



Connolly, M. Claire (2019) *Reflective Activists? Exploring Student Teachers' Emerging Practice in Northern Ireland: a Bourdieusian Analysis*. Ed.D thesis.

<https://theses.gla.ac.uk/75162/>

Copyright and moral rights for this work are retained by the author

A copy can be downloaded for personal non-commercial research or study, without prior permission or charge

This work cannot be reproduced or quoted extensively from without first obtaining permission in writing from the author

The content must not be changed in any way or sold commercially in any format or medium without the formal permission of the author

When referring to this work, full bibliographic details including the author, title, awarding institution and date of the thesis must be given

# **Reflective Activists? Exploring Student Teachers' Emerging Practice in Northern Ireland: a Bourdieusian Analysis.**

Mary Claire Connolly

B.A. (Joint Hons), P.G.C.E., M.Ed.

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the  
Degree of Doctor of Education (Ed.D.)

School of Education,  
College of Social Sciences  
University of Glasgow

April, 2019

## **Abstract**

‘Class’ has become increasingly invisible in contemporary society, with teachers reluctant to discuss or acknowledge it (Reay, 2006; Hall and Jones, 2013). This can lead to inequality as the education system continues to disadvantage working-class children while advantaging their middle-class peers. In this study, I focus on two aspects of this problem. First is the impact on education due to the perpetuation of class-based inequality and, secondly, the (in)ability of teachers to recognise and/or address this inequality within the system. This research set out to explore student teachers’ perceptions of social class and academic selection which, I argue, exacerbates and perpetuates unfairness in education in Northern Ireland. My concern is that student teachers, having themselves been through processes of selection to gain a place in Initial Teacher Education (ITE) and generally having come from socially ‘privileged’ backgrounds, may find it challenging to move beyond their own experiences to meet the needs of disadvantaged pupils.

Consistent with an interpretivist paradigm, this research acknowledges that meaning is socially constructed through interaction with others. Data was collected initially through a survey of 128 students in their third year of ITE in a single institution. This was followed by three focus groups and then semi-structured interviews with ten student teachers. The methodological design and data analysis were informed by Bourdieu’s signature concepts of habitus, field and, to a lesser extent, capital, thus exploring students’ perceptions of practice. Drawing on the data collected through focus groups and interviews, five themes emerged and these are analysed and discussed in relation to both current literature and with reference to Bourdieu’s theoretical understanding in three sections based around the facets of habitus. The findings indicate that social reproduction is likely to continue if the student’s habitus is reproductive.

The student teachers in this study, who have not been challenged either by experiences or in their thinking, tend to misrecognise the current education system as fair and effective, and often (in common with findings from Reay, 2006; Dunne and Gazeley, 2008; Hall and Jones, 2013; Archer *et al.*, 2018) attribute underachievement to the home background of the pupil. It is only when students encounter failure or disruption within the field, or are asked to stop and consider inequalities, that the habitus’ transformative potential might encourage them to question the equity of the system and to play a part in seeking amelioration. The conclusion to this study offers some proposals that might encourage student teachers to be more deeply about the ‘purposes and consequences of education’ (GTCNI, 2007:9) and

promote reflective activist practitioners. Although this is a small-scale study, and I articulate its limitations, its findings lead me to suggest that until ITE equips students to recognise and challenge their own assumptions and to better understand the complexity of our education system, inequalities and symbolic violence will be perpetuated.

# Contents

<b>Chapter 1: Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
This Study.....	4
Structure and Chapter Outline .....	6
<b>Chapter 2: Education in Northern Ireland .....</b>	<b>9</b>
Introduction .....	9
The Genesis of Northern Ireland's System of Education.....	9
Current arrangements for post-primary education in Northern Ireland.....	13
Teacher Education in Northern Ireland .....	17
Becoming a teacher.....	22
Summing Up.....	24
<b>Chapter 3: Bourdieu's Conceptual Tools .....</b>	<b>26</b>
Introduction .....	26
Habitus.....	28
Habitus as history.....	29
Habitus as everyday bodily practice .....	31
Habitus has generative potential and is not necessarily determinist/reproductive .....	34
Field.....	37
Capital.....	41
Summing Up.....	44
<b>Chapter 4: Sophisticated Mechanisms of Reproduction .....</b>	<b>46</b>
Introduction .....	46
Doxa.....	48
Symbolic violence.....	49
Misrecognition .....	50
Reproduction .....	51
Language.....	53
Selection.....	56
Summing Up.....	61

<b>Chapter 5: Perceptions of Class .....</b>	<b>63</b>
Introduction .....	63
What is Class? .....	63
Bourdieu's Understanding of Class.....	65
Class in the Classroom .....	68
The invisibility of class within education .....	73
Stereotyping.....	75
Deficit constructions of working-class pupils.....	78
How social class shapes students' expectations of learners.....	79
Summing Up.....	82
<b>Chapter 6: Methodology.....</b>	<b>83</b>
Introduction .....	83
The Research Design and Context .....	83
Bourdieu's Approach to Research.....	87
Examining practice .....	91
Reflexivity.....	92
Methods .....	93
Survey .....	94
Focus groups .....	96
Vignettes .....	100
Interviews.....	101
Analysis and organisation of the data: some challenges.....	104
Ethical Considerations and Measures of Goodness.....	107
Summing Up.....	110
<b>Chapter 7: Measuring Up - Are We Distinctive?.....</b>	<b>111</b>
Introduction .....	111
Analysis and Discussion of Survey Findings .....	112
Student teachers' social and academic background.....	114
Motivations for becoming teachers.....	117
Factors impacting on children's learning.....	118
Perceptions of academic selection .....	119
Themes Arising from the Research .....	122
The Impact of History .....	125
Concerted Cultivation.....	125

Investment.....	126
Match between home/school contexts.....	128
Parental expectations.....	130
Parental interactions with schools.....	132
Everyday Practices .....	135
Distinction: Measuring Up.....	135
A feel for the game.....	135
Markers of class.....	136
Simply the best: winners and losers.....	137
Comparisons and measuring up.....	139
The Neoliberalisation of Education.....	143
Pressure to perform.....	144
The impact on practice.....	146
Competition: winners and losers.....	147
Reproduction and Transformation of Inequalities in Education .....	149
‘Othering’ .....	150
Normalising middle-class achievement.....	151
Selection: creating subjective expectations.....	152
Second-class learners:accepting the label.....	155
Channelling and eliminating those who do not fit.....	156
Grouping for Inequity.....	158
Selective education in Northern Ireland:student teachers' views.....	158
Channelling and streaming:social reproduction in action.....	160
Pedagogies employed .....	162
Teacher/school expectations.....	164
Selection works for some – or does it? .....	166
Summing Up.....	168
<b>Chapter 8: Conclusion .....</b>	<b>170</b>
Introduction .....	170
Review.....	171
Using Bourdieu’s Concepts as a Lens to Examine Education in Northern Ireland.....	174
Students misrecognise the education system as fair: Misrecognition.....	175
Gearing children up for failure: Symbolic violence .....	177
Student teachers’ experiences lead to differing approaches: Habitus.....	179
The reproductive habitus.....	180

The transformative habitus.....	182
Education as a mechanism for securing advantage: Capital/Habitus .....	184
Neoliberal influences impact practice: Field .....	186
Students willingness to engage in reflection on their practice.....	188
Limitations of the Research and Suggestions for Further Research.....	190
Reflecting on my Professional Practice: What Next? .....	193
Contribution to the Literature .....	199
Final Thoughts for the Moment.....	202
<b>Appendices .....</b>	<b>204</b>
Appendix A: Ethics Approval.....	205
Appendix B: Research Instruments .....	206
Appendix C: Rules for Formatting Transcriptions .....	220
Appendix D: Sample Transcript .....	221
Appendix E: Participant Profiles .....	233
<b>References .....</b>	<b>243</b>

## **List of Tables**

Table 1: Focus group and interview participants	98
Table 2: Students' motivations to become teachers	118
Table 3: Students' perceptions of factors impacting pupils' learning	119
Table 4: Presentation of thematic analysis	123

## **List of Figures**

Figure 1: Students' perceptions of their social background	115
Figure 2: Students' perceptions of academic selection	120
Figure 3: Students' views of factors related to ability-grouping	122
Figure 4: Interview participants' placement on the habitus as a continuum between reproductive and transformative	180

## Acknowledgements

Writing this page delights me as it signals the end of a long journey and I get to thank those who have believed in me and made it possible.

To start at the beginning, my thanks goes to the two people who inspired a passion for education and learning from the very beginning. My parents, Jim and Stella, who in the early years read aloud, checked homework, challenged and praised, while more recently they have listened and asked, always believing, always tolerant and always encouraging – I've tried to follow your motto ‘If it’s worth doing, do it well!’ Thanks are also due to Mary and Joe who were just as positive. All four of you have been great role models and thank you for allowing me to ignore you for the last while!

Next to Professor Nicki Hedge, you have been an inspiration; positive, supportive while always expecting the best. I have learnt from you Nicki, that with gentle persistence, encouragement and a dash of humour we get the best from others – especially when you believe in them. Thank you for all those Saturday evening calls, my weekends will not be the same from here on in. My thanks also to the tutors and my fellow students on the University of Glasgow Ed.D. Programme, it has been a pleasure to engage with and learn from you all.

A note of thanks is due to my employer St. Mary’s University College, Belfast for funding these studies. I am most appreciative for those student participants who readily gave up their time and discussed their views on education and I continue to be heartened by their sense of enthusiasm and desire to do right by the children they will teach. Thanks also to those friends who have kept me sane and kept me going over the last five years; particular thanks to Deirdre – our work here is done.

Finally, to my family who have put up with studying, assignments, research and writing for the last five years. Without you nothing is worthwhile, so thank you for allowing me to be selfish and achieve my ambitions. Ciaran you are my better half in every way. I could not have done it without you as you gave me time by doing all those everyday jobs that keep our lives going – the music goes back on now! Christopher, Caití and Ellen, I am immensely proud of each of you. Thank you for believing in me.

## **Author's Declaration**

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

M. Claire Connolly

## Chapter 1: Introduction

I embarked on this study to examine student teachers' perceptions of social class and academic selection in response to my realisation of the lack of awareness and understanding of educational inequality that I see played out daily in my professional context. I work in a university college of Initial Teacher Education (ITE) and I am responsible for the preparation, organisation and placement of student teachers (hereafter referred to as students) in schools, an essential aspect of a B.Ed. programme that will result in qualified teacher status. The college, a specialist provider of ITE, prides itself on making a 'distinctive contribution of service and excellence' (SMUCB, 2017:np) to teacher education in Northern Ireland and consistently strives to improve practice. This is relevant to this study as it is essential that students understand and recognise their 'responsibilities for the future of each individual child and the well-being of society as a whole' (SMUCB, 2017:np).

