical account of data preparation and transcription guidelines for processing qualitative interview recordings that, while grounded in large-scale research settings involving multiple researchers and transcribers, offers practical guidance adaptable to the single researcher/single transcriber situation. Central to my adaptation of their protocol is the assertion that the

level of transcription, that is, what text to include, whether timings, pauses, intonation etc. need be indicated, should relate to the level of the analysis. While my approach to analysis does not require the level of detail necessary in linguistic discourse analysis or conversation analysis, I found it useful to record more than just the spoken words. From their discussion I developed my own set of rules for formatting my transcriptions and these are included in Appendix C.

I embarked on the transcription stage after the third interview armed with my transcription protocol and having taken cognisance of experienced researchers in the field of qualitative interview inquiry. The interview conversations had flowed naturally and re-listening reminded me of the discussions that had taken place but my typing shuddered to a halt when I heard the response to my first question about leaving school: '*Well, it jist goat tae the stage that school wisnae fur me*'. This had seemed a very natural response at the time but now my muddled brain could not decide what to type and I found myself questioning how I ever thought that computer voice recognition software might make light of this transcription task. Should I translate from the vernacular or even change the words to something like 'I eventually realised that school was not meeting my needs at the time and I should embark on an alternative path'? Dialect and use of vernacular speech were not the only problematic areas. I had not truly appreciated how natural language stutters and starts and restarts and pauses and repeats and overlaps the speech of others. I had not considered the ubiquity of non-verbal utterances, unfinished sentences, or expressions such as '*d'ye know whit I mean?*' and '*an I goes*' or how I might record them and frequently had to improvise with spelling and punctuation. At the time, transcribing the research interviews constituted a personal and ethical dilemma that created a major confidence crisis. How could I produce a scholarly yet authentic account of schooling described as '*shite*'; troublemakers referred to as '*fannies*' and drugs referred to as '*smack*'. These words were not in my vocabulary initially. I could no more write them than speak them let alone understand them. Decisions on how to proceed could be considered 'dodgy' (Sikes, 2006). Two lines of thought were particularly problematic. First, a writing style that engages with such language and vernacular speech could have negative implications on how the young subjects are depicted and second, such a style may be viewed pejoratively in academic circles as not conforming to traditional doctoral writing styles.

Gradually, after much self-examination, I came to realise that the problem lay with me and not with the young people who took part in the study. If readers are shocked with the

language of my writing then they, too, must ask themselves why. Drawing logically and rationally from my reading on voice, authenticity, authorship and ethics, I proceeded to transcribe the conversations remaining as true to the speaker's words as I possibly could. Thereafter, having come to terms with the fact that my position was not neutral and unbiased, the transcription process, although labour intensive and time consuming, proceeded uneventfully and provided another opportunity to further scrutinise the verbal record of our conversations.

IV. Making Sense of the Data

To a greater or lesser extent, the content of an interview conversation is partially analysed by the time the transcription is complete; the stories, the questions, the gestures and emotions committed to the memory of the researcher – some of them indelibly so. Focussing on methods of analysis risks butchering these memories - these inter-subjective conversations - into impersonal, detached fragments of speech devoid of any nuance of the social interaction between researcher and participant and the private confidences divulged. That said, and in order to facilitate dissemination of the stories and messages of the young people interviewed and to report the findings of the study, a sympathetic, considerate approach to analysis, interpretation and reporting must be adopted. It follows that my approach to analysis is a collection of methods gleaned from those authors who advocate engaging in dialogue with the interview texts (Kvale, 1996), producing an interpretation that does justice to the richness of the data within the constraints of a dissertation (King, 1998), and discovering both significant and subtle themes in the text (Ryan and Bernard, 2003).

Theme identification is central to the analysis of textual data but the term is difficult to define. Themes are, King tells us 'pragmatic tools to help the researcher produce their account of the data' and arise from engagement with the text 'as he or she attempts to address a particular research question' (King, 1998:np). Along the same line, Ryan and Bernard (2003:1) describe themes as 'abstract, often fuzzy, constructs which investigators identify before, during and after data collection' and come from sources including literature reviews, characteristics of the phenomenon being studied and from researchers' values and personal experience.

Setting aside, for the moment, my discomfort in referring to either NEET status or NEET young people as 'phenomena being studied', the early chapters of this dissertation show,

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through engagement with the literature, a detailed analysis of the characteristics frequently ascribed to the stereotype NEET. It was from this literature and my own personal experience that I developed both the interview guide submitted for ethics approval and the life grid used during the interviews and from which I developed the research questions addressed in this inquiry and so it makes sense that these feature as *a priori* themes in my initial analysis: people (teachers, parent, peers); places (school, work, private spaces) and emotions (anger, fear, anxiety, apathy, disappointment). The discourse surrounding disaffected and disengaged young people in general and NEET young people in particular has clearly impacted on this choice of themes and raises concerns that I might have come to the analysis with preconceived notions of what I might find. Of course, *a priori* themes may prove not to be effective in helping to understand the data and there is a danger that they may divert my focus from other important areas and so it became crucial to engage with the dialogue and to allow the data to drive the identification of themes.

Word-based Textual Analysis

Ryan and Bernard (2003) outline several word-based 'theme dredging' techniques used by social scientists and from these I identified four as suitable for the demands of my project – at least in the early stages of analysis. These are described briefly below and their application and efficacy critiqued later in this section.

First, a simple word count based on the *a priori* themes helps to highlight those words repeated most often and the patterns of speech in which they are repeated. That, however, is not to suggest that only frequently used terms are of interest in the analysis; identification of more subtle themes requires engagement at a deeper level.

Second, building on the identification of key words, the context in which these words are used is considered and examples of the usage of each word are taken from the text and physically bundled together. This key-words-in-context (KWIC) technique helps to structure the various texts so as to get a feeling for the diverse contexts in which the word is used.

Third, Ryan and Bernard (2003) highly recommend 'pawing' through texts and marking them with different coloured highlighter pens as one of the best ways to begin hunting for patterns in qualitative data.

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Fourth, suggested as possibly more appropriate to later stages of exploration and more suited to seasoned researchers, is the idea of searching the text for specific topics which are likely to generate major social and cultural themes and produce evidence of social conflict, cultural contradictions and other indigenous themes that characterise the experience of the informants.

Each of these four techniques has a role to play and my approach was to employ them, as Ryan and Bernard (2003) suggest, in a sequential manner as my exploration of the interview data progressed and the depth of my engagement with the themes deepened.

Template Analysis

Template Analysis (TA) is a technique complementary to those described above offering a particular, structured and organised way of thematically analysing qualitative interview data. Central to this method is the development of a coding 'template' that organises themes into a hierarchical structure of codes that are then used to label or 'code' sections of the data. The template is developed iteratively. Generally, analysis starts with some *a priori* codes identifying salient themes; then, while reading through the transcripts, sections are marked as corresponding to these codes or possibly, on scrutinising the text, other themes considered relevant to the study are identified. From this first pass through (some of) the data an initial template is produced which is then applied to the whole data set. This process is repeated and the template refined to the researcher's satisfaction and, once a final version is defined, all transcripts are coded to it. The final template can then be used as the basis for the researcher's interpretation or illumination of the data set and the writing up of findings. The same caution is due here as in defining *a priori* themes; that is that we do not proceed with preconceived notions of what we might find. That said, using the aforementioned themes: people (teachers, parent, peers); places (school, work, private spaces) and emotions (anger, fear, anxiety, apathy, disappointment) in the initial template was a helpful starting point.

V. Discussion of Analysis in Practice

Initial analysis of the transcripts followed the 'word-based' techniques described above and using the *a priori* themes in the template to find instances of words like 'school' and 'teacher' and 'work'. My starting point was to read through the texts to get a feel for the data and highlight references to each of these themes in different coloured pens. Further searches were carried out using a word processor and were helpful in showing how

frequently these particular key words were used and the contexts of their usage but this did not take account of the many synonymous terms in the text. For instance, the interviewees referred to 'pals' and 'mates' and 'folk I go about with' as well as 'friends' and preferred 'getting a job' to 'finding work' and so I found myself dredging the text line by line to identify themes and contexts. This informal wordcount generated an initial list of possible significant topics or themes and highlighted the use of particular vocabulary. Re-visiting each instance of these words and topics and scrutinising the context in which each was used (Key Word In Context - KWIC) gave a better understanding of its meaning and significance and informed the subsequent redefinition of the template.

There came a point where the iterative search for themes, sub-themes and subtle themes was exhausted and the major issues in the lives of these young people became evident. From the analysis surrounding the theme of work came evidence that these young people were not 'work-shy' and were on the Get Ready for Work course to improve their chances of skilled work. The theme of school suggested that they had negative experiences at school and many felt marginalised from the dominant academic stream; relationships with teachers had a profound affect on their attitude to education and they enjoyed being at college because they were learning practical skills and were treated more like adults. The analysis around the theme of emotions suggested that they felt insecure and unsafe because of the perceived threat of violence fuelled from a street gang culture and alcohol and drug abuse. Emerging from the data were stories of experiences, perceptions and aspirations that deserved to be re-told.

It seemed to make sense, at that point, to move on to the fourth and final method. That is, the idea of searching the text for specific topics which are likely to generate major social and cultural themes and produce evidence of social conflict, cultural contradictions and other indigenous themes that characterise the experiences and perceptions of the young participants. Having identified those themes that appeared most relevant to the questions posed in my study, I needed to revisit the transcripts and find and collate appropriate references. Re-listening to the interview conversations at this point re-confirmed the shift in significance from what I had initially considered might emerge as salient themes towards issues of social conflict that dominated young people's lives and which they chose to raise in conversation. It should be noted, however, that searching for themes did not exclude recognising exceptions when they occurred: the one person who attended fee-paying school; the one who actively participated in gang culture and street fighting; the one

who was offered a permanent position after a placement but turned down the opportunity; the one who thought the GRfW course was badly organised because promised placements had not materialised. In effect, the data gathered met two important criteria by providing me with valuable insight into the lives of NEET young people while allowing them scope to express their concerns and share their experiences. With a reasonably small number of transcripts it was possible to have several copies of each one highlighting a particular theme and to cut contexts from individual scripts, along with the identity of the source, and paste them into a new document along with similar references from each of the other transcripts. Thus, all the references to a particular theme were sorted into a single document for comparison, further analysis and cross-referencing. Collating the data in this way facilitated interpretation and helped identify pertinent quotes to use in the reporting. The remaining chapters of this dissertation are devoted to reporting these stories in a way that illuminates their individuality while at the same time, highlighting recurring themes.

4. Beyond Interview as Method

Throughout this methods chapter my goal has been to be open and transparent about the difficult and messy moments experienced during my research project so that the reader might follow my journey and validate my analysis - without necessarily agreeing with it. As mentioned in the opening section, qualitative research is not without its critics. The collection of data by means of purposeful conversation and its subsequent analysis, interpretation and presentation is subjective and value-laden. In this section, I address those issues that have caused me most angst: first, the issue of representation and whether my interpretation might be considered as authentic portrayal or dishonest betrayal; second, the subjectivity of narrative inquiry and the implication of author's choice of which stories she chooses to tell; third, the concept of voice and the issues surrounding 'speaking of' and 'speaking for' others; fourth, the nature of the relationship between the interviewer and the participant and the implications on the research. In addition, a discussion of the self-examining that has persisted throughout this project and that I refer to as 'reflexivity' appears in the final chapter.

I. Interview as Portrayal or Betrayal

In Glasgow, an adjective commonly used about its citizenry, particularly its female citizenry is 'gallus'. There is no obvious translation. It means cheeky and jaunty and mouthy and profoundly unimpressed by rank (Wishart, 2004). I would describe Gina as 'gallus'. Her dark spikey hair tied back from her face left a long blonde fringe hiding her

eyes. As she sat back in her chair, chewing gum, her lip curled as she replied defiantly '*I goat expelled frae the school*!' in reply to my question about leaving school. A story unfolded about an incident in a science classroom where the teacher dropped a book which knocked a piece of equipment onto her provoking an attack during which she '*pure hut 'im wi a seat an everything – pure belted im*' before going on to explain how she could not be charged with assault because she was too young at the time.

Within minutes of meeting Gina I had perceived her as 'cheeky, jaunty and profoundly unimpressed by rank' and using the term 'gallus' portrays her as such. I was not put off by her attitude and apparent attempt to shock but proceeded to nurture a conversation in which she might feel willing to explain her feelings and her actions. Writing about the young people who participated in this study reminds me that the central value of empirical interview data is its quality as a rich and powerful resource for understanding and for throwing new light on the social and emotional issues that can become barriers to learning. But collecting and transcribing interview data is only part of the inquiry – we also have to tell the life-stories we are privileged to hear; producing a scholarly text that critically and authentically reports the experiences in ways that genuinely portray the participants' stories – and the participants themselves. There seems to be no straightforward or objective way of confronting these writing dilemmas as Denzin and Lincoln (2000:19) tell us '[…] there is no clear window into the inner life of an individual. Any gaze is always filtered through the lens of language, gender, social class, race and ethnicity'.

The experience of engaging with NEET young people has made me realise that my gaze is indeed filtered through social, economic and language lenses. Thus, it is impossible to listen to the recorded interviews and not be alerted to the broad Glasgow dialects that might be interpreted in academic circles as indicative of poor articulation and communication skills. Using authentic quotations, such as in Gina's portrayal above risks reinforcing existing conceptions that might do more harm than good by undermining the richness of real lived experiences that serve to illuminate our understanding in relevant and meaningful ways but, in doing so, may place us again 'on dodgy ground' (Sikes, 2006). As I struggle with how to infuse my telling so as to portray the young people with the dignity and respect they deserve, the alternative approach of anglicising their language problematises the inevitable interpretations that will occur, feels like a patronising act of betrayal, and threatens to validate the prejudices that already exist towards local language traditions.

Language plays a central role in portrayal. In this section I focus on the particular aspect of my study that, implicitly or explicitly, portrays an image of the young people involved by speaking about them while, in a later part of this section, I address the issue of speaking for others insofar as it relates to issues of voice. For Alcoff (1991), there is a strong overlap between the practice of speaking about others and the practice of speaking for others such that it may be difficult to distinguish between the two. For her, and for many other writers on the subject of voice, the products of such practices are necessarily subjected to interpretations that re-iterate the claim that the speaker's location has 'epistemic salience'. It is precisely because I recognise that, in speaking about others, I am, as Alcoff suggests,

> engaging in the act of representing the other's needs, goals, situation and in fact, *who they are*. I am representing them *as* such and such, or in post-structural terms, I am participating in the construction of their subject-positions.
> (Alcoff, 1991:9)

Taking a lead from this view and drawing on the work of Humphries and Said, Fielding (2004:298) provides a connection between 'accommodation' and 'accumulation' in 'the covert construction of the less powerful research subject' through the use of language. Here, he suggests, 'the language of the researcher is often used either to redescribe or reshape the language of the researched'. However, it is only by acknowledging my own situated perspective and my awareness of the risk that any reshaping and redescription might have on the sincerity of my portrayals that I can continue in my quest for an authentic representation of NEET young lives.

If the problem of offering richly descriptive portrayals or 'speaking about others' is constitutive of a 'crisis of representation' then it is useful to turn to Elliot and Lukes:

> The good portrayal provokes its readers into a new way of understanding their own practical situation. The claim that such situational understanding also embodies knowledge of universal truth is validated when readers of a case portrayal come to think differently about their own experience. It renders the familiar qualitative world they live in strange. (Elliot and Lukes, 2008:98)

Although their work is centred around case study as a 'method of inquiry', Elliot and Lukes suggest that their deliberations are relevant to other forms of narrative and ethnographic research and so it follows that we could ask, as they do of case study, whether portrayal changes the prejudices of the reader (p.112). That is, does it provide a

challenge or is it opening the mind of the reader to factors they would have otherwise ignored?

In the light of this we can see 'portrayal' as writing in that space between fact and fiction that, while placing ethical and moral responsibilities on the writer, is licence to select which stories to tell and which to omit. This is not to suggest that 'speaking about' is either wrong or futile but to emphasise the complexity of the interview data collected and the magnitude of the selection task. The short portrayal given earlier invites the reader to imagine beyond the bounds of the text as Becker reports from his reading of census data:

> I can work up in my mind, a complete if provisional, picture of the
> neighbourhood. […] I 'know', for instance, what kinds of houses these people
> live in – I can practically see the flamingos, the furniture 'suites' from the
> credit furniture store and whatever else my stereotype of the population
> produces. (Becker, 1992:211 cited in Elliot and Lukes, 2008:105)

Selecting fragments of storied lives cannot deliver a holistic portrayal of an individual as a complete person. Nor can the space constraints of a doctoral dissertation accommodate every aspect of every interview conversation although I do provide short 'little stories' from each interview in Appendix A. What matters is that the writer accepts responsibility for the way in which she portrays the subject and takes account of the extent to which her portrayals are subjective and interpretive. Consider the different picture conjured up if we hear another part of Gina's story; the part that she told when the anger and aggression had subsided and she announced that she would like to go back to school because she had missed so much and now realised the importance of education for her future work prospects. She was so persistent, continually making reference to the university logo on the consent form she had been asked to sign, that I had to stop the interview to tell her about access courses as alternative routes of entry to further education. While explaining her change of heart, she was very defensive of her younger brother who was bullied at school for being '*a swot*' and admired his ambition, despite having a learning difficulty, to go to university because '*I see what he's got goin for him now*'. To portray Gina as a changed person does not condone the acts of violence she inflicted on other people. What it does is stress the danger of not telling the whole story. She learned to lash out, physically and verbally, at any threat of assault on her or those she cared for. The tears in her eyes, and in mine, as she explained the reason for this change – the violent murder of her best friend at the age of sixteen, battered to death in an alleyway in the centre of Glasgow – were enough to convince me that to risk accusations of betrayal through

sensationalisation would be worthwhile if I could do justice to the portrayal of young lives such as Gina's. Only by speaking privately and intimately with these young people have I been permitted to hear their stories and only through the discomfort and emotion of listening have my prejudices and pre-conceptions been challenged in a way that now encourages me to speak about them with empathy and compassion as I seek a deeper understanding of their experiences, actions and behaviours.

II. Interview as Narrative

There are many explanations for the powerful attraction of narrative inquiry, not least its capacity to relate to, and characterise the phenomena of human lived experiences, actions and behaviours. That is not, necessarily, to imply a quest for a theoretical causal relationship but to acknowledge that people live storied lives and it is in the telling and re-telling of our stories that we explain ourselves and our lives to others and position ourselves in relation to others. So, while not searching for an explicit chronological account of life events, and striving to avoid over-theorising and abstraction, the story-telling incidents collected in the interviews bring together the complex perceptions that young people have about their life experiences and their school experiences that afford a better understanding about the nature and quality of their lives. The educational relevance of this approach to better understanding is echoed in Connelly and Clandinin's work and their assertion that 'Life's narratives are the context for making meaning of school situations' (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990:3).

This is not the stuff of positivist research that would treat individuals as objects of study. Rather, it embraces and celebrates the uniqueness and diversity of human life and relies on criteria other than validity, reliability and generalisability. No two lives are the same even if they experience the same events. Experiences are told as stories, relived and retold differently to each audience and so raise the same kind of issues as those concerning the plurality of voice and identity portrayal. Similarly, moving on from the storied account to writing the research narrative is fraught with risk of misrepresentation and intentional or unintentional deception through subjective selection. My concerns about giving a fair account of experiences within the context of making meaning of school situations are exemplified, not through re-telling the whole of Gerry's story, but by presenting, here, a short excerpt from our interview conversation wherein he tells his story about the fire which destroyed the school toilets. While telling this story, it was clear that he had told and retold the same story to many different audiences: his parents, teachers, friends, police,

and his lawyer and to the court. It is probably safe, too, to assume that he had relived the experience and retold the story to himself. He never claimed he was innocent nor admitted his guilt (although on at least one occasion I winced when I thought he was going to); he simply repeated that they could not prove it was him.

File: DS30028

… I didnae want to do a fifth year – I didnae really like the first four years there – I didnae see how I should stay and do a fifth one when I don't like it.

[So tell me about not liking school]

ssss jist teachers

[This is to help me to understand]

jist teachers like ye'd go in an' ye might be right stupid in second year an' that – want to have a laugh an' that an' ye end up getting a reputation frae that an' so through third and fourth year – cos I done things in second year when I wis a stupid wee boy they started to gie me a reputation if something went wrang like they just automatically blamed me fur it.

[Right]

Like one time the school went on fire – the public – the toilets went on fire ...

[Uhhhuh]

an' I got oot ma class an' I went tae the toilet an' I left

[Uhhhuh]

an' somebody else went in ahind me but they never seen who that wis – cos I wis the last one oot they jist blamed me cos it wis oan CCTV so they blamed me fur that an' I wis goannae get done by the polis an' everything because it wis a criminal offence an' everything

[Right]

An' then – an' then the case got dropped because they couldnae prove who the other boy wis.

[Right]

An' I couldnae prove who it wis cos I hid missed him an' they seen that. But at first they just blamed me straight away fur it an' it wis an investigation for a wee while.

[Right, so once you have that reputation ...]

Aye – you'll no get rid o it.

{pause}

The other thing about the school's ... eh – see the folk that were always bad and being sent out the class – instead o' like punishing them – well this is the way I see it – instead o' punishing <u>them</u>, they were like getting sent tae like (Name of) College an' got tae dae construction 'n that or got tae go on days oot cos one o' ma pals – he got tae go on it an' ... eh ... he brought a DVD back an' they were a' mountain biking on it ... mountain biking! – he got tae dae things like that 'n we were daein alright in the class 'n we had tae stay in the class a' the time. So ma approach wis actually – I'd jist start misbehavin' so they'd let me go to college an' go mountain biking wi ma pals an' that cos maist o' ma pals were on it.

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Presenting Gerry's story as an excerpt from the interview transcript leaves the reader free to interpret its meaning and significance and purpose as they wish but this is not an option in the writing of a research narrative where part of the difficulty is in conveying a respectful and authentic interpretation. The content of the story is clear but in many ways, unimportant. Gerry had many stories to tell and, in their telling, taught me so much about his school experiences, his involvement in local gang culture and street fighting, his drinking and smoking habits and his aspirations for the future. However, I selected the story about the fire not to sensationalise or romanticise Gerry's escapades but to highlight its significance in his perception of his treatment at school – the reputation that never went away and that appears to have had a bearing on his desire to leave school as soon as possible.

But where do stories start and where do they end? Although Gerry now viewed his early behaviour as 'stupid' he later identified a link between bad behaviour and reward that contradicted his experience of bad behaviour and punishment and blame; a connection that, to him at least, legitimised the perpetuation of misbehaviour. There seems to me to be no end to such a story as the threads reach out and entangle so many other stories and weave the very fabric of human life. In writing about these stories and engaging in the narrative inquiry process, and reflecting on the lessons learned in other stages of the Ed D course where I experimented with various forms of representation, I am conscious of the complexity of the task of selecting how to use the stories in a manner that best meets the purpose of the project and, at the same time, respects the vulnerability of the young people who participated in the study.

Connelly and Clandinin (1990) usefully explore a number of methodological issues of narrative inquiry and discuss criteria that various authors suggest might constitute a good narrative. From Van Maanen (1988), apparency and verisimilitude; from Guba and Lincoln (1989), transferability; from their own work, adequacy and plausibility and from Robinson and Hawpe (1986), economy, selectivity and familiarity - going on to remark that:

> Stories function as arguments in which we learn something essentially human by understanding an actual life or community as lived. The narrative inquirer undertakes this mediation from beginning to end and embodies these dimensions as best as he or she can in the written narrative.
> (Robinson and Hawpe, 1986 cited in Connelly and Clandinin, 1990:8).

Their work has helped me think through the dilemmas of narrative writing to ultimately find resonance with their view:

> Life, like the narrative writer's task, is a dialectic balancing act in which one strives for various perfections, always falling short, yet sometimes achieving a liveable harmony of competing narrative threads and criteria.
> (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990:8)

Narrative inquiry remains powerfully attractive. Falling short of perfection may be a fact of life but in the context of narrative writing does not need to equate to an inadequate or implausible research outcome. Rather, by taking the dangers into account, I am convinced that it can lead to a new if never complete understanding of life as lived.

III. Interview as Voice

Using interview as a research process to capture the voices of young people offers a multi-layered and multi-faceted insight into their lives. As indicated already, it would be naïve to think that such an approach is not fraught with ethical, epistemological and methodological risks and challenges. Voice is a term used in qualitative research as a way of knowing: a way of collecting and creating knowledge about life experiences that cannot be achieved and communicated through conventional means (LeCompte, 1993 cited in Shacklock et al., 1998). While census-like quantitative panel data explicating the characteristics of NEET young people abound, the aggregated statistics risk stereotyping NEET young people as failures and drop-outs in a way that forgets, or neglects, their individual life-stories. Voice, Shacklock et al. tell us, functions to remind the reader that the research deals with the lives of real people and that the most interesting voices belong to individuals and groups that are in some way disadvantaged, deficient of power or located at the margins of society (Shacklock et al., 1998). The polarised dualisms that define NEETs as 'always othered', often 'not' – not school pupils; not college students; not in work; not apprentices - position them as disadvantaged and marginalised so as to invite, indeed demand, that we engage in listening to them telling us about their lives rather than pre-judging them as failures. In the wider interpretation of NEET, leaving school with no planned destination is not necessarily problematic where an individual has other means of support but this is not true for those young people on Get Ready for Work courses since, by definition, they are welfare benefit claimants. No doubt some may not be academically capable of meeting the demands of further study but, if that is not true in all cases, why do they leave school when they have no prospect of sustainable employment? Do they fit the pattern of high school dropouts in America portrayed as 'losers'; hopeless,

inadequate, lazy and too poorly motivated (Fine and Rosenberg, 1983) and if not, what were the factors that influenced their decision to leave? A discussion on exclusion and participation is particularly relevant to the young people in this study and I return to this in the final chapter. Aggregated statistics might characterise a stereotypical NEET young person but again such generalisation only offers limited insight. My decision to base my research on one-to-one interviews is predicated on my conviction that it is only through speaking with these young people and listening to their experiences and aspirations that I can take the first step towards understanding their lives and making sense of their actions and behaviours. Crucially, this listening is not predicated on interest or inquisitiveness but on a genuine concern and a sincere desire to better understand the complex and interrelated factors that contribute to NEETism and presenting the perceptions voiced as legitimating a call for change that will improve their lives. I believe Hargreaves is right in claiming that, as fundamental principles of humanity and democracy and regardless how marginal or unfashionable they might be, all voices are worth listening to 'no matter how cynically, inarticulately, or maladroitly' these voices are expressed (Hargreaves, 1996:16).

It appears that student voice is missing in much educational research and from dialogue on educational policy and practice, according to Cook-Sather, because of the historical lack of trust towards young people from which there have evolved various power structures and practices 'to keep students under control and in their place as the largely passive recipients of what others determine is education' (Cook-Sather, 2002:4). While imploring us to elicit students' voices and to learn to listen to and act on them because without these perspectives our efforts will be based on an incomplete picture of life in classrooms and how that life could be improved, she alerts us to the 'difficulties and contradictions as well as the illuminations' attendant in such practices (ibid:4,7). These concerns sit well with current trends in educational research that seek to involve students in the research process and encourage learners to shape the agenda for research and policy making. This is an interesting and relevant issue in the concept of voice and I develop the ideas of 'giving voice' and 'having voice' as compared to 'capturing voice' and 'representing voice' in the final chapter.

Interview as voice is a disturbingly different genre of interview from the guidance or admissions interviews that I routinely carry out with students. Guidance interviews generally involve negotiating solutions to problem situations and occasionally involve instigating discipline procedures while admissions interviews are designed to establish the

suitability of applicants for courses. Reflecting on these differences I am aware that not only do I present myself differently through dress, voice and demeanour in each situation but that the students project varying images and voices they deem appropriate to the purpose of each interview. The confusion and ambiguity of plural identities and plural voices and the power relation between adult researcher and young respondent are the basic premises for the arguments against voice-based research.

Although his work centres on young children and those with disabilities, Komulainen's critique of the ambiguity of the child's 'voice' in social research questions the extent to which factors like age, maturity and the credibility of their statements mean their voices can be taken seriously. He argues that it is unsatisfactory to imagine children as either 'competent' or 'incompetent' suggesting that they can be, at the same time, both vulnerable and competent (Komulainen, 2007). Translating this image of 'competent yet vulnerable' into the context of seeking out and listening to adolescent voices reminds us to see them, at the same time, as both child and adult. This poses more methodological challenges around how the interviews can be designed and conducted so as to encourage a mutual exchange of trust and confidence in which previously quietened voices can be heard and where the adult/child teacher/student boundary between researcher and interviewee can be blurred as necessary.