Northern Ireland, hereafter often NI, values the excellent primary education it provides (Burge *et al.*, 2016; Sizmur *et al.*, 2017) and, having worked in this sector for twenty years, I was content, indeed complacent, that the students with whom I worked were graduating as well-rounded, motivated professionals who were well prepared to work with children from all backgrounds and help improve their life-chances. These students demonstrate a strong academic profile (Clarke and Magennis, 2016) and are capable and hard-working. A recent Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2013:91) report found that there is 'a high degree of respect for the quality of initial teacher education' in NI. My complacency may well have continued until an Ed.D. course in Ethics and Education encouraged me to take a more critical stance. This unsettled me and I initially reacted as James suggests:

Where someone is accustomed to seeing their daily and strenuous efforts as an educator in generally positive terms, it will seem difficult and quite possibly perverse to be asking in what sense they are part of a system that generates inequalities. (James, 2015:107)

I had indeed viewed my work as an educator in positive terms and I struggled to recognise how I might be part of a system that generated inequalities within education. It was only as I studied Bourdieu and Passeron (1990), whose theory of reproduction will be considered in Chapter 4, that I began to recognise that the education system is structured in such a way as to advantage those from the dominant class. Rather than the system being fair as I had always presumed, Bourdieu and Passeron argue that it operates through a process of

‘misrecognition’. This might be explained as ‘the way in which teachers’ judgements on their pupils transmute social classifications into school classifications’ (Nice, 1990:xxiv). Aoife<sup>1</sup>, one of my research participants<sup>2</sup> expressed this eloquently:

*So, initially when children come into school, schools like a middle-class value system and norms, so the children that show these norms and values, attitude and behaviour and oral language, they’re seen as the ones that’ve more ability... whereas the ones that haven’t had the same opportunities at home, they’re put in the lower groups and the teacher differentiates based on this... like, initial opinion – and this makes this ‘gap’ get bigger and bigger between the two classes.*

If the education system is misrecognised as neutral, the role of social origin in predetermining a child’s educational ‘destiny’ appears not to be a contributory factor. Children may be misrecognised as ‘bright’ or ‘dim’ and that children’s performances are ‘socially, culturally and economically “made up” ’ (Ball, 2010:162) may be ignored. For years I had misrecognised education in NI as fair, as I now explain.

In NI, academic selection takes place at eleven years of age. This means that ‘able’ pupils<sup>3</sup> – those who succeed in academic selection tests – go to Grammar schools. Grammar schools produce strong academic results (Department for Education Northern Ireland, (DENI), 2017) and the majority of their pupils will continue to university. As many working-class children go on to, and succeed in, Grammar schools I believed that we had a fair education system. However, having read Bourdieu and Passeron (1990), I began to recognise the continual selection that children go through from the earliest days of school and I became much more aware of how the dominant culture may self-perpetuate. This made me much more sceptical about our education system and acted as a catalyst for this study.

Furthermore, I became increasingly aware of the limited backgrounds from which the student teacher cohort is drawn. Most of these students are ‘indigenous’ to NI, and so will have come through the selective system and many will have studied in Grammar schools:

The ‘closed’ nature of the system means there is considerable homogeneity in the educational experiences of those enrolling on teacher education courses, where most students have been part of a selective... school system.  
Additionally, many may have limited experience of working-class schools so

---

<sup>1</sup> All participant names, school names and town names have been replaced to maintain confidentiality.

<sup>2</sup> I shall use data extracts throughout this Dissertation (with the exception of Chapter 2) so provide a summary of my study methodology here in the first Chapter before developing this in Chapter 6.

<sup>3</sup> The term ‘pupils’ is used to refer to school children at both primary and secondary level, while the term ‘students’ is used to refer to student teachers.

impacting on their understanding and recognition of the challenges faced by these pupils. (Montgomery and Smith, 2006:52)

This mirrors studies by Hall and Jones (2013) examining student and beginning teachers' experiences working in English primary schools.

In NI teaching remains a valued and respected profession (OECD, 2013) and there continues to be high demand for places on ITE courses even though there is limited local employment. This is different from the current and significant teacher shortages in England, which may be related to the deprofessionalisation of teaching coupled with increasing workloads (Ball, 2018). As stated, NI values education and compares favourably internationally with pupil performance at primary level, as measured by international comparative assessments (Burge *et al.*, 2016; Sizmur *et al.*, 2017). However, differences in pupil performance in post-primary 'are more strongly associated with their schools' socio-economic intake' (OECD, 2013:9). My concern is that students, having been through a rigorous process of selection to gain a place within ITE, and generally coming from socially 'privileged' backgrounds, may not appreciate the challenges facing, nor be able to meet the needs of, disadvantaged<sup>4</sup> pupils who are not like them. Having succeeded in education and, for the most part, attended Grammar schools, these students might often misrecognise disadvantaged pupils as lazy, poorly-mannered and often demonstrating little aspiration (Allard and Santoro, 2006). I have experienced students who are reluctant to undertake placements in schools in socially deprived areas, or with high levels of pupils using English as an Additional Language. One student asked '*How can I do well in this placement if pupils don't even speak English?*'. With no apparent awareness of the difficulties faced by disadvantaged learners as well as the failure to understand the professional responsibilities of teachers such views have, I contend, to be challenged and has led me to question what I can do. I will argue that we, both students and those working with them, must move beyond our habitual positions and follow Choules who asserts:

[we] who have the privilege can be ignorant of [disadvantage], disclaim it, disavow it, and yet be unable to avoid benefiting from it, whether [we] consciously exercise it or not. (Choules, 2007:242)

---

<sup>4</sup> I refer to schools being disadvantaged when they are located in the top 20% of areas of high social deprivation as identified by Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure (2017). This measure is made up from 38 indicators grouped into seven 'domains' of deprivation: Income Deprivation; Employment Deprivation; Health Deprivation and Disability; Education, Skills and Training Deprivation; Proximity to Services; Living Environment and Crime and Disorder.

<https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/deprivation/northern-ireland-multiple-deprivation-measure-2017-nimdm2017> (accessed 20 January, 2019).

Hence this study began with the premise that it is essential that we challenge any taken-for-granted notions of privilege, of ‘bright’ advantaged children succeeding, and ‘lazy’, ‘uninterested’ disadvantaged children failing, and that we turn these on their head, considering them from the position of those marginalised by economic circumstances and discourses of deficit.

## This Study

Motivated by the concerns summarised above, the purpose of this research was to develop a better understanding of students’ perceptions of the impact of both social class and academic selection on education in NI. Ultimately I hoped that this might allow me to raise awareness of these issues with current and future students and to make gradual but meaningful changes to the one ITE programme to allow students to recognise and so begin to address inequality in education. This led to the overarching research question:

- To what extent is it possible to enable student teachers to recognise how ‘social class’ and cultures of academic selection may create inequalities in education in NI?

To investigate students’ views and thinking I chose a predominantly interpretative qualitative approach using an initial survey followed by focus groups and interviews. I provide a detailed account of my methods in Chapter 6 but offer a summary here as I draw on apposite data extracts prior to that chapter. The intention here is to exemplify theoretical concepts using examples drawn from participants in this study. Bourdieu stresses the importance of employing data alongside theory and I hope, by using data extracts in theoretical chapters, to ground what can be complex ideas in the lived realities of agents, my participants, positioned in, and impacted by, the field of education in NI. In order that these extracts are not removed from the context, which would be antithetical to the research process as proposed by Bourdieu, I refer readers to the participant profiles in Appendix E for a more complete contextualisation.

A survey was distributed to a third year cohort (128 students) on a four-year B.Ed. programme in the institution in which I teach. The survey gathered demographic information including age, gender, qualifications, parental employment, self-perception of social class and type of school attended. It also asked students about their motivations for teaching, their perceptions of barriers to learning which children may face, and their views on selection. Students were then invited to participate in focus groups that explored their

attitudes towards, and various experiences of, academic selection, the impact of teachers' expectations on children's progress, and experiences of working with children from differently classed backgrounds. Seventeen students participated in three focus groups and from these ten were interviewed individually to allow further probing around issues raised. The data gathered was transcribed and close reading of transcripts uncovered critical influences and factors that may have shaped these students, with some similarities and also marked differences across not only experiences but also their responses to situations. Transcripts were analysed into themes generated from the literature but also examined using Bourdieu's thinking tools of habitus, field and capital to consider the extent to which these students were inclined to reproduce the educational practices they themselves had experienced.

While this Dissertation appears structured and hopefully flows meaningfully, this was a challenging and engaging process. I have learnt much through my reading and thinking but most importantly in talking to the participants who so generously gave of their time and were open and honest about their experiences. While I have been working with students for 20 years and knew of their enthusiasm and willingness to share, I had not anticipated that they would be so delighted to be listened to, a salutary lesson for teacher educators and a lesson I return to in the final chapter here. As I listened to their experiences and views on our education system, and as they shared and explained the rationale for their thinking, Bourdieu and Wacquant's assertion stuck with me: 'Human beings make meaningful the world that makes them' (1992:7). All participants demonstrated care and commitment, and several indicated passion for the children that they will teach and nurture in their classrooms. Indeed, some of these students already exhibit approaches 'characterised by open-mindedness and wholeheartedness' (GTCNI, 2007:9) commensurate with their emergence as reflective, activist practitioners, as will be explained in Chapter 2. Each had their own approach, their way of doing things – their 'practice' – and I have tried to remain true to that throughout. These students make the world meaningful through their practice and I intend to show how this has been shaped by their dispositions and experiences. I am also aware, following this research, that there are many challenges ahead. One recurring theme from interviewees was '*It (academic selection) worked for me...*' and this, one of the key challenges identified, will be developed as the Dissertation progresses and some potential solutions are proposed in the final chapter as noted in the next section which outlines the structure of the Dissertation.

## Structure and Chapter Outline

It is important to be explicit about the particular context of education in NI because an understanding of ‘field’ is critical to how these students’ habitus have been shaped, and goes some way to explaining how and why they think and react in the ways that they do. Hence, Chapter 2 outlines how education in NI has evolved and then summarises current post-primary provision. Here I also examine the impact of neoliberal reforms on ITE, considering how practice in teacher education in NI gradually diverged from that in England, and exploring the impact of the competence model introduced twenty years ago. This model rejects the technical rational model of teacher competence in favour of one which promotes critically reflective, activist teachers. The final part of this chapter considers the type of student applying to ITE courses in NI.

Chapter 3 presents Bourdieu’s theory of practice and his key concepts of habitus, field and capital, all of which are intricately linked (Ingram, 2018:52). Habitus is an ‘organizing action ... *a way of being*’ (Bourdieu, 1977:214, original italics) that is the embodiment of history and the social conditions within which is produced. Three facets of habitus are outlined; habitus as history, inculcated and embodied in the home as these earliest influences are fundamental to our dispositions and values; the habitus as everyday bodily practice, evident in manners, bearing and conduct and, finally, the habitus as both generative and deterministic/reproductive, reproducing the past but with each iteration affording the potential for change dependent on the context and accessible resources. It is essential to recognise, however, that the habitus does not act alone and indeed Maton (2012) asserts that to attempt to explain practice using habitus alone is not Bourdieusian. To explain practice, the habitus must be considered in relation to ‘one’s current circumstances’ (Maton, 2012:51), the field – or social context in which individuals are placed – alongside the various resources, or capitals, that they have available to them. Maton suggests that these thinking tools allow a means of analysing ‘the workings of the social world through empirical investigations’ (2012:48) and I bring these to bear in considering students’ perceptions of the field of education in NI,

Bourdieu’s theory of social and cultural reproduction is introduced in Chapter 4 alongside the associated concepts of doxa, symbolic violence and misrecognition. I suggest that these latter elements allow the field of education in NI to reproduce, as taken-for-granted beliefs and opinions are rarely questioned and the related limits or expectations imposed are also

frequently accepted unquestioningly as simply the ‘way things are’. I use Bourdieu’s schema as a lens through which to understand some of the mechanisms that allow social advantage to be transformed into educational advantage in NI. Attention is given to the processes that enable reproduction, particularly Bourdieu’s focus on inherited cultural capital, language and academic selection. The theories and concepts presented in Chapters 3 and 4 form the theoretical framework through which I investigate students’ perceptions of the education system and consider how one ITE course might begin to disrupt the reproductive structures in place.