That is not to suggest that the perspective, countenance or positionality of myself as researcher does not have a significant bearing on the 'voice' that an interviewee might choose to present to me or that the voice that I hear might not be the voice I expected or wanted to hear. Surely this is true in any student/ teacher dialogical encounter where multiple identities and multiple voices potentially compete. While acknowledging the messy ambiguity of 'voice data' and an uneasy acceptance that, under different circumstances, I might hear a different voice from the same individual, I remain convinced that, in the telling of lived experiences, these voices deserve to be heard and the lessons learned from listening will help me to make meaning of their actions and perceptions on life. To retreat from this troublesome and emotional endeavour would be to abdicate responsibility to articulate the voices of those young people who appear to me to be at the margins of our system/society. Presenting, or re-presenting, their voices collected through interview, requires engagement in some interpretive manner in their re-telling; unless I simply present recordings of the interviews. Moreover, such an option is not feasible if the purpose of my writing is not only to tell the story of this inquiry but also to meet the

academic requirements of a doctoral dissertation. Put another way, while the experience of engaging in conversation with these young people and reflecting on the discussions that took place has given me a deeper understanding of NEET young people's lives, giving a written account of these lives is ethically, professionally and emotionally challenging.

My project does not assume that all NEET young people are unable or unwilling to speak up for themselves. Quite the opposite pertains in some cases. But what they have to say appears, historically, not to be listened to possibly because they do not reflect the view of the dominant majority or what they have to say is not what we want to hear or act upon. Nor does my project assume that I might speak with any legitimate authority on their behalf or that I might claim any superior knowledge or understanding of their situation. However, by engaging in purposeful conversation and authoring my understandings of our discussions, I place myself in a privileged position that risks exposing the young participants to the possibility of misrepresentation; regardless of whether they ever read what I choose to say about them.

Alcoff (1991) articulates this problem beautifully and I find resonance in the way she conflates the issue of 'speaking about' others with the issue of 'speaking for' others that impacted my approach to both collecting and re-presenting voiced data. Two interlinked themes run through her critique: first, how the location of the speaker affects the meaning and truth of what gets said and what gets heard and second, the discursive context of the speech that, she asserts, is a political arena in which no speech can remain neutral. While I agree with many of the points Alcoff makes and I find her framing of the problem of speaking for others useful and noteworthy, I find the nuance of her conclusion disturbing accusing:

> [...] I would stress that the practice of speaking for others is often born of a desire for mastery, to privilege oneself as the one who more correctly understands the truth about another's situation or as one who can champion a just cause and thus achieve glory and praise.
> (Alcoff, 1991:29)

Although Alcoff and Fielding present a 'formidable case against' speaking about and speaking for others, both appear to agree that it is not sufficient to simply facilitate the practice of allowing students to speak for themselves 'in ways which presume a transparency and self-knowledge that may not be justified' (Fielding, 2004:205). This comment is reminiscent of my earlier interpretation of Komulainen's (2007) perception of

adolescent as both child and adult; as both competent and vulnerable; requiring on the one hand, agents to speak empathetically on their behalf and, on the other, real opportunities for dialogic encounter wherein they may articulate their needs as mature, responsible adults and become agents for their own change. Throughout this theorising about voice, there are constant reminders from the interview experience, that young people only have a voice if someone is prepared to listen and perhaps act on what they have to say. While strong arguments pervade these views on eliciting and re-presenting young people's voice and reveal a range of issues that need to be acknowledged, by giving much attention to these issues, I trust my use of interview as a research process will properly meet the needs of my project and do justice to the stories I hear. The different issues around having voice and giving voice emanate from this discussion to be re-visited, in light of the stories heard, in the final chapter.

IV. Interview as Intersubjectivity

Intersubjectivity is a term used by phenomenological and sociological theorists that performs many functions across various disciplines including psychology, psychotherapy and cognitive development. In his book, 'Intersubjectivity: the Fabric of Social Becoming', Nick Crossley introduces his topic as a 'complex and multilayered concept' (Crossley, 1996:viii) and describes overlapping and often contradicting theories and versions of intersubjectivity found in different contexts and using sometimes very different methods (Crossley, 1996). One of the main tenets of intersubjectivity, that it is something involving or occurring between separate conscious minds, is heavily imbued with philosophical notions of intercorporeality, existentialism and solipsism. But I use the term more lightly, yet carefully, to emphasise the kind of connection and engagement that develops between two persons in the mutual constitution of a social relationship such as that which forms the basis of a fruitful research interview. My reading of intersubjectivity draws on notions of sharing, empathy, interaction and engagement that foster communication and understanding.

Entering into an ethical research dialogue with NEET young people requires developing, over a very short interval of time, a relationship of a personal nature based on a sense of mutual respect and understanding – a delicate process, Mauthner (1997) suggests 'characterised by intimacy and negotiation' (p.22). The face-to-face interviews of this study take place between two very different people. Engaging with the notion of intersubjectivity in this context requires recognition of the interviewee as a subject, a

person existing in their own right, with experiences and consciousness of their own. Only through their willingness to engage and share their thoughts with me can I hope to grasp any knowledge of what these young people have experienced in their lives and what their future aspirations might be. That is to say, the research relationship is mutually constructed between the researcher and the researched predicated on each opening out onto the lived experiences of the other so that shared meaning and understanding can be reached through their intersubjectivity.

That is not to suggest that I can ever come to understand what is going on inside the head of another but I would reject the solipsistic theory that it is therefore useless to try. Rather, I would follow the view that human meaning emerges from our intersubjectivity and what matters in understanding the other is not subjectivity or individual psychology but what is between the two subjects (Dokecki, 1997).

It could be argued, then, that the intersubjective quality of narrative inquiry problematises the research approaches used in this study. Although my work draws methodologically from theories of phenomenography, ethnography and narrative inquiry, the interviews were not designed to be therapeutic, collaborative or invasive but to encourage young people to talk broadly about their lived experiences around education and to deepen my understanding of their behaviour and aspirations. For me it was important not to judge their actions or question their perception of events but to listen and, where appropriate, steer the conversation in relevant directions. The intention was not to argue with them about things or point things out in order to change their standpoints or even to exchange perspectives but to interact and engage with their language in order to better experience their world (Crossley, 1996). Connelly and Clandinin (1990:12) describe a similar dilemma when they became aware during their research that 'merely listening, recording and fostering participant story telling was both impossible and unsatisfactory' and that they needed to tell their own stories. Certainly, during the interview dialogue, situations arose when it seemed natural and appropriate to respond with stories of my own but I would tend to disagree with Connelly and Clandinin's conclusion that the final research product be 'a mutually constructed story created out of the lives of both researcher and participant' (1990:12). Such communication implies intersubjectivity but in at least one case the research relationship barely reached a basic rapport with the interviewee only giving polite answers to my questions and offering little insight into his world. In such situations, Crossley tells us, there is nothing we can do 'if they elect to hide their pain and to contain

it in a private space' (1996:27). On the other hand, where we were able to develop and enjoy and engage in a more dynamic, intersubjective relationship, the conversation could be described using Lahman's 'constant dance of recipricocity' (Lahman, 2008:289). Establishing an ethical research relationship requires knowing how deeply to burrow into someone's story and knowing when to accept that there are some things we need not, and should not, know. This is what Crossley refers to as functionally specific interactions. There were many instances of 'functionally specific interactions' during the interviews when I drew back from probing too deeply. Here, I offer two examples.

When Gina reflected on the reasons for her violent outbursts she mentioned that they started '*When they were saying all that stuff about ma Ma*'. I did not need to know about 'all that stuff' and did not ask. It was sufficient for me to understand that the violent behaviour that led to her expulsion from school was founded on a need and a desire to defend herself and her family.

When Gerry talked about the fire in the school toilets and how it could not be proven that he started it, I did not ask whether or not he did. What mattered was his perception that his alleged involvement discredited his reputation and had a long-term detrimental effect on his treatment by school staff.

Confronting the issues of intersubjectivity requires recognition of the establishment and negotiation of the social and personal boundary between interviewer and interviewee as between the self and the other. Such a boundary is set and re-set in each conversation and is socially constituted, not only through language and narrative but through gestures, body language, facial expressions and perceived emotions. Maddison discusses the view that emotions are not inner mental states but visible actions and through these visible actions 'others perceive the expression on my face and interpret it' (Maddison, 2001:np). He questions Crossley's assumption that equally visible implies equally aware and opens up the argument of interpretation and the concealment of 'mental states'. Such philosophical discussion belongs elsewhere. Here I want to emphasise the significant impact of shared emotion on the interview relationship. In doing so I return again to Crossley's work and his conceptualisation of 'egological intersubjectivity' that, he tells us, 'involves an empathic intentionality which experiences otherness by way of an imaginative transposition of self into the position of other' (Crossley, 1996:23). From this definition I

focus on the references to empathy and transposition to describe two of the most emotional episodes in the interview process.

It was towards the end of the interview when I was asking Emma what she would change about her life and she answered '*the violence*' and proceeded to give an account of the stabbing of a close family friend. Seeing street violence is a common occurrence in our society and we are no longer shocked when we hear or read of it. Yet it was clear that recalling the event was painful. When Emma described how she lay down over her friend's body and saved his life by stopping the flow of blood from the stab wound I found myself living the experience and imagining how it felt to be soaked in someone else's blood.

During the interview with Gina, her emotions re-surfaced towards the end of our conversation as she described how she and her best friend went their separate ways after an evening out in town and her shock when learning that her friend had met a violent death a short time after they parted company in a taxi queue. Apparently the dead girl telephoned her brother when she was threatened and the boy heard his sister being attacked. For some strange, inexplicable reason I found myself panicking as I imagined his situation and tried to think what to do – try to talk to his sister or hang up and phone the police or run for help.

Even as I re-tell these stories now the memories of the shock and the mutual exchange of emotion during the interviews return and I agree with Connelly and Clandinin that it is impossible to simply listen and record such traumatic experiences. This 'empathetic intentionality' had not been adequately predicted and it left me emotionally drained when it occurred. This rich, but shocking insight into the experiences of young people has caused me to question the assumptions and pre-conceptions I previously held about them and the lives they led. Questioning my assumptions and pre-conceptions has led me to engage with the notion of reflexivity as self-examination throughout this study. The realisation that I might earlier have argued that my position was value-free, objective and neutral has been challenged and the jolt from this realisation has prompted and coloured the topics in this section and has an undeniable impact in the following chapters where I offer my interpretation of these lived experiences.

5. Reflecting on the Interview Process and Progressing the Inquiry

The phrase 'research journey' is a hackneyed phrase with connotations implying a fixed starting point, a prescribed finishing point and an accessible vehicle to traverse the journey from start to finish in a way that can be planned in detail and conducted effectively. My project was carefully planned; goals identified, access to subjects negotiated, methods researched and trialled but what was not, and could not be, factored in was the rich and unpredictable interview experience. The richness was unexpected or at least, beyond expectations. In planning the interview process initially, I was concerned that the participants might be reluctant to speak to me; hesitant, recalcitrant, truculent or perhaps unable to express themselves adequately due to lack of confidence or maturity. One or two were quiet - I respected that. On at least one occasion I sensed a deliberate attempt to shock – I accepted that and moved on – a response that apparently, in such interview situations, 'fosters the telling of the story the interviewee wants to tell, and thus, this seems to be the most productive approach' (Sands and Krumer-Nevo, 2006:966). Others spoke freely, willingly and articulately providing the rich accounts of experiences, perceptions and aspirations this project was designed to elicit. The content was not predicted; nor should it have been predictable if the purpose of research was to create new knowledge and, in this case, new understanding. If I had not expected to be discussing street violence, drink, drugs or police harassment then what had I expected – discussions around curriculum, assessment, class sizes, school organisation and management, maintenance allowances, leaving age? Not only are the topics instigated by the young people my first step to understanding what is important in their lives and what they value, the contrast between what I heard and what I thought I might hear serves to emphasise the assumptions I brought to the study. Let me explain further. While the ubiquitous white tracksuits and modern dress of contemporary youth, the body jewellery and the fashionable hairstyles and makeup were evident; the expected behaviours and attitudes assumed to be consistent with such externally visible signals were not. During the interviews, none of the participants shouted, swore or challenged the interview situation in which they found themselves. They spoke positively about the Get Ready for Work course and their relationship with college staff and there appeared to be a genuine desire to 'get a job'; an observation that contradicted the received view that NEET young people are 'lazy louts' who are unemployed through choice and need to be coerced into work. Indeed, considering the contradictory nature of the characterisation of NEET young people discussed in the earlier chapters, what is emerging from this inquiry is a very different view of the NEET young person as a competent yet vulnerable individual.

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Reflecting on the shocks and surprises of the interview experience suggests that there are maybe two journeys taking place through this inquiry. First, is the research journey that is moving me towards a deeper understanding of the perceptions and aspirations of NEET young people whilst allowing me to give voice to their views. Second is a personal journey that is uncovering my preconceived and, if I am to be honest, pre-concealed, ideas of these young people. Effectively, the conflation of these two paths impels a change in my attitude towards the young people I meet publicly and professionally promoting a new confidence that behind the label, behind the appearance, behind the loutish behaviour, there is a young person in need of and responsive to, support and direction in their quest to flourish.

Progressing the inquiry beyond the interview process and towards a research dissertation re-engages the writer with issues surrounding voice and representation that were the focus of the previous section and that have a bearing on the writing of an ethical account of NEET young lives. Moreover, discussion around notions of flourishing and wellbeing that seek to improve people's lives, at first glance, may initially suggest some sort of relativist view from which to appreciate the predicament of others and may possibly be viewed as paternalistic. In a similar way, interpreting stories and behaviours raises ethical questions regarding values and subjective judgements that entail the risk of being influenced by the writer's own biography and positionality. Positionality, as Pendlebury and Enslin (2001) observe, has become something of a 'touchstone' for good qualitative research writing in education that mediates between 'humanism's universal subject' and the depersonalised subject of poststructuralism. Their argument in defence of a universalist conception of research ethics in education develops from Nussbaum's brand of feminist humanism that assumes considerable commonality in what people must have in order to be capable of living well and that insists on 'the universal importance of protecting spheres of choice and freedom, within which people with diverse views of what matters in life can pursue flourishing according to their own lights' (Pendlebury and Enslin, 2001:367). Central to their argument for an ethical approach to educational research is that it should promote agency and choice and enable the development of central human capabilities – that is, the list of central capabilities proposed by Nussbaum that all citizens should have and that politics should aim to promote and defend as part of the good life.

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Whilst I am aware of criticisms against Nussbaum's universalist approach to human development and take these on board in my engagement with her work, I find resonance with her philosophy of the equal worth of human beings; a philosophy that at the same time acknowledges people's lives as different but recognises the commonality of need for basic capacities and functions in order to be able to live a good life. It seems to me that a capabilities approach to quality of life measurement with its inherent promotion of agency and choice offers a framework of thought within which to explore the difficult questions surrounding wellbeing and human flourishing in the context of this inquiry and is the basis of my discussion in the following chapter where I draw on the distinct but complementary work of Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum and their conceptualisation of a capabilities approach.

Initially, this chapter provided an overview of the inquiry before proceeding towards a theoretical description of the methods and approaches used and an evaluation of the effectiveness of these methods in practice. Here, I described the conceptual foundation of this study as drawn from both constructivist and interpretivist paradigms and the methodological approach borrowed from phenomenography, narrative and ethnography. Throughout this chapter I have engaged with relevant literature to inform a discussion around issues arising from the interview process; issues that reified the interviews as more than a means of data collection. I have said that efforts to make sense of the interview data initially followed two paths: first, the interview transcripts were searched for recurring themes addressed and interpreted as they related to the received wisdom of NEET; second, the search for themes was refined to link with notions of capabilities as developed by Nussbaum in a capabilities approach. In the following chapter, I use Nussbaum's capabilities approach as a framework within which to develop an understanding of NEET young lives within the context of the interview data.

Chapter Five

Towards an Understanding of NEET Young Lives

This chapter provides the theoretical background to critically understanding the concepts of wellbeing, human development and quality of life. It explores the relevance of a capabilities approach and its application to this inquiry and goes on to examine the lives of the young people in this study by mapping their stories to Nussbaum's list of central capabilities. The chapter engages with Nussbaum's invitation to contest and remake her list of capabilities and concludes with a re-framing of her list adapted to the context of NEET young lives.

Progressing this inquiry towards an understanding of NEET young lives requires a critical engagement with the concepts of wellbeing, happiness, human development and quality of life, concepts that, by their very nature, require a consideration that goes beyond definitions. Attempting to unravel the intricately complex social, political and economic landscape that is so closely interwoven with individual experiences, perceptions and aspirations not only emphasises the enormity of such a task but also highlights the diversity of individual human lives and the futility in separating the person from the conditions, preferences and constraints that have a bearing on his or her efforts to flourish. There can be no single tidy formula for measurement when the very notions of wellbeing, happiness, flourishing and development are contestable and intrinsically unmeasurable and the concept of 'a good life' subject to individual values. Traditional approaches to measuring

wellbeing and human development are frequently economic as seen in measures and comparisons of income, resources, purchasing power and material possessions. But these aggregative methods, while useful in comparisons of economic advantage, neglect the different needs of different people to reach the same level of wellbeing or advantage and may exclude any moral obligation for politics or society to meet the needs of the individual. As I move towards a deeper understanding of NEET young lives in this chapter, I develop my thoughts around these ideas by drawing on the work of Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum as alternatives to traditional approaches. For the purpose of illustrating the shift away from such approaches it is useful to reconsider the UNICEF Child Poverty Report (UNICEF, 2007) that provides a comprehensive assessment of the lives and wellbeing of children and young people in 21 of the world's richest countries. Unlike previous UNICEF studies that used income poverty as a measure for overall child wellbeing, this study used 40 separate indicators under six different dimensions: material wellbeing, health and safety, education, peer and family relationships, behaviours and risks, and young people's own subjective sense of wellbeing. One of the main claims of the study was that there is no obvious relationship between Gross Domestic Product (GDP) *per capita* and levels of child wellbeing and, as has already been noted, the United Kingdom found itself in bottom place in the overall ranking with the United States in second bottom place. Moreover, the United Kingdom and the United States, generally considered to be amongst the richest and most powerful nations, were in the bottom third of the rankings for five of the six dimensions reviewed. Crudely put, wealth does not equate to wellbeing; what is ultimately important is that people have the freedoms or capabilities to lead the kind of lives they want to lead, to do what they want to do and be the person they want to be. Once they effectively have these freedoms, they can choose to act on these freedoms in line with their own ideas of the kind of lives they want to live (Robeyns, 2003a:7).

The concepts of capability, freedom of choice and individual perceptions of what counts as a 'good life' lie at the heart of an alternative approach to quality of life measurement that better reflects the aims of this study than income or resource based theories. The capability approach, pioneered by economist Amartya Sen as a critique of resource or utility based welfare economics and developed in a partial theory of social justice by political philosopher Martha Nussbaum, focuses on capabilities and functionings as an evaluative space in wellbeing and development assessment. Initially in this chapter, I engage with the work of both Sen and Nussbaum to interpret their distinct approaches and later take up

Nussbaum's invitation to contextualise her approach towards understanding NEET young lives. For me, the appeal of a capabilities approach is its focus on what individuals are actually able to be and do, on the quality of their life, and on removing obstacles in their lives so that they have more freedom to live the kind of life they choose to value. Moreover, I consider education to play an important role in removing obstacles in people's lives while, at the same time, respecting individual freedom to choose how to act on the educational opportunities open to them. What matters is that they have real access to high quality education and are able to make informed choices and good decisions that are not adversely affected by social, economic or political constraints or influences.

In the language of a capabilities approach, the distinction between capabilities and functionings is crucial. The distinction between achieved functionings and capabilities is between the realised and the effectively possible; that is, between achievements and freedom to achieve. According to Sen, capability is a set of vectors of functionings; that is, the functionings that a person could achieve. Moreover, he attests that the relationship between commodities and the functionings to achieve certain beings and doings is influenced by three conversion factors: personal characteristics, social characteristics and environmental characteristics. Clearly, personal choice plays a central role in the realisation of achieved functionings – the actual beings and doings that a person has reason to value – from the set of capabilities to which a person has access albeit their choice may be constrained by social, cultural and economic influences. So, two people with identical capability sets are likely to end up with different types and different levels of achieved functionings as they would make different choices from their respective options; those choices having been constrained by a person's own history, personality, emotions, desires and preferences (Robeyns, 2003a). As I have argued in the earlier chapters of this dissertation, the social, political and economic landscape in which NEET young people strive to flourish can adversely and unjustly influence their freedom to realise their full potential and constrains the set of capabilities to which they have access. Moreover, in situations where they might theoretically have equal access to resources such as education, many appear unable to use these opportunities in their own best interest.

It follows that we must now ask questions about the set of capabilities a person can access. That is, we must question what they are effectively able to be and do. Regarding such questions, it is worth noting that Sen and Nussbaum take different stances on this issue, not least due to the different theoretical backgrounds and goals of their projects. Sen's

pioneering work of the 1980s, rooted in development economics and social choice theory, was a radical shift from traditional welfarist economics that focussed on utility, income and resources as measures of social equality and inequality. What mattered to Sen were people's capabilities and the development of each individual's capability set was an end in itself; income and resources were a means to that end. His work provides a framework of thought – and evaluative space – in the study of equality and advantage that has been developed in a broad sphere of applications. Accordingly, he refuses to propose or endorse a single set of capabilities arguing that this would limit and constrain the broad nature of his approach. For Sen, any list of capabilities must be contextualised within the aims of the particular study to which it is applied and be formulated democratically so as to reflect the views and values of everyone involved in the study's quality of life assessment.

Nussbaum (2000) believes that 'we can arrive at an enumeration of central elements of truly human functioning that can command a broad cross-cultural consensus' (p.74) and she describes her version of the capabilities approach as a partial theory of justice. Her work clearly articulates her feminist political and moral stance and is influenced by her projects with socially, politically and culturally disadvantaged women in India. In presenting a single list of 'central capabilities' that she asserts should be the threshold for 'central constitutional principles that citizens have a right to demand from their government' – a list whose justification evidences her emotional attachment to, and sympathies with, issues of abusive and unjust practices against women and global inequalities - she defends her universalist approach and intuitive conception of the good life by describing her list as 'open-ended and humble' in that 'its members can be concretely specified in accordance with local beliefs and circumstances'. The ten items on her list are: 1. Life; 2. Bodily health; 3. Bodily integrity; 4. Senses, imagination and thought; 5. Emotions; 6. Practical reason; 7. Affiliation; 8. Other species; 9. Play; 10. Control over one's environment (p.77). The full specification of these items appears in Appendix E.

While there are many areas of agreement and parallel thought, it is the distinct political dimensions of Sen and Nussbaum's versions that distinguish their approaches and I have drawn from elements of each approach to inform my own project. In Sen's approach I recognise (at least a partial) formula or algorithm that models the relationship between commodities, capabilities and functionings facilitating interpersonal comparisons of

wellbeing and inequality that acknowledges the role played by individual choice in translating capabilities into functionings. Further, I appreciate the role played by individual freedoms in converting commodities (goods and services – the means to achieve) into capabilities. This focus on capabilities and functionings as the evaluative space in wellbeing and development assessment is a promising approach in my quest towards a better understanding of NEET young lives and appreciation of the diverse abilities of young people to convert opportunities into functionings. From Nussbaum's approach, I have learned to appreciate the use of narrative and close engagement with others in order to better understand their experiences, perceptions and aspirations and to give them voice by articulating their stories. Although the awful injustices that she reports bear little resemblance to the comparatively privileged lives of the participants in my own project, concern for the right of the individual to be free to live the kind of life he or she has reason to value is a goal common to both. In the following sections of this chapter I engage with the items on Nussbaum's list as a framework to interpret NEET young lives before going on to offer my own thoughts around her attestation that her list can be, and should be, more concretely specified in accordance with local circumstances. Prior to offering a re-framed version of Nussbaum's list, I engage with many of the criticisms directed towards her approach.

Engaging with Nussbaum's List

Listening to the stories of young people's lives and the varied social settings in which many struggle to flourish can invoke an innate reaction and an emotional response that threatens to compare, assess or even to judge. Understanding people's lives requires engagement with their stories but risks an intuitive judgement of behaviour and of instances of unfair, unequal or unjust treatment that are coloured by the researcher's own values and background. Against what 'quality of life' standard should we compare or assess and on what grounds do we have the right to judge? Is there a benchmark against which we can examine quality of life, wellbeing or human development and whose perception of such measures might we promote?

The diversity of human life and values dictates that there can be no single definition of 'a good life' but these questions and jumbled thoughts are offered some structure and direction when we engage with the 'partial, not comprehensive, conception of the good life' that Nussbaum offers in her list of central capabilities (2000:76). Intent on giving an accurate and ethical account of the stories I hear, her capabilities approach offers a

framework for my thoughts and a space for deliberation while working towards an account that neither trivialises young people's concerns nor sensationalises their behaviour; an account that lets their voices speak and be heard.

Nussbaum presents her capabilities list as 'the basic minimum that all governments should provide for their citizens' (p.xiii). The compilation of the list, which she tells us evolved over time through observation, cross-cultural discussion and debate, is rooted in her concern for the unequal and unjust treatment of poor women in India and is therefore gendered as well as being both political and universalist. Defending her approach, Nussbaum insists that her list is based on moral intuition of a life lived with dignity, is 'open ended and humble' in that ' it can always be contested and remade' and represents 'a type of overlapping consensus on the part of people with otherwise very different views of human life' (p.76-77). Further, she argues that her philosophical, theoretical approach helps us perform the special task which 'involves the systemisation and critical scrutiny of thoughts and perceptions that in daily life are frequently jumbled and unexamined' (p.35).

Not denying that the items on the list are to some extent 'differently constructed by different societies' she insists that 'its members can be more concretely specified in accordance with local beliefs and customs' (p.77). By directing us 'to examine real lives and their material and social settings' and to 'inquire about reasons for differences we observe' in comparisons, Nussbaum encourages us to look beyond the structure of her approach in order to 'flesh out its contents' and, although she qualifies this in terms of women's lives, she clearly intends us to use her approach in a plurality of social and cultural settings. Re-specifying her list is not a simple matter considering the gendered focus on women in developing countries that permeates each of Nussbaum's specifications. So, too, the reconciliation of political systems in developing countries compared to our western democracy when we ask whether a government is providing the social basis for developing each capability is complex. However, by attempting to re-interpret and re-align each specification in light of the empirical data collected from the young people in this study, I hope to gain a better understanding of the capacities of NEET young people to live the kind of life they choose to live and to better understand what it is in life that they value.

1. Life. Being able to live to the end of a human life of normal length; not dying prematurely, or before one's life is so reduced as to be not worth living.

It is banal to suggest that the capability of life is other than vital to human development and wellbeing or that its promotion should not be a moral, political and universal goal. In presenting the capability of life as a separate component in her list, inextricably linked to other items such as bodily health and bodily integrity, Nussbaum identifies with the injustices and inequalities practiced against the female gender. The situation in Scotland regarding premature death is reversed. Women in Scotland have a total life expectancy of 79.9 years while men have a total life expectancy of 73.5 years but these figures are disturbingly low when compared to the rest of the UK. Statistics show that Scottish women have the highest mortality rates in the world for lung cancer and, if countries of the United Kingdom were regarded as separate entities, then life expectancy in Scotland would, for women, be the lowest in the European Union, and for men, the second lowest after Portugal (Leon et al., 2003).

Perhaps more significant than gender related inequalities for this study, with its focus on the social and economic disadvantage assumed typical of NEET young people, is the degree of deprivation-related inequality in life expectancy such that people in more deprived areas experience both a shorter life and a greater proportion of their life spent in poor health (Wood et al., 2006). Moreover, Nussbaum's reference to gender-related abortion can be recontextualised to our own society by considering the record levels of abortion and teenage pregnancy that now exist in Scotland and the evidence that the most deprived groups have approximately ten times the rate of teenage births as the least deprived and twice the rate of abortions.

With these thoughts in mind, I turn to the political aims of Nussbaum's project that would ask whether our government is providing its citizens with the capability for life. That is, whether they are providing the social basis for people to be able to live to the end of a human life of normal length and not dying prematurely, or before one's life is so reduced as to be not worth living. According to the latest spending review (The Scottish Government, 2007b), the Health and Wellbeing portfolio aims to provide financial investment targeted to reduce health inequalities, tackle disadvantage and identify people at particular risk of preventable, serious ill health. In addition, targets have been set to

reduce the number of teenage pregnancies amonst those under 16 by 20% and by 33% in the most deprived areas (Scottish Health Statistics, 2007). With these policies in place we might be confident that the government is indeed providing its citizens with the means to acquire the capability of life – even where that involves the redistribution of resources towards the more deprived groups. But Nussbaum reminds us that, while Indian women, according to their democratic constitution, have equality in principle, in practice they live as second class citizens. So, it is the implementation of these policies and their effectiveness in practice that will count if inequalities of life opportunities are to be reduced.

> **2. Bodily Health**. Being able to have good health, including reproductive health; to be adequately nourished; to have adequate shelter.

The capability of Bodily Health is inextricably linked to the capability of life and the capability of bodily integrity and is crucial in the development of all other capabilities. Indeed, it is intuitive to assume that a person burdened by disease or infirmity must struggle to achieve truly human functioning in accordance with Nussbaum's perceptions of the good life. While an absence or poverty of bodily health capability might be alleviated by the provision of additional resources or unusual types of support, it is important to be aware of the constraints of opportunity and choice that separate the healthy individual from the unhealthy.

Striving for a deeper understanding of Nussbaum's capabilities approach, rooted as it is in the tragedies of starvation, AIDS, lack of clean water and death from avoidable disease faced by citizens in the 'South', I struggle to reconcile my perceptions of such battles for survival with the quality of life enjoyed by citizens of rich western democracies and the level of healthcare and welfare provision available to them. But this, to my reading, is exactly what Nussbaum's philosophical approach invites us to do; to examine our jumbled thoughts of how capabilities are differently constructed by different societies in a way that moves towards a re-visioning of her list in accordance with local material and social settings.

Scotland's health performs relatively poorly when compared to other Western European countries. Although the situation is improving, there are several causes of death such as

cancer of the oesophagus, liver cirrhosis and suicide in men which have been increasing in the 1990s contrary to the downward trends seen in most other Western European countries (Leon et al., 2003) whose prevalence mirrors the use of alcohol and tobacco and reflects the level of stress related mental health problems reported in young Scottish men. Statistics also show apparent inequalities in health outcomes between areas of deprivation and the population overall – and this gap does not appear to be narrowing over time (The Scottish Government, 2008b). Analysis of the reasons for Scotland's comparatively poor health record posits tobacco use and the low intake of fresh fruit and vegetables in the traditional Scottish diet as the main causes.

'To be adequately nourished' is part of Nussbaum's specification of the capability of bodily health. Nourishment invokes vividly contrasting perceptions of diet from starvation and malnutrition to unhealthy eating habits and resultant obesity that exemplify Nussbaum's argument that capabilities are differently constructed by different societies. Her reference to 'reproductive health', from which she goes on to assert that every birth should be healthy, every pregnancy intended and every sex act free of coercion and infection invokes equally disturbing contradictions in light of the present high levels of teenage pregnancies and the 'shock rise' in teenage abortions. Here we notice the interconnectedness of the bodily health capability with the life capability of the previous section where I argued that a casual approach to unprotected sex and subsequent abortion denies the unborn child the right to be born. Moreover, the early onset of sexual activity in young people brings additional serious sexually transmitted health problems with statistics showing the highest proportion of samples testing positive were in women aged 15 to 19 and men aged 15 to 24 (Scottish Health Statistics, 2007).

This discussion is useful not only for the way in which it highlights the inequalities in health capability but also to introduce the role of choice. Nussbaum's approach respects the individual's right, indeed entitlement, to choose to function according to a particular capability but insists that governments should provide them with the capability to make that choice. And, it is appropriate, here, to acknowledge the level of responsibility placed on education to provide citizens with these capabilities.

Although Nussbaum asserts that capabilities and not functionings are the political goal (for adults), she makes exceptions in a few cases. Health, she believes, is a human good that has value in itself and is so crucial to the development and maintenance of all other

capabilities that we are justified in 'promoting functioning rather than simply capability' such that 'it is not unreasonable for government to take a stand on its importance in a way that to some extent (though not totally) bypasses choice' (p.91). No rational person, she suggests, would choose not to have good health when they had the freedom to do so. Education she treats somewhat differently. It does not appear explicitly in her list although it is clear that she recognises the important role that it plays in human development and wellbeing as she argues that all citizens, especially poor women, should have equal access to education. From a capabilities perspective, education, like health, could be interpreted as having both intrinsic and instrumental value and the interplay of those two vital elements heightens the efficacy of each. Health education saves lives, reduces mortality and suffering and improves life expectancy and nutrition. So, if we believe that healthy individuals are more capable of living a life worthy of human dignity, sustaining a healthy, stable community, and participating positively in educational opportunities, it follows that schooling should provide opportunities for the promotion of healthy living.

That education and health both have high policy salience in Scotland is evidenced by recent initiatives advocating Integrated Community Schools and Health Promoting Schools designed to educate citizens towards healthier living and to facilitate a holistic approach to the delivery of health related services. The appropriation of schools – and teachers – as the domain of activity for government policy is highly paternalistic and yet, Nussbaum might argue that this lack of liberty is justified as 'not unreasonable' due to the importance of achieving bodily health functioning. Moreover, this approach appears to reflect and accommodate her political project wherein she requires government to provide the social basis for the development of a threshold level of capabilities for all.

It would appear from the discourse on health promoting schools that the political aim of providing a threshold level of healthcare and advice to young people is being met; indeed, compared to the opportunities for bodily health capability in developing countries, our government provision goes far beyond a 'threshold' level that Sen might consider necessary for survival. The National Programme for Improving Mental Health and Well-Being embraces a national strategy to prevent suicide (which is disturbingly high in young people), and aims to promote and support recovery and remove the stigma from mental health sufferers. The 'Hungry for Success' initiative has delivered 'The Scottish Nutrient Standards for School Lunches' aimed to encourage healthy eating and to address the problem of obesity and other eating disorders in young people. The 'Active Schools'

programme is part of the remit of the Physical Activity Task Force which was established to encourage increased participation in physical activity. Although there is no statutory requirement for schools in Scotland to provide sex education, in practice, national guidelines require that all schools provide sex education within a comprehensive programme of personal, social and health education and religious and moral education. Taken together, it becomes clear that education has become the political vehicle for promoting social, emotional, nutritional and physical health by encouraging changes in attitude to unhealthy lifestyles.

It will have been apparent that, up to this point, my re-imagining of Nussbaum's bodily health capability has drawn from literature and research rather than from the research conversations of my inquiry. Being able to have good health is crucial to the quality of life we are able to enjoy and so it is surprising that very few of the young people interviewed expressed any concern over health related matters other than to comment on the effects of drugs and alcohol within their peer group. Jamie was an exception. He agreed that '*ye have to have good health*' and went on to describe how he had '*been on a diet for a bit of time ... aiming to lose a bit of weight*' and that he regularly played football and golf and went to the gym. He credits his positive attitude to a lecture in college from a volunteer worker who '*... like, inspires you ... teaches you about like, emotions an' fear an' all that stuff. It's really helpful ... I've taken a lot of it on board an' I'm trying to really change like, my attitude ... changed a lot aboot me*'. It is reasonable to deduce from the enthusiastic way Jamie recalls the lifestory of this 'guy' that lessons in health and wellbeing are best received when the teacher can engage emotionally with the learner and not when they are delivered simply to impart information, advice, or some abstract doctrine of morality. For me, Jamie's comment about 'taking on board' epitomises and problematises the role of individual choice and values in making good decisions and raises difficult questions about how we can best provide opportunities to young people that support them to make good decisions about life and health. For, as Nussbaum frequently reminds us, giving resources to people does not always bring differently situated people up to the same level of capability to function.

I turn now to the final aspect of Nussbaum's specification of the capability of bodily health; that is, the capability 'to have adequate shelter'. This is the ability to live a healthy life that is not compromised by the lack of an appropriate level of housing and fuels the debate as to what level of shelter people have a right to expect their government to provide.

Chapter 5: Towards an Understanding of NEET Young Lives

To reach any kind of consensus as to what might constitute a threshold level of shelter we need to be sensitive to cultural and climatic differences and social norms between developing and developed countries and also to be aware of the unequal social and economic environments in which people live. What might be considered 'adequate shelter' in India or Africa might not be accepted as such in affluent Western societies where shelter does not relate simply to a threshold level of protection from the elements or to a private dwelling space for a family. Nevertheless, evidence of inadequate housing, homelessness and concomitant ill health is ever present in the streets of Western towns and cities and it seems to me that debating appropriate threshold levels of shelter is exactly what Nussbaum invites us to do when engaging with her list of capabilities.

In the language and context of capabilities, homelessness could be considered as a failure to achieve the functioning of adequate shelter whether through choice or circumstance and we might ask whether that lack of functioning is indicative of a person never having had, or having had and lost, the capability to have adequate shelter. Many young people become homeless through the breakup of their family unit and many are made to 'fend for themselves' when they reach the age of sixteen and are no longer the legal responsibilities of their parents. Taking the same line as with the other aspects of bodily health, namely good health and nutrition, we might assume, as Nussbaum does, that no rational person would choose to live a life without adequate shelter, albeit their choice of shelter might differ from the social norm, and that homelessness is, to a greater or lesser extent, the result of government failure to provide shelter for its people. In addition, we might expect parents to care for their offspring beyond their legal obligation and provide them with shelter until such time as they are capable of supporting themselves.

Re-aligning this argument to a local context requires an understanding of the UK government's commitment to providing adequate shelter for its citizens and an appreciation of how this commitment has changed direction over the past half-century. Historically, the boom years of the post-war economy saw an unprecedented rise in the standard of living and the standard of housing that spurred the then UK Prime Minister, Harold Macmillan, speaking at a Conservative Party rally in Bedford, to claim that 'most of our people have never had it so good' (Macmillan, 1957). But the spiralling costs of such a high level of welfare provision were not sustainable. Claims of bureaucratic inefficiencies in the public sector and a waning tolerance of the power of trade unions to demand large wage increases legitimated the introduction of incorporation and

privatisation into the public sector with calls for increased efficiency and accountability in public spending.

By the 1980s the vast areas of local authority dwellings built under government housing improvement schemes (and known in Scotland as 'schemes') were considered poor contenders for capital investment by the Conservative administration of that time. Margaret Thatcher's 'Right to Buy' policies, introduced in the 1980's were rooted in her neoliberal ideals that sought to promote individual autonomy and reduce dependency by systematically dismantling the welfare state and exposing public services to market forces. By giving council tenants the right to buy their rented properties at hugely discounted prices, opportunities for property ownership were allowed to thousands but at the same time, stocks of affordable social housing were depleted to the extent that many local authorities could not meet the demand for housing. Replacing properties cost twice the amount realised from the sale so that the remaining stock of council housing was concentrated in undesirable areas with lower demand for housing and fewer employment opportunities resulting in the isolation and stigmatization of the tenants (Jones and Murie, 1998).

Nussbaum's call for governments to take responsibility for the provision of adequate shelter finds resonance with the living conditions of many young people in the study albeit that their situations are arguably more socially problematic than crucial for survival and sustaining bodily health. Housing is more than just a place of shelter. Where we live contributes to how we live, how we work, how we play and how we view the world. It defines how the world views us; constructing our social identities and fostering a sense of belonging. During our research conversation, when Jamie described his experience of life in the schemes, he spoke of young boys carrying knives and of having to '*watch your back*' because '*some people will just batter ye for nae reason at all if ye jist walk into different areas*'. Jamie's experiences give us a glimpse of a life threatened with territorial gang culture as does Jonathan's revelation that '*it'll no be long till the guns start coming in either*'. Both these young people are alert to the dangers surrounding them in their home neighbourhoods and both are keen to avoid any involvement with gang culture by '*just hingin aboot wi' folk ye can trust*'. They are also acutely aware that life is different for other people '*like families that are alright and got a nice hoose that's no in any o the schemes– that's in a nice area. Whereas you've got some families – yur in a scheme claimin Giro – yur brought up in this area where it's a constant fight – d'ye know whit I*

mean?' This insight into the privileged lives of young people living in '*a nice hoose*' compared to those living in '*wan o the schemes*' i.e. a council housing scheme, epitomises the widening poverty gap that is considered an acceptable and expected outcome of neoliberal policies and leads us to explore the interplay between housing and education spawned by Thatcher's neoliberal administration and the promotion of parental choice.

The 1988 Education Reform Act was described at the time as 'the Big Bang of educational Thatcherism' that ended an era in which post war values of equality of educational opportunity and social fairness pervaded the politics of education only to be replaced by exposure to the forces of a free market ideology that characterised the growing influence of neoliberalism in global politics (Gruber, 1989). Radical reforms designed to raise educational standards through performativity gave rise to a culture and a mode of regulation that employed judgements, comparisons and displays as means of incentive, control, attrition and change – based on rewards and sanctions - thus putting teachers and principals under pressure to perform or 'improve' in a competitive market (Ball, 2003). Through the technology of performativity, the displaying of performance indicators provided a means whereby schools could be judged as performing well or performing badly. Parental freedom to select a school for their children to attend caused a steady flow of pupils to gravitate towards what the published league tables identified as 'better' schools although this trend is more prevalent in England than in Scotland.

'Better schools' are typically located in 'better' areas and populated by middle class 'better off' families who have more resources at their disposal to allow them to either relocate or travel to the school of their choice. Conversely, poorer schools, that is those schools whose performance indicators place them lower down in the league tables, generally accommodate less privileged working class families. Here, failure to attract 'motivated' parents with 'able' children often invokes a spiral of declining standards that leads to the further marginalisation of socially and economically disadvantaged young people.

Apple (2001) is highly critical of neoliberal marketised solutions to educational problems claiming that they 'may actually serve to reproduce, not subvert, traditional hierarchies of class and race' (p.413). He draws our attention towards the 'hidden effects' of these policies on real lives drawing on Whitty et al. (1998), Chubb and Moe (1990) and Henig (1995) to emphasise the extent to which parental choice is as likely to reinforce hierarchies as to improve educational opportunities and the overall quality of schooling.

> There is a growing body of empirical evidence that, rather than benefiting the disadvantaged, the main emphasis on parental choice and school autonomy is further disadvantaging those least able to compete in the market. (Whitty et al., 1998:42 cited in Apple, 2001:419)

Apple's critique posits the aggregation of parental, social, cultural and economic capital, which he refers to as 'confidence', as crucial skills for the successful negotiation of 'marketised forms' and the ability to make good choices. The ability to convert opportunities into beings and doings has a parallel in the language of capabilities and highlights the role of parental aspiration and expectation in the exercise of choice of schooling. Moreover, it chimes with the ideas around meritocracy, social mobility and advantage discussed earlier. It may be significant, then, that of the young people interviewed, although they all had low levels of academic achievement and reported negative experiences of schooling and living environment, few suggested that their parents had become involved on their behalf or that they might move house to a better area or a better school. Gerry described how he had been involved in a long court case accused of setting fire to his school and had asked his parents if he could move to another school. His father, however, refused to consider this suggesting, instead, that Gerry would just *'mess around as before'* at his new school. This does not mean that parents and young people are not aware of school mediated forms of privilege or of the play of forces between housing and education. Rather, it implies a lack of agency and voice that, as Apple suggests, serves to legitimate and reproduce traditional hierarchies. This point is brought home by Jonathan's perception of the interplay between housing and education:

> *It like depends where aboots ye come fi. Whit part o the area ye live in – ye know whit I mean. Like, half o the time, if you're from a decent house, decent neighbourhood an that, decent family and ye go to a decent school ye turn out decent. But you live in the schemes, go to a shitty school where there's a these fannies and fightin an all these folk roon the corner smoking joints an' stuff ... ye ... ye go to a school like that an ...*

As his voice faded to silence and his last sentence remained unfinished it seemed to me that Jonathan imagined a better life, a more dignified life than the one he presently had no opportunity to change. He aspired to a life lived in a better and safer environment and offering a better education that, in turn, might lead him to a more prosperous and 'decent' future.

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3. Bodily Integrity. Being able to move freely from place to place; having one's bodily boundaries treated as sovereign, i.e. being able to be secure against assault, child sex abuse, and domestic violence; having opportunities for sexual satisfaction and for choice in matters of reproduction.

The central importance of bodily integrity to the wellbeing of NEET young people is evidenced by its emergence as a dominant theme from the interview conversations and so my revisioning of this capability reflects the participants' received knowledge around real and perceived threats of violence and assault. Further, it reflects their concerns and experiences of risk-taking behaviours and discusses the impact of government policies designed to address these issues.

Nussbaum's explication of bodily integrity intuitively assumes political obligation to protect people from abuse, assault and inhumane or degrading treatment or punishment. The UK Government's commitment to protecting the bodily integrity of its citizens is evidenced in the raft of policies designed to limit exposure to abuse and reduce opportunities to indulge in risk-taking behaviours. Paradoxically, a number of these policies, like the ban on smoking, the use of cannabis and other illicit drugs, the wearing of seatbelts and crash helmets and the right to bear arms, are considered by some to infringe their rights and freedom of choice. Nussbaum, however, defends such paternalistic political intrusion, especially where children and vulnerable adults are concerned, arguing that it is acceptable to limit the scope of choice where this leads to future long-term benefit to the individual. Setting a minimum age at which young people can legally purchase tobacco (16) or alcohol (18) or legally engage in sexual activity (16) defines a somewhat blurred boundary between childhood and adulthood in an attempt to address concerns about the long term effects of exposure to tobacco smoke, youth binge drinking and associated violence; unplanned teenage pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases is legitimated by its intention to protect young people from making choices that might place them at a disadvantage in their adult lives. Nevertheless, young people are confused as Kylie explained '*I think it's pointless that you can get married when you're sixteen but you can't drink till you're eighteen. So you're not meant to drink on your honeymoon which is stupid. Eighteen to get a tattoo ... like I'm sixteen so I can put on the lottery ... I mean marriage is a bigger commitment than any o them so that's what I don't understand*'.

Setting a threshold level for bodily integrity is a difficult area to ponder. So, too, is the role of individual choice in the argument whether capabilities or functionings ought to be the political goal. The proliferation of government funded incentives targeting young people at risk of following unhealthy or undesirable lifestyles challenges us to better understand their perception of 'the good life' that they choose to value and makes it difficult to argue that the government is providing less than a threshold level of freedom to choose a life that values bodily integrity. However, the alarming levels of what might be considered as 'self-inflicted' or 'self-indulgent' abuse suggest that many young people are denouncing their right to bodily integrity by engaging in alternative risk-laden lifestyles.

So, Nussbaum reminds us, legislation cannot guarantee bodily integrity, even where there is commitment towards the effective enforcement of laws for the protection of young people as Jenny's story demonstrates:

> *There's always people fighting up ma bit. That's jist the young ones – they're aboot 11 to 15. They're always goin roon the back o the shops and they drink – smoking too. They just start arguing wi anybody. They jist ask anyone [to buy drink and tobacco] and they say 'mind if ye get caught don't say I got ye it'. It would be better if they had cameras outside the shops then ye would see them all asking. It's jist the younger ones up ma bit that drink – all the older ones are intae drugs. It starts as soon as they go to high school.'*

Jenny goes on to explain that young people '*just stand in the street bored*' because there is nowhere else for them to go and so they just start drinking. She believes that people smoke and take drugs because '*they feel bad about themselves and they think it's taking away what's bad or what's annoying them ... but it doesn't. Ye just keep taking it*'. Jamie agrees that '*they just want to escape from their normal state of mind. Because of everybody's debt, I think that makes people depressed, or overweight or anorexia (*sic*). They're chasing a feeling they want off the drugs*'.

Concern for young people's use of tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs focuses as much on the short term health and social problems as on the injuries and fatalities sustained or inflicted while intoxicated (Ogilvie et al., 2005). The similarities in the reported experiences of the young people in this study confirm that the feeling of vulnerability to attack, especially if they find themselves outside the boundaries of their home district, is very real. For them, Nussbaum's perception of the capability of bodily integrity, which posits freedom to move from place to place and safety from assault as central aspects of

what citizens can expect from their government, appears to be missing from both their capability set and their functioning despite a raft of legislation targeted against gang culture and the carrying of weapons. However, there is an expressed wish that things might be different in the future and that education might play a major role in this social transformation as Jamie explains:

> *I hope that in the future generation there's no any of that* [knives and big gang fights] *an folk'll jist get alang and can walk through different schemes. Teach them in schools, from primary one up, everybody just to be friends – no to be racist an that – get mixed cultures to bond wi other mixed cultures. Hopefully make them all friends in the end.*

Jamie's awareness of social differences and rivalries that led to threats of violence inspired him to think to the future with hopes of friendship and neighbourliness that would bring an end to racism and youth gang culture. Gerry, on the other hand, was actively involved in the gang culture that the others were keen to avoid and was happy to educate me in the ways of local 'Young Teams' and the territorial rivalry that drove the violent combats. For Gerry, fighting was a matter of pride, reputation and 'street cred' even though he had suffered epileptic blackouts when he was younger and was always anxious not to sustain any head injuries. When he described the kind of battles he had been involved in and the injuries he sustained, I asked how his parents reacted. He replied that when he returned home injured he told his mother he had fallen in the street.

Jamie's suggestion for school-based promotion of friendship is challenging to unravel when we consider its multifaceted nature that begs to include notions of caring, compassion, citizenship and multiculturalism; and the contradictory evidence of bullying, physical and verbal abuse, and violence, that involves both teachers and pupils. It becomes especially complex when we consider that, twenty years ago, physical violence in the form of corporal punishment was an accepted means of imposing discipline in school and that the abolition of physical chastisement is now considered by some to be partly to blame for the apparent indiscipline in schools and anti-social behaviour in general. Caning, belting and other forms of corporal punishment, once considered to be 'character building' and a natural means of discipline in school life, are now outlawed in Scottish schools as attitudes to human rights shift towards protection from inhuman or degrading punishment that is perceived to cause irreparable emotional damage to victims.

However, the deliberate infliction of emotional and physical harm remains a major social issue in schools. In 1990, around the time of the abolition of corporal punishment and

following the findings of Olweus's pioneering research in Norway, Mellor's (1990) exploratory work in Scotland, while not claiming to be a representative sample of the nation's schools as it only involved ten secondary schools, exposed the extent and seriousness of the problem of peer bullying among pupils. This seminal work eventually led to the requirement that all schools should have a specific anti-bullying policy to combat the problem and Olweus's internationally acclaimed bullying prevention program has been the basis of many intervention and coping strategies. Further, the suggestion that bullying might be a reason why many young people do not attend school invites further investigation within the context of this inquiry.

Recent research findings (British Council, 2008) claim that bullying is endemic in schools across Europe and that the problem is perceived to be worse in the UK with 43% of Scottish pupils who participated in that study agreeing that bullying is a problem in their school. This figure is second only to England with 48%. Within the Scottish results, the main reason for bullying was given as 'Differences in appearance for example height' (44%) and the second 'Clothes students wear' (41%). (Multiple reasons for bullying were obviously recorded – the third reason was 'Skin colour (37%)). Jamie's evidence of people being called '*skank*' and '*tink*' because they '*don't have nice clothes or the latest trackies or come from a poorer family*' endorses these claims and also strengthens the argument that bullying is a major factor in truancy which is strongly linked to poor achievement. '*Folk, like, that that are maybe poorer, they get doon and they get fucking upset and don't wannae go back to school cos they're getting bullied*'. (see also Mellor (1990), Olweus (1993), Karatzias et al. (2002), Lipsett (2008))

In Gina's case, bullying was not the reason for her non attendance at school – she just preferred to '*dog it*' with her pals, get drunk and smoke hash. She was regularly suspended and was finally expelled when she was thirteen for assaulting her teacher. While Gina's story reminds us that teachers have a right to be protected from assault, it would appear that procedures for the protection of pupils are more highly visible. The establishment of the Criminal Records Bureau and the Scottish Criminal Records Office (SCRO) in 2002 under Part V of the Police Act 1997 are further indications of the high policy salience afforded to the increased protection of children and vulnerable adults in society, especially in an educational environment. Disclosure Scotland operates within SCRO to provide criminal history information, called a Disclosure, for employment and other purposes to comply with the Protection of Vulnerable Groups (Scotland) Act 2007. By facilitating schools, colleges and nurseries, indeed any organisations and institutions working with

vulnerable groups, to run comprehensive checks on employees or intended employees, anyone with a history that would make them unsuitable would be barred from such positions.

Barring people with a record of inappropriate behaviour chimes with Nussbaum's defence of the inclusion of bodily integrity in her list of central human functional capabilities because she considers bodily integrity to be 'a fixed point in our considered judgements of goodness' (Nussbaum, 2000:77). The political aspect of her project is primarily to coerce governments to provide a threshold level of the capabilities in her list but, in addition, she cautions us that, even where national policies exist to make such provision, such as in India, caste and religious laws and traditions constrain their implementation. From her reports of the abuse suffered by women in India, it is difficult to draw a parallel to the accounts of violence, abuse and bullying we hear of locally, especially the disturbing reports of technological 'cyber bullying' and 'happy bashing' and other web-based and digitally transmitted abuse. And, yet, aligning Nussbaum's conception of bodily integrity to the empirical data collected in this study highlights a similar dichotomy between the policies implemented by government and the reality of the lived experiences of its citizens. The plethora of policies, strategies and incentives designed to safeguard young people in both an educational and social environment appears ineffective and inadequate in the fight against the types of violence and abuse related in the narration of NEET young people's stories. Is Nussbaum mistakenly benevolent in assuming bodily integrity, and its embedded notions of freedom of movement, security against assault, violence and child sex abuse to be 'a fixed point in our considered judgements of goodness'? Is there a 'subculture' that cannot be influenced by such 'judgements of goodness' consonant with John's perception that *'There's folk that are bad and that's it – they drink, they fight, they go oot an' bottle folk an' stuff like that an' think nothing of it'… 'you'll no change them. naebody'll change them. Once they've hit high school you'll no change them'*. These questions bring me back to my conversation with Gina and how she repeatedly 'dogged' school with her friends. Gina agreed that she was '*dead quiet*' at primary school but '*jist changed*' when she went to secondary where '*ye stuck up fur yerself*'. But she regrets her behaviour at school and her violent past explaining that '*I went to a school of neds – I jist thought I was a ned – ye copied every other person didn't ye? Well, like, everybody else dunnit so ye didnae want tae sortae clash as well did ye?*'

Exploring the capability of bodily integrity has provided a fascinating yet disturbing insight into the lives of NEET young people and the plurality of views and values these young people hold. It appears to me that all young people have the capability of bodily integrity but some choose not to convert that capability into actual functioning by engaging in self-abusive risk-taking behaviour while some deny others of the capability by inflicting harm on them. What is most disturbing is the seeming lack of concern over the hurt inflicted by their aggressive and violent actions and that leads me to inquire into the role that compassion plays in Nussbaum's perception of a 'good life'. As a strong advocate for liberal education, Nussbaum posits education, both content and pedagogy, as the supreme vehicle by which to critically turn young minds towards democratic citizenship and compassion. These thoughts recur throughout the remainder of this dissertation and towards the final chapter where I suggest that all of us involved in education have a role to play in developing feelings of caring, sympathy and compassion in the young lives we guide.

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4. Senses, Imagination and Thought. Being able to use the senses, to imagine, think and reason – and to do these things in a "truly human" way, a way informed and cultivated by an adequate education, including, but by no means limited to, literacy and basic mathematical and scientific training. Being able to use imagination and thought in connection with experiencing and producing self-expressive works and events of one's own choice, religious, literary, musical, and so forth. Being able to use one's mind in ways protected by guarantees of freedom of expression with respect to both political and artistic speech, and freedom of religious exercise. Being able to search for the ultimate meaning of life in one's own way. Being able to have pleasurable experiences, and to avoid non-necessary pain.