Bourdieu explores how class is made and given value through culture. As Skeggs maintains, ‘some cultural characteristics fix some groups and enable others to be mobile’ (2004:1). Hence Chapter 5 explores what is understood by social class, hereafter referred to as class. In four sections this chapter initially defines common understandings of class, how it is understood today, how it is ascribed and largely ignored. The second section outlines Bourdieu’s understanding of class before thirdly demonstrating how neoliberal conceptions of the entrepreneurial self alongside government rhetoric have led to class being misrecognised within education and society. The final part of this chapter argues that we have become reliant on stereotypes which, I suggest, may be problematic for students. This chapter also incorporates previous research related to student misrecognition of class in the classroom.

The methodology applied in this Dissertation is presented in Chapter 6 in which I outline Bourdieu’s philosophical approach to research before explaining how he proposes that practice should be examined. Detail is provided here about the research issues, design and context, participants, and ethical considerations before explaining the research instruments used. The final section of this chapter details the organisation and analysis of the data.

Analysis and discussion of the findings are incorporated into Chapter 7. This chapter is organised in four main sections, beginning with the survey findings which provide an overview of the students’ own social and academic backgrounds, their perceptions of factors impacting on children’s learning and academic selection. Drawing on the data collected through focus groups and interviews, five themes emerged and these are analysed and discussed in relation to both current literature and with reference to Bourdieu’s theoretical understanding in three further sub-sections based around the three facets of habitus outlined in Chapter 3.

Conclusions from the research are presented in Chapter 8. Here I synthesise relevant findings from the discussion, outlining the specific contributions this Dissertation makes to the literature on students' perceptions of class and selection, as well as the significance of critical reflection for student teachers aspiring to become reflective activists. I also consider the limitations of this study, implications for further research, and the impact this study has made on my own professional practice. This introduction has given a brief overview of this study, beginning to uncover the next generation of teachers' thinking about inequality in education. The next chapter provides the context for education in NI in which this research is set.

## **Chapter 2: Education in Northern Ireland**

### **Introduction**

This chapter provides an overview of the educational system in Northern Ireland (NI), explaining the segregated nature of education which is framed particularly by religion and academic selection. I outline the genealogy of this system, explaining the role of religion and how academic selection came about and why it continues today before considering the link between social class and educational outcomes. I argue that educational policies exacerbate educational inequalities, with parental choice encouraging cultural reproduction, as will be developed in Chapter 4. I then examine Initial Teacher Education (ITE) in NI and consider how moves to reform and standardise practice in the last twenty years led to the introduction of competences which the General Teaching Council Northern Ireland (GTCNI) have sought to counterbalance by encouraging teachers to be reflective and activist practitioners who will:

... reflect on the nature and purposes of education ... and seek to act as a shaper of policy as well as a well informed critic of proposals and reform  
(GTCNI, 2007:9)

The final section in this chapter considers the routes into teaching and previous experiences of those who apply. In this chapter I hope to set the context for this study. I suggest that there are two concerns relating to selection and class. First is the impact on education of the perpetuation of class-based inequalities particularly those caused through academic selection. Secondly I suggest that ITE in its current form may not effectively prepare students to recognise and/or address these systemic inequalities.

### **The Genesis of Northern Ireland's System of Education**

NI was established following the partition of Ireland in 1921, with the North remaining part of the United Kingdom while the Republic of Ireland became a sovereign state. Montgomery and Smith (2006:50) explain how the new Ministry of Education sought to introduce an education system (ES) similar to that in England where, following the 1923 Education Act, all schools were under the control of the state. However, this met with considerable resistance from the churches, who had previously controlled education (McGuinness, 2012), and resulted in a dual school system developed along denominational lines with Protestant and Catholic children educated separately. This segregation continues today with only 6% of the post-primary school population attending non-religious affiliated schools (DENI, 2018). Hughes (2011:847) argues that it is inconceivable ‘that

education will ever become secularised' as the separateness of schools is based on a strong interconnectedness with local communities and teachers are reluctant to challenge strong cultural-religious identities. While religion is not the focus of this Dissertation, it is an integral aspect of the context of education in NI.

McEwen and Salters (1995:132) assert that education in NI maintained a 'step-by-step' policy with respect to educational changes made by Westminster governments. This can be seen in the 1947 Education Act in NI which mirrored the 1944 'Butler' Act intended to ensure a new equality of opportunity. As Watson (2007:355) has argued, this enabled the 'previously under-utilized talents of the intelligent working-class ... to flourish, reaping economic as well as cultural benefits'. The aim of the 1947 Act was to provide an ES that provided equal opportunity for every child 'to develop their abilities to the full' (Burns, 2001:43). This act, raising the school leaving age to fifteen, provided for free Secondary education for all, as well as enabling children, regardless of background, the opportunity to attend Grammar school thereby establishing a two tier post-primary system (Kelleher *et al.*, 2016). Entry to Grammar<sup>5</sup> was through academic selection, with qualifying tests in English and arithmetic taken in the last year of primary school, normally at eleven years of age, and so these tests became known colloquially as the 'eleven-plus'<sup>6</sup>. Grammar schools had previously served only fee-paying students and Simpson and Daly (2004:173) assert that in the NI unionist community in particular 'these schools were viewed as a key part of the "establishment"'. Even today, Grammars are viewed as a bastion of conservative values and a means of the dominant class perpetuating the status quo (Wilson, 2016).

McManus (2015:58) contends that despite very small numbers of working-class children succeeding in the eleven-plus, these reforms led to a new narrative, 'that those with the necessary talents and determination would achieve academically, irrespective of their social-class origins'. McManus (2015) goes on to suggest that in NI, with its segregated population, this change to Grammar school entry appears to have benefitted the Catholic sector more than the Protestant working-class sector. Osborne *et al.* (1988) note that by the mid-1970s, as employment opportunities were much better for the Protestant working-classes, there was a stronger representation of Catholic working-classes in Higher Education and university was considered 'a major route for potential social mobility for

---

<sup>5</sup> Commonly, in NI, we refer to Grammar schools as simply Grammar and I shall, often hereafter, follow this convention.

<sup>6</sup> This academic selection test taken at eleven years of age is also known as the Transfer Test or the 'Qualifying', but most regularly referred to as the 'eleven-plus'.

Catholics' (1988:288, see also Breen, 2000). McManus (2015:59) asserts that, for many Catholics, education was seen as a significant means of overcoming both real and perceived discrimination, as well as delivering social and economic change. While England and Wales shifted towards comprehensive education in the 1960s and 1970s (Gallagher and Smith, 2003), NI's government rejected that model. Gardner (2016) suggests that there was consistent concern expressed about academic selection in the decades following its introduction. Indeed, the Advisory Council for Education in Northern Ireland (ACENI), in reviewing selection procedures, 'express[ed] grave disquiet regarding the principle of selection' (ACENI, 1971:27). Two years later this council recommended to the NI Minister of Education that the eleven-plus be eliminated (ACENI, 1973). However, this was resisted by the NI government partly due to concerns that a comprehensive system might lead to a 'lowering of high academic achievements' (Burns, 2001:44). Indeed, McManus (2015:61) speculates that the Unionist government of the time were not keen to address educational underachievement in Protestant schools concerned that this 'would lead to a challenge of the political and social ascendancy that has characterised unionism'. This demonstrates the two very different perspectives on education within the working-classes of each religious tradition. As McEwen and Salters (1995:139) state, 'education is one of the most significant expressions of cultural and political disagreement'. McGrath (1997) asserts that Catholics often used education as a means of escaping inequality, of building social capital with 'academic credentialism' being important to status (McKeown, 1996:221). By contrast, McManus (2015:60) posits that within the Protestant working-class tradition, where there had been access to apprenticeships in traditional industries, there tended to be 'significant long-term undervaluing of educational achievement'.

NI had been governed by devolved legislature in Stormont (home of the NI Parliament) since partition in 1921, and with two-thirds of the population in the North at that time being Protestants/unionists, Sir James Craig, the first prime-minister of NI, described the state as having 'a Protestant Parliament for a Protestant people' (Fitzduff and O'Hagan 2009:np). This effectively led to discrimination against Catholics and produced 'significant distrust and prejudice between the communities' (Fitzduff and O'Hagan 2009:np). This erupted in violent conflict in the late 1960s which led to the collapse of NI's devolved government in 1972 and the imposition of direct rule from Westminster. While there were moves towards a comprehensive system at this point, Gallagher and Smith (2003) explain that these were halted with the election of a Conservative government in 1979. Significant problems with the selective ES were highlighted through research in the 1980s (Wilson,

1986; Sutherland and Gallagher, 1987) which illustrated the (dis)advantages that academic segregation created, but it was a further decade before action was taken. Gardner (2016:352) suggests that the ‘Free School Meals and Low Achievement’ report (DENI, 1996) ‘powerfully illustrated the inequalities within the system’ as it starkly demonstrated that children entitled to free school meals were much less likely to succeed in school, a point that will be developed below. It was with the introduction of devolved government in 1999, that Martin McGuinness, then Minister for Education, initiated the abolition of the statutory eleven-plus (McGuinness, 2012).

Gallagher and Smith had been commissioned by the Labour government to carry out research on the effects of selective education on society in NI in 1997. Their report recognised the high academic standards that Grammars achieved but a consequence was a long tail of low-achievement in Secondary schools. They suggested that:

a selective system produces a disproportionate number of schools which combine low ability and social disadvantage in their enrolments, thereby compounding the educational disadvantages of both factors.  
(Gallagher and Smith, 2000:45)

This indicates how some children were doubly disadvantaged, through both socio-economic background and academic selection. The Minister for Education then commissioned a review of post-primary education, the Burns Report (2001). This was welcomed by reformers but not widely by the general public nor by all political parties. The consultation following its publication found that 64% of households, 63% of parents, and 62% of teachers favoured the retention of academic selection (DENI, 2002). Despite research findings, a full-scale review and the will of successive Sinn Fein<sup>7</sup> Ministers of Education to eliminate selection, there has been consistent and strong opposition from many including middle-class parents, the Governing Bodies Association<sup>8</sup> and the unionist political parties. Kelleher *et al.* (2016:216) maintains that this appears to ‘reflect the education performance aspirations of these [middle-class] parents for their children’. Indeed, Gardner (2016:353) suggests that ‘class-based motivations for academic selection are tellingly underlined by its socially segregating effect on Northern Ireland’s children’. I return to these issues as the Dissertation proceeds but I now examine current post-primary provision in NI.

<sup>7</sup> The devolved government is a power-sharing executive, with a close balance of power between unionist and nationalist politicians. The key political parties are Ulster Unionists (conservative), Democratic Unionists (right-wing), Sinn Fein (left-wing nationalists), Social Democratic and Labour Party (nationalists), and the Alliance Party (moderate centrist).

<sup>8</sup> An umbrella group set up to represent the interests of both Catholic and Protestant Grammar schools.