It is interesting that Nussbaum promotes this capability – being able to use the senses, to imagine, think and reason – 'in a way informed and cultivated by an adequate education' (2000:78); asserting, as she does, that education is not a capability or functioning in itself but a good or resource to be used in the development of all other capabilities and functionings. Does our model promote the development of the senses, imagination and thought as they relate to Nussbaum's explication of this capability or does it deaden young minds and deny them the opportunity for self-expression and imagination? Through Jonathan's and Jamie's experiences we begin to get a clearer understanding of how our formal model of schooling, with its accent on meritocracy and certification, narrows

opportunities for self expression and confidence building through the inclusive and levelling experiences of the performing arts.

Jonathan liked his Drama classes but decided not to continue with them in fifth year '*because I goat telt there were a lot of essays, big essays – writin an that – cannae be bothered writing 500 word essays*'. Not that he disliked writing. In fact he had enjoyed English and was '*alright*' at it. He had wanted to be a journalist at one time because he '*liked writing stories an that*' but his creative talents were not appropriate to the writing requirements of exams and so, after an altercation with his English teacher over perceived inadequate preparation for the preliminary exams that would indicate his readiness to progress to higher study, he '*just sort of veered off that*'.

Jamie was equally enthusiastic about Drama classes. He '*liked performing*' and '*wanted to be an actor*' but now that he had left school there were no opportunities for him to pursue this interest further. Acting seems to have been one of the few things at which he excelled and he was disappointed that another member of his class was now appearing on television although he '*got better marks than her*'. There was a hint of disappointment, too, that he had not continued with his Higher Drama but he was made to feel unwelcome at school by the teachers because he was only taking one higher.

These young people are now embarking on an introduction to work skills in the construction industry where, following Dewey's progressive ideas, they are 'learning by doing' because, in their own words, they '*enjoy daein stuff*'. Both suggest that schools should offer more opportunities in work-related subjects; a sentiment echoed by Julie in her search for a position as an apprentice hairdresser. At school Julie enjoyed sport: netball, cross country running and trampolining and still continues her private dance classes but none of these talents have helped her to find employment as she has spent the past year at home doing housework for her mother.

Can the model of learning and teaching that Nussbaum describes as 'creative', 'dynamic', 'animated' and 'intensely passionate' only be realised in non-government or informal situations or can we guide teachers to 'take delight in the progress and individuality of their students'? Can we morally justify encouraging a sixteen-year-old to stay at school for a further two years in the hope that he might achieve a single Higher in Drama or Physical Education or should we advise a more vocationally oriented route? If we follow

Nussbaum's lead in capabilities and quality education, to what extent can we ask an 'adequate education' to inform and cultivate senses, imagination and thought if the alternative is to inform and cultivate a capacity for work?

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5. Emotions. Being able to have attachments to things and people outside ourselves; to love those who love and care for us, to grieve at their absence; in general, to love, to grieve, to experience longing, gratitude, and justified anger. Not having one's emotional development blighted by overwhelming fear and anxiety, or by traumatic events of abuse or neglect. (Supporting this capability means supporting forms of human association that can be crucial to their development.)

It is difficult to imagine a life void of feelings towards other human beings or without attachments to things beyond ourselves whether these might occasion pleasurable feelings like love, gratitude, joy and delight or negative feelings like guilt, fear and shame. Such feelings are characteristic of what could commonly be referred to as 'emotions' although other writers might debate this assertion and insist on the distinction between feelings and emotions and the significance of the events and experiences from which they follow. Nussbaum does not shrink from engaging with the messy topic of emotion offering an examination of emotion in 'Upheavals of Thought' (2001) and writing extensively on love, passion, grief, disgust and shame in 'Hiding from Humanity' (2004).   However, for the present purpose of emotion as an item in Nussbaum's list of central capabilities, I will restrict my deliberations to the coverage she gives to emotions in 'Women and Human Development' (Nussbaum, 2000).

That Nussbaum includes emotions in her list of central human capabilities indicates her perception of emotion as playing a crucial role in how she perceives a dignified human life and holds the view that the emotions have a cognitive dimension and can be valuable in the social choice process. And yet, it is a difficult area to ponder. How can we ask if an individual is capable of emotion and how can a government provide the social basis for its development? Not only does Nussbaum include emotion in her list, coupling it frequently with imagination in her writing, she acknowledges the importance of these capabilities in the methodology of her approach:

> Imagination about the necessary components of a truly human life, and emotions of loss and longing associated with the imagining of these central goods, play a (suitably constrained) role in the creation of basic political principles. (2000:250)

She then goes on to direct users of her approach to imagine how resources go to work differently in different lives – 'an exercise that requires a rich contextual imagining of particular lives and circumstances, seeing how general goals and aims are differently realised in different concrete conditions' (2000:250).

Imagining the reality of the lives of the young people interviewed was, for me, a very moving emotional experience and I have given a detailed account of this in Chapter Four. Grief at the death of a parent, love for a mother left alone to care for her family, disgust for a teacher who lied about providing textbooks, fear of the unknown when moving to secondary school, feelings of helplessness watching a mother cry, shame of past behaviour, longing for a job, anger at a father who abandoned his children, anxiety when venturing beyond one's local area and the trauma of witnessing violent events. Recollecting the stories around the expressions of these emotions suggests that here we have what looks like a list of negative emotions and experiences. Where is the joy, the pride, the pleasure or the fun and delight in these young people's lives? Although we shared laughter and humour during our discussions, none of the storied lives exuded happiness or confidence or enthusiasm for the future. At best, they seemed to be adapting, coping, surviving, to be 'fine' or 'OK'. On reflection, it seems to me that this is what Nussbaum meant by 'not having one's emotional development blighted by overwhelming fear and anxiety' and why Jamie felt grateful for the college lessons he had from a voluntary worker who '*teaches you about emotions and fear and why you shouldnae be feart – it's just false expectations appearing real*'. Regardless of whether these particular lives and circumstances are in some way different from the norm, by placing love and care at the heart of her specification of emotion, Nussbaum challenges us to find ways to support forms of human association that can be crucial to its development.

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6. Practical Reason. Being able to form a conception of the good and to engage in critical reflection about the planning of one's life. (This entails protection for the liberty of conscience.)

The historical context of our lived experiences shapes us as human beings and forms our aspirations, our values, our opportunities and our choices. Being able to act as rational agents with the capacity to reflect on our predicament and make wise decisions for a life that we choose to value lie, to my reading, at the heart of what Nussbaum describes as the

capability of practical reason. Being capable of practical reason, within the context of leaving school, would imply a positive, deliberate decision that considered alternative courses of action leading to an improved and more desirable future but we must remember that teenage years are difficult years lived betwixt childhood and adulthood; sometimes rejecting offers of help and support yet, often needing more than is on offer. Setting aside, for the moment at least, any discussion of the role of education in directly preparing young people for the world of work and the divided opinion on liberal and vocational paradigms, education must surely be recognised as a major contributor to the development of capabilities in young people. To have the freedom to participate actively and creatively in the world and not just as passive, manipulatable individuals is crucial to Nussbaum's moral philosophy and so it is this view of the individual as an end and not merely as a means to the social, political and economic ends of others that lies at the heart of the capabilities approach and provides us with a rich vocabulary and responsive framework for thought.

I have argued that, for many young people, making a successful transition from education to the world of work is crucial to the pursuit of flourishing and a dignified human life and that young people who leave school at the earliest possible opportunity with low levels of attainment and who have no immediate prospects of sustainable employment are particularly at risk of being confined to a life of poverty and exclusion. I have also argued, through my discussion of meritocracy and social mobility that many young people we might consider to be in privileged situations may have their life trajectories directed and supported by family or social traditions that encourage them to aspire to higher academic achievement and professional positions. While some are able to rely on social networks and family connections to assist them in finding employment and to extended learning opportunities to support their achievement, others, who lack such social and cultural capital, are more vulnerable to the vagaries of the employment market and less able to compete as dignified equals. Hence, we see the advantage of social background in forming a conception of the good and making reasoned choices for the future.

Nussbaum describes practical reason as a 'basic' capability: the innate equipment of individuals that is the necessary basis for developing the more advanced capabilities and as such, is 'sometimes more or less ready to function' (2000:84). Moreover, her approach attaches very great importance to practical reason and figures it as a central function on the list. In re-aligning practical reason toward the context of this inquiry, it is useful to note Sen's approach that asserts that individuals have different capacities to exercise choice in

the conversion of capabilities (opportunities) into functionings; their choice being constrained by different ideas of the good life and by personal, social and environmental factors. So, the account of human diversity that we can draw from the capabilities approach goes a long way in helping us to distinguish those young people who have developed the capability of practical reason and who appear to have achieved this particular functioning as Jonathan's story illustrates:

> *The school sent me tae college tae dae a wee taster – joinery an bricklaying an that. I liked daein that kind o stuff. That's why I applied – so I could come back cos a lot o the places dinnae take ye aff the street. Like they'll go to the college an say I'm needin boys. So that's half the reason I'm at college an I'll try an keep in at it cos the college will put the best boys forward and you've got a chance of getting a job out o it. College can help me so I thought it's a smart idea to come here. I thought it looked better anyway on ma CV if I've no got a gap of about three month or that where I've done nothin'.*

While this short excerpt from my conversation with Jonathan portrays him as consciously living out a predetermined life plan with a distinct perception of a good life and a mature capacity to act autonomously and rationally, fragmenting his story in this way risks losing sight of the fact he at one time aspired to be a journalist but became so disillusioned with school that he left at the earliest opportunity. That said, his understanding and appreciation of values, self-awareness, self-confidence, self-esteem and the capacity for critical reflection are crucial elements of the capability of practical reason that have provided him with the capacity to reflect on his situation and make conscious decisions about his future.

For Jenny, leaving school was not so much a conscious decision but more a 'drifting away' because she got '*fed up*' with what she considered a boring routine. Although her parents did not particularly want her to leave, they agreed it was up to her so long as she got a job but what followed for Jenny was a year of '*nuthin tae dae*' except her mother's housework and caring for her young sister. As she said during our conversation '*I wanted to leave but then I wis like I don't know if I want tae ... but then I jist left ... but once I left I wanted tae go back. But naw ... I jist didnae go back.*'

From my conversation with Jenny it became clear that she had always wanted to be a hairdresser but appeared to lack drive and initiative in moving toward her goal. After months spent looking for an opportunity in hairdressing by visiting salons and responding to small advertisements in shop windows Jenny became frustrated and disappointed by her failure to find work. Bored with her life at home, she found her own way to the Careers

Service and was enrolled on a Get Ready for Work hairdressing course in the hope that this would give her better access to work opportunities.

Unlike Jenny, Robyn had no previous plans to become a hairdresser until she was offered a place on the Get Ready for Work hairdressing course. She appeared unsure about the content and length of her course or what she might do next to the extent that her complacency and apparent lack of enthusiasm suggested that this decision was made hurriedly and with little thought and planning. The fact that she *'left school on the Friday so I could start here on the Monday'* implied that her priority was to leave school and any path that legitimated her departure was acceptable. School, according to Robyn was *'dead borin'* and she *'jist hated goin a the time – getting up dead early jist tae go an do a bit o work that ye didnae have to do really – jist hated it'*. The one good thing about school was *'jist tae see ma pals and talk to them'* but this was not enough reason to keep attending because she considered some teachers *'kept moanin an shoutin'* and she *'couldnae be bothered wi all that wi some teachers'*.

My conversations with Jonathan, Jenny and Robyn illuminate the complex inter-related factors that influence young people in their decision to leave school and while it might be unreasonable to expect typical sixteen year olds to be consciously living out a predetermined life plan with a distinctive perception of a good life and a mature capacity to act autonomously and rationally, it seems to me that these three young people have developed very different levels of the capability for practical reason. Questions around the role played by guidance teachers and the Careers Service might clarify the level of planning advice given and received but I cannot determine any particular reason why Jonathan might be so much more focussed on his future than the other two appeared to be. He had been very unhappy at school, always in trouble with teachers, and said that he *'went a bit dodgy'* when his parents were splitting up and yet, he was highly motivated to improve his life by finding work in the construction industry and understood and appreciated the contribution that the Get Ready for Work course could make towards that ambition. Perhaps we could speculate that it was those very experiences – the difficult times that he had come through losing the main male role model in his life– that made him determined to succeed. But that theory does not hold for Jenny and Robyn. Jenny claimed that her parents were happy for her to leave school so long as she found a job and yet they also seemed content to have her at home to do the housework and look after their other child. It did emerge, however, that there was a possibility that Jenny's father would help

her set up her own hairdressing business. In contrast, Robyn's parents did not encourage her to stay at on at school and '*jist said if I wanted to leave I could leave*'. Robyn also believed that '*it's no up to them if I want to stay on or leave*'.

What disturbs me in this exploration of practical reason is the role of adults in developing in young people the capability for practical reason considering its complex and difficult associations with values, aspirations and perceptions of the good. Conceptions of the good come from example, experience and critical reflection on the effects of our own behaviour and place an onerous burden on the teaching profession, on parents and carers and other adults working formally and informally with young people.

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7. Affiliation. **A**. Being able to live with and toward others, to recognise and show concern for other human beings, to engage in various forms of social interaction; to be able to imagine the situation of another and to have compassion for that situation; to have the capability for both justice and friendship. (Protecting this capability means protecting institutions that constitute and nourish such forms of affiliation, and also protecting the freedom of assembly and political speech.)
B. Having the social bases of self-respect and non-humiliation; being able to be treated as a dignified being whose worth is equal to that of others. This entails, at a minimum, protection against discrimination on the basis of race, sex, sexual orientation, religion, caste, ethnicity, or national origin. In work, being able to work as a human being, exercising practical reason and entering into meaningful relationships of mutual recognition with other workers.

Having tended to think, from an early reading of the specification of affiliation, that the first part, **A**, and its reference to friendship, compassion and social interaction had little relevance to my examining and understanding of NEET young lives, it is both disconcerting and comforting that I have come to revaluate that initial judgement. From my exploration of the capabilities of bodily integrity, emotion and practical reason, the extent to which social interaction with peers, with parents and other adults and with teachers impacts on behaviour has become more evident and as I engage more deeply with their stories and reflect on the context in which they strive to flourish, it becomes frighteningly apparent that the violence and aggression young people perceive or experience, either as victims or perpetrators, is constantly present in their lives. It thus emerges that the capability for friendship and concern for others; being able to imagine and care about their predicament; is a capability that should be nourished and protected as being crucial for fully human functioning.

What is also becoming apparent is the complex intertwining and overlapping of the elements in Nussbaum's list which, she tells us, is morally and ethically constructed from intuitive conceptions of the good – the capacity for cruelty, for example, does not figure on the list. Human beings, she argues, 'are creatures such that, provided with the right educational and material support, they can become capable of all these human functions' (2000:83). By her assertion that all human beings are capable of friendship, compassion, justice and concern for others and that these capabilities can be developed through education, we are directed to inquire how educational institutions can nourish the capacity for compassion. Here, I am reminded of Jamie's suggestion that we should '*teach them from primary one – everyone to be friends with everyone else*' that pre-empts Jonathan's concern that '*when they reach high school they'll no change*'. Could it be the case, then, that people can learn to care for and be considerate of others in ways that, while not necessarily expected to lead to friendship or commitment, promote forms of social interaction that eschew intent to hurt and harm. And, if this is the case, how do we and how can we promote the development of such social interactions through our educational institutions. These hypothetical questions are difficult to ponder. I develop my thoughts below and return to discuss further in the final chapter. Nussbaum, in her other writings (Nussbaum, 1997; Nussbaum, 2001), has much to say on the education of compassion and the humanities and the influence of social institutions in the development of compassion in individuals. This leads me to consider the influence of schools and colleges in the development of self-respect and dignity in a manner that draws on the second part, B, of the specification of affiliation and reflects the experiences and perceptions of the young people in this inquiry. Although Nussbaum makes reference to equality, self-respect, non-humiliation and dignity in the context of discrimination at work, it seems reasonable to assume that her thoughts might be re-contextualised to the world of education.

Education in the formal setting of schools shapes young lives; nurturing them to aspire to being good citizens, responsible and caring adults and to flourish as individual human beings. And we have seen how Nussbaum's approach would expand this to include the capability of affiliation with its focus on caring and compassion. Politically, however, successful schools are measured by levels of pupil attainment, exam results, client satisfaction and other performance indicators and targets and schools publicise their success through the dissemination of competitive league tables in a way that often conflicts

with concerns for the wellbeing of individual learners and the educational philosophy of the teacher.

The capability approach denounces the significance of such proxy measures of wellbeing and impels us to focus instead on people's capabilities and how an institution enables each individual to flourish – seeking by contrast to understand how equality and inequality, justice and injustice are formed and perpetuated through the everyday experiences of education. Put another way, schools and colleges are charged with more than the development of academic ability and vocational skills and play a major role in the development of social and personal development in young people.

Nussbaum endorses the Aristotelian /Marxian view that fully human functioning 'requires affiliation and reciprocity with others' thus positing affiliation among the most important of the human capabilities (2000:224) and making 'having the social bases for self respect and non-humiliation and being treated as a dignified human being whose worth is equal to that of others' central to our examination of the various types of social interaction experienced at school. Social interaction within a supportive educational environment that fosters mutually beneficial relations between individuals is crucial in the development of self-esteem, self-confidence and self-respect and is a key element in affiliation and reciprocity. Nussbaum's reference to work in her explication of affiliation can equally usefully be directed towards educational institutions where treating people with equal respect entails allowing their voice to be heard.

From Jonathan's story it seems that mutual respect and non-humiliation were not always evident in teacher-pupil relations:

> 'Well I jist got to the stage that school wisnae fur me any mair. Couldny stick teachers treatin ye like weans. Some o them would treat ye like idiots – ye know whit I mean – it jist got tae the point where either I left or I think the school would've threw me out.
>
> It jist depended whit teachers it wis ... some o them were sound[10] wi ye an other wans would jist talk to ye as if ye were stupit an that. An when they dae that, that's when ye lose ... that's when ye dinnae bother listening. Then when they start shouting, you're like 'you don't treat me like an idiot I'll maybe dae something' an then ye get in trouble for being cheeky.

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[10] trusted / respected / accepted

> *I liked the social side of it. .know what I mean? Enjoyed seein yur mates and that ... daein stuff an that but ye cannae keep goin for that.*

Jamie gives a similar account of feeling unwelcome and humiliated:

> *I didnae like school. Naw, no much cos I thought ye got treated like wee kids still even if ye were in fifth year. Some o the teachers talk to you as though you were still in primary – jist though ye were wee weans and shouted at you even though you were in fifth year – jist didnae really like school. I liked third and fourth year when I done ma exams and then in fifth year it was jist like "Well you've done your exams. Whit ur yis still doin in the school – get oot!" They were like moanin' at yis aw the time. "Why are ye staying on. Why do you not leave?" an' that like cos I only had one higher.*

Neither of these short excerpts describes a learning environment embracing self-respect and non-humiliation. To my reading, they show clearly that both of these young people perceived themselves as incompatible with their school environment; they no longer belonged, fitted in or even felt welcome due to the poor relations they had with some of their teachers. They were both keen to report that this was not always the case. But this implies, to some extent, unjust, unfair or unequal treatment:

> *Some o my teachers were brand new[11]. I liked some o my teachers. The other ones that didnae like you – they were all moany, grumpy some of them. But the ones that wernae moany grumpy I got alang wi quite well.*
> (Jamie)

> *There wis wan. Mrs I the Geography teacher. She wis sound man. Used to get some laughs in her class because we would be talking an stuff an then I would say one o ma comments and she would - she wouldnae really bother man – she would kinda get a wee laugh goin and then we'd a – like cos she was sound like that an we could get a laugh – then when she said "Right, heids doon" we done it out of respect.*
> (Jonathan)

The interview data illustrates the extent to which good pupil/teacher relationships affects receptiveness to learning and reveals instances implying a lack of mutual respect. The data also suggests that learners enjoyed better relationships with their lecturers when they moved to a college environment.

> *See, the lecturers and that treat ye better- treat ye more like an adult. Aye, they can be strict sometimes but at the same time, if you play the game fair wi them they'll be fair back. But when you start to rip the piss an that then that's when they'll say to you "You've stepped over it". Know whit I mean? But maist o them you can have a good laugh wi. It's good banter an that.*
> (Jonathan)

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[11] very good

> *Ye get taught – ye get treated like an adult and all the lecturers are dead friendly – they're all brand new. If ye canny dae it they would gie ye a haun. [In school] they only came over for about five seconds and say "I've already tellt ye whit tae dae 'n you've tae dae this 'n you've tae dae that" – don't explain it enough. You get a lot of help in college. They like explain to ye exactly what you've to do 'n if you're finding it hard - if I tell the teacher "Sur, onnae chance o a wee haun?" he'll come ower an gies a wee haun.*
> (Jamie)

> *I think it's different in college. It's like ... eh... like they don't come up every time and tell ye not to talk an all that. In school they do – ye can't talk an have a laugh or anything – ye can't do that cos ye jist get moaned at in school.*
> (Julie)

To a greater or lesser degree, every teacher probably has a perspective of education that centres around leading their students into aspiring to 'greater heights', to 'better themselves' or 'reach their potential', that is historically embedded in the teacher's own values and history; many seeing their role to get their students to aspire to become part of an educated upper or middle class (Radnor et al., 2007). Every education institution has a multifaceted view of equality that struggles between the demands of social justice and those of competitive market forces. The structures, systems, strategies and forms of power in an institution might be seen to afford preferential treatment to those members who comply and reinforce unjust practices towards those who do not. Indications coming through from the interview data are that this group of young people do not meet with the behaviour, attitude and ability requirements of their schools allowing a situation of disinterest, disengagement and disappointment to develop along with concomitant inequalities of opportunity that this produces and legitimates. The different social norms of the dominant 'academic' group tend to be treated more favourably than those of the other thus spawning and perpetuating the 'have' and 'have not' divide. Following this line, Gagnon and Cornelius's (2000) work uses the capabilities approach to examine workplace equality in a way that finds resonance with Nussbaum's references to affiliation and work and that can be assumed to apply to educational organisations. They suggest that minority groups have limited opportunities to shape the agenda of their organisation and 'certain minority groups will never gain a voice that is really listened to'. They conclude that 'the more marginalised and demonised a group has been, the less likely it is that the dominant group will actively listen and acknowledge grievances' (Gagnon and Cornelius, 2000:85).

Affiliation, according to Nussbaum's list of central capabilities subsumes capability for empathy, sympathy, compassion, friendship and justice and calls for the protection of

institutions that constitute and nourish such forms of affiliation. Exploring affiliation through the ethical lens of Nussbaum's approach has allowed me to better understand the barriers to educational equality as may be perceived by disadvantaged young people and the role of institutional and interpersonal relationships in felt unfair treatment is more clearly articulated. The data from the interview conversations suggest three important aspects of affiliation that invite further discussion. First, is the idea that non-participation implies non-conformity to expected norms of behaviour. Second, is the suggestion that capacities for friendship, sympathy and compassion might be developed though education. And third, the issue that minority groups do not have a voice that is listened to. These points are particularly relevant to this inquiry and are carried forward to be discussed further in the final chapter.

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8. Other Species. Being able to live with concern for and in relation to animals, plants and the world of nature.

Nussbaum considers the inclusion of this item in her list to be the most controversial. Enjoying and appreciating the world of nature was not a theme that emerged during the research conversations but, rather than immediately challenge its inclusion in Nussbaum's list, I prefer to examine its possible relevance and benefit in the context of the wellbeing of the young people in this inquiry. While diet and physical activity are widely acknowledged to be two of the primary determinants of physical and mental health, Pretty et al. (2003) believe that wellbeing is further enhanced through close connections to both nature and communities. The line of their argument draws on research evidence to suggest that closeness to nature has a positive effect on people and increases likelihood of understanding of and care for nature whereas increasing disconnections between people and nature will have an impact on individuals, on their communities and cultures, and ultimately on how they treat and care for nature. Moreover, they draw from a large body of research to attest that 'people both seek and derive a variety of values when they visit wildernesses, in particular a desire for tranquility and natural beauty, escape from the stresses of urban life, and the potential for dramatic 'peak experiences' or transcendent moments' (p.22).

Being convinced by these arguments draws us to consider whether, given the strong emphasis on 'hanging about the streets' and having 'nothing to do but drink', young people

should be encouraged and supported to develop a concern for and appreciation of animals, plants and the world of nature and to enquire as to what role education might play in fostering a connection between young people and nature.

9. Play. Being able to laugh, to play, to enjoy recreational activities.

Play and childhood are traditionally synonymous in Western culture. However, opportunities for play for today's children are restricted not only as a consequence of increased traffic and the lack of green spaces in urban areas, but also as the result of changes in attitude to risk in our society. Freedom to roam far from home, to play in streets, fields, woods and rivers, activities that previous generations of children enjoyed, are now labelled too dangerous and parents' conceptions of 'stranger danger', fuelled by media coverage of rare but horrifying instances of child abduction, reinforce the view that 'it is wrong for adults to initiate social contact with children they don't know, which breeds mistrust and can have damaging consequences' (Gill, 2007:53).

It is regrettable that the Scottish Government has been slow to develop a play strategy, preferring instead to 'look at play within the broader context of early years policy first' (The Scottish Government, 2007a). A commitment to provide well designed, high quality and well maintained play spaces would delight Jamie who bemoaned the fact that there were '*nae grass bits or parks in oor bit tae play – ye jist make the best o it an wait till all the car parks are empty and play there*'. This was hardly ideal because he and his friends frequently hurt themselves falling and '*burstin oor heids open on the concrete*'. Facilities had been available at one time but had been targeted by vandals: '*goal posts getting knocked doon – get spray painted*' and '*everybody's moaning they've nuthin tae dae an that's how they drink – that's how they hang aboot the streets*'. Jamie's solution to deter vandals was to '*have a supervisor watching them* [the play parks]' and '*I think that would be good b'cos then people widnae have an excuse ony mair for drinking and fighting and that*'.

Jamie's casual remark about the friends he played football with – that they were all Celtic supporters and he was a Rangers supporter, they Catholics and he Protestant – supports the

theory that play, sport and recreation can break down barriers and allow friendship and compassion to flourish. But not always. Religious bigotry is the scourge of the West of Scotland and football is the vehicle through which it is manifested and perpetuated. '*It was the football thing that was on – Rangers and Celtic*' was Emma's explanation for the potentially fatal stabbing of her friend had she not lain over his body to stop his bleeding.

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10. Control over One's Environment. A. Political. Being able to participate effectively in political choices that govern one's life; having the right of political participation, protection of free speech and association.
B. Material. Being able to hold property (both land and movable goods), not just formally but in terms of real opportunity; and having property rights on an equal basis with others; having the right to seek employment on an equal basis with others; having the freedom from unwarranted search and seizure.

My interpretation of this element of Nussbaum's list gravitates towards her core idea of an individual as a 'dignified free being who shapes his or her own life' (2000:72) making each person the bearer of value and an end in herself – not a means to the ends of others.

A. Political. Considering, first, the political aspect of this element of Nussbaum's list and the historical struggle over the right of UK citizens to vote, it is an inconvenient truth that, in the 2001 UK general election, only 59% of the electorate participated. Although there is no exact data on the voting behaviour of young people available in psephological studies, it is believed that the number of young first-time voters who participate in general elections has declined (Kimberlee, 2002). Politics and political franchise were not identified by the young people in the study as areas of concern; perhaps because most of the interviewees had not reached voting age. However, in light of the present debate to lower the voting age to 16, it is useful to examine this apparent apathy in order to better understand why young people choose to denounce their right to political involvement.

From his analysis of the literature, Kimberlee (2002) identifies and discusses four broad explanations which he classifies as: youth focussed, politics focussed, 'alternative value' and generational approaches before offering his own explanation for the phenomenon of youth non-participation. That is not to say that he rejects reasons that suggest youth apathy, lifestyle and 'don't care' attitudes or the failure of political parties to attract young people as valid explanations. The political interests of young people, he tells us, have shifted away from class-structured politics to a 'new politics' predicated on alternative

values that engage and enrage them – issues such as war, homelessness and the environment. He suggests that non-participation has more to do with the generational differences of contemporary youth's changing journey to 'adult statuses' compared to their parents or grandparents. Basing his argument on the confusion, uncertainty and marginalisation caused by an unstable youth labour market, declining welfare provision and the increase in adolescent experimentation with sex, alcohol and drugs, he believes that young people are struggling to construct an adult identity in the absence of strong family and community bonds.