### **Current arrangements for post-primary education in Northern Ireland**

Devolved power and the capacity to self-govern has been an ongoing struggle in NI as a system of checks and balances put in place by the 1998 Good Friday Agreement have ensured that there has to be consensus between the main political parties on policy decisions, including education<sup>9</sup>. So while the process of dismantling academic selection began in 1998, it was to be a further decade before the last ‘official’ eleven-plus examinations occurred in 2008. It is important to briefly outline the mechanics of these transfer tests. Up until 2007, while not mandatory, most pupils were prepared for the eleven-plus in school. Pupils had one opportunity to take two sets of papers, regulated by the Department for Education NI (DENI), testing them in English, Mathematics and Science, leading to a final aggregated score (see Gardner and Cowan, 2005 for details). This score was then used to rank candidates and resulted in the award of a grade: A, B1, B2, C1, C2 and D. Grammar schools had strict entry quotas and the majority only accepted pupils awarded an A grade (Gardner and Cowan, 2005). While a key priority of Sinn Fein in the then new power-sharing executive was to abolish these tests, a loop-hole provided by the St. Andrew’s agreement (2006) meant that no action could be taken against Grammar schools, which have effectively privatised selective entry tests (MacDonald, 2009). DENI no longer organise the eleven-plus and primary schools were prohibited from preparing pupils; instead two consortia of schools emerged, largely based around religious affiliations and there is ‘no significant government oversight’ (Gardner, 2016:358). In effect, the status quo continues and ‘dubious’ unregulated entry-tests (BBC, 2014) perpetuate the selective system with children now transferring to either Grammar or non-selective post-primary schools. As Gardner asserts:

Grammar schools are perceived as offering a direct line to university and employment; and this avenue to opportunity is jealously guarded by the middle-classes in both communities who benefit most from it. (Gardner, 2016:358)

The status quo currently means that there is a ‘bewildering array of schools’ (Boroohah and Knox, 2015:196) attended by the current cohort of 140,500 post-primary pupils. These pupils are currently disaggregated into selective and non-selective schools, hereafter referred to as Grammar and Secondary; controlled (mainly Protestant) and maintained (mostly Catholic); single-sex and co-educational, as well as Irish Medium (taught through the Irish language) and integrated (pupils of all faiths and none) schools (Boroohah and

---

<sup>9</sup> Indeed, education was made a key bargaining tool at the St. Andrew’s talks as Prime Minister Tony Blair, rather than imposing the abolition of academic selection, made it subject to the decision of NI Assembly provided the parties agreed to a new model of devolved government (Gardner, 2016).

Knox, 2015). The indigenous post-primary population in NI is almost exclusively white with only 3.7% of the current cohort from other ethnic backgrounds (DENI, 2018). As has been noted above, segregation occurs on two fronts, religious and academic. Based on current enrolments (DENI, 2018), 50% of the post-primary population is Catholic, 38% Protestant and 12% are from other/no religious affiliation. Despite a decline in the size of the post-primary population over the last ten years, enrolments in Grammars have remained static (44%), while there has been a slight decrease in the numbers enrolling in Secondary schools (56%). The focus in this Dissertation is primarily on the academic rather than religious divide, and while I research from one particular religious perspective I suggest that my findings might well pertain across all student teachers in NI. I work with student teachers in the Catholic sector who have come through the selective system attending Grammar and Secondary schools and this research investigates their perceptions of selection and class.

A strong link between social class and educational outcomes has been consistently evidenced in research (Horgan, 2007; OECD, 2013; Wilson, 2016). With respect to outcomes, NI pupils consistently outperform their peers in England and Wales at GCSE and A-level (Nixon, 2017). However, when these figures are scrutinised it becomes clear that while NI pupils ‘perform well at the top end of the academic spectrum there is much evidence of underperformance at the bottom end’ (McGuinness, 2012:216). This once again demonstrates the Grammar and Secondary disparity. NI’s educational policies focus on raising standards and tackling underachievement with the express purpose of ‘reducing the gap in achievement that exists, particularly between pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds and their more affluent counterparts’ (DENI, 2009:39). Yet this gap is starkly evidenced in exam performance. 49% of pupils with Free School Meal Entitlement (FSME)<sup>10</sup> achieved 5(+) GCSEs at grades A\*-C (including English and maths), 29% lower than the equivalent achievement for non-FSME pupils (78%). More dramatic are comparisons in performance between Secondary (50%) and Grammar school (95%) pupils who achieved 5(+) GCSEs at grades A\*-C (including English and maths) (DENI, 2017). This represents a performance gap of 45% between the two school types and this attainment gap is significantly worse than in other OECD countries (DENI, 2013). Additionally, as Borooah and Knox highlight:

<sup>10</sup> FSME is the deprivation measure used in official education statistics. The overall average for post-primary schools is 19%. Breaking this figure down for the two school types highlights the disparity of their socio-economic backgrounds: the average FSME for Grammar schools is 7.4% (from a range of 1%-23%) while for non-selective schools the average FSME is 28% (from a range of 7%-70%) (OECD, 2013:24).

Given the fact that the performance of grammar schools is so much superior to that of secondary schools, a disturbing feature of Northern Ireland's post-primary schooling system is that pupils from deprived backgrounds, pupils entitled to free school meals...were grossly under-represented in grammar schools. (Boroohah and Knox, 2015:200)

At a system level, Ball asserts that 'educational policies are also exacerbating social segregation' (2010:163). Recent policy discourses of raising standards and achievements focus on testing and performativity<sup>11</sup> placing 'primary responsibility for action (and hence 'blame' for low aspirations/achievement) with pupils and parents' (Archer, 2008:97, see also DENI, 2009:35). Policy discourses of choice and parental-involvement create 'consumers' and 'investors' in education (Reay, 2004a) and such policies in NI intensify 'social class polarisation' (Dunne and Gazeley, 2008:413). As Kelleher *et al.* (2016:204) explain, the opportunity to exercise choice in the educational market is constrained by the limited resources within the market and 'the client's own varying degrees of competencies required exercising such choice effectively'. They go on to suggest that those less advantaged 'suffer the consequences' and decisions by certain socio-economic groups lead 'to stratification in economic, ethnic, and racial terms and to increased social segregation' (Kelleher *et al.*, 2016:205). Connolly *et al.* (2013:59) concur, noting that social divisions correlate with the type of school attended and 'are also likely to exacerbate achievement gaps in relation to socio-economic background'. This 'social segregation' is central to the issue that I investigate here. How aware of and prepared are student teachers to teach pupils from different socio-economic backgrounds from their own?

While NI compares favourably internationally with pupil performance at primary level, differences in pupil performance in post-primary 'are more strongly associated with their schools' socio-economic intake' as measured by OECD (2013:9). This has been identified as a significant factor in perpetuating social and educational inequality with Gallagher and Smith's (2000) review providing insight not only into academic results but also pupil motivations and attitudes in the two school sectors. They reported that staff in Secondary schools perceived that pupils transferring from primary schools often displayed 'a sense of failure' and so a 'priority for the school is to seek to re-establish a sense of self-worth' (2000:9). This resulted in pastoral care being prioritised in Secondary schools with teachers emphasising 'the creation of a supportive and caring environment' (2000:13). Despite this, Gallagher and Smith noted that while Secondary pupils were well-disposed

<sup>11</sup> The introduction of the Education Reform Act (1988) led to a package of market-oriented reforms (Machin and Vignoles, 2006) that enabled greater parental choice and resulted in schools being more accountable. This has led to a swathe of neoliberal policy reforms whose impacts will be discussed further in Chapter 5.

towards their Secondary schools and found them supportive, they were aware that Grammar schools were more favourably regarded as having a better social status (2000:10). Grammar school teachers who participated in their research stated that their priority was the achievement of high academic results and expressed pride in the recognition their schools received through academic excellence. Gallagher and Smith commented that, while the two sectors were trying to address different needs, ‘the only ones that mattered in the eyes of the public were academic criteria’ (2000:24). This review is nearly 20 years old but more recent research has found little has changed.

Social divisions associated with grammar and secondary school attendance are also likely to exacerbate achievement gaps in relation to socio-economic background. (Connolly *et al.*, 2013:59)

Leitch *et al.*’s (2017) recent research investigated links between achievement and deprivation. They noted a number of negative impacts relating to academic selection including a confirmation of earlier findings that pupils who fail the eleven-plus (or choose not to sit this test) are negatively impacted in terms of confidence and self-esteem. Secondly, despite declining post-primary numbers, Grammar enrolments remain constant so these schools were perceived to be ‘creaming off’ high achievers who would otherwise be positive role models in the Secondary sector. Next, equity is a factor because ‘successful navigation of the academic selection process is often contingent on parents having the financial means to pay for private tuition’ (2017:17). This research also highlighted the importance of parental aspirations, alongside high expectations from schools, as significant drivers for educational achievement, while inter-generational transmission of educational failure was identified as a significant inhibitor of achievement.

I suggest that the selective nature of the post-primary sector perpetuates inequalities with class often reinforcing cultural reproduction. This can lead to a ‘deficit’ model of education for some children who may not have the capital required to ‘succeed’. There are, at least, two aspects to this issue. First, is the impact on education due to the perpetuation of class-based inequalities particularly those caused by selection. Secondly is the (in)ability of teachers to recognise and/or address this inequality within the system. That stated and having summarised the educational context in NI, I now outline key elements of teacher education policy as this constitutes the ‘field’ of teacher education as will be explained in Chapter 3, before considering those students who choose to become teachers.

## Teacher Education in Northern Ireland

As explained, a dual system of education has been operational for nearly a century in NI with schools divided along broadly denominational lines (Montgomery and Smith, 2006; OECD, 2013). Additionally, despite the abolition of academic selection in 2008, unregulated entry tests perpetuate the selective system (Gardner, 2016) with children continuing to either Grammar or Secondary schools. Student teachers are largely drawn from the high-performing Grammar sector and tend not to question the status quo, as I will explain in the coming sections and as my data indicates. Hagan (2003:122) asserts that this ‘selective structure tends to reflect the socio-economic divisions in society’ with children from advantaged backgrounds much more likely to attend selective schools (and indeed continue to university). Caul and McWilliams’ (2002:253) remark that education is ‘fractured by the sectional and segregated nature of Northern Ireland’ remains pertinent. This study sought to examine if the social and cultural practices in NI have become so entrenched that they are no longer questioned but seen as normal (Phillips, 2002:238). I maintain that while someone looking in at education in NI from the outside would most obviously see the religious divide, selective education has as much of an impact on our divided society and on teacher education as I discuss below. Mirroring the evolution of education in NI, I now examine the principles on which ITE policy in NI is based and outline how these principles are implemented through ‘Teaching: the Reflective Profession’ (GTCNI, 2007), the current Teacher Education policy, which is conceived as a framework to be used at all stages of teacher education from ITE to continuing professional development. I then go on to consider the background of those students who choose to become teachers. Providing this context will allow discussion of field and habitus in Chapters 3 and 4.

Over the last three decades a process of radical educational reform in the UK has been led by governments introducing mechanisms to implement neoliberal assumptions and values (Ball, 2013; Maguire, 2014). The introduction of accountability has impacted on all educational sectors and while the accountability measures explained here may be more particular to Higher Education, schools have parallel and related pressures. Indeed, certain performance indicators are shared by both sectors, including enrolment, exam results and retention which feed into various evaluations and league tables (Biesta, 2009). Policy-makers have also introduced processes to centralise control and increase accountability for ITE, moving the system ‘from one of diversity and autonomy to a “command economy” with unanimity and central control’ (Furlong, 2005:121). Conservative governments in the

early 1990s, concerned about the lack of uniformity and equivalence of provision within ITE, alongside a perceived theory-practice gap (Wilkin, 1992; Bines, 1994), sought to raise standards and make ITE accountable (Whitty, 2002). This led to a series of reforms including longer placements in schools and the introduction of competences to assess students' knowledge and skills (Department for Education, 1992; 1993). Forde *et al.* (2006:51) assert that these reforms signalled the beginning of an era 'of performativity, generated and legitimated by government policy'. This provides the backdrop for the field of ITE within which students operate, with the core element of their programme based around working to meet stated competences in schools during extended placements. As explained above, NI has maintained a 'step-by-step' approach to educational policy and these changes to ITE in England were mirrored here.

Relationships between HEIs and schools have traditionally been excellent in NI (Caul and McWilliams, 2002). Schools here resisted government proposals for formal, contractual and financial arrangements for the formation and assessment of students as envisaged in England believing the existing system to be effective (McMahon, 2000). While students were welcome in schools for longer periods of placement, the formal partnership arrangements were rejected so student placements are undertaken on a 'goodwill' basis in schools. This was a clear rejection of the moves towards the marketisation of Initial Teacher Training<sup>12</sup> (Childs, 2013) that was being implemented in England.

Working closely with stakeholders, DENI devised an integrated model for teacher education based around a competence framework (Hagan, 2013) set out in the 'Teacher Education Partnership Handbook' (NITEC, 1998). While not unproblematic, as will be discussed below, the drive for accountability in public services led to 'the creation of a clear definition of what a beginning teacher should be capable of doing' (Menter, 2016:21), framed as competences. In NI these competence statements were underpinned by a set of core criteria outlining those 'personal qualities ... desirable for effective teaching' (Moran, 1998:460). These were indicative of the desire to avoid the 'the atomisation of professional knowledge, judgement and skill into discrete competences' (Whitty, 2006:7). Purported to provide clarity and accountability, competences are intended to inform students about the knowledge and skills required to be a good teacher, to allow clear targets to be set, and to encourage a shared understanding of the purpose of school

<sup>12</sup> In the late 1990s there was a consistent reframing of Initial Teacher Education to Initial Teacher Training in both policy discourse and documentation in England (Childs, 2013). NI strongly resisted this and the terminology Initial Teacher Education continues.

placement and practice (Whitty and Willmott, 1991; Bridges, 1996). However, critics such as Bines (1994:374), contend that competences are ‘a utilitarian, skills-based approach’ which Pring (1992) and Hargreaves (2000) among others suggest leads to a reductionist approach, undermining understanding and indeed professionalism. Reynolds (1999:251) suggests that the introduction of competences to ITE changed the focus from ‘process, purposes and outcomes to mainly outcomes alone’. This focus on outcomes can mean that students avoid reflecting on the purposes underpinning their chosen vocation (Biesta, 2009). Indeed, serious concerns regarding the use of competence-based approaches centre around the premise that providing prescriptions of what a student must be able to do results in the ‘good enough teacher’ (Zeichner, 2006). This, Maguire (2014:6) asserts, can create mere technicians with little understanding of the knowledge, theory, and values underpinning the complex choices to be made on a daily basis in particular contexts. These concerns may have significant consequences particularly for this research which considers whether students who have come through an ES that prizes results and values individualism are equipped to recognise the impact of class and selection, as will be discussed in Chapter 7.

Furlong (2013) postulates that successive UK governments have justified reform as a means of addressing the perceived problem of raising standards in education in order ‘to recover international competitive advantage’ (Cowen, 2002:66). The *leitmotif* of education policy has been to advance skill development for the knowledge economy (Brown and Lauder, 2006), and this has led to greater emphasis on ‘training’ rather than education (Murray and Passy, 2014). This, allied with the ‘turn to the practical’ (Furlong and Lawn, 2011:6), has implications for students coming into ITE through a school system in NI which, it may be argued, has prioritised academic results over personal formation (Colwill and Gallagher, 2007) as will be discussed in Chapter 7. Furthermore, Liakopoulou (2011) questions if students are being ‘trained’ rather than educated, is this sufficient to deal with the complex and value-laden contexts in which they will work? This tension between Initial Teacher ‘Training’ and ‘Education’ is critical and a question that this Dissertation hopes to address because, if students, the teachers of the future, fail to take account of these value-laden contexts they may simply reproduce existing educational inequalities.

The GTCNI has attempted to address such concerns by proposing that teacher education in NI should reject a ‘technicist’ approach (Maguire, 2014) in favour of one that promotes reflective, activist teachers. This model proposes a more holistic approach to teacher

education with an explicit statement of a ‘Code of Values and Professional Practice’ embedded at the heart of its key policy. This makes clear that it has:

... consistently rejected any attempt to adopt a reductionist approach to professional development and the adoption of a competence-based analysis underpins the Council’s belief that professional knowledge is by its very nature organic and to an extent evolutionary, reflecting a synthesis of research, experiences gained and expertise shared in communities of practice.

(GTCNI, 2007:4)

This clearly situates the NI interpretation of competences in a context where skills and mechanical processes seem to be subservient to the knowledge, dialogue and values that constitute good teaching with technical rationality rejected in favour of the teacher as a reflective practitioner (Donaldson, 2010; Hagan, 2013). This holistic approach seeks to weave competences, values and a sense of purpose into the professional identity of the teacher and the GTCNI (2007:5) emphasises that teachers should have a ‘sense of moral purpose and responsibility’. This professional identity is considered:

... an essential requirement for the exercise of professional autonomy. However, it is not static and it will always be subject to adaptation, modification and growth. This will be particularly significant for teachers as they respond to new professional demands and circumstances. (GTCNI, 2007:5)

The GTCNI’s conception of the reflective and activist professional is of a teacher who actively seeks to contribute not only to their pupils’ well-being, but also to the common good. Drawing on the work of Dalmau and Gudjonsdottir (2002:103), who regard reflective professionals as ‘inquirers, analysts and activists who weave reflection into their professional role by collecting and analysing data from their daily practice’ (2002:103), the GTCNI propose that should teachers embrace various roles as reflective, activist educators in four key ways. Firstly, teachers should act as pedagogues and experts in teaching and learning, engaging in professional dialogue. Secondly, teachers should be reflective and critical problem solvers, monitoring pupil progress and participating in communities of practice to benefit both pupil and their own professional development. Thirdly, as researchers and change agents, teachers should inform their thinking through investigating their practice. Finally, through reflection and action research, the GTCNI propose that teachers should become creators of knowledge and theory builders (GTCNI, 2007:9). This is of direct relevance to my study as I aim to encourage student teachers to be critical of, and indeed to challenge, the status quo. Moreover, the study might be regarded as a professional dialogue which seeks to help the participants to be reflective, and ultimately, to become critical problem-solvers in ways that benefit their pupils and their own professional development. Additionally, the conversations and interview in the study were,

in some respects, an introduction to ways in which these student teachers could inform their thinking through investigating their practice.

While the concept of the reflective practitioner is well established (Schon, 1983; Hargreaves, 2003; Finlay, 2008) that of the ‘activist’ professional derives from Sachs (2000). She maintains that there are two dominant discourses underpinning teacher professionalism: managerial professionalism and democratic professionalism. The former focuses on efficiency and compliance while the latter emphasises ‘collaborative, cooperative action between teachers and other educational stakeholders (2000:78). She develops this notion of democratic professionalism by promoting ‘active trust’ (Giddens, 1994) as a ‘contingent and negotiated feature’ of professional engagement with others (Sachs, 2000:79) and this, allied to respect and reciprocity, are the core features of activist teacher professionalism. In depicting the teacher as a reflective and activist professional the GTCNI is endorsing this concept of a practitioner who will:

... individually and collectively... reflect on the nature and purposes of education and will seek to act as both a shaper of policy and well-informed critic of proposals and reforms (GTCNI, 2007:9).

Thus the GTCNI, while accepting a competence framework, have moved well beyond the managerial professional who is accountable and efficient, akin to Zeichner’s (2006) ‘good enough teacher’, to frame the teacher as ‘an educator and moral agent’ (GTCNI, 2007:9) and so a reflective, activist professional. Groundwater-Smith and Sachs (2002) argue that the activist professional has come about in response to managerialism and that, in working collaboratively with others, the activist professional’s first and foremost concern is ‘to reduce or eliminate exploitation, inequality and oppression’ (2002:352). Relatedly, they maintain that ITE must be more than an ‘instrumental preparation for enacting government policies’ (2002:353) in schools and, rather, that it should based upon ‘critical pedagogies which, from the very outset, challenge the solidified beliefs about what constitutes “good practice”’. Enslin (1999) and Smith (2002) among others, suggest that if individuals work in social contexts where they are free to exercise choice, they need to create a ‘public space’ in which to discuss those things that matter. It appears that the GTCNI have envisaged a re-orientation towards what matters in education which will require discursive spaces to be found for educators to consider how to move education forward in the best interests of children. As Groundwater-Smith and Sachs (2002:354) advise, activist professionalism ‘has to be deeply reflected upon, negotiated, lived and practiced’. This might be achieved through concerted efforts to create authentic partnerships in which

educators work collaboratively and create ‘collective capacity’ which Fullan (cited in Barber *et al.*, 2010:74) suggests:

... generates the emotional commitment and the technical expertise that no amount of individual capacity working alone can come close to matching... The power of collective capacity is that it enables ordinary people to accomplish extraordinary things.

This ‘collective capacity’ is an important factor that I hope to tap into to generate discussion and critical reflection around inequalities in education in this study and I refer back to this in the concluding chapter. While this is the intention, my concern is that having come through an ES in which accountability is a key feature, with clear emphasis on educational success, students may be unaware of and fail to reflect adequately on the challenges facing others who are not as fortunate. This may lead to children from disadvantaged backgrounds being ‘problematised’ rather than supported, as will be discussed in Chapter 5. A further aspiration of the GTCNI is that teachers should be encouraged to ‘act as shapers of policy and well-informed critics of proposals and reforms’ (2007:9), a point that I also explore because part of my concern is that accountability mechanisms have led in some cases to an acceptance of the status quo. I shall return to this in Chapters 7 and 8.

This section has demonstrated how, while initially complying with accountability measures put in place to ensure a more standardised approach to ITE, NI increasingly diverged from English policy approaches. Competences were introduced and, while potentially problematic in that they can lead to technicist approaches, the GTCNI attempted to redress these by framing them within a policy promoting reflective practice. Edward-Groves and Gray (2008) are doubtful, explaining that on placements students tend to focus on the technical and practical aspects of their nascent practice and need support to engage on critical levels, particularly the political and ethical dimensions of education. This is my concern. Predominantly middle-class students, having come through post-primary schools that have prioritised academic success, may not be adequately aware of their privileged position if they are to be effectively prepared to teach children from more diverse backgrounds and so I now consider the type of candidate applying to ITE in NI.