If, as Kimberlee (2002) suggests, the rapid social changes to which young people are being subjected 'could be effecting or undermining their ability to engage and identify with contemporary politics' (p.96), we must question whether, for any individual affected by such changes but who does have the 'right' to vote, actually has this right in Nussbaum's sense of a combined capability. Clearly, to anyone aged 18 or over (and there is considerable support to reduce this to 16) a threshold level of political participation is constitutionally guaranteed and Nussbaum insists that 'we shoot for capabilities' not functionings and thereafter 'citizens must be left free to determine their own course' (2000:87). So, is non-participation a genuine informed choice not to convert a capability into a functioning or can we use Kimberlee's argument to suggest that, for today's disaffected, disadvantaged and disengaged youth, control over one's environment in the political sense, does not feature in the set of capabilities to which they have real access?

Government concern over youth non-participation has brought the introduction of 'Citizenship' to the curriculum to promote awareness and understanding of the political process (see Crick report etc.) In addition New Initiatives Fund (NIF) funding to the Electoral Commission has supported voluntary organisations and local authorities to undertake innovative projects to engage young people with politics evidencing the UK Government's intention to provide more than a threshold level of political control to its citizens.

B. Material. From an initial reading of the material aspect of Control over One's Environment, Nussbaum's specification may appear as an eclectic and incoherent mix of rights predicated on the unequal treatment of poor Indian women with regard to holding property and taking on work outside the home that leaves them totally dependent on the male members of their family. Re-imagining this capability from the evidence collected

during the research conversations directs our gaze towards two aspects: having the right to seek employment on an equal basis with others and having the freedom from unwarranted search and seizure. With regard to the former, my earlier argument around issues of inequality and disadvantage that pertain to NEET young people posits the right to seek employment on an equal basis with others central to the phenomenon of NEET and so, having discussed this aspect at length, I move on to engage with the latter aspect: having the freedom from unwarranted search and seizure. But, first, I want to tell Jonathan's story:

Jonathan clearly considered being '*pullt by the polis*' and being '*slammed up against the wall just because yur out in the street*' to be unwarranted seizure. He and his friends were frequently stopped by police and asked to split up if there were more than three of them together. But then '*if ye don't do that they'll pull ye again and they'll try to arrest ye – arrest ye for anything*'. He detested the gang culture and the '*idiots*' who perpetrated it and felt angry at the injustice of being branded a '*hooligan*' because he wore a tracksuit identical to one that the police claimed was worn by members of a local gang. Jonathan's experience was not an isolated incident as other young people made similar comments. The relationship between the police and young people, according to Jamie, needs to be improved. '*Most of the time they're bothering youngsters like me for playing football in the car parks rather than actually going oot an stopping the ones that deserve to get stopped – like the boys that are drinking an that – they never get caught.*'

Nussbaum (2004) articulates this situation eloquently in her discussion of contemporary moral panic that led to the adoption of laws and policies aimed at juvenile offenders such as the passage of anti-loitering laws targeted at members of inner-city gangs. She offers a legal argument that the definition of 'loiter' as 'to remain in any one place with no apparent purpose' is 'inpermissably vague and an arbitrary restriction on personal liberties' (p.272). The order to disperse, she tells us, is also vague because it does not make clear how far away one must go, or for how long. Moreover, 'gang membership may not be established solely because an individual is wearing clothing available for sale to the general public'. In light of social tendencies to moral panic based on flimsy stereotypes and stigma, Nussbaum suggests that we ought to respond 'by making very certain that there is clarity about what harmful behavior is being targeted and clear standards that distinguish the harmful behavior from innocent loafing around' (p.273).

Borders between innocent loafing around, harmful behaviour and crime are hardly easy to ascertain but Gerry's story is a good example of 'not-so-innocent' behaviour that he would nevertheless defend. Gerry spoke freely of his involvement in gangfights and underage drinking giving a vague description of what appeared to be a covert 'arrangement' that, so long as he and his friends did not drink behind shops or on the street and did not cause any trouble, they would be left in peace. He was most indignant that this agreement had been broken and that the police had raided their hideout and rendered it unusable. Gerry was adamant that young people should be free to choose to smoke or drink if they wished and was in favour of the legalisation of cannabis. That such behaviour is prohibited by law raises interesting issues of paternalism which Nussbaum defends 'because there are issues of justice involved: people are being harmed; the freedom of some to pursue their good is interfering with the legitimate pursuits of others' (2000:53).

In a bid to curb low-level criminal activity, new powers were given to police under the Antisocial Behaviour (Scotland) Act 2004 to allow them to disperse gatherings of young people in public places. Jonathan, Jamie and Gerry were all disturbed by the way this act affected their freedom but, if these contrasting experiences are valid interpretations of what Nussbaum might consider as freedom from unwarranted search or seizure, contextualising or re-specifying this capability 'in accordance with local beliefs and circumstances' appears disturbingly problematic. The conflicting perceptions, Jonathan and Jamie's innocent behaviour resulting in unjustified harassment while Gerry challenges the restriction to his freedom that age-related access to alcohol and tobacco cause, seem irreconcilable. Perhaps it is the intertwining of the capabilities of bodily integrity and bodily health and their evident manifestation in the justification of policing anti-social behaviour in young people that is confusing my understanding of the idea of the 'multiple realisability' of Nussbaum's list. Or perhaps it is the positioning of 'having freedom from unwarranted search or seizure' within the capability of control over one's environment that also embraces 'the right to political participation' that is more suggestive of freedom of political expression than protection of the individual or society. Whether or not I am correct about Nussbaum's intent, my interpretation spawns a debate over her capabilities approach that promotes the capability of the individual over the collective good of society. In response to such comments, Nussbaum might remind us that, in her view, each person is valuable and worthy of respect as an end, not as agent and supporter of others but, she would add, there is no incompatibility between individual and collective good because

people are free to choose to make sacrifices for others. What matters is that freedom to choose how to live one's life does not harm others.

Beyond Nussbaum's List

In this section I reflect on the problems uncovered during the mapping exercise of the previous section. Throughout my discussion I engage with some of the criticisms of Nussbaum's version of the capabilities approach and its application in practice. Thereafter, I argue in favour of a re-framed version of Nussbaum's list, contextualising the original towards this inquiry in light of the rich data collected during the research conversations.

Nussbaum's list of capabilities provides a useful framework to follow in thinking about the diversity of young people's lives; allowing us to see, afresh, both the differing and common facets of the process towards human flourishing. By mapping the members of her list of central capabilities to the data of the research interviews and engaging with the relevant literature, I have acquired a deeper and broader understanding of NEET young people's lives. The mapping process has also highlighted the stark differences between the lives of poor women in India who were the focus of Nussbaum's concern and those of the young people who participated in this inquiry. Those differences now require to be reconciled in light of Nussbaum's claims that her list 'can always be contested and remade' and that it represents 'a type of overlapping consensus on the part of people with otherwise very different views of human life' (2000:5,77). Notwithstanding the very positive aspects of engaging with Nussbaum's list, there remain some confusions, ambiguities and unanswered questions around the application of a capability approach in practice that cannot be assumed away by unquestioningly 'remaking' her list. Nussbaum gives no indication as to how, and to what extent, her list may be 'contested and remade'. Nor does she explain how a consensus was reached during its compilation. So, I must examine whether my reinterpretations, reorientations, and revisionings represent the views and values of the young people who participated in this study; whether they are biased by my own positionality or whether they are fundamentally misguided.

Questions that need to be asked in light of Nussbaum's insistence that the list is open-ended include how we might add new items to the list and how many items we might reasonably add before the list can no longer be considered a 'remake' of the original. One possible response could be to consider removing or merging some items but this, too, is fraught as the list is 'emphatically' non-fungible, that is it is a list of related but distinct

components wherein we 'cannot satisfy the need for one of them by giving a larger amount of another one' (p.81). To add to this confusion, Nussbaum tells us that, in revising her list, some items were promoted to individual status in light of their heightened importance. At the same time, although the items are described as 'fixed', some, like bodily integrity, may seem more fixed than others and it would be, she notes, 'astonishing' (p.77) if it were to be removed from the list. Thus, while Nussbaum eloquently argues to convince us of the flexibility of her list, deep methodological issues arise from what appear to me to be contradictions and lack of procedural guidance as to how this list of 'irreducibly distinct items', each of which is held to be 'essential', might be effectively contextualised towards my own particular project (p.212).

Contesting Nussbaum's List

<u>A Single Universal List?</u>

Dominating the criticisms of Nussbaum's approach (see Stewart (2001), Deveaux (2002), Menon (2002), Okin (2003), Robeyns (2005)) is the question of the validity of using a single list of capabilities - as my efforts to re-imagine and recontextualise the elements in Nussbaum's list away from issues of gender inequality and injustice in India and towards NEET young people in Scotland have illustrated. It would appear that there are two diametrically opposed views to the use of a single universal list in applications of the capability approach. Sen, despite Nussbaum's insistence that he should be more specific in his account of capabilities and freedoms, has persistently refused to produce a fixed and final list of capabilities arguing that each project requires the democratic selection of appropriate capabilities that take note of the unique purpose of the exercise.

> The problem is not with listing important capabilities, but with insisting on one predetermined canonical list of capabilities, chosen by theorists without any social discussion or public reasoning. (Sen, 2004:77)

Criticisms made against Nussbaum's claims to the universal applicability of her version of the capabilities approach across culturally plural societies are primarily based on the lack of evidence or justification for the conception of the good life that is reflected in her list of capabilities and challenge her right, as a Western, liberal, educated and privileged female, to determine central capabilities for other societies. Robeyns (2005) adds to this debate by arguing that 'irrespective of the capabilities that will be selected, it matters how the list is drawn up' (p.200) and that 'the process or method through which her list is created lacks legitimacy and encounters some serious epistemological limits' (p.202). Alkire (2007:1) concurs with Robeyns' suggestion that writers should explicitly describe how and why

they chose certain particular dimensions adding that, without understanding the basis of their choices, 'the reader is unable to examine, trust or question the selection' (see Stewart (2001), Deveaux (2002), Menon (2002), Okin (2003), Robeyns (2005)). Below, I address some of the criticisms made against Nussbaum's approach. As I move towards re-framing the list, I respond to the above concerns by providing an explicit description of that process and its engagement with the data collected during interview.

The Structure of the List

By presenting a list of universal norms, Nussbaum identifies a definitive set of human capabilities as 'the most important ones to protect' which, because the list aims to be exhaustive, necessarily includes capabilities concerned primarily with aspects of physical survival such as health, food, shelter and protection from assault. It seems reasonable to assume that such capabilities are to be valued by each person in society and there is good reason to insist that they should be developed and protected as the basis of political guarantees. In contrast, other items place an emphasis on human self sufficiency and appear to promote social, emotional and political development. Moreover, because the list has been changed as a result of discussions with people in India and Scandinavia, it is easy to imagine arguments over the validity of some inclusions and claims to cross-cultural relevance that accommodates prevailing social arrangements.

Threshold Levels

The idea of a threshold level of each capability is important to Nussbaum's (2000) political goal of securing a social minimum which people have a right to expect from their governments and below which 'truly human functioning is not available' (p.6). She envisages this taking place 'within each constitutional tradition as it evolves through interpretation and deliberation' as citizens work towards a consensus for political purposes (p.77). It would be good to be clear about how this threshold level might be determined in practice but Nussbaum offers no instructive guidance towards this. Rather, she argues that we may reasonably 'defer questions about what we shall do when all citizens are above the threshold, given that this already imposes a taxing and nowhere-realized standard' (p.12).

One possible reaction to this confused situation is to imagine, say, a minimum level of healthcare provision that promotes the development of bodily health capability for each person. The first and most obvious problem arises if we claim that our national health service provision goes beyond a threshold level when compared to the healthcare provision

in developing countries. But, of course, when we become aware of shortcomings in provision and unequal access to treatment, the question is not 'is a social minimum being met?' but 'how can we improve the present level of health capability for every individual?'. The problem becomes still deeper as we try to imagine how threshold levels of other elements of Nussbaum's list like 'being able to use senses, imagination and thought' or 'to love' or 'to grieve' might be secured. These questions should not be neglected but must be noted as problematic and troublesome areas with respect to the practical application of Nussbaum's approach.

The Items in the List and the Method of Selection

Through frequent references to the work of John Rawls, Nussbaum draws our attention to the closeness of her own list of capabilities and Rawls's notion of primary goods and basic liberties that include freedom of speech, freedom of movement, freedom from arbitrary arrest, income and wealth and the social basis of self respect; 'things which a rational man wants whatever else he wants' (Rawls, 1999:79). On the one hand, Nussbaum has included several of Rawls's 'natural goods' (as opposed to 'primary goods') like health and imagination in her list but, on the other, has not included materialist items like income and wealth because she considers wealth, like education, to be a resource for furthering human capability development and not a goal in itself.

More needs to be said about how Nussbaum arrived at her list of central capabilities and, equally importantly, how revisions were made between earlier and later versions. Indeed, considering her assertion that it is 'intended for the modern world, rather than timeless' we need to ask how 'final' and 'fixed' is the current version and how and by whom will the demands of 'continued reflection and testing' be met? (p.77). Her remarks about an intuitive, moral conception of human functioning invite us to question exactly how intuitive this conception might be and to what extent it reflects the situatedness of the author or the possibly biased views of those unidentified people involved in the years of cross-cultural discussion.

Nussbaum's Defence

Nussbaum presents the latest version of her list of central human capabilities in 'Women and Human Development: The Capabilities Approach'. In the section preceding the introduction of her list, Nussbaum anticipates that her philosophical theorising about universal norms will be challenged and contested and argues eloquently in its defence against three attacks from: culture, the good of diversity and paternalism. Against the argument from culture, she denies that normative criteria must come from within the society to which they are applied proposing instead that, while people should be free to choose to follow their cultural traditions, we should use universal criteria to rule out unjust or cruel cultural practices. Diversity itself, she asserts, should be valued and allowed to flourish so long as its practices respect basic forms of human dignity and concepts of value. The argument from paternalism that she envisages, would oppose the formulation of a set of politically endorsed criteria that purported to describe universal conceptions of the good on the grounds that it would not respect the many diverse notions of the good and would deny citizens the right to choose to pursue the kind of life they have reason to value. Such criticism is unfounded, she claims, as her project would seek to respect the dignity and freedom of individuals as agents of choice in the pursuit of their own values – so long as this does no harm to others.

The substance of Nussbaum's defence focuses on two primary assertions of her approach which she emphasises repeatedly. First, since the list is 'open-ended and humble' (p.77) and is made for political purposes only, it is not intended to define universal criteria of a good life for everyone. Second, its members can be more concretely specified to meet local contexts through interpretation and deliberation. So, it seems that, by accepting Nussbaum's invitation to contest and re-make the list, I am able to move towards accommodating the situation of NEET young people.

Situating the NEET Project within this Debate.

Nussbaum's writing has inspired my thoughts in directions not previously considered and helped me to organise these in a concerted and more conceptually coherent fashion. That is not to deny that there remain unsolved problems regarding the implementation of her approach and the need to remake or contextualise the items on her list towards the purpose of the present project; these problems having been unearthed without recourse to the features of Nussbaum's list during the initial stages of analysis. The question I face now is

how best to proceed. Contextualising may not be sufficient as my earlier interpretations and deliberations have demonstrated but remaking the list appears equally troublesome.

Nussbaum argues that there should be a single list of central capabilities that can be translated into more detailed and specific lists to suit the context of the inquiry; Sen argues that each application of the capabilities approach requires its own list, but neither writer offers guidance as to how these proposals might be achieved. What Alkire's (2007) analysis helpfully adds to this conversation is the insightful observation that, while the selection of capabilities seems complex, in practice the methods used by researchers when identifying capabilities are drawn, either alone or in combination, from five overlapping processes which she lists and these are provided in more detail in Appendix D.

It would be useful to ponder over the usefulness of each of these methods in turn in contemplation of their applicability to the present project.

i) Existing data or convention: the UNICEF (2007) report on the lives and wellbeing of children and adolescents in a group of the world's richest countries could be considered in this category drawing as it does on existing international data to measure and compare wellbeing under six different headings or dimensions: material wellbeing, health and safety, education, peer and family relationships, behaviour and risks, as well as on a subjective measure of young people's sense of their own wellbeing. The choice of indicators for assessment are primarily taken or adapted from the universal 'Convention on the Rights of the Child' (which could put that study in category iii – Public consensus) but it is interesting to note that the report acknowledges that 'child economic, social and cultural rights must be implemented progressively taking into account the specific context of each nation' (UNICEF, 2007:42). Although this extensive study provides extremely useful and sometimes shocking comparisons of wellbeing, the limitations of the adequacy and availability of data that could permit valid international comparisons are documented throughout the analysis. There are two further limiting factors to be considered when evaluating the usefulness of this method with regard to the present project. First, the quantification of narrative data into discrete categories and/or satisfaction scales dilutes the richness of the responses and, second, the chosen capabilities, if selected from existing data such as Panel Data or School Leavers statistics as used in the NEET literature, cannot and do not necessarily

represent or respect the expressed values of the young people to which they are applied in this project.

ii) Assumptions: making reasoned and informed assumptions about what people would value; health, safety, relationships etc., is the most common method of selecting capabilities according to Alkire who reminds us, referring to Nussbaum's negligence here, that 'the strength of the normative or theoretical assumptions are limited *unless* the assumptions are transparently informed to invite public scrutiny'(Alkire, 2007:9). Moreover, making normative assumptions about what people would or ought to value raises difficult questions and invites the kind of criticism directed at Nussbaum's universalist approach that was discussed earlier.

iii) Public 'consensus': A fixed list of capabilities that has been refined and developed through a process of ongoing debate in response to diverse sources of expertise and critique can claim to be relatively stable and authoritative. Universal human rights, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Sphere Project's standards for humanitarian assistance in events of disaster are good examples of this approach. Using an existing consensus-based list has obvious advantages but it is unclear who would decide when a consensus had been reached and whether the values of the people who were to be the focus of the study were reflected in the list of capabilities.

iv) Ongoing deliberative participation: This approach seeks to engage the people concerned in dialogue in order to identify and agree on priorities and to improve the selection of capabilities through an ongoing process of revision. Alkire believes that, when this method works well, it seems to be the ideal forum for selecting capabilities but, in practice may be subject to a number of distortions due to power imbalances and lack of trust. Further, since this process is dynamic, 'it is likely to lead to a different set of dimensions at each participatory process at different times and for different groups. Consequently, the data generated are not comparable across communities or over time' (p.12).

(v)Empirical analysis: this method of selecting capabilities draws on the analysis of empirical, possibly survey, data of people's values and behaviours and, according to Alkire, is becoming increasingly popular. If my understanding of her explication is correct, she argues that a weakness of this approach is that it can sideline practical

> reason and people's own aspirations, studying these factors as objects. 'For this reason the empirical approach should be used to provide informative support to participatory methods and deliberations, but should not constitute the sole basis for selecting dimensions' (p.13).

Alkire's critique of methodologies and techniques for the selection of capabilities advocates a 'mixed methods' approach that articulates the views and values of the group under study. An excellent and relevant example of this is the 'The Good Childhood Inquiry' (Layard and Dunn, 2009) to which more than 35,000 people contributed as parents and grandparents, carers and careworkers, teachers, academics and professionals as well as young people themselves through a call for evidence, surveys, focus groups, 'my life' postcards and the BBC Newsround television programme. The inquiry was designed to achieve consensus but 'sought the healthy and necessary tension and difference of view' drawing on the panel's expertise and experience to evaluate and interpret the evidence. As the biggest inquiry into childhood ever conducted in the UK, this contemporary study explores the main influences to which every child is exposed – family, friends, lifestyle, values, mental health, inequalities and schooling – seeking ways to make childhood better. And so it follows that the discussion and reported findings from this landmark study have informed my own thoughts around young people's search for values in this competitive age.

Besides advocating a 'mixed methods' approach for the selection of capabilities, Alkire recommends that the selection meets the five criteria set by Robeyns (2003a, 2003b, 2005 and 2006). In presenting her criteria as 'very much up for debate', Robeyns offers practical and workable suggestions towards a procedural approach for the selection of quality of life measurement that aims to address issues of difference in epistemological goals across disciplines and applications and possible selection biases in specifying which capabilities matter. She argues strongly against the use of Nussbaum's list for quality of life measurements on the grounds of epistemology and legitimacy; promoting instead the development of a set of methods to select capabilities appropriate for the particular approach and goes on to define criteria that the lists should meet. Central to Robeyn's critique is her emphasis on the diverse interdisciplinary application of the capability approach and correspondingly different types of analysis and different epistemological goals which necessarily require individual consideration of capabilities and functionings.

To this end she offers a 'typology of capability analysis' as an open-ended table of goals, roles and methodologies.

It is interesting, and relevant, that Robeyns' account asserts that, in the selection of criteria for a particular project, even if we end up with the same list as Nussbaum, the underlying assumptions of what the list is and what it is supposed to do remain different. The theoretical status of the lists will remain distinct, even if both lists contain the same elements because the purpose and process of selection are different. Moreover, she adds, it is important to go through a democratic process when drawing up a list of priorities as 'This will give a legitimacy to the outcome that simply copying Nussbaum's list will lack' (Robeyns, 2003b:69). Robeyns' methodology for selection involves testing a draft list by engaging with existing literature and debates and with other lists of capabilities before finally ensuring that the selection meets her criteria. These criteria for the selection of capabilities are sketched below: (Robeyns, 2005:205).

1. Explicit formulation (the list should be made explicit, discussed and defended);
2. Methodological justification (the method that generated the list should be clarified, scrutinized and defended);
3. Sensitivity to context (the level of abstraction at which the list is pitched should be appropriate for fulfilling the objectives for which we are seeking to use the capabilities approach);
4. Different levels of generality (if a selection aims at an empirical application or is intended to lead to implementable policy proposals, then the list should be drawn up in two stages, whereby each stage will generate a list at a different level of ideal theory to more pragmatic lists);
5. Exhaustion and non-reduction (no important capabilities should be left out).

Re-framing Nussbaum's List

Having taken all the above into account, I now move towards offering a re-visioning of Nussbaum's list. My purpose is neither to champion Nussbaum's insistence on a single universal collection of capabilities nor to eschew Sen's argument for the democratic selection of appropriate capabilities for each application of the capabilities approach. I steer clear of these opposing views to focus on the goals of this inquiry which are to develop a deeper understanding of NEET young lives and to give a valid account of the perceptions and aspirations of the young people who participated in this study. It seems to me that Sen offers a broader, more general approach possibly better suited to large scale

quantitative measurement and democratic discussion and selection of appropriate freedoms that are valued by a community while Nussbaum's focus on theories of justice and her natural inclination to engage with narrative and emotion offer a more supportive scaffold in the context of this small-scale qualitative study. The mapping exercise of the previous section goes some way towards justifying my decision and, by infusing references to appropriate literature with the voices of the participants, challenges around issues of bias can be at least partially absolved. Moreover, my deliberations and cogitations of other lists (Alkire and Black, 1997; Finnis, 1980; Robeyns, 2005; Layard and Dunn, 2009) suggest that, broadly speaking, the issue is more one of naming, grouping and interpretation than of any radical differences in perceptions of the good or of what constitutes wellbeing and human flourishing. That said, I offer my re-visioned list not as a remake of Nussbaum's but as a re-framing of her list in order to re-draw the landscape in which she positions her list and to shift the original focus from gender inequality and the plight of women in India towards NEET young people in Glasgow.

A NEETer List

My re-framed version of Nussbaum's list may usefully be divided into four sections: Core Values, Social Interaction and Participation, Economic and Financial Wellbeing and, finally, Personal Wellbeing. The specifications of the items on this list reflect the views expressed by the group of NEET young people who participated in this inquiry. In addition, the deeper understanding of issues around young people's lives that developed through my exploration of literature and research has had a bearing on the inclusion of items that were not specifically raised during interview. Of particular import is the re-visioning of 'Bodily Integrity and Safety' and the inclusion of 'Work' and 'Knowledge, Skills and Education' as capabilities in their own right. While Nussbaum might argue that 'Work' and 'Education' are to be viewed as resources for flourishing and not as ends in themselves, the evidence of this inquiry suggests that 'Work' be viewed as a right as well as a resource. Moreover, it reflects the political view that it is government's responsibility to provide opportunities to achieve the knowledge and skills necessary to compete as an equal in the labour market.

NEET Core Values

Life: to have one's life valued, nurtured and supported (maintained) from time of conception. To be able to have one's birth and life celebrated, not despised and destroyed.

To enjoy a life of normal length not ended prematurely or limited due to affliction caused by parental lifestyles.

Physical Health: to live a life in good health, free from unnecessary or avoidable pain and disease. To have a level of healthcare opportunity on an equal basis with others; not limited by income, social status or geographic location.

Mental and Emotional Health: to experience childhood and adolescence free from overwhelming negative mental and emotional states insofar as these negative states are due to unjust or excessive exposure to stress and the challenges of modern competitive life.

Bodily Integrity and Safety: being able to be secure and protected against perceived, threatened or actual violence, harassment or abuse including sexual abuse, domestic violence, street crime and bullying; being able to move freely from place to place and live in a friendly, neighbourly environment; having one's bodily boundaries treated as sovereign by self and others.

Food: being able to be adequately nourished, suffering neither malnutrition nor obesity.

Shelter: to have living accommodation that provides shelter, sanitation and privacy conducive to living a life without shame or stigma; being able to have care and shelter after family breakdown or when step-families appear; being able to have care and shelter beyond the age of parental responsibility.

NEET Social Interaction and Participation

Affiliation: having the social basis of self-respect, self-esteem, self-confidence and non-humiliation; especially: not having one's development and progress hampered by discrimination on the basis of socio-economic background or academic ability, attainment or achievement. Having the social basis of mutual respect and trust with others: peers, family, teachers, police, and society; not suffering discrimination on the basis of age, appearance or moral panic.

Control Over One's Environment: being able to participate effectively in political choices that govern one's life; having one's voice heard, valued and respected; not silenced or marginalised.

NEET Economic and Financial Wellbeing

Work: having the skills, capacities, aptitude, propensity and real opportunities for rewarding employment; being free to seek employment on an equal basis with others; not suffering discrimination in the job market through age, socio-economic background, area of residence or appearance.

Practical Reason, Self-determination, Autonomy and Critical Thinking: being able to form a conception of the good and to engage in critical reflection about the planning of one's life; being able to make independent, reasoned judgements and have confidence in one's opinions; not being persuaded passively by others.

Knowledge, Skills and Education: being able to create and use knowledge; being able to develop skills for one's own flourishing and wellbeing and for the good of others. Being able to participate in and enjoy educational opportunities and gain real benefits from them; not being discouraged from learning by inappropriate methods or subjects, by ineffective or uninspiring teaching or by excessive assessment.

NEET Personal Wellbeing

Emotions: to experience love; to be loved and to give love. To experience happiness and joy and find pleasure in the happiness of others.

Play, Recreation and Leisure: having opportunities and affordable facilities for safe play and recreation; not being harassed when playing innocently or being discriminated against on grounds of age or image. Being able to use the senses, imagination and thought to experience and produce self expressive works; to have opportunities to develop interests in sport, music, dance, drama, books and other recreational activities.

Religion, Transcendence and Spirituality: being free to search for inner peace, a meaning or purpose in life or 'harmony with some more-than-human source of meaning and value' (Finnis, 1980); having a predisposition to curiosity and instinct to explore; to experience awe and wonder, able to appreciate beauty and live in harmony with nature and other species; a feeling of belonging to something bigger than oneself (Layard and Dunn).

Chapter Six

Towards a Conclusion

As this dissertation moves towards a conclusion, I reflect on the issue that spawned its inception. That is, my confusion around why, and how, young people who leave compulsory education at the earliest opportunity, with no immediate prospects of employment or training, re-appear, in growing numbers, on government training schemes in the post-compulsory sector. Since those early days the crisis of NEET has not gone away. The surge in numbers, estimated to break one million by the end of the year, indicates that young people may be bearing the brunt of the current recession amid claims by David Willets, the Conservative Shadow Universities Secretary, that 'Ministers have comprehensively failed to get a grip on this crisis' (Garner, 2009, *The Independent*). In the political row that Garner covers in his recent article, the Liberal Democrats' schools spokesman, David Laws, warns that this failure 'risks creating a lost generation' while the present Chancellor of the Exchequer, Alistair Darling, responds by defending government spending over five billion pounds to get people back to work because 'we don't want to repeat the mistakes that were made 20 years ago when a whole generation was lost' – a reference to a similarly challenging situation when Margaret Thatcher was Prime Minister. As the political debate continues with attack and counter-attack of the effectiveness of waves of policies and interventions, it is clear that we are still far from a solution and my need to understand those young people who are to be accommodated in the further education sector is as salient as ever.

Chapter 6: Towards a Conclusion

Initial questions asked whether these young people failed to learn or learned to fail or whether we, as educators, failed to teach. What experiences coloured their perceptions of schooling, training and work and what were their aspirations for the future? In light of my improved understanding of the NEET situation and my altered view of teaching as embracing far more than the imparting of knowledge, a question now might also ask whether we, as teachers, failed to educate. In our current social, political and economic climate, education is seen to be the main instrument in cultivating autonomy and employability and so dropping out, or leaving early with few qualifications and no positive destination, is viewed negatively by some as deviant, anti-social behaviour. Fine and Rosenberg (1983) suggest that ascribing this image to dropouts delegitimises their criticisms of educational institutions and the labour market and bolsters the image of education as the great equaliser. Further, they suggest that many young people who are described as dropouts have in fact been 'thrown out, pushed out or never been allowed into mainstream education' (p.258). Fine and Rosenberg's critique sits comfortably with the evidence gathered in this study. That is, that dropping out needs to be recognised not as aberrant and not as giving up. Often it voices a critique of educational and economic systems promising opportunity and mobility but delivering neither (p.270).

Adding to my early confusion was the moral panic surrounding received knowledge of contemporary youth culture choosing to engage in risk behaviours involving violence and substance abuse. Such stereotyping appeared to me to conflict with reports describing young people as vulnerable victims of an aggressive, over individualistic consumer society that failed to care for them. Moreover, the dramatic changes in society as it responded to global challenges appeared to have brought unprecedented uncertainty to young people as they navigate a transition to adulthood. Underpinning this confusion was a realisation that I could not claim to understand what life was like for young people today and a concern that any preconceptions might adversely affect my professional relationship with them in a teaching context that might perpetuate any previous negative experiences of learning. So, this study engaged in conversation with a group of NEET young people attending college on a government training scheme in order to elicit stories about their perceptions and aspirations and give voice to their views. These stories are embedded here and their analysis interwoven with theoretical and conceptual discourse around welfare-to-work policies and notions of wellbeing and quality of life that both sought to inform, and be informed by, the interview process. Together these strands were pursued to affect a move

away from a state of confusion towards a deeper understanding of young people's lives, changed personal attitudes, and possibilities for improved professional practice.

In this final chapter of my dissertation, I draw on previous chapters to bring the inquiry to a close on paper. In a study that set out to develop an understanding of NEET young people and give voice to their views there can be no obvious conclusion and this is reflected here, not least in the chapter title. Understanding is deeply internalised, difficult to articulate, and always incomplete. As I have indicated, representing voice as speaking about others is equally problematic. Moreover, producing an academic text requires a linearity of presentation that cannot properly reflect the research story in practice nor do justice to the stories of the participants. What is offered here is in three parts. First, the research story is re-told by summarising the phases and stages of the journey as they appeared in previous chapters of this dissertation. From this I pick up on postponed discussions to develop salient points and address issues around the research exercise. The second part of this chapter asks questions of the data collected during interview and from the interview process itself - what has been learned from listening to these stories and what can be gained from re-telling them? Here I re-visit the research questions established in Chapter One before proceeding to discuss issues around giving voice to NEET young people who appear hitherto unheard. In the third and final part of this chapter, I move to consider how the knowledge and understanding gained through the experience of this study has changed my perspectives of NEET young people. In doing so, I acknowledge the potential for change beyond my personal endeavours but focus on how my new understandings and knowledge might drive such changes.

1. The Research Story

Re-telling a 'chaptered' version of the research story may imply a procedural linearity that fails to reflect the cyclical, iterative nature of the inquiry; this linearity imposed by the constraints of writing a research dissertation. Writing such a dissertation may also expect chapters of equal length that cannot reflect the emphasis of the inquiry. Further, it should be noted that the chapters do not follow a standard format such as could be expected in a traditional doctoral dissertation. For example, there is no chapter titled 'Findings' nor is there a section devoted exclusively to 'Limitations of the Study'. Such standard content has not been omitted but is written into the document in appropriate places. It is also important, at this stage, to acknowledge and summarise the limitations of this study. I have said that, with 14 participants, and no opportunity for follow-up interviews, the findings of

this inquiry are limited and certainly no claim is made that they are generalisable beyond the group of young people who participated. Moreover, it should be clear, in light of the non-homogeneous nature of the NEET population, that this study only engaged with young people who were attending GRfW courses at one further education college. In addition, only those young people present in a particular class at a time when interviews were being conducted were invited to participate. Whilst presenting challenges, writing this study into the form of a doctoral dissertation has provided opportunities for scholarly engagement not only with the empirical interview data but also with literature and theory. On the one hand, my reading informed the direction of the research and usefully fleshed out theories, policies and statistics while, on the other hand, themes emerging from the interview data allowed me to re-enter the literature to expand, validate and, often, to challenge my understanding. I have noted that with only 14 participants and no opportunity for follow-up interviews to confirm my understandings of their stories, the findings of this study are limited and not intended for generalisation. However, and with respect to the non-homogeneous nature of the NEET group and the individual nature of their experiences and aspirations, what might be generalised is a call for further contextually specific similar studies that seek to understand the lives of such young people. Finding out about the lives of these NEET young people has been a valuable exercise that has demystified the phenomenon of NEET, shifted my previously unexamined perspective on today's youth and challenged me to find ways and means of meeting their needs within my professional practice. I return to discuss these issues further in parts two and three of this chapter.

I introduced this project in Chapter One as an engagement in conversation with a group of NEET young people and with relevant theoretical, research and policy literature to move towards a better understanding of these young people's lives.

In Chapter Two, I laid the basis for an argument that forces of globalisation have played a significant role in changing the structure of employment and that, with the collapse of traditional youth labour markets, the emphasis on service and knowledge-based professions in this new structure placed young people from poorer backgrounds at a particular disadvantage when seeking employment.

Chapter Three provided a review of the literature and research surrounding the issue of NEET in order to situate the problem within the growing crisis of youth unemployment over the second half of the 20th century and the accompanying introduction of training

initiatives targeting school leavers without a job. This review of the literature, research evidence and policy context uncovered various different schools of thought around the NEET label that required further unpicking and demanded a deeper understanding of the individual circumstances that pre-empted NEET status. Developing such an understanding was the central aim of this project and thus drove the approaches, empirical and conceptual, used in this inquiry.

Chapter Four provided explicit detail of the research approaches used in this inquiry and gave a reflective account of their effectiveness and limitations in practice. In this chapter, I argued that any research study that strives to listen to, and understand, accounts of human experiences and perceptions was an uncharted process and so what emerged in practice was a messy approach using tools and methods borrowed and adapted from various schools of thought and occasionally improvised in response to unexpected events. There are several points I wish to re-iterate here and to which I return later in this chapter. Encouraging young people to talk about their lives offers a space for them to find 'voice' and to realise that someone wants to listen to what they have to say. Many of the young people had strong views on issues affecting their lives that they wanted to share and it was important to me, both ethically and professionally, that they were able to do so. The unstructured yet purposeful conversations accommodated both their agenda and the requirements of this inquiry. What caused concern, methodologically, was the uncomfortable realisation that the use of voice was problematic and required careful consideration if young people's stories were to be represented in a research dissertation allied with questions around how my increased knowledge about their lives might be examined and communicated. Chapter Four gave an open, transparent account of this research journey that bifurcated towards both an understanding of the young people who took part and the researcher herself.

Chapter Five advanced the inquiry beyond the interview stage and towards examination and communication of what was heard. The chapter is in two parts: the first part drew from the work of Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum in the development of their different capabilities approaches before engaging more deeply with Nussbaum's more specified approach and attendant issues surrounding its implementation in practice. The second part of this chapter took up Nussbaum's invitation to challenge and re-specify her list, drawing from the mapping exercise in the first part and what emerged was a re-framing of her list so that it was set within the context and circumstances of NEET young people. The re-

framed version offered a list of capabilities whose specification was informed by the young people to whom it is relevant in an endeavour to more adequately point to what they might require in order to live the kind of life they would choose to value.

2. Stories as Research

Having explained the methods used to gather, interpret, and re-tell NEET young people's stories, I now turn to focus on the data collected during the research interviews in a move towards addressing the research questions and the project aims. Here, I draw on these previous chapters and move first, to the research questions and what has been learned from listening to young people's stories and second, to consider what benefits re-telling these stories can bring to their lives.

Hearing Stories– what has been learned?

In the introductory chapter of this dissertation, I referred to the issue of NEET as a perplexing phenomenon that was subjected to various, often contradictory, views. In particular, the view frequently expressed by the media of NEET young people as disengaged, disaffected dropouts links disturbingly and confusingly with suggestions that the UK has the unhappiest children in the world and that our society fears, demonises and silences them unfairly (Moore, 2008). Embroiled in this debate is the notion that education has a Janus-faced character – accused of producing disengaged, disaffected dropouts yet charged with the task of re-engaging young people with learning and providing routes into future employment and training. My project aims to contribute to this debate by attempting to understand its landscape and to develop a better understanding of the young person behind the label of NEET. Drawing on the extensive discussion of attendant issues in previous chapters, I start now by providing, initially, a brief response to the research questions that were derived from my interest in and concern for NEET young people and then proceed to expand this discussion in light of the stories heard.

What is the perception of schooling and its relevance to their lives and aspirations for the future?

The general perception of schooling was negative; it was not considered relevant to life either at the present time or in the future although many thought that qualifications were important when trying to find work. The majority of young people disliked or even hated school although they enjoyed the social aspect of being there with friends. The main reason this group gave for disliking school was the teachers who shouted at them and

treated them like children. There were, however, frequent references to positive experiences, usually when the young person enjoyed a particular subject or/and was able to establish a positive relationship with a particular teacher.

What is the perception of training for work and its relevance to their lives and aspirations for the future?

The Get Ready for Work course was viewed as a positive step towards finding work and the college environment perceived of as better accommodating the young people's needs. The practical subjects being studied were considered to be more relevant and provided more valuable experience for future employment than subjects studied at school. Of particular importance and linked to the section above was the perception of being treated more as an adult and being able to build rapport with college staff.

What do young people value in life and what anxieties, concerns and fears do these young people experience?

Most young people spoke of having a small group of friends that they trusted and whose company they enjoyed. Families were important too as were health, safety and being able to walk the streets without harassment. The single most significant cause of anxiety, concern and fear in young people's lives was the threat of street violence. Moreover, this perceived threat of violence was related to youth alcohol and drug abuse and particular forms of discrimination associated with religion, football, gang membership and territorial or 'post-code' wars.

What are their aspirations for the future?

When asked about plans and hopes for the future, every young person referred to 'getting a job' as a top priority. In addition, from both explicit and implicit comments against anti-social youth behaviour, it was clear that these young people hope for a solution to the threat of violence and drug and alcohol abuse.

Discussing Perceptions

At the risk of over-simplification, these brief responses to the research questions typify, but try to avoid stereotyping, the young people who participated in this study sufficiently to dismiss suggestions that they are disaffected, disengaged dropouts. I did not find evidence from the interview data to suggest that they form an oppositional culture or youth underclass, unable or unwilling to participate in mainstream education, employment or

training. Here, my deliberations reflect the results of McKendrick et al.'s study of the aspirations, attitudes and skills of young people in one of the most deprived areas in Glasgow. That study demonstrated that, while there were indications of skills and aspiration gaps between different types of young people, these young people were not disaffected or disengaged. Nor was there evidence of any rejection of mainstream values or of an oppositional youth culture (McKendrick et al., 2007). While participation in education is claimed to empower young people and to encourage and enable them to make their views known on matters that affect them, Masschelein and Quaghebeur (2005) point out how participation represents or is part of a more general problematisation of education. Attention to their view of participation, in turn drawing from Foucault's perception of governmentality and Butler's restatement of the process of subjectivation, suggests that we may be interpellated to assume or to (re)produce a certain identity or to behave in a certain way. Further, and more pertinent to this study, Masschelein and Quaghebeur (2005) attest that

> [...] without there being any overt obligation or direct imposition of changes of any kind, schools, students and teachers are interpellated through instruments and discourses to participate, to behave as participants, to present and shape themselves as participants and also to consider and approach others as such. (p.56)

Taking a broad view of this critique suggests that, in order to participate in education, one must behave in a certain way. It may then be the case that some young people who do not participate in education are either unwilling or unable to behave in such a prescribed manner – a manner that prescribes conformity and submission to school norms. It follows, then, that non-participation is viewed as deviant behaviour and dropouts portrayed as 'trouble making', 'incipient welfare recipient' or 'delinquent'. As Fine and Rosenberg (1983) attest, many young people who are disappointed and disillusioned by schooling and who cannot or do not conform to expected norms of behaviour and performance, are, in effect, not allowed to participate. So, having alluded to the changing characteristics of further education students in light of the influx of NEET young people on training schemes, we are challenged to re-think what is 'normal' in a way that balances what is 'acceptable' while still aspiring to provide positive and engaging learning experiences. This challenge also reaches out to the compulsory sector in a call to re-examine the effects of their established norms of behaviour and performance on those young people who cannot or do not conform.

Chapter 6: Towards a Conclusion

Moving on to discuss the perception of training for work and the Get Ready for Work (GRfW) courses that the young people were following, I note again the comment above that dropping out needs to be recognised not as aberrant and not as giving up. This comment reflects the positive attitudes towards GRfW and continuing in education and training that emerged from the interviews and contrasts somewhat paradoxically with the dominant view of NEET as dropouts. It has been emphasised, of course, that the NEET group is not a homogeneous group and it may be that many of the young people in this study could be described as 'open to learning NEET' rather than 'sustained NEET' (Spielhofer et al., 2009) since they have clearly not given up on learning. Following this line of argument and linking it with the group's view on schooling might suggest that school is not the kind of place where these young people want to be. Nor is it the kind of place where they feel able to learn and there may be alternative contexts that lend themselves to better accommodate their needs. It remains to be seen whether the planned curriculum review designed to offer 'More Choices and More Chances' to young people at risk of becoming NEET will indeed accommodate their needs and whether the shift away from the negative connotations of the NEET label towards the more positive MCMC label will effect more positive outcomes. What appear to be needed are improved opportunities for work-based learning that in turn require better links with employers, colleges and training providers. It may even be the case that we revisit Rifkin's (2005) argument to explore bold new approaches to addressing the problems created by the disappearance of mass labour by, for example, moving towards a shorter working week or looking towards the third sector to create jobs with government support. In the meantime, what seems to be emerging is a positive perception of GRfW as a recognised and accepted alternative to staying on at school beyond the minimum leaving age as its vocationally oriented training appears more relevant to promoting employability. The fact that only a few of the participants had actually been employed, and unemployed, suggests a shift in the aims and objectives of the GRfW programme, in line with a recent programme evaluation, to position itself within the NEET agenda so that 'it avoids NEET status through early engagement of participants leaving school' (Scottish Enterprise National [SEN], 2006:np). Further, 'it is probably reasonable to assume that without participation, many of the GRFW group would have swelled the NEET figures further, but equally, GRFW is clearly a long way from being able to accommodate the entire NEET population' and 'GRFW should in future be targeted at young people assessed as likely to progress to positive outcomes' (SEN, 2006:np). This might be one explanation as to why the young people in this study perceived the GRfW courses positively but Yates and Payne (2006) attest that setting

targets for reducing the numbers of NEET young people problematises the situation. They present evidence that inappropriate emphasis on chasing targets can result in situations in which those who are, for whatever reason, unable to work or become engaged in training receive less attention because they will require more resources. Otherwise, young people may be pushed into education and training for which they are not ready. There was some suggestion that this might have been the case in this study with one young person being advised to leave school on Friday to start a GRfW course on Monday and another being placed on a course doing joinery, brickwork and childcare although he was waiting to start a computing course because '*See, they called me n said it's different stuff to try but if you don't want that you can still do computing n because you still like computing but this other stuff ye can taste. So I did it.*' That said, for those young people with no immediate prospect of employment, GRfW courses at college were generally perceived as a preferred option to staying on at school. Here, we could have a case of what Nussbaum (2000:111) might consider an 'adaptive preference' where the preference of individuals is 'deformed' by adverse social, economic or political circumstances. Even if these young people prefer the GRfW course to being at school, most would prefer an alternative that is not available to them. That is, to have a 'decent' job.

The interview discussion around values, anxieties, concerns and fears uncovered many facets of young people's lives. From the outset I knew I was out of touch with contemporary youth culture and was prepared to be alarmed, embarrassed and possibly offended but I had not been prepared for the emotional experience of listening to their stories. On reflection, while several of the reported events were shocking in themselves, it was the extent to which so many young people had been directly exposed to such experiences that caused me most concern. These stories were not hearsay but were personal anecdotal accounts involving gang culture, alcohol and drug abuse, teenage pregnancy, murder, street stabbing, fatal crashes, rape drugs and suicide. Although almost all had been exposed to such experiences, only one or two young people confided that they had previously been perpetrators or participants and now eschewed such behaviour and did not want to be associated with it. These young people valued their friends and their families and wanted to feel safe – not living with the threat of violence or being harassed by police when they were doing nothing wrong. And they <u>did</u> want the 'wrong-doing' stopped. In taking a stance against the perpetrators of violence and wrongdoing, these young people appeared to be marking their own identities by the difference between 'them' and 'us' in a way that challenges society to re-examine its perception of 'people like me'.

While learning about the world that many of today's young people inhabit has helped me to understand their lives and the values they hold, there are two points I wish to make here. First, the interviews did not set out to elicit stories of violent youth experiences but to raise questions around issues of wellbeing such as health and safety and to ask what young people would change about their lives. Second, in understanding these lives it is useful to note the dearth of discussion around hobbies, constructive interests, participation in organisations or structured activities or following leisure pursuits other than 'hanging out' with friends. While it is easy to imagine an argument that structured activities are costly and therefore beyond the reach of many young people, it is helpful to remember that the young people in this study are teenagers who traditionally claim to be 'bored' with 'nothing to do'. This was evident when I asked Kylie what she would like to be able to do to stop being bored and she replied *'Don't know. We sit 'n say "what can we do... what can we do ... ". We're complaining there's nothing for us to do but then we cannae think what we'd like to do ...'.*

Discussing Aspirations

The final research question focussed on aspirations for the future and it became clear from the responses that young people's perceptions of future wellbeing and flourishing were dependent on both finding a 'decent' job and feeling safe from the threat of violence. I turn, first, to examine contemporary work opportunities and then move to discuss issues around safety. From the time the interviews took place to the present, work opportunities for young people, although always uncertain, have drastically declined and youth unemployment rates are now higher than they have been for two decades. Young people have been hit particularly hard by the current recession and those young people without qualifications are more disadvantaged as even the most basic entry-level jobs become harder to get in a competitive labour market (Shaheen, 2009). It remains to be seen how long the recession will last and how effective government plans to tackle the crisis will be and whether they are able to prevent a 'lost generation' being created who are 'left on the scrapheap' (Grice, 2009, *The Independent*). Earlier discussion (Chapter Two) around theories of globalisation, capitalisation and free-markets implicated governments and multinational corporations in the changing structure of youth labour markets in a way that suggested a political/economic impetus is required in order to effect any future restructuring. Young people aspiring to find 'a decent job' appear to be dependent on external factors shaped by the political and economic climate of their time. But, as I have

noted above, the present climate, despite waves of political intervention and extensive funding, is not effecting improvement. Moving on to the second point made above in relation to young people's aspirations, that is aspiring to a life without the threat of violence and other effects of deviant youth behaviour, is clearly a difficult area to ponder. I have tried, in Chapter Five, to describe what life is like for these young people and to grasp what it means to them to live with this threat of violence. Finding a solution is one of the biggest challenges of our day and seems to call for something stronger than policies and policing. It demands a shift in attitude and an appeal to the hearts and minds of society. I do not pretend to have a solution but suggest that Nussbaum's idea of teaching compassion for others might offer a tentative first step in the right direction. This proposal invites a lengthier discussion that I postpone until the final part of this chapter.

Re-telling Stories – what does this do?

In the second part of Chapter Four, I discussed various ethical and methodological issues around the concept of voice and the impact of these issues on my approach to eliciting and presenting (re-presenting) young people's voices. I now return to the concept of voice to focus on issues around 'giving voice' and 'finding voice'; picking up on the point I made in Chapter Four that young people only have a voice if someone is prepared to listen to and, perhaps, to act on or at least give consideration to what they have to say. My concern that NEET young people are not listened to is exacerbated by the suggestion that ascribing deviant images to young people who do not conform as participants in education serves to delegitimise their criticisms and silence their voices. These concerns are echoed in Hargreaves' message that 'research indicates how subtly but systematically, the curricula and pedagogies of public education disregard, deny, and thereby silence the voices of students who eventually drop out' (Hargreaves, 1996:14). Moreover, in Chapter Four, I described 'interview as voice' as a disturbingly different genre of interview because of the contrast between these research conversations and the standard work-based interviews I regularly carry out with students. Standard interviews conducted as part of my everyday professional life, I think, often have a narrow purpose and a focussed outcome; whether that purpose is to evaluate student progress, to examine suitability for entry to a course or to progress some form of disciplinary procedure. What disturbs me is that, here, I only ask the questions I want to ask and students only give the answers they want me to hear. It is helpful to observe the distinction between standard interviews and research interviews that are designed to encourage students to talk freely, but with purpose, on topics of their choice. This project was dependent on establishing an environment conducive to

comfortable dialogical exchanges in order to elicit stories of young people's experiences and so I move now to examine how purposeful conversations can offer an opportunity for finding and giving voice to hitherto disregarded young people.

It seems that being able to present myself as an 'interested stranger'[12], asking for help in understanding young people's lives and not questioning or judging their stories encouraged confidence in the young people to reflect on their experiences and talk freely about their anxieties in a way that I am inclined to think of as 'finding voice'. Moreover, by making reference to published international reports that expounded young people's views helped to demonstrate that someone was interested in what they had to say and that other young people perhaps shared their opinions. Taking part in interviews was neither a new nor strange experience for these young people but their standard interviews would likely enquire into performance, behaviour and progress and form the basis of an evaluative report; they would also involve some form of power relation with the interviewer. In contrast, the research interviews were designed to encourage a conversation 'with' rather than 'about' the young person. Indeed, it seemed so important to appear friendly and non-judgemental that I declined to interview anyone who had come to know me in any other light. Finding voice is not a simple idea – it implies a level of trust, self confidence and self esteem that might not come naturally to some young people. It may view them ambiguously as both competent to speak on their own behalf yet requiring an advocate to speak for them. I have presented these ideas as standing in some kind of contradiction. But rules of engagement with education and welfare providers require such interviews to take place and constraints such as time and purpose do not allow the interviewer the flexibility afforded to the researcher. That is to say, it is often not possible to choose not to interview a particular person or to spend time encouraging discussion beyond the purpose of the interview. Nevertheless, it is crucial that all young people are encouraged to make their views known on matters that affect them and that room is found in the curriculum to allow staff to engage in such discussions with students. Cotton and Griffiths (2007) observe 'it may be necessary to learn to enter a space *before* a voice can be found or a move made towards finding a voice' (p.557). Further, it is suggested that voice and agency may need to be developed in a safer, more attractive, compelling space, before they can be exercised in other spaces because, without the experience of exercising voice and agency, it may be difficult for a person to believe they have the capacity to do it at all.

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[12] but not unfamiliar with GRfW course or college environment

Chapter 6: Towards a Conclusion

The idea of constructing a space where young people can find a voice and have that voice heard requires a paradigm shift in how we view the relationship between teacher and student in the construction of opportunities for new types of dialogic encounter. It requires the creation of new fora within which students can, following Cook-Sather (2002:3) embrace 'the political potential of speaking out on their own behalf' and challenges us to seriously question the assumption that we know more than the young people of today about how they learn or what they need to learn in preparation for the decades ahead. Decades of calls for educational reform, she tells us, have not succeeded in making school places where all young people want to and are able to learn and so we should seek ways to involve students in our endeavour to accomplish that. While it could be argued that students <u>do</u> have a voice and opportunities to be heard we need to question the reality of such a line. How many students, for example, who eventually drop out, had previously contributed as group representatives or had been invited to participate in focus groups? Do questionnaires accommodate the views of non-participants and, if they do, are they listened to and acted on? Are we willing to be told that <u>we</u> are part of the problem? Do we communicate with students in ways that are natural to them like social networks and blogspots? Finally, how many of our conversations with students are non-judgemental? Perhaps it is time to examine the conversations that we have with students and inquire whether they do, or could contribute to making schools and colleges places where all young people want to and are able to learn.

The concept of voice is central to the goal of this inquiry that is, to develop a deeper understanding of NEET young people's lives and give voice to their views. I have suggested that the interview process was itself an opportunity for young people to find voice and argue above that we should create more spaces where young people's voices might be heard and acted on. I have also said that listening to their stories, reflecting and re-listening to the recorded interviews provided opportunities for deepening my understanding of their lives. Giving voice to what was heard, however, was not a straightforward matter and I discussed challenging issues around voice in the second part of Chapter Four. Now, I move to discuss how a project such as this might give voice to young people's perspectives. Voice and understanding come together in Chapter Five where I use excerpts from the interview transcripts to illuminate my understanding and revisioning of Nussbaum's central capabilities for human development. But using excerpts, although effective in that situation, fragments the conversations and does not provide a holistic portrayal of the young person speaking. Writing a doctoral dissertation

requires a scholarly engagement beyond providing complete interview transcripts that invite readers to come to their own conclusions about the content. Permitting access to transcripts, or even excerpts, regardless of whether efforts have been made to efface references to real people and real places, raises issues and challenges around whether absolute anonymity can ever be assured. Providing a paraphrased version de-authorises and de-legitimates the young person's voice. Gow and McPherson's (1980) thought-provoking book 'Tell them from me' collates (very) brief stories from young people who have left school and presents them in a way that compels the reader to imagine the life and the person beyond the few lines of text. This sits comfortably with Cotton and Griffiths' (2007) advocacy for the use of 'little stories' as offering a way of finding 'voice' and discovering that others want to hear our story, to share it and to act with us in writing our futures (p.548). Further, they add that 'although any search for 'truths' is problematic, the act of articulation of 'little stories' can work for social justice' (p.546). Having recognised that much is to be gained by providing brief 'snapshots' of each of the young participants, deciding on where best to position these in a dissertation that is necessarily a linear text is difficult. So, I submit, as an appendix to this dissertation (Appendix A), NEET 'little stories' taken from each of the interview conversations as a way of 'creating the conditions in which partial perspectives can be enlarged' (p.550). By so doing, anyone reading this dissertation will have the opportunity to move towards a better understanding of the lives of the young people who contributed to its goals. So, while it is important that these snapshots are viewed within the context of this inquiry that is, in light of its goals and appreciative of the interplay between theory and data in its conceptualisation of young people's lives, it is not essential. These little stories articulate the experiences of young people at risk of becoming excluded from education and from society and should bother everyone proclaiming an interest in their future wellbeing.

3. So What?

I endeavour, here, to respond to the 'so what' question that I returned to time and again during this inquiry. I consider the impact the study has had on my perspectives of NEET young people and outline ways in which my professional practice has changed and may well continue to change as a result of this inquiry. I reflect, too, on the process of the research and the impact this inquiry has had on me as a researcher. In doing so, I acknowledge the potential for change beyond my personal endeavours and suggest ways in which my new understandings might drive such change and motivate further research. Initially I provide a brief section on interview as reflexivity. I then return to my point of

departure in NEET young people's aspirations to a life without the threat of violence and other effects of what they consider to be unacceptable youth behaviour.

Interview as Reflexivity

The words reflection and reflexivity share the same root: to bend back on the self. The former, reflection, having been the focus of the earliest unit of study in the EdD course sits comfortably in both my teaching practice and my research. The latter, reflexivity, less so; the significance of its appearances reaching a crescendo when I read Ryan (2004), drawing from Heartz, that reflexiveness is 'both intriguing and ubiquitous' (np) and that

> This folding back on oneself is problematic and yet without it we, as researchers, have not accounted for the element of 'self' within the research. Each researcher has a moral duty to look within and communicate publicly what is there. (Ryan, 2004:np)

Komulainen (2007) suggests reflexivity as a strategy for ensuring ethical research conduct while Lahman (2008) believes that 'Reflexivity is arguably one of the most vital constructs in research'. Shacklock and Smyth (1998) take a stronger line and argue that 'being reflexive in doing research is part of being honest and ethically mature in research practice that requires researchers to 'stop being "shamans" of objectivity' (Ruby, 1980:154). To not acknowledge the interests implicit in a critical agenda for the research, or to assume value-free positions of neutrality, is to assume 'an obscene and dishonest position' (Shacklock and Smyth, 1998:6-7).