### Becoming a teacher

Unlike in England with its myriad entry routes to teaching (Maguire, 2014), there are only two options in NI for both primary and post-primary sectors: a four-year B.Ed. degree

programme or a one-year PGCE. There are four providers of ITE, two universities and two teacher education colleges (OECD, 2013). Entry to ITE is greatly oversubscribed with between five and 15 candidates applying for each place (Clarke and Magennis, 2016) on ITE programmes. My research has been undertaken with students from one such B.Ed. programme. The high demand for places means that students have had to be academically successful (OECD, 2013) and the majority will have attended Grammar schools. Unpublished figures for the institution in which I work indicate that despite a significantly higher entry of students from lower-socio-economic backgrounds than in other ITE providers, only 20% of B.Ed. entrants came through Secondary schools. More often than not, these students come from middle-class home backgrounds (McCully and Clarke, 2016) in which they likely had high levels of parental support and in which their habitus, an ‘internalised framework’ (Reay, 2004b:435) that guides dispositions and decision-making, is in keeping with the expectations of the ES, as will be discussed in Chapter 4. Lareau and Weininger (2003) explain that the ES is designed and resourced according to assumptions about relations and processes informed by middle-class norms and this allows the dominant class to maintain their position. Furthermore, as Montgomery and Smith (2006) explain:

The ‘closed’ nature of the system means there is considerable homogeneity in the educational experiences of those enrolling on teacher education courses, where most students have been part of a selective... school system.  
(Montgomery and Smith, 2006:52)

Coming through NI’s ‘segregated’ system (both religious and selective), student teachers are likely to have had only limited opportunities to meet peers from different social, religious and cultural backgrounds from their own (McCully and Clarke, 2016). Lambe and Bones (2006:511) have also found that students in NI ‘show a strong attachment to, and belief in, traditional academic selection as a preferred education model’ believing it to be fair. This is of concern, and an important reason for undertaking this study is that the students I work with may have limited experiences outside of their own culture (Mills, 2009; Hall and Jones, 2013) adding to the potential for what Bourdieu terms ‘misrecognition’. Atkinson (2012) explains this well, asserting that by providing the school with what it prioritises, such as middle-class culture, attitudes and values, middle-class children succeed within it ‘under the misconception that they must have innate talent’ (2012:737) and this idea will be developed in Chapter 4. Mills (2008a:83) contends that schools’ role in reproducing inequality occurs through the ‘hidden linkages between scholastic aptitude and cultural heritage’. Furthermore, the dominant class encourage the ES to ‘reproduce the legitimate culture as it stands and produce agents capable of

manipulating it legitimately' (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990:59). Articulated in this way, my concern is that with the emphasis on competences, the technical aspects of teaching, students may fail to question the 'legitimate culture' thereby allowing inequalities to fester (Sleeter, 2008).

Indeed, Passy (2013) found students, while chiefly concerned with children's holistic development, articulated frustration with pupils who were 'gifted but lazy'. This exemplifies the '“pernicious reach of neoliberalism”, where ...the discourses of individual self-improvement and competition are absorbed into the psyche' (2013:1072). This correlates with Smith's (2008:74) assertion that 'our background prefigures our practice' and, while education as self-improvement is not necessarily problematic, I am concerned that students internalise 'silent messages' about perceived educational priorities. While education gives the illusion of providing a level playing field, processes of selection and exclusion are entrenched from the outset (Reay, 2011). So, teachers arguably may fail to take cognisance of, and therefore ameliorate, the inequity within our selective system in which those with economic and social means can ensure their children do not slide below the 'glass floor'<sup>13</sup> (McKnight, 2015:ii). Hall and Jones (2013:416), investigating the experiences of 'middle-class novice teachers' working in disadvantaged schools, found that 'the difficulty many people have in articulating social class is part of its enduring power' (2013:420). This is a key concern for this research which follows Reay's (2006:288) argument that ITE needs 'to reclaim social class as a central concern within education'.

## Summing Up

This chapter has provided the context for this Dissertation explaining how the segregated nature of education in NI, both religious and academic, has come about. It has demonstrated how, despite the removal of academic selection in 2008, there remains a system of unregulated entrance exams to Grammar schools. The chapter then examined how ITE policy in NI has gradually diverged from that of England over the last 25 years. While competences were initially introduced as a means of accountability, the GTCNI's explicit inclusion of a code of values means than rather than supporting an instrumental

---

<sup>13</sup> McKnight (2015:ii) claims that advantaged families 'construct a "glass floor" to ensure their children succeed irrespective of cognitive ability'. This includes measures such as 'hoarding opportunities' such as using economic capital to provide tutoring, or social capital to secure lucrative work-placements which may block the progress of higher-ability disadvantaged children.

model, they aim to encourage reflective activist practitioners. However, with the neoliberal conception of education as a means of improving the self, my concern is that students may focus on the technicist approach rather than considering the wider purposes of education. The last section considered the type of student applying to ITE courses in NI. This increases my concern that these students, predominantly drawn from middle-class backgrounds, are the product of an academically selective education and, as a result, they may fail to recognise the educational inequalities inherent within the system for others less fortunate than themselves. Hence this research aims to both explore these issues and to raise students' awareness of inequity in education. The next chapter introduces Bourdieu's theory of practice and the key concepts that I use to explore inequality in education.

## Chapter 3: Bourdieu's Theory of Practice

### Introduction

Bourdieu explains that, in ‘Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture’ (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990), he:

sought to propose a model of the social mediations and processes which tend, *behind the backs of the agents* engaged in the school system – and *often against their will*, to ensure the transmission of cultural capital across generations and to stamp *pre-existing differences in inherited cultural capital* with a *meritocratic seal of academic consecration*.

(Bourdieu, 1990a:ix, italics added)

While ‘Reproduction’ examined the formal educational system of France in the 1970s, when reading it I noticed many parallels with the conservative education system (ES) that continues here in Northern Ireland (NI). I realised that I was one of the ‘agents’ who, in my ‘happy unconsciousness’ (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990:198), was, unintentionally, contributing to conserving a ‘social order’ that perpetuated injustice. My rationale for engaging in this study is well articulated in Reay’s (2006:289) comment that ‘initial teacher training rarely engages with social class as a relevant concern’. Indeed, Reay argues powerfully that initial teacher education (ITE) often leaves student teachers poorly informed about and:

... ill equipped to broach, let alone tackle, the greatest problem the education system faces: that of working-class educational underachievement, alienation and disaffection. (Reay, 2006:303)

My research sought to explore students’ awareness of the inequalities that class differences can amplify, to raise their consciousness and to begin to consider how to address these. This should help them, I hoped, to take the initial steps to enable them to become effective reflective, activist practitioners. However, in order to pursue this goal, I needed to better understand the causes for the ES allowing ‘the subtle and persistent ravages of class inequality’ (Ball, 2015:822).

I use Bourdieu’s theory of reproduction alongside his ‘signature’ concepts of habitus, field, and capital to examine students’ perceptions of how the NI ES perpetuates some inequalities inherent within it. While recognising that social class is one element leading to inequity, Reay (2012:588) notes it is ‘the one aspect of inequality that has been marginalized in the contemporary focus on diversity’. Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) warn

that no single factor should be considered in isolation but, rather, that intersectionality<sup>14</sup> should be taken into account, proposing that various factors including class, gender and race should be examined as these create a student's habitus, the full significance of which can only be seen across an educational career. While other factors are, of course, important, this study aims to make class more visible to students as an aspect of inequality. Using Bourdieu's theoretical 'thinking tools' of habitus, field and capital (explained below) I hope to illustrate how students understand, or do not understand, the implications of maintaining the status quo in education in NI. These concepts are helpful in interpreting the relationships between social structures focussed on schools and ITE in NI and everyday practices, what students do (Webb *et al.*, 2002), and are used here to allow me to contribute to research on how students conceive their practice.

Bourdieu claimed never to theorize for the sake of it (Grenfell, 2012). Rather, he maintained that his theory arose from his exploration of practical contexts, using empirical research to consider how and why people function within the social world. To examine an agent's actions, Bourdieu developed his concepts of habitus, capital and field. Explaining how these generate an individual's logic of practice he formulates their interconnection as:

$$[(\text{habitus}) (\text{capital})] + \text{field} = \text{practice} \quad (\text{Bourdieu, 1984:101})$$

This may be interpreted as follows: how one acts (practice) is determined by one's habitus (dispositions, values and ways of being) and the capital (resources and connections) that one has available in any given field (social situation/arena) and so:

$$\left( \begin{matrix} \text{dispositions/} \\ \text{attitudes} \end{matrix} \right) \left( \begin{matrix} \text{resources and} \\ \text{connections} \end{matrix} \right) + \text{social situation/} = \text{practice} \\ \text{arena}$$

'Practice' is generated through the dialectic between habitus and the field in which it operates. This is important as practice is not the result of an individual's habitus alone, but rather the '*relations* between one's habitus and one's current circumstances' (Maton, 2012, pp.50-51, original italics). Hence, while I outline habitus below, I do so from the premise that what matters for practice is the interaction *between* habitus, capitals and field and that, within that interaction, the habitus may be in tension, at odds, with the field. I pursue this later in this chapter as it is a key aspect of this study in which I sought to challenge the habitus of my participants by encouraging them to re-consider the field and practice in order to recognise both disadvantage and privilege. The options available are dependent on the various capitals that are accessible to an individual at a given time. An example of this

---

<sup>14</sup> Crenshaw (1988) first used the term intersectionality in 1988 to explain how a person or group may experience discrimination and disadvantage in different ways from other persons or groups. Intersectionality means that people may often be disadvantaged by multiple sources of oppression.

was demonstrated in my data with several participants explaining schools had channelled them into subjects regarded as desirable, such as Maths or Sciences ('academic capital'). Helen a mature, self-described middle-class<sup>15</sup> participant who had attended Grammar, commented that if you were '*Sciencey*' then

*you were going to be a doctor or a nurse – mostly a doctor. If you weren't... well, [sotto voce] secretarial or something.*

With this extract's message echoed by others in my study, it suggests that in Helen's experience of the Grammar 'field' there is a ranking of subjects (symbolic capital) and the capital available to a particular habitus within the Grammar field shapes subsequent Higher Education choices, determining an individual's practice. For those deemed to have less academic capital, a 'second-best' option is understood but, as the conspiratorial tone adopted by Helen implied, not overtly acknowledged.

Education is of crucial concern for Bourdieu as it is 'the mechanism through which the values and relations that make up the social space are passed from one generation to the next' (Webb *et al.*, 2002:105), thus (re)producing practice. As Reay insists, we need:

an open and honest debate about structural inequality and the workings of social class in order to combat the symbolic violence that underpins commonsense understandings of the causes of working-class underachievement. (Reay, 2013:666)

Bourdieu (2005:49) proposes his thinking tools are 'indispensable instrument[s] for social analysis' and I now outline each concept in turn.

## Habitus

For Bourdieu, habitus provides insight into a person's actions through her mindset or dispositions, allowing us to consider her relationally with regards to the wider social context or, field, within which she is functioning. Exploring habitus may enable some awareness into the inner workings, values and decision-making processes of an individual acting within a particular social arena (Maton, 2012) and so into their practice. As Maton (2012:51) explains, habitus

... focuses on our ways of acting, feeling, thinking and being. It captures how we carry within us our history, how we bring this history into our present circumstances and how we then make choices to act in certain ways and not others.

---

<sup>15</sup> Some participants, in focus groups and interview, told me and so self-identified as working- or middle-class. Others I tentatively categorised based on the information that they volunteered during these sessions, including schools attended, area they live in and parental occupation.

This section will consider the ways in which habitus ‘captures’ history, how that history influences an embodied habitus, and how choices are then made. Accordingly, three facets of habitus will frame this section. As each is an element of the same concept, they can be difficult to disentangle and will likely seep into and overlap each other. This first is habitus as history, socially inculcated from early childhood and so apparently natural to us. Secondly, I examine the habitus as everyday bodily practice influenced by the history we bring ‘into our present circumstances’. This is habitus embodied which, as it is socially constructed, is also class-specific. Thirdly, I explore the generative potential of habitus, how it influences the choices that we make, noting that it is not, necessarily, deterministic and so, and importantly for this study, it may be amenable to change. In discussing this third facet of habitus I refer to the views of some critics who suggest it is both deterministic and static, and I offer alternative views which refute this thereby allowing habitus to be regarded as a generative construct amenable to transformation.