It is difficult to ignore a body of opinion that endorses ethical moral research conduct with counter claims of lack of public accountability and dishonesty. Scheurich (1997), however, offers a very different view of accountability in qualitative research from a post-modern perspective in his claim that such scrutiny constricts the creativity of the writer. That said, and mindful of King's (1998) advice that in using template analysis from a contextual constructivist position, the researcher would want to find ways of examining issues of reflexivity, the usefulness of such an endeavour seems clear. The ubiquity of reflexiveness portends a confusion and an ambiguity of meaning and inter-disciplinary attachments within qualitative research methods. Findlay and Gough (2003:ix) have said that reflexivity 'requires critical self-reflection of the ways in which researchers' social background, assumptions, positioning behaviour impact on the social process'.

Chapter 6: Towards a Conclusion

Several issues are surfacing from this review of the literature on reflexivity that appear to arise from a persistent and historical concern about validity of research that does not follow some prescribed scientific, objective, experimental technique whereby the effect of unwanted variables can be removed or at least, controlled. Implicit in these concerns is the capacity of the researcher to colour the data collection, the analysis and the write up and thus blur the boundaries between fictional writing and fact. This capacity is not to be denied. But exploratory, illuminative, interpretive research such as concerns this project, where the aims are to reach an understanding of young people's experiences, to make sense of their behaviour and find ways of conveying their messages is not looking to predict, or generalise or uncover cause-effect relationships or to obliterate the researcher presence from the study. This causes me to reflect on the first presentation I gave on my choice of dissertation topic when I stood back and said 'There's a lot of me in there ... it's what I care about'. I would not have done this study if I had not been driven by a need to understand NEET young people and why they are always othered; in school, in work and in society. Now, at the stage of writing a doctoral dissertation of this inquiry as a contribution to educational research, it seems important that I convince my audience that I have taken a reflexive, self-examining stance before, during and after each stage of the study. I argue that subjectivity need not necessarily be associated with unethical research as long as we maintain a position of self-examination and persist in reflexively questioning the research process. Thus, reflexivity supports rather than undermines a study's findings by refusing to occlude the problematics of researcher and situational influences. Surely this is the point Lahman (2008) was making when referring to reflexivity as a manner in which to scrutinise the entire research process thus maximising the validity of findings and then drawing from Hertz (1997) the observation that a reflexive researcher understands that they are not writing truths but instead are constructing interpretations to be probed and reconstructed.

Scheurich (1997) stretches the concept of researchers 'not writing truths' when, somewhat provocatively, he describes his research writing, and its reading, as a simulcra – an imitation that never existed - and eschews the notion that research happens in a way that fits a particular narrative structure; questioning, *post factum*, the set of assumptions he used throughout his study and presenting an argument against inadequate research. The message I take from Scheurich is that of reflexivity 'coming clean' about the messy moments of the research process or what Ruby (1980) refers to as 'exposing' the self and the methodology as the instrument of data generation; being publicly, explicitly, and

openly self-aware or reflexive. I believe I have 'come clean' about my messy, confusing and emotional research experiences and have written myself into this dissertation in a way I had not previously imagined. Have I asked myself whether another researcher might make different interpretations of the data – or even collect different data by asking different questions in a different interview setting? Am I to ask myself whether my values, interests and experiences impacted on this study? Has my critical agenda of understanding NEETs as 'other' impacted on the analysis and reporting? The answers, I hope, are obvious from the detail I have provided in reporting this study and in the extensive use of actual data in my writing which should allow the reader to understand, without necessarily agreeing with, the reasoning behind my interpretations.

Still, one question remains to be addressed; the question that inverts the impact of the researcher on the research; the question that asks whether the research has had an impact on the researcher and whether she has been changed as a person and as a researcher. To answer this I would like to revisit the experience of my very first interview and my reaction to what I heard; indeed, not just my reaction but the agonising self-questioning that followed. I was moved, but not shocked, by the stories I was being told: unhappy at school, unhappy at home, nothing to do and nowhere to go with friends other than '*hang about the street*'. I remember being surprised by the maturity of the comment that '*society doesn't respect young people enough*' and the frankness of admitting to '*feeling scared*' in third year when having to choose subjects at such a young age; '*feeling helpless*' when father left home and mother was '*crying all the time*'. '*Hanging about the street*' was an activity that attracted the attention of the police, I was told – especially anyone wearing a particular track suit that identified them with the local youth gang. As I mentally 'ticked the boxes' mapping 'low academic attainment', 'broken home', 'disruptive in class' to the NEET characteristics I remembered from the literature, I became aware of him sitting forward in his seat and repeating, for my benefit, '*D'you know what I mean? My Nana gave me it!*' The track suit that the police had assumed identified him with the local gang culture – he was wearing it because it was a gift from his Nana and he wanted to be sure that I knew his wearing it did not make him a gang member. Perhaps he thought that I had made the same assumption as the police and perhaps he was right. But what caused the shockwaves was the fact that he spoke about his Nana! My arrogance and ignorance had somehow occluded the possibility of this young person having a loving, caring family and I was actually shocked to hear him talking affectionately about his grandparent.

Ryan (2004) warned that grappling with reflexivity could cause upset even in the most prepared researcher and could colour the research and the researcher. Interestingly, too, he describes the researcher and the degree of reflexivity as a 'personal journey' and an 'awakening' for many (Ryan, 2004:4). Carolan (2003) echoes the idea of reflexivity as a 'personal journey' paved with tensions perceived through her conflicting roles of researcher and professional practitioner in the interview situation. From her deliberations on the impact of her background, philosophical stance, values and feelings on her research she concludes that reflexivity has become an important and expected part of most qualitative research lending valuable insight, depth and credibility. By writing myself into this dissertation and acknowledging my role and influence on the research project, I believe I have shifted my understanding of myself and the phenomena of NEET, to a different level. In this respect I have started to answer the 'so what' question as it pertains to my own experiences of and learning from this inquiry. I shall now turn to the 'so what' question as it relates to young people's aspirations to a life without the threat of violence and other effects of what they consider to be unacceptable youth behaviour.

So, what next?

My discussion draws on Nussbaum's perspective of central human capabilities and relates to particular aspects of two items in her list: from Bodily Integrity, being able to move freely from place to place and to be secure against assault and from Affiliation, being able to live with and toward others, to recognise and show concern for other human beings, to be able to imagine the situation of another and to have compassion for that situation. Protecting this capability, Nussbaum adds, means protecting those institutions that constitute and nourish such forms of affiliation. In the context of this study this means, I think, promoting the capacity to show concern for others and to live together with other people in harmony.

Nussbaum (1996) refers to compassion, as 'the basic social emotion' and while she presents an in-depth philosophical account of emotions in her writings (2001, 2004), the exact terminology is not so crucial here. Using the term loosely so as to embrace feelings of empathy, sympathy, caring and love that express a concern for the wellbeing of another, it might be reasonably speculated that promoting beneficence might work to extirpate deleterious behaviour. However, it should not be imagined that the claim is being made that this is an easy or even realisable task. Nor do I move to consider a philosophical argument around whether violence is ever justified. Rather, it is a suggestion that we who

are involved in education should seek ways to promote the capacity to care for others and work towards establishing and maintaining educational institutions that seek to develop this capacity as a first step towards eradicating senseless violence predicated on perceptions of difference. The architects of current plans to reform Scottish education (Curriculum for Excellence [CfE]) appear to have recognised the salience of this idea by insisting that it is the responsibility of all staff to develop, reinforce and extend learning in health and wellbeing. This is a promising move away from a situation in which only designated members of staff have had responsibility to teach social, personal and moral development. Moreover, establishing a pattern of health and wellbeing which will be sustained into adult life, may help to promote the health and wellbeing of the next generation of Scottish children who 'know that friendship, caring, sharing, fairness, equality and love are important in building positive relationships' and who develop the capacity to value relationships and 'care and show respect for themselves and others' (Scottish Government, CfE, 2008c). It seems to me that my research, with its discussion around the notion of wellbeing and the teaching of compassion, has something to offer staff who might feel uncomfortable or unfamiliar with what might be expected of them in the future. For, as Shacklock et al. (1998:9) suggest 'If we are successful in firstly, eliciting student stories, and secondly, presenting them in such a way that the teacher and educational administrator can hear, honour and act on them, then we have achieved our purpose as action researchers'.

There was a time, early in my teaching career, when I held and would have defended the view that teaching was about me, about my expertise in my subject area, and that education's priority was the transfer of knowledge from teacher to learner. Moreover, I saw no reason why education should be tasked with social issues; these belonged at home or with society at large.   My view has shifted radically with experience and even more as a result of undertaking this inquiry so that I now see education as a social and emotional activity with the relationship between teacher and learner essential for its success. That is not to demote the role of the family and society in the teaching of values. As Layard and Dunn (2009) remind us, a loving family is the key to a good start in life by providing, in addition to good physical care, unconditional love and clear boundaries for behaviour. But I now acknowledge the opportunities for social and emotional learning within formal educational settings that can be directed towards cultivating the ability to imagine the predicament of others and to seek to alleviate their suffering. If this could be achieved, even to a threshold level whereby children and young people learned not to cause

suffering, we might take a tentative first step towards living more safely in harmony with others.

Nussbaum writes extensively about emotion and compassion, advocating engagement with the humanities in a liberal curriculum – art, music, literature, political, social and economic history – to support an education in compassion (Nussbaum, 1997; Nussbaum, 2001). Of particular note to schools and colleges is her comment that the relationships between compassion and social institutions is and should be a two-way 'street' because 'compassionate individuals construct institutions that embody what they imagine; and institutions, in turn, influence the development of compassion in individuals' (Nussbaum, 2001:405). So we, as educators are asked to be, or become, compassionate individuals if we are to develop this capacity in our learners. A similar point is made by Layard and Dunn (2009) in their call for a significant change of heart in our society, where adults (be they parents or teachers) are less embarrassed to stand for the values without which a society cannot flourish. 'They should exemplify and teach children the importance of key values (like respect, honesty, kindness), using the power of words as well as example' and 'The school ethos should be built on principles of respect, participation and non-violence, physical and psychological' (p.85-86). Imagining a world, a country, a city or even a 'scheme' without violence invites rejection for naivety. Shrinking the realm of possibility to a street, a classroom, a home, makes the realisation more achievable. But Nussbaum (2006) would advise that '[...] we should not set our sights too low, deferring to present bad arrangements […] on the grounds that right now it is not feasible' (p.402) and then suggests that 'we should [...] open the windows of our imaginations [...] with some new pictures of what may be possible [...]' (p.415). So it seems to me that, within my classroom, I should strive to develop in my students the capacity to consider the plight of others and respond with compassion in a 'ground up' approach to changing attitudes towards others. If, as Nussbaum suggests, this is a two way 'street', then it is possible to imagine the construction of compassionate institutions constructed by compassionate individuals. While such imagining might be dismissed by some as impossibly idealistic, I find encouragement in Nussbaum's line that we must strive towards making our imaginings possible and not dismiss alternative, better possibilities simply because they are challenging. Inspired and encouraged by the principles of the 'Curriculum for Excellence' these would be institutions where respect and dignity pervade power hierarchies and respect, honesty and kindness are taught by example. I can imagine this dissertation stimulating interest for staff development events and galvanising action towards a more

caring, sympathetic environment for those young people hitherto unable to participate in formal education. If teachers were able to make time to understand the young people they work with this might effect a shift in their pedagogy. Having time and confidence to build a mutually respectful relationship with students as individuals could be a useful first step towards changing how 'non-participating' young people are taught. Then it becomes possible to imagine values of respect, honesty and kindness nurturing an ethos of compassion and non-violence.

In drawing this dissertation to a close, I take with me a deeper understanding of NEET young people that is difficult to articulate. Suffice to say that my perception of young people has changed now that I have a better grasp of the circumstances they endure and the experiences to which they have been exposed. I am less apprehensive about meeting them both socially and professionally and more confident that I can communicate with them and establish a mutually respectful and fruitful relationship. This shift has come about, I think, because I have been able to get to know them as individuals – away from peer influence and away from situations involving evaluation or judgement. It is important to me that I am able to continue to build good relations with all young people I meet and provide them with a learning environment where they want to and can learn.

As I listen, possibly for the last time, to the interview conversations, there are occasions when I would have liked to have been able to delve more deeply, or wish I had asked different questions or even been able to speak again with a young person to clarify my understanding but within the constraints of this inquiry this was not possible. It also continues to bother me that I was not able to speak with young people who had dropped out of the GRfW course or who were absent at the time of the interviews as I feel they might have had very different stories to tell. Having acknowledged these limitations above, and throughout this dissertation, what matters is that I have been able to communicate with the kind of young people who are becoming the norm in our further education colleges. Practitioner research in the further education sector is still in its infancy but that does not mean that future projects cannot be imagined and resources sought for their implementation. The gaps in this small-scale single-researcher study could be addressed by a future study with more time and resources allocated in order to allow more in-depth interviews with a larger number of participants on an on-going basis. Here I would advocate engaging with a group of young people at risk of becoming NEET and observing their journey from school to work, education or training. This would give

opportunities to understand the processes that led to their decision to leave school and to identify the stages and destinations that their journey followed. Working collaboratively with other stakeholders (schools, colleges, Careers Service) could provide access to young people who had been enlisted but had dropped out or never attended GRfW to learn and understand what circumstances led to their decision. Collaborative working could also provide an opportunity to hear different perspectives to those expressed by the young people in this study. Sikes (2006:110) might warn that such insider research, in terms of its potential affect, effect and impact on the workplace is 'inherently sensitive' and therefore 'potentially dodgy' but I remain convinced, as she does, that shared interest in and concern for the wellbeing of the young people in our care could work towards finding ways to move forward together for their benefit.

Earlier in this section, I made reference to the ambitious plan within CfE that all staff will have responsibility to develop, reinforce and extend learning in health and wellbeing[13]. Prior to undertaking this research, I would have dismissed such a suggestion as 'not including me', but my new understanding of ideas around the notion of wellbeing drawing on Nussbaum's capability approach to flourishing, leads me to think otherwise. As I said earlier, I no longer hold a narrow view of teaching as transferring knowledge with the responsibility for wellbeing resting almost exclusively on guidance/other staff with specifically designated responsibility in areas of personal, social and emotional development. My concern is that others may continue to hold my previous views and I now see a need for schools and colleges to actively engage in developing strategies to support staff in coping with their new responsibilities. But I would insist that developing strategies must include practitioners as equal partners in the dialogue and not have policies imposed solely from above. There is, I think, a need for a space for professional dialogue that fosters ownership and exchange of ideas around the impact of CfE within the further education sector in general and within individual colleges in particular. Facilitating such dialogue requires finding new ways to release practitioners from other duties in order to participate.

I have shown throughout this dissertation that research around the phenomenon of NEET is widespread, that government investment towards a solution is a priority and that the problem continues to grow. A recent article (Vaughan, 2009, *The TES*) expounds the

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[13] also requires all staff to develop skills in numeracy and literacy

social cost of NEET in the findings of research in the North of England[14] that examined what had happened to the long-term NEETs of 10 years ago. One particularly shocking finding of that study was that 15 per cent of those young people were dead by the time that research was completed. Vaughan quotes Jon Coles, Director General for Schools saying 'For those of us who console ourselves with the thought that education is not a matter of life or death, actually for those young people [...] it really is'. Here the work of schools, teachers and colleges is called to question and I reflect on the stories that referred to 'an absolutely brilliant teacher' and 'an amazing guy' who inspired young people to greater things and I ask what stops each one of us from being inspirational, amazing and brilliant. I do not pretend to have an answer; either practical or philosophical but I turn again to Nussbaum (2006:415) who believes that:

> [...] without imaginative courage we are likely to be left with public cynicism and despair before the very large challenges that these [...] areas pose. But with some new pictures of what may be possible we can at least approach these frontiers and think creatively about what justice can be in a world that is so much more complicated, and interdependent, than philosophical theory has often acknowledged.

The stories I heard conjure up pictures in my imagination. Many of the stories will remain with me forever. My own story is here too; threading through the dissertation from my early confusion and addled thoughts around NEET young people, my reading around policies, politics and notions of wellbeing and capabilities, my dilemma when striving to represent their voice, my emotional experiences during the research interviews, all leading to my altered perception of today's youth that challenges me to reflect on how I can and should change my teaching practice. My project set out to develop an understanding of NEET young people's lives and, having found out what one group of young people think and what they value in life, I now assume a responsibility to use this to improve the lot of other young people. This is not an easy task. My call for teaching compassion in education is tempered by the memory of Gina's smirk as she announced that she '*Goat expelled frae the school*' and kindles thoughts of the teachers who endured her wild behaviour. My transformed commitment towards teaching values like respect, honesty and kindness draws from Jamie's advocacy that we should '*teach them, from primary one up, everybody to be friends with everybody else*'. And finally, as I commit to making my classroom, and my college, a place where young people want to, and are able to learn, I remember how Jonathan plans for a good life centred around getting an apprenticeship as a

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[14] Research carried out by Department for Schools, Children and Families who have apparently not released the report and warn against extrapolating or generalising its findings.

plumber and then possibly emigrating to start afresh somewhere to make a good life for any children he might have in the future. In his words:

> *[…] cos I'm no wantin them tae go through what I went through wi ma school an that. I'm no wantin that fur them - cos it's shite. I want them to have a better chance at it all.*

Appendix A – NEET little stories

Jonathan : file 22

See, the lecturers an that treat you better – treat you more like an adult – it's good banter an that. Teachers arenae like that in the school. Some o them were jist nutters man like ma English teacher before I left. She wis aff her nut ... know whit a mean? Well fur the exams ... for the prelims ... we'd tae pick a book an write – fur yer writin thing ye'd tae pick a book ... back ... whenever ... months ago ... an do a writin on it - an that teacher told the head of English we'd picked our books. Two weeks before the exams she came in an sais 'where's your book for your exam' an we were like that man – 'we never picked our book'. It was two weeks before the prelims ... literally two weeks before the prelims an we had to pick a book, read it then write an essay on it. Know whit I mean? It's stuff like that – crazy – I couldnae get over it. Jist madness man.

The lecturers treat you better. Treat you more like an adult; it's good banter. Teachers aren't like that in school. Some of them were just insane - like my English teacher. She was crazy ... Well, for the exams, the prelim exams back months ago, we had to choose a book and write about it and that teacher told the head of English that we had chosen our books. Two weeks before the exams she came in and said 'where's your book for your exam' and we said 'we never picked our book'. It was two week before the prelims ... literally two weeks before the prelims and we had to pick a book, read it, then write an essay on it. Do you know what I mean? It's stuff like that – crazy – I couldn't get over it. Just madness.

Janey : file 23

I feel sorry for people that can't get a job – see like if they've been tryin n tryin n jist can't get one bcos at the end of the day they're still people that need money – they need money to live. So ye jist wonder why people can turn people – certain people - away like jist say ... dunno... Maybe they're not smart enough to get a certain job they want and they turn them away but at the end of the day if that's what they want they should be able to try n get it. Cos it's hopeless – I've ... I've handed out CVs ... I've went down to employers n there's jist nobody looking for anyone cos o the credit crunch so I jist hope there's goin to be more things for young people to do like at ma age cos when you're sixteen you're like – well say if you're older – say somebody wis twentyfive n went for the same job as a sixteen year old – cos they're older and more experienced so they would get it – there's nothing really for us young people so ... it's not fair because there's not a lot for us to do the now. An that's what I'm sayin – there's not a lot for us to do so an so if we are jist out like about the streets then ye do really need to watch what you're doing an then maybe say we were just standing in the park – n then the police will come and move us. That's what annoys me – they move us an then if we walk – like if we go behind the civic then they'll come n they'll move us again. Aye like 'stay away frae here' an then we're like that – 'we've naewhere else tae go'.

I feel sorry for people who can't get a job. If they've been trying and trying but just can't get one because at the end of the day they are still people who need money – they need money to live. So you just wonder why people can turn people – certain people away. Maybe they're not smart enough to get a certain job they want and they turn them away but at the end of the day if that's what they want they should be able to try and get it. . because

it's hopeless. I've handed out CVs ... I've gone down to employers and there's just no-one looking for anyone because of the credit crunch. So I hope there's going to be more things for young people to do at my age because when you're sixteen ... Well, say somebody was twentyfive and went for the same job as a sixteen year old, because they're older and more experienced they would get it. There's nothing really for us young people. It's not fair because there's not a lot for us to do just now. And that's what I'm saying, there's not a lot for us to do and so if we are just out about the streets then you do really need to watch what you are doing. Say we were just standing in the park then the police will come along and move us. That's what annoys me. They move us and then, if we walk ... like if we go behind the Civic Centre then they'll come and move us again. Yes, like 'stay away from here' and then we all say 'we've nowhere else to go'.

Karen : file 24

I left ... eh ... before the exams came up. I wis 16 in November – I could have left at Christmas ... well I wis goin to – I didn't have anything to go to – I didn't have college or anything to go to so I stayed on till I found something. I wis ... I wis trying to think about leaving school anyway so I jist ... I jist went to the Careers and they told me about this an a just took it an left. Think it's a 13 week or 10 week course. I'm doin hairdressing ... well eh to work in a hairdresser's jist. I think I'll ... ehm ... it'll feel good cos I'll get paid for doin it an I don't get paid for goin to school.

I left ... before the exams. I was 16 in November and I could have left at Christmas. Well, I was going to but I didn't have anything to go to. I didn't have college or anything to go to so I stayed on until I found something. I was trying to think about leaving school anyway so I just went to the Careers and they told me about this and I just took it and left. I think it's a 13 week or 10 week course. I'm doing hairdressing ... to work in a hairdresser's. I think I'll ... it'll feel good because I'll get paid for doing it and I don't get paid for going to school.

Robyn : file 25

I did like school. It's just some o the classes I didnae like – some o the teachers put ye aff tae. Aye, jist some, maist o the teachers is nice – jist depends, some o them jist no. Don't know – it's jist whenever ye dae something in our school ... if ye didnae dae somethin right they made a big deal o it in front o everybody an ye got made tae dae the whole thing again – no jist the wan bit – ye'd tae dae the whole thing. They're nice at the college. They always staun wi ye if ye've got something ye cannae dae an then they'll dae it an then haud yer hauns tae dae it tae. Cos they jist be nice tae ye an then ye don't get a row for asking yer pal a question or something like that ... Ye don't really talk in college but cos you're always ... ye're daein something ye like tae dae but. It's different. I left school in May it was – just after my exams n didnae dae nothin. I wis trying at hairdressers but I didnae get – they didnae get back to me an so ... then I went tae the school careers advisor [in January] – told me about this an she says she'd get me a place in the college. Mum and Dad gave me money every day. Mum can't get good hours because she needs to put my wee sister in and out of school. They didnae want me to leave but ma Dad jist said it was up to me so long as I got a job. Well I got to do ma Mum's housework as long as I wanted but I didnae want to do that all the time. It's cos ye were fed up every day but ... wakin up an ye didnae huv nuthin tae dae.

I did like school. It's just some of the classes I didn't like. Some of the teachers put you off too. Just some. Most of the teachers are nice. Just depends – some of them just not.

It's just whenever you do something in our school ... if you didn't do something right they made a big deal of it in front of everybody and you were made to do the whole thing again. Not just the one bit. You had to do the whole thing. They're nice at the college. They always stand with you if you have something you can't do and then they'll do it and then hold your hands to do it too. Because they're just nice to you and you don't get a row for asking your pal a question or something like that. You don't really talk in college though because you're always ... you're doing something you like to do. It's different. I left school in May – just after my exams and didn't do anything. I was trying at the hairdressers but I didn't – they didn't get back to me. So, then I went to the school careers advisor [in January)]. She told me about this and said she would get me a place in the college. Mum and Dad gave me money every day. Mum can't get good hours because she needs to put my young sister in and out of school. I got to do my Mum's housework as long as I wanted but I didn't want to do that all the time because you were fed up every day. Waking up and you didn't have anything to do.

Jamie : file 26

I think it would help everybody if ye get taught about emotions an how no tae start fights an that – like gang fighting an that – I don't like a that. Like walking through other schemes boys'll chase ye wi picks or golf clubs jist cos ye're frae another area. I don't like people like that – I mean I think it's shocking. An they're racist an a – everybody's racist in this place. People are jist walking about the town an I've heard boys shouting racist things and I've heard boys shouting racist things back and I think that's shocking. I've got lots of friends that are a different religion from me an that an I'm brand new wi everybody I am. Cos I'm a Rangers fan myself but I don't go n shout about it. Maist o ma friends are Celtic fans an I get a bit of stick when we get beat but that's about it. We jist slag each other like that. I'm Protestant, ma friends are Catholic but we don't shout at each other about that either. We're jist pals. I jist like to go out an play fitba wi ma mates an that. I'd like obviously in the future tae see myself with a job. Like in the far future – if I've got a wean – I don't want them having to walk about the street where people are bringing their weans up different. It's jist if ye get some o they people that huvnae a clue whit they're talking aboot – that jist want tae be racist for the fact they want tae be racist ... ye get some people like that.

I think it would help everybody if you were taught about emotions and how not to start fighting – like gang fighting. I don't like all that. Walking through other schemes boys will chase you with picks or golf clubs just because you are from another area. I don't like people like that. I think it's shocking. And they're racist too – everybody's racist in this place. People are just walking about the town and I have heard boys shouting racist things and I have heard boys shouting racist things back and I think that is shocking. I have lots of friends who are a different religion from me and I am fine with that. Because I am a Rangers fan myself but I don't go and shout about it. Most of my friends are Celtic fans and I get a bit of stick when we get beaten but that's about it. We just tease each other. I'm Protestant, my friends are Catholic but we don't shout at each other about that either. We are just pals. I just like to go out and play football with my mates. I'd like, obviously, in the future, to see myself with a job. In the far future – if I have a child – I don't want them having to walk about the street where people are brining their children up differently. It's just that if you get some of those people who don't have a clue what they are talking about – that just want to be racist for the fact they want to be racist – you get some people like that.

Gerry : file 28

PE wis good. Physics wis good. I didnae really like physics but see ma lect... see ma teacher – wis an absolutely amazing teacher. Best teacher I've had in ma life an he got it a through to me an I understood it all. So he wis good so I liked physics as well. English wis alright if the teacher didnae – like – gie ye a hard time. Jist depended whit kinda mood she wis in an that. Don't like writing. They used to give me them back all the time cos ... see how I'm left handed – I write funny cos I cannae see ... like ... see when you're right handed ye see what you've got to write and where you've got to write it but cos I'm left handed, I don't see the gap cos I'm covering up ma previous words so it was all quite squashed – like awthegither[15].

Bullying at our school was ye were always trying to hit the boy or something like that or trying tae carry on wi him or touching him in some way – if it was slapping him or punching him or jist trying tae bully him basically. There was one boy – we had a learning support unit so they'd come up tae our school n there was one boy always walked aboot n he had his bag right up an he was always – he wis a tiny wee boy – he wisnae right in the heid – I think it was LCD he had cos ye always seen him touching things so folk tried tae pick on him jist because o the way he wis an everything n I wis like ... sad ... don't dae that ... he couldnae help it. Boys tried it wanst wi me – tried tae bully me – stabbed me in the eye wi a pen an I, like – seriously – jist hit him. But after that y'know, as soon as ye hit wan boy – ye batter him – ye get a reputation aboot. That's you safe cos folk say like I've seen him fight afore – knocked him oot wi wan punch ... I didnae go aboot sayin I wis hard or that ... sayin that I wis gonnae have a fight. But if somebody did hit me I could handle masel. Maist folk jist fight for their reputation these days. That's another thing – ye never get a fair fight these days – somebody's always got to jump in for the other person. I don't like tae worry ma Mum an Dad about things like that - jist say to her I fell. They'd try n get the polis intae it an that's the worst thing they could dae – if yer a Ma or Da and ye try to defend your son by getting the police in it'll no get ye anywhere it'll jist – the boy's gonnae end up getting hit again an again.

Physical education was good. Physics was good. I didn't really like physics but my teacher was an absolutely amazing teacher. Best teacher I've had in my life and he got it all through to me and I understood it all. English was alright if the teacher didn't give you a hard time. Just depended what kind of mood she was in. Don't like writing. They used to give me them back all the time ... because I'm left handed I write funny because I can't see. See, when you're right handed you see what you've got to write and where you've got to write it but because I'm left handed I don't see the gap because I'm covering up my previous words so it was all quite squashed – like altogether.

Bullying at our school was you were always trying to hit the boy or something like that or trying to carry on with him or touching him in some way – if it was touching him or punching him or just trying to bully him basically. There was one boy ... we had a learning support unit so they'd come up to our school and there was one boy always walked about and he had his bag right up and he was always ... he was a very small boy ... he wasn't right in the head ... I think it was LCD he had because you always saw him touching things so people tried to pick on him just because of the way he was ... and I thought ... sad ... don't do that ... he couldn't help it. Boys tried it with me once... tried to bully me ... stabbed me in the eye with a pen and I – seriously – just hit him. But after that you know, as soon as you hit one boy you get a reputation about. That's you safe because people say ' I've seen him fight before – knocked him out with one punch'. I didn't go about saying I

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[15] altogether

Appendices

was hard or that – saying I was going to have a fight. But if somebody did hit me I could handle myself. Most people fight for their reputations these days. That's another thing, you never get a fair fight these days – somebody's always got to jump in for the other person. I don't like to worry my Mum and Dad about things like that. I just say I fell. They'd try to get the police involved and that's the worst thing they could do. If you're a mother or father and you try to defend your son by getting the police involved it won't get you anywhere. The boy's going to end up getting hit again and again.

Scott : file 29

Well, see, how do you get a placement cos, like, I've got three warnings like. See, the first one, I wis standin wi ma mates in the hallway an they were carryin on fightin so I got a warning – right. Fair enough, wisnae ma fault but still. The second one ma mate was sittin behind me in the class an they all sat n scratched the seat – right. So he said it's ma seat – the teacher thought I sat n scratched it all n ... another warning. So I cannae go on a placement bit it wisnae ma fault twice. There's only three in oor class now. The other ten are away out on a placement.

Well, how do you get a placement?... because I've got three warnings. See, the first one, I was standing with my mates in the corridor and they were carrying on fighting so I got a warning, right? Fair enough, wasn't my fault but still ... The second one, my mate was sitting behind me in class and they all sat and scratched the seat, right? So he said it's my seat. The teacher thought I sat and scratched it all and ... another warning. So I can't go on a placement but it wasn't my fault twice. There's only three in our class now. The other ten are away out on a placement.

Emma : file 30

I don't like the violence – it's bad. Well cos my Mum's boyfriend got stabbed and I was there so ... he got stabbed here [abdomen]. And I had to lie across his belly to keep all the blood in and while they were still stabbin him I wis hangin across him. He nearly died n that. But eh ... cos I lay across his stomach ... but if I never he would have been dead so ... It was the football thing that was on. Yeh ... an we went out and got stabbed in the street.

I don't like the violence – it's bad. My Mum's boyfriend got stabbed and I was there. He got stabbed there [abdomen] and I had to lie across his belly to keep all the blood in and while they were still stabbing him I was hanging across him. He nearly died. But because I lay across his stomach ... but if I never he would have been dead so ... It was the football thing that was on. Yes, and we went out and got stabbed in the street.

Julie : file 31

Oh I hated school. I <u>never</u> went. Officially I left in December ... unofficially September sometime ... jist efter the holidays ... end o September bit I wisnae 16 till February. I suppose I jist hated it an I used tae go an jist come home at lunchtime a the time. I wis <u>never</u> at school. I jist hated it. But see now ... I wid ... see thinkin aboot it now ... I wid go tae school. See, everyone said that ... when you leave school you'll want tae go back an I wis like that 'naw ... nae chance ... whit wid I want tae go back there fur?' But I wis ... I would love to go back. I kin dae this every day so I kin dae school every day ... bit I jist didnae like it when I wis there. Aye. I've come here. I wis aff Monday an Tuesday there an Monday an Tuesday last week an that's it.

Oh I hated school. I never went. Officially I left in December ... unofficially, September some time – just after the holidays – end of September but I wasn't 16 till February. I suppose I just hated it and I used to go and just come home at lunchtime all the time. I was <u>never</u> at school. I just hated it. But see now ... I would ... see thinking about it now ... I would go to school. Everyone said that – when you leave school you'll want to go back and I thought 'No, no chance, what would I want to go back there for?' But ... I would love to go back. I can do this every day so I can do school every day but I just didn't like it when I was there. Yes, I've come here. I was off Monday and Tuesday there and Monday and Tuesday last week and that's it.

Gina : file 32

Well, I've done shoes an I've worked in a bakery. I didnae want tae work in a shoe shop ... it wis murder. I'm daein this till I can ... basically really jist tae get a wee bit of money in ma pocket an that. We get paid for coming here. We get 50 pounds a week for coming here. If ye don't come that day ye don't get paid. I goat expelled frae the school. I wisnae there. I went intae history and art because I'm good at art an a like history. If I'm bored in the hoose I'll jist sit an draw ... History ... I love history ... I jist like all that old stuff like the war an all that ... I like stuff like that. I would have done history but I thought aboot batterin ma head teacher an I goat expelled. Bit I wis never done getting suspended. Whenever I did go in all I done wis batter ma teachers an jist ended up getting parked outside so there wisnae any point goin in. Went an got our booze ... smokin hash an that ... don't do it anymore though. I jist liked playin aboot wi ma pals. I jist liked goin oot an getting drunk an stuff. It's ... ye copied every other person didn't ye. Didnae wannae feel like the pure black sheep o the school. Well, like everybody else dunnit so ye didnae want tae sortae clash as well did ye? Well I went tae a school o neds - I jist thought I wis a ned.

I've got two brothers. Me an M are the same but A - he's dead gentle n that – he jist wants tae be a lawyer an that – he jist wants tae dae something wi his life. He was bullied at school. Obviously he wanted to sit doon an get an education – jist wanted tae go tae uni – jist wanted tae dae good fur himsel. Jist a couple o people jist didnae have that attitude jist thought ... aw there's a wee ... a wee swot... He's got dyspraxia an that so – he cannae really write or anything so they slagged him for that. I see whit he's getting now an I'm like 'I want that'.

We're staunin in this taxi rank an ma taxi came first an she says 'you jist jump in that' an I wis like 'what about yersel?' and she says 'naw you jist jump in that – here's wan comin doon the noo'. An I jumped in the taxi an went hame. An a guy jist come up behind her an went 'dae ye want tae come tae ma hoose?' an she's like that 'Naw I don't want tae come tae yer hoose'. But tae cut a long story short ... she got battered to death... ... ... Sixteen she was.

Well, I've done shoes and I've worked in a bakery. I didn't want to work in a shoe shop ... it was murder. I'm doing this until I can ... basically really just to get a little bit of money in my pocket. We get paid for coming here. We get £50 a week for coming here. If you don't come that day you don't get paid. I was expelled from school. I wasn't there. I went in to history and art because I'm good at art and I like history. If I'm bored in the house I'll just sit and draw. History ... I love history ... I just like all that old stuff about the war and that ... I like stuff like that. I would have done history but I thought about battering my head teacher and I got expelled. But I was never done being suspended. Whenever I did go in all I did was batter my teachers and just ended up being parked outside so there wasn't any point of going in. Went and got our booze ... smoking hash

and that ... don't do it any more though. I just liked playing around with my pals. I just liked going out and getting drunk and stuff. It's ... you copied every other person didn't you. Didn't want to be the black sheep of the school. Like, everybody else did it so you didn't want to clash as well did you? Well, I went to a school of neds – I just thought I was a ned.

I have two brothers. Me and M are the same but A – he's really gentle – he wants to be a lawyer – just wants to do something with his life. He was bullied at school. Obviously he wanted to sit down and get an education – just wanted to go to uni – just wanted to do well for himself. Just a couple of people didn't have that attitude just thought 'there's a wee ... a wee swot. He's got dyspraxia so he can't really write or anything so they insulted him for that. I see what he's getting now and I'm thinking 'I want that'.

We were standing in this taxi rank and my taxi came first and she said 'just you jump in that one' and I said 'what about yourself' and she said 'no, just you jump in that one – here's one coming down just now'. And I jumped in the taxi and went home. And this guy just came up behind her and asked 'do you want to come to my house?' and she said 'No, I don't want to come to your house'. But to cut a long story short ... she was battered to death … … … Sixteen she was.

David : file 33

It's jist ehm ... they used to like help with you ... like sit with you and tell you ideas (?) but this time the teacher gives you like paper that jist already has it on it. n for maths ... it's kinda like the same here. Like eh ... if it was ... eh ... someone didn't understand something – they just turn round and shout at them 'you've not been listening' and they probably have been. They probably didn't understand.

It's just ... they used to, like, help with you ... sit with you and tell you ideas (?) but this time the teacher gives you paper that just already has it on it. And for maths ... it's kind of the same here. Like, if it was ... someone didn't understand something – they just turn round and shout at them 'you've not been listening' and they probably have been. They probably didn't understand.

Kylie : file 34

School – I jist didnae like it at all. Jist I couldnae wait tae leave cos I wis only 16 in October so Christmas was the first time I could leave. Dunno school jist didnae interest me – jist wanted to go out an do something else – cos I'd been at school all these years ... Well, what made me unhappy was the fact that I didn't understand my subjects well enough. Maths, I jist didn't understand maths at all. Dunno jist couldnae take an interest in it at all. Ehmm because in maths if a teacher was like up at the board writing things down n I wis like that I wis following it n then see when it came to a test an me having to look at the questions maself and me trying to understand the questions maself – that's what mixed me up with maths. So ... don't know ... the teachers were obviously good teachers an things like that bit I don't know – maths – nobody could help me understand it. I suppose – maybe that was just me or maybe the teachers wernae ... but I don't think I liked any o the teachers that were the boring subjects which is quite funny but ... but some o the lecturers are jist like teachers. Still look doon at ye as if – well jist a wee wean. I don't like the GRfW course ... see cos oor course isnae like a full time course – isnae like full time students ... see cos it's a GRfW course so most of the lecturers don't bother with us because we're not full-time qualified students if ye know what I mean. Like cos this is only

a 13 week course so they don't bother as much with us as much as they should. That's why I don't think it's as organised as it should be. Because, we've been here about eight weeks and we're supposed to get ehm ... a placement through this course and ehm... none ae us is got one yet except frae girl that wis here – but she's on our course but she was doin the exact same course last year – don't know why she's back but she is and she's been offered two placements but nobody else has which is quite confusing but I don't know why.

*Drugs-I don't understand why people would do it – I mean what if everybody could get addicted to them and they cost money so what's the point n a lot o people have died through drugs. Did you hear about (Name)? D'you remember (Name)? ...
eh he was fifteen. He stays in (Town) – he hung hisself under the bridge – (Town) – it was like last year last February. Well like I knew him because he stays directly over the back from ma Gran an I use tae play wi him when I wis a little girl. Ehm ehm he wis out wi his friends and I don't – he must've got in wi a bad group like when through his teenage years n I hadnae spoke tae him in years n eh he took ehhm vallium ... is that it? vallium or something ... eh I don't know – they did something tae his head n he went n hung hissel. That's why I don't understand why people ....*

The police are tryin tae stop eh em shops selling under age alcohol because I do a test purchasing – have you ever heard of that? Well I do that wi eh em the (Town) police. Basically all I need to do is walk into the shop try an get served an walk back out. But I've never been sold afore so ... I look too young {laughs}I get paid for it so ... all I need to do is ehm walk into the shop n say can I get whatever an if they ask me ma age I'm not allowed to lie – like I need to say ah'm sixteen. An then I walk back out n if they serve me it I walk out n then the police go in n charge them for not even basically serving me it. So I do that so they are tryin to stop it - like drink gettin selt like served under age bit .

About the police - I think the police should be out and about more bcos there's so many people you hear about getting stabbed n getting shot – whatever – people carrying weapons There was a boy – know how like (School Name) down in (Town) like n supposedly ehmm -I think it was in the papers- another boy went intae the school wi a blade n stabbed im. That wis aboot... that wis aboot two years ago ehmm there wis people goin intae school n things wi weapons n things like that. Know how there's things like Beebo – there's Beebo ehmm ye go on people's Beebos n I don't even know the Beebos I wis on an they were standin wi a bottle o MD - know how Mad Dog 20 20 alcohol - ehmm in school ehmm n you're thinkin like ... is anybody like ... is the teachers actually noticed that's goin on ... bit obviously the teachers would've taken it off them n gied them intae trouble bit ye see them in school n it wis actually in the classroom that somebody'd taken a picture of it – standin wi a bottle n you're jist thinkin – dae teachers no notice things like that're getting done.

School – I just didn't like it at all. I couldn't wait to leave because I was only 16 in October so Christmas was the first time I could leave. Don't know, school just didn't interest me – just wanted to go out and do something else – because I'd been at school all these years. Well, what made me unhappy was the fact that I didn't understand my subjects well enough. Maths, I just didn't understand maths at all. Don't know - just couldn't take an interest in it at all.   Because in maths if a teacher was up at the board writing things down and I was following it and then, see when it came to a test and me having to look at the questions myself and me trying to understand the questions myself – that's what mixed me up in maths. So ... don't know ... the teachers were obviously good teachers but I don't know – maths – nobody could help me understand it. I suppose – maybe that was just me or maybe the teachers weren't ... but I don't think I liked any of the

teachers that were boring subjects which is quite funny but ... but ... some of the lecturers are just like teachers. Still look down on you as if ... well just a little child. I don't like the GRfW course. Because our course isn't like full-time – isn't like full-time students ... because it's a GRfW course so most of the lecturers don't bother with us because we're not full-time qualified students if you know what I mean. Because this is only a 13 week course they don't bother as much with us as they should. That's why I don't think it's as organised as it should be. Because we've been here about eight weeks and we're supposed to get a placement through this course and none of us has one yet except for a girl who was here – she's on our course but she was doing the exact same course last year – don't know why she's back but she is and she's been offered two placements but nobody else has which is quite confusing. But I don't know why.

Drugs – I don't understand why people would do it – I mean what if everybody could get addicted to them and they cost money so what's the point ... and a lot of people have died through drugs. Did you hear about (Name)? Do you remember (Name)? He was fifteen. He stays in (Town) – he hung himself under the bridge – (Town) – it was last February. Well, I knew him because he stays directly across the back from my Gran and I used to play with him when I was a little girl. He was out with his friends and I don't – he must have got in with a bad group through his teenage years and I hadn't spoken to him in years. He took vallium ... is that it? vallium or something ... I don't know ... they did something to his head and he went and hung himself. That's why I don't understand people ….

The police are trying to stop shops selling under age alcohol because I do a test purchasing – have you heard of that? Well, I do that with the (Town) police. Basically, all I need to do is walk into the shop, try to get served and walk back out. But I've never been sold before so ... I look too young {laughs}. I get paid for it so ... all I need to do is walk into the shop and say 'Can I get ... whatever ... ' and if they ask me my age I'm not allowed to lie – I need to say I'm sixteen. And then I walk back out and if they serve me it I walk out and the police go in to charge them for not even basically serving me it. So I do that so they are trying to stop it – like drink being served under age.

About the police – I think the police should be out and about more because there's so many people you hear about getting stabbed and getting shot – whatever – people carrying weapons. There was a boy – in (School Name) in (Town) – and supposedly – I think it was in the papers – another boy went into the school with a blade and stabbed him. That was about ... that was about two years ago ... there were people going into school and things with weapons and things like that. Do you know how there's things like Beebo – there's Beebo – you go on people's Beebos and I don't even know the Beebo I was on and they were standing with a bottle of MD – Mad Dog 20 20 alcohol – in school. And you're thinking 'is anybody ... have the teachers actually noticed that's going on?' But obviously the teachers would have taken it off them and given them into trouble but you see them in school. It was actually in the classroom that somebody had taken a picture of it – standing with a bottle and you're just thinking 'do teachers not notice things like that being done?'.

Jenny: file 35

I left jist before Christmas – I wis fifteen – I wis sixteen in January though. I obviously wanted to leave n couldn't wait n then I couldn't leave until I had a college placement. Wanted to leave because it was like borin n jist all the same n I wanted do like something different instead of school. So ma careers advisor got me into the GRfW course. Well, I left the GRfW for about four weeks n I left to go and work in the hairdresser's for like a four week trial n I jist came back today. They were goannae keep me on – they were

goannae train me up and I said I wanted to go back to college. I don't want to, like, go an work n just rush in if you know what I mean. It's hairdressing I wanted to do but I don't want to do it right now. I would rather like train up here because we get showed better stuff here n like ye get more time. In a hairdresser's ye only get a certain amount o time. I liked it back here.

I left just before Christmas – I was fifteen – I was sixteen in January though. I obviously wanted to leave and couldn't wait and then I couldn't leave until I had a college placement. Wanted to leave because it was, like boring and just all the same and I wanted to do something different instead of school. So my careers advisor got me into the GRfW course. Well, I left the GRfW course for about four weeks. I left to go and work in the hairdresser's for, like, a four week trial and I just came back today. They were going to keep me on – they were going to train me up and I said I wanted to go back to college. I don't want to, like, go and work and just rush in if you know what I mean. It's hairdressing I wanted to do but I don't want to do it right now. I would rather train up here because we are shown better things here and you get more time. In a hairdresser's you only get a certain amount of time. I liked it back here.

Lesley : file 36

Well, I had applied for a course in eh ... cosmetology. Bit I didnae get accepted. So I wisnae jist lying about all day daein things so I stayed on at school till ... like ... I wis getting a course. Then I got intae this course so I left because I jist didnae enjoy it. Jist ... think it wis jist some o the teachers like jist intimidated me n like didnae ... I don't know – jist didnae enjoy it. College's mair fun an ye get – yer lecturers speak tae ye more as though you're an adult than they did in school n I jist enjoy it mair. I loved primary. I loved it. Dunno – jist enjoyed the kind o work we done n ma teachers were a dead nice – better than the high school. Secondary - scared ... shy at first. When ye were getting like maybe at the start of third year – end of second year – jist hated it through that time. Think it was cos o the exams comin up an I wis jist stressed ... n ... I dunno – I wish I had studied more for it. I wish I had studied more for it cos I think I would have enjoyed it. I liked art ... I loved art ... I jist wanted to dae art o day n then I.T. as well ... I liked that ... n English ... I loved English. I liked essays n that ... I loved essays n that. Hated maths – I've never been good at maths.

My friend died – over a month ago – he got hit wi a motorbike. Aye – he died. He wis I think thirteen. It was a motorbike that eh killed him. He wis – it was his fault but it was the guy's fault as well because he wis goin – it was quite fast – I'm no sure – bit it wis faster than he should have been goin. But at the same time he ran out in front o it and thought he could get past. It was a joint effort really. The guy on the motorbike died as well. He died a couple of days – a couple of days after it.

They should be doin more aboot ... like ... drinkin on the streets. They're stoppin young people on the streets – like young kids – n takin their drink off them instead o takin them home – like off the streets. Ma friend wis caught a few weeks ago – well she was ma friend. She wis drinkin on the street bit she's younger than me n she got her drink took off her and a forty pound fine. But I don't see how that's gonnae stop her. I dinnae really speak tae her about it cos I've never done it – I've never done it before – I've never thought o doin that. I hate it ... I think it's disgustin. Like it's just ... I dunno ... it's cheeky like if ye know whit I mean – walkin about the street legless. It's no nice. It's dangerous as well – anythin could happen tae ye. Somebody could pick ye up n take ye anywhere. That's the worst thing

Appendices

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I think the population's goin up for girls like ma age and younger getting pregnant. Y'know ma friend had her baby two weeks ago – no it was last week she had it – n she jist turned sixteen. And there wis a wee girl down the road fae me – she's goin wi a boy that stays across the road fae me – he's sixteen n she wis fourteen at the time n she turned pregnant ... n she fell pregnant n she had a baby jist after her fifteenth birthday. I donno – honestly how they cope. I don't think they think. See wi those – I think it's a trend they're tryin tae make ... Aww I want a baby n they're a delivering babies n they're regrettin it efter. And I mean it's a shame cos the wee baby's life is goin to waste. The age should maybe go up for sex bit at the same time it's no helpin. It's no helpin anyway cos they're doin it everywhere n anywhere n whatever age.

I applied for a course in cosmetology. But I didn't get accepted. So I wasn't just lying about all day doing things so I stayed on at school till I was getting a course. Then I got into this course so I left because I just didn't enjoy it. Just ... think it was just some of the teachers, like, just intimidated me and, like ... I don't know – just didn't enjoy it. College is more fun and you get – your lecturers speak to you more as though you're an adult than they did in school and I just enjoy it more. I loved Primary. I loved it. Don't know – just enjoyed the kind of work we did and my teachers were all really nice – better than the high school. Secondary – scared ... shy at first. When you were getting, like, maybe at the start of third year – end of second year – just hated it through that time. Think it was because of the exams coming up and I was just stressed. I don't know – I wish I has studied more for it. I wish I had studied more for it because I think I would have enjoyed it. I liked art ... I loved art ... I just wanted to do art all day. Then I.T. as well ... I liked that ... and English ... I loved English. I liked essays and that ... I loved essays and that. Hated maths – I've never been good at maths.

My friend died – over a month ago – he was hit with a motor bike. Yes, he died. He was, I think, thirteen. It was a motorbike that eh killed him. He was – it was his fault but it was the guy's fault as well because he was going – it was quite fast – I'm not sure – but it was faster than he should have been going. But at the same time he ran out in front of it and thought he could get past. It was a joint effort really. The guy on the motorbike died too. He died a couple of days – a couple of days after it.

They should be doing more about – like – drinking on the streets. They're stopping young people on the streets – like young kids – and taking their drink off them instead of taking them home – like off the streets. My friend was caught a few weeks ago – well she was my friend. She was drinking on the street but she's younger than me and she had her drink taken from her and a forty pounds fine. But I don't see how that's going to stop her. I don't really speak to her about it because I've never done it – I've never done it before – I've never thought of doing that. I hate it ... I think it's disgusting. Like, it's just – I don't know – it's cheeky if you know what I mean – walking about the street legless. It's not nice. It's dangerous too – anything could happen to you. Somebody could pick you up and take you anywhere. That's the worst thing.

I think the population's going up for girls my age and younger getting pregnant. You know, my friend had her baby two weeks ago – no it was last week she had it – and she just turned sixteen. And there was this young girl down the road from me – she's going with a boy who stays across the road from me – he's sixteen and she was fourteen at the time and she turned pregnant ... and she fell pregnant and she had her baby just after her fifteenth birthday. I don't know – honestly how they cope. I don't think they think. See with those – I think it's a trend they're trying to make . Aww I want a baby and they're

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delivering babies and they're regretting it afterwards. And I mean it's a shame because the little baby's life is going to waste. The age should maybe go up for sex but at the same time it's not helping. It's not helping anyway because they are doing it everywhere and anywhere and whatever age.

Appendix B – Life Grid

Places	People	Time	Thoughts and feelings	
		left school		

Appendix C – Rules for Formatting Transcriptions

- each interview will be transcribed verbatim to a separate text document.
- the filename on the audiofile will be used for the textfile.
- cross-reference to the participant will be made by writing this filename on the consent form. This will be the only means of identification.
- backup copies of both the text and audiofiles will be held securely on USB pendrive.
- paper printouts of transcripts will be held in lockable filebox.
- all references to the participant's name will be replaced in the transcript by an alias and all possible means of identification of places, schools, teachers or other persons will be removed if considered sensitive or breach confidentiality.
- vernacular expressions, expletives and slang will be considered within the context they are used and an *ad hoc* decision made on how to transcribe these.
- silences, pauses, non-verbal sounds, emotions, facial expressions will be indicated using braces, for example {laughs}.
- word stress will be noted using capitals or underlining, for example NEVER or never
- recording the duration of silences or pauses is not necessary or appropriate.
- overlapping speech and unfinished sentences will be indicated using ellipses i.e. …
- if a section of the speech is inaudible or unclear, this section will be marked using question marks.
- the researcher's speech will be bracketed thus: [ ] in order that it be differentiated from the participant's speech.
- all datafiles: paper, audio and text, will be destroyed when this project is finished.

Appendix D – Methods Used when Identifying Capabilities

        i)   ***Existing data or convention***: selecting dimensions (or capabilities) based on convenience or a convention that is taken to be authoritative, or because these are the only data available with the required statistics;

        ii)   ***Assumptions***: choosing dimensions based on implicit or explicit assumptions with respect to what people do value or should value. These are commonly the informed guesses of the researcher; they may also draw on convention, social or psychological theory, philosophy, religion and so on;

        iii)   ***Public 'consensus'***: selecting a list of dimensions that has achieved a degree of legitimacy as a result of public consensus, exemplified at the international level by the universal human rights, the MDGs[16], and the Sphere project[17]; these vary at the national and local levels;

        iv)   ***Ongoing deliberative participatory processes***: deciding dimensions on the basis of ongoing purposive participatory exercises that periodically elicit the values and perspectives of stakeholders; and

        v)   ***Empirical evidence regarding people's values***: deciding dimensions on the basis of expert analyses of people's values from empirical data, or data on consumer preferences and behaviours, or studies of the values that are most conducive to mental health or social benefit.

(Alkire, 2007:7)

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[16] MDG: Millennium Development Goals are the UN/international targets for addressing extreme poverty
[17] Sphere project: Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response sets out clearly what people affected by disasters have a right to expect from humanitarian assistance

Appendices

Appendix E – Nussbaum's List of Central Human Functional Capabilities (Nussbaum, 2000:77)

1. Life. Being able to live to the end of a human life of normal length; not dying prematurely, or before one's life is so reduced as to be not worth living.

2. Bodily Health. Being able to have good health, including reproductive health; to be adequately nourished; to have adequate shelter.

3. Bodily Integrity. Being able to move freely from place to place; having one's bodily boundaries treated as sovereign, i.e. being able to be secure against assault, child sex abuse, and domestic violence; having opportunities for sexual satisfaction and for choice in matters of reproduction.

4. Senses, Imagination and Thought. Being able to use the senses, to imagine, think and reason – and to do these things in a "truly human" way, a way informed and cultivated by an adequate education, including, but by no means limited to, literacy and the basic mathematical and scientific training. Being able to use imagination and thought in connection with experiencing and producing self-expressive works and events of one's own choice, religious, literary, musical, and so forth. Being able to use one's mind in ways protected by guarantees of freedom of expression with respect to both political and artistic speech, and freedom of religious exercise. Being able to search for the ultimate meaning of life in one's own way. Being able to have pleasurable experiences, and to avoid non-necessary pain.

5. Emotions. Being able to have attachments to things and people outside ourselves; to love those who love and care for us, to grieve at their absence; in general, to love, to grieve, to experience longing, gratitude, and justified anger. Not having one's emotional development blighted by overwhelming fear and anxiety, or by traumatic events of abuse or neglect. (Supporting this capability means supporting forms of human association that can be crucial to their development.)

6. Practical Reason. Being able to form a conception of the good and to engage in critical reflection about the planning of one's life. (This entails protection for the liberty of conscience.)

7. Affiliation. **A**. Being able to live with and toward others, to recognise and show concern for other human beings, to engage in various forms of social interaction; to be able to imagine the situation of another and to have compassion for that situation; to have the capability for both justice and friendship. (Protecting this capability means protecting institutions that constitute and nourish such forms of affiliation, and also protecting the freedom of assembly and political speech.)

B. Having the social bases of self-respect and non-humiliation; being able to be treated as a dignified being whose worth is equal to that of others. This entails, at a minimum, protection against discrimination on the basis of race, sex, sexual orientation, religion, caste, ethnicity, or national origin. In work, being able to work as a human being, exercising practical reason and entering into meaningful relationships of mutual recognition with other workers.

8. Other Species. Being able to live with concern for and in relation to animals, plants and the world of nature.

9. Play. Being able to laugh, to play, to enjoy recreational activities.

10. Control over One's Environment. A. Political. Being able to participate effectively in political choices that govern one's life; having the right of political participation, protection of free speech and association.

B. Material. Being able to hold property (both land and movable goods), not just formally but in terms of real opportunity; and having property rights on an equal basis with others; having the right to seek employment on an equal basis with others; having the freedom from unwarranted search and seizure.

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