### **Habitus as history**

Habitus is ‘the generative, unifying principle of conducts and opinions which ... tends to reproduce the system of objective conditions of which it is the product’ (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990:161). Reay suggests that it is an ‘internalised framework’ from which ‘everyday experiences emanate’ (2004b:435). These are socially constituted dispositions which are not ‘inborn’, argues Bourdieu (2002:45), but are, rather, the ‘product of history, that is, of social experience and education’. Habitus as history is acquired through a ‘myriad of mundane processes of training and learning’ (Thompson, 1991:12), a process of ‘inculcation’ that begins with ‘the formative experiences of earliest infancy’ (Bourdieu, 1990c:91) as socialisation within the family. This conditioning ‘unavoidably reflects the social conditions’ within which it is acquired, states Thompson (1991:12), so embedding the collective history of family and class within us (Bourdieu, 1990c). Indeed Bourdieu refers to it as ‘embodied history’ (1990:56), as habitus is, in many ways, the impact or affect of the past in the present, not just an individual’s personal history but the history of their family. This may mean, for example, that a child raised in a working-class family acquires ways of thinking and being that are different from those acquired by a child from a middle-class background (and see ‘capitals’ below). This process of inculcation leads the individual to ‘acquire a set of dispositions which literally mould the body and become second nature’ (Thompson, 1991:12), often operating below the level of consciousness. Parents instil habitus through their everyday dealings and exchanges with their children,

often unintentionally inculcating their values, attitudes, practices and the relevance of various symbolic capitals (explained below). As children we may be taught to sit up straight, walk tall, not to talk with our mouth full, literally embodying the habitus. Parents may also make explicit the manners and behaviours expected within their homes, which become second nature and go unquestioned and so our habitus, our thoughts, actions and ways of being, seem 'natural' to us. In this way, habitus is 'the active presence of past experiences' (Bourdieu, 1990b:54).

Habitus is, moreover, 'the product of structure, producer of practice, and the reproducer of structure' (Bourdieu, cited in Wacquant, 2008:268). It is 'structured' in that it provides a blueprint for our practice and thinking through socially constituted dispositions including our class. Habitus structures our behaviour determining how we act not only in the present but also in what we may aspire to in the future. The product of early socialisation, our habitus is continually re-structured by our experiences and encounters with the outside world (Reay, 2004b), and in this way links our past, our present and our future (Maton, 2008). So, for example, middle-class parents, who have themselves benefitted from education, may spend time with their children over homework embedding dispositions that value education, both anticipating and expecting future educational success. Such structured dispositions are durable and transposable (Bourdieu 1990b:53). Even an individual who moves from the working-class background of her childhood to a middle-class job may retain mannerisms, accent and views that reveal her origins (Reay *et al.*, 2009), and she may choose, or not, to disguise or even reject those. It is 'structuring' producing practice as it is habitus which determines our behaviour in any given circumstance and which, unless disrupted, will reproduce. In her interview, Helen explained that in the middle-class area she was from:

*There's a huge pressure to do well at school because it's like a big wheel and you just get on it and everybody's going the same way.*

This illustrates how, for the middle-class, success at school is expected; the habitus generates practices that match the social conditions that have produced it and are structured by the field, which in turn structures expectations and practices that, in this case, work to optimise middle-class success. Habitus has both history and 'memory' so the 'habitus acquired within the family forms the basis of the reception and assimilation of the classroom message', while that acquired in school 'conditions the level of reception and degree of assimilation of the messages produced and diffused by the culture' (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990:43-44). Habitus as history ensures that middle-class parents generate

practices that reproduce educational achievement so children coming from homes where, for example, books are always present and positive interactions with adults happen regularly, are advantaged in school having familiarity with the language and activities that teachers value. Others, from less academic homes where they are equally cherished, may, however, come to school without the same exposure to reading and discussion, and may receive less praise and more criticism as teachers perceive them to be less prepared for the ‘classroom message’ (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990:44). Bourdieu (1990b:70) explains that habitus not only relates to ways of thinking but to ways of being which leads to the next facet, habitus as everyday bodily practice.

### **Habitus as everyday bodily practice**

Habitus is reaffirmed in our lived experiences where it relates not only to ways of thinking but to ways of being (Bourdieu, 1990b). Habitus is pervasive, embodied as well as intellectual, ‘a durable way of standing, speaking, walking, and thereby of feeling and thinking’ (Bourdieu, 1990b:70). It provides us with a sense of how to act and respond appropriately to situations in our daily lives even if it does not necessarily and strictly determine our actions (Thompson, 1991). Habitus is the physical embodiment of cultural capital (Goldthorpe, 2007:50, see below), which manifests in deeply ingrained ways of being including habits, skills and ways of thinking. This might mean that a middle-class child learning ballet is able to demonstrate poise and grace and to develop physical assurance, while a working-class student may lack confidence in how to stand and move in unfamiliar settings, such as at interviews or when she is the focus of attention, potentially leading to discomfort or embarrassment. In another setting, this working-class student may have all the capital she needs to obtain what she wants, but which the middle-class girl may lack. Her habitus, her social history, will condition her bodily practice to such a degree that she becomes a ‘fish in water’. As explained above, habitus, as well as being embodied in our physical being, performances and outlook on the world, is closely connected with our individual and collective history. This is because it is ‘acquired through lasting exposure to particular social conditions’ (Wacquant, 2008:267) which determine our behaviour in given circumstances. This is significant when it comes to class as I shall now discuss.

Habitus is essentially the way in which the culture and tastes of a particular social group are internalised or embodied in the individual as Bourdieu’s research presented in ‘Distinction’ (1984) demonstrates. This starts during the socialisation process in early

childhood and is manifest in the ways that people speak, eat, laugh and move to such a degree that 'the body is the site of incorporated history' (Thompson , 1991:13). It is 'a socialized subjectivity' (Edgerton and Roberts, 2014:198) embedding a way of thinking, acting and aspiring in keeping with the social circumstances and lifestyle in which we have been brought up (Bourdieu, 2005:44). Indeed Reay (2019) asserts that habitus is used by Bourdieu to explain how history becomes embodied 'in the form of dispositions that remain powerfully linked to economic and cultural background' (Reay, 2019:10). Shaped through our early upbringing, our observations and experiences, habitus is 'capable of durably generating practices conforming with the principles of the inculcated arbitrary<sup>16</sup>, (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990:31). It is class-specific in that it is shaped within the social and cultural environment particular to a social class and here we see how habitus as history and habitus as everyday bodily practice are entwined. So the stereotypical middle-class child comes to school knowing how to act, is attentive and articulate, has her pencil ready to work, while another from a different background may be trying hard to fit in, but is inclined to swing on chairs, has a more limited vocabulary and may take longer to settle to work. While the first child may be valued and praised by teachers, this second child may be classed as uninterested, not least because teachers do not always take account of the differing cultural environments from which these children come. While, of course, no two people have identical experiences, members of the same class will have had similar experiences and so often have commonalities with others from the same class (Swartz, 2002; Reay *et al.*, 2009).

Lareau's (2011) research into child-rearing practices provides further insight to the habitus as bodily practice. Lareau found that middle-class parents 'transmit differential advantages' (2011:5) through reasoning with children and engaging with teachers, practices aligned to the 'dominant set of cultural repertoires' (2011:4). She established that middle-class families deliberately 'invest' time and economic capital in ensuring that children's cognitive/social skills are nurtured through engaging with organised activities. Such 'concerted cultivation' (2011:2) provides children with both a sense of entitlement and an ability to engage with adults 'as relative equals', developing habitus that displays confidence as well as an understanding of how to engage in social situations with ease. Conversely, working-class parents 'viewed child development as unfolding spontaneously'

<sup>16</sup> In the foreword to 'Reproduction', Bottomore (1990:xv) explains Bourdieu and Passeron's use of 'arbitrary' in referencing a cultural scheme in that it is 'an arbitrary cultural scheme which is actually, though not in appearance, based upon power'. That is, while the things that are valued within a cultural context are chosen quite randomly, they are indicative of the power and status of those who hold them.

(2011:238), and so they tended to allow children greater freedom to play and organise themselves. Furthermore, rather than reasoning with their children, Lareau found these parents to be more inclined to use directives, telling children what to do rather than negotiating. Boundaries between working-class children and adults were clearer than those between middle-class children, who had been encouraged to reason with, and even to question, adults. Lareau termed this approach the ‘accomplishment of natural growth’ (2011:3), arguing that working-class children were more constrained in their relationships with adults, and their parents tended to turn educational responsibility over to the professionals. In school, the educational field, the working-class children were much more likely to defer to adults and to accept rather than question decisions thereby potentially developing a habitus that was more accepting and consonant with the social hierarchy. So, as individuals our habitus is formed through our earliest experiences characterised by the habitual values, attitudes and expectations of different social classes (Mills, 2008a). While acknowledging that Lareau’s research provides insight into differing child-rearing practices, it is important to guard against homogenising these groups, as will be seen below, and my research data suggests that the habitus has generative potential with individuals negotiating similar contexts in very different ways.

As noted above, Bourdieu emphasises that habitus is not something natural or inborn, rather it is ‘a set of *acquired dispositions*’ (original italics, 2005:45) – habitus as history as well as practice. Similarly, Bourdieu asserts that certain cultural practices, such as going to the theatre, concerts and art galleries, or tastes in literature, music or art are closely linked to educational level and ‘social origin’ (1984:1). Considered natural for certain groups, he suggests that ‘this predisposes tastes to function as markers of “class” ’ (Bourdieu, 1984:2). Such ‘markers of class’ become a means of identifying with, or differentiating oneself from, others, as ‘tastes are the practical affirmation of an inevitable difference’ (Bourdieu, 1984:56). So, although we may believe that we act with agency, our culture and class are inscribed within us from the outset as our habitus literally becomes second nature, physically as well as intellectually and, often unwittingly, our ‘tastes’ may set us apart from other social groups. Accordingly, and as Lareau’s research (2011) confirms, one child will engage confidently with adults, another will wait until spoken to. Each has been conditioned to particular social niceties from a young age, and these practices are reinforced by those with whom the child socialises, they are naturalised, a *lifestyle* (Bourdieu, 2005:44). Thus, habitus becomes embedded without our consciousness, meaning it is ‘not readily amenable to conscious reflection and modification’ (Thompson,

1991:13), and it determines not only our manners, but ways of thinking, attitudes, values and social behaviour. It is possible, however, to render the habitus conscious and modifiable and while it is not ‘readily amenable’ to reflection or modification, the habitus does have this potential as will be explained now and demonstrated later in this Dissertation.

### **Habitus has generative potential and is not necessarily determinist/ reproductive**

Bourdieu (1977:72) also conceives of habitus as ‘generative’ thereby enabling us ‘to cope with unforeseen and ever-changing situations’ based on our ‘incorporated’ history (Thompson, 1991:13) and modified through experience. Mills and Gale (2010:16) assert that ‘the habitus operates below the level of calculation and consciousness’, operating across a range of situations, orienting, rather than tightly determining, how we think and act. Our actions are shaped but not determined by our habitus. Rather the habitus, guides behaviour and responses in our daily lives (Edgerton and Roberts, 2013:202). However, critics such as Jenkins (1992) maintain that habitus is determinist and he asserts that Bourdieu’s social world:

... ultimately remains one in which things happen to people, rather than a world in which they can intervene in their individual and collective destinies. (Jenkins 2002:91)

Jenkins argues that because of the constraints of societal contexts, there are limited opportunities for social change. He suggests that social conditions predetermine the individual habitus to the extent that pre-dispositions cannot be altered. Furthermore, he proposes that as habitus governs an individual’s social formation this significantly limits the concept of agency as ‘it is difficult to know where to place conscious deliberation and awareness in Bourdieu’s scheme of things’ (Jenkins, 2002:77). Archer (2007:44) extends this argument, suggesting that the ‘semi-conscious operation’ of habitus negates the need for deliberation. Sayer (2005) agrees and suggests that Bourdieu’s presentation of habitus may overlook both the importance of internal dialogue in an individual’s decision-making processes and ethical capacity. He contends that there is a need to modify and expand the conception of habitus so that it can ‘do new work’ (2005:23). A concern that Sayer raises is that Bourdieu ignores our ‘mundane reflexivity’ (2005:29). Sayer proposes that our ‘streams of consciousness’ are constant and central, but not easily apprehensible as ‘many of the intentions and plans developed through our internal conversations are frustrated by external constraints’ (2005:30). It was on such internal conversations that this study sought to capitalise, to make them conscious in order to unveil students’ thinking and to

encourage reflexivity in deliberating on their practice. However, concerns around habitus echo previous criticisms of reproduction theories with Giroux, for example, stating that:

... by downplaying the importance of human agency and the notion of resistance, reproduction theories offer little hope for challenging and changing the repressive features of schooling. (Giroux, 1983:259)

These criticisms suggest that Bourdieu's approach is pessimistic, with little hope for change. However, as discussed below, and as the findings of this study confirm, the habitus can both enable agency and be generative or transformative. Indeed, the fact that we do not live in monolithic societies is indicative of the potential education has to transform despite the highly reproductive tendencies that can be observed.

Bourdieu emphasises that habitus is 'not a fate, not a destiny' (Bourdieu, 2005:45). Similarly, Reay (1995) argues that choice is at the heart of habitus, reminding us that habitus is permeable, continually modified through encounters with the outside world, in various fields, as one would expect if one accepts the notion of habitus as bodily practice. However, while enabling agency, habitus is nonetheless, to an extent, circumscribed with 'some possibilities inconceivable, others improbable and a limited range acceptable' (Reay, 2004b:435). Reay (2004b) proposes that the range of options our habitus presents may be seen as a continuum and the options available will vary from person to person. At one end, where the habitus is compatible with the field, practice is likely to be reproduced. At the other end, where there is disjuncture between the habitus and field, it may be transformed, either raising or lowering an individual's expectations, and university entrance, especially to elite universities, are a prime example. This was exemplified during a focus group discussion in this study when one participant, Jenna, described how she worked with some Secondary pupils encouraging them to apply to university. However, she explained they were reluctant:

*Ah the girls had these perceptions, like 'My sister didn't go to uni ... I just want to leave now and get a job'.*

Maton (2012:51) explains that habitus can curb 'the range of options that are visible to us as viable'. Similarly, Reay *et al.* (2009) found that working-class pupils did not apply to university concerned that they were not clever enough or that they might not 'fit in'. They excluded themselves by limiting their choices to options they considered plausible and probable. Through these 'subjective expectations', pupils 'internalise objective conditions' (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990:156) so that what is perceived as likely to be the case becomes what we appear to choose, and our aspirations match what we believe can be fulfilled. As Maton (2012:57) suggests, we learn 'our rightful place in the social world'. In

my study, in common with Jenna's pupils, Aoife (a self-identifying working-class participant) explains how her niece, placed in the middle-group in her class, a group called 'Triangles', limits herself to that 'middle' group with the word 'only':

*I'm asking her 'Why is your handwriting not the best?' and she'll say 'But I'm only a Triangle!'*

So while the habitus does not determine how we will act, the choices available are constrained by the current position we occupy within a social field and are filtered, not only by our own past experiences, but also by those of our family/classed background. Habitus is 'acquired through a gradual process of inculcation; making the habitus a complex amalgam of past and present' (Mills 2008a:80). As explained above, it is 'history embodied', bringing our (collective) past into the present to shape the future. It is the 'presence of the past in the present which makes possible the presence in the present of the forth-coming' (Bourdieu, 2000:210). So parents who have gone to university may expect the same for their children: those who have not been to university may not have that aspiration for their children. Consequently, as Swartz explains, habitus:

... adjusts aspirations and expectations according to the objective probabilities for success or failure common to the members of the same class for a particular behaviour. (Swartz, 2002:655)

The habitus is inclined to reproduce as it operates at an unconscious level (Mills and Gale, 2010) unless there is some type of disjuncture between the habitus and field or the habitus encounters an event that might 'cause self-questioning' (Reay, 2004:437) and so lead to change. It was precisely that self-questioning that I sought to explore and ultimately to foster in this study. Mills (2008a) also recognises that individuals have the potential for either a primarily reproductive habitus, accepting the 'constraint of social conditions' and resigning themselves to the future that 'fits' them, or a transformative habitus 'recognis[ing] the capacity for improvisation and tend[ing] to generate opportunities for action' (2008a:82). Those with a transformative habitus can see the potential for change, and this often arises as they have encountered an event or situation that has 'cause[d] self-questioning' (Reay, 2004:437). In this study, those students adopting a reproductive habitus may see the options for their pupils defined by their perceptions of children's social backgrounds (Gazeley and Dunne, 2007), potentially limiting their expectations of them and reproducing and conserving the status quo. This is exemplified by Derbhla (a participant who had self-identified as middle-class) revealing her perception of working-class families:

*Children were very uninterested and didn't want to learn. It nearly seemed that the parents were sending them to school to get rid of them for six hours ...*

In this extract she was not seeing other possibilities for these learners she perceives to be '*uninterested*'. Here Derbhla exhibits a 'reproductive' habitus, as well as prejudicially stereotypical assumptions of class, accepting pupils' social constraints and limiting the options she views as viable for these children. By contrast, those with a more transformative habitus (Mills, 2008a) will recognise and seek opportunities to disrupt the cycle of disadvantage that their pupils face (Ellis *et al.* 2016), as Ide another participant (self-identifying as middle-class and who had failed the eleven-plus) explained:

*You can't go in [to disadvantaged schools] with preconceived notions about what it's going to be like – you've to get to know them as a person as opposed to a label.*

As this section has explained, habitus is the 'internalisation of experiences in the world' (Ingram, 2018:206), shaped by the environment in which we have been brought up and regulated by the ways of thinking, responding and feeling of those around us. Furthermore, while the habitus is adept at navigating us through our indigenous environments, where we know intuitively how to act and react, there may be a sense of tension or mismatch in a new social setting or field. As Ingram (2018:62) asserts, in order to consider how habitus can act as a generative concept, it should be 'considered inseparably' from the context in which practice takes place – the field.

## Field

In order to understand practice, Bourdieu maintained that it was necessary to consider the 'space', or field, within which interactions took place (Thomson, 2012). Shim (2012:213) maintains that while each field has specific properties, all fields share several generic attributes. This section will outline these characteristics including each as a social space; a site of struggle; valuing particular forms of capital, and a logic of practice relevant to that field. Importantly, field and habitus are relational, they 'constitute a dialectic through which specific practices produce and reproduce the social world' (Thomson, 2012:73).

While 'habitus' allows Bourdieu to realise the generative strategies underlying practices, 'field' is the 'structured space of situated positions we occupy, defined by specific stakes and interests' (O'Donoghue, 2013:191), the social space where interactions and events take place. Bourdieu (1990b) saw society as comprised of interlocking fields (such as economic/education/religious/media/artistic/legal), where agents vie for positions, compete for power and do not act arbitrarily (Nolan, 2012). While fields resemble little, self-

contained worlds with ‘patterned, regular and predictable practices’ (Thomson, 2012:68), Mills (2008a:86) proposes that Bourdieu’s conception is not that of a defined, bordered space, but rather a ‘field of forces’ that is dynamic and opens up various potentials. Webb *et al.* (2002:28) contend that fields are ‘fluid’ as they can be altered ‘by internal practices and by politics’ as well as through the impact of other fields. For example, in the last twenty years, the field of Higher Education has been influenced by an emphasis on staff/student evaluations (internal practices), the Research Excellence Framework (accountability and marketisation – performance measures applied across various fields) and through the introduction of tuition fees (economic and political fields).

Fields, like games, are competitive and have their own specific rules, histories and distinctive logics of practice (Thomson, 2012:68), with activities within them following regularly-ordered patterns. However, in a game, the field (a pitch or board) ‘is clearly seen for what it is, *an arbitrary social construct*’ (Bourdieu, 1990b:67, italics added). This is in contrast to social fields which are ‘products of a long, slow process of autonomization... one does not embark on the game by a conscious act’ (Bourdieu, 1990b:67). Significantly, an individual must not only know how to play the game; they need to know what the game actually is (O’Donoghue, 2013). Individuals are born into various social positions and will have access to different capitals in various fields and as such are often unconscious of the ‘arbitrariness and artificiality’ of the field (Bourdieu, 1990:67), tacitly accepting their position without question (Lawler, 2011).

Bourdieu asserts that fields are the sites of struggle where individuals compete to accumulate capital, ‘the specific profits that are at stake in the field’ (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992:97). In business, connections may be made through social capital with the ultimate aim of accruing economic profits. In education this may be economic capital invested in tutoring or cultural capital reified through qualifications. As Emma said of her Grammar school:

*It was all very much focussed on the academic ... I felt that there wasn't much room to develop other areas, like it was all about results.*

These academic results equate to cultural capital – a valuable asset in the field of education. Unlike in sport with, ideally, well-tended pitches, evenly matched teams and explicit rules, social fields have no level ground, rather ‘players who begin with particular forms of capital are advantaged at the outset’ (Thomson, 2012:67). So, those in privileged

positions aim to perpetuate and reproduce a given field, maintaining the status quo (Nolan, 2012). As Bourdieu contends:

The earlier a player enters the game... the greater is his ignorance of all that is tacitly granted through his investment in the field and his interest in its very existence and perpetuation ... and his unawareness of the unthought presuppositions that the game produces and endlessly reproduces, thereby reproducing the conditions of its own perpetuation. (Bourdieu, 1990b:67)

Thompson asserts that practice is not necessarily consciously calculated, but rather, due to the habitus, ‘individuals are *already predisposed* to act in certain ways’ (Thompson, 1991:16-17 original italics). One self-identified middle-class participant, Helen, explained how the dominant work the field to their advantage:

*Teachers are relying on the children to get tutored – so much that I think rather than publish league tables of school success, there should be a league table of tutors' passes.*

The middle-class shore up educational success by using economic resources to press home their advantage. Others in less-advantaged positions may allow ‘unthought presuppositions’ to limit their aspirations (Walther, 2014), or alternatively, seek to change or transform the field (Mills, 2008a).

The fundamental dynamic here is the relation between the habitus, and the specific fields within which agents act (Thompson, 1991). Field structures the habitus which in turn constitutes field

Social reality exists... twice, in things and in minds, in fields and in habitus, outside and inside social agents. And when habitus encounters a social world of which it is the product, it is like a ‘fish in water’: it does not feel the weight of the water and it takes the world about itself for granted.

(Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992:127)

Thus when the habitus is ‘congruent’ with the field (Ingram, 2018:141) there is no tension, the actor has an innate understanding of how to behave in that particular context. This is not always the case as Ingram (2018) has found and I discuss Ingram’s research on working-class boys’ negotiation of academic success further in Chapter 5. Bourdieu, as demonstrated above, explains this ‘congruence’ as the habitus, that framework of dispositions drawing on individual and collective history, having a practical sense of how to act, and innately understanding which ‘things to do or not to do, things to say or not to say’ (1990b:53). When a field is unfamiliar to the habitus the individual will more than likely feel awkward or uncomfortable which may lead to them removing or excluding themselves from that field, or at least it will take some time for the habitus of the

individual to adjust and begin to learn the doxa, those ‘unwritten rules of the game’ (Maton, 2012:56). This is significant in the field of education which enables the accumulation of capital in the form of educational qualifications (Webb *et al.*, 2002:110) increasingly required for entry into the field of employment or to Higher Education. Thomson (2014b:90) argues that the ‘game’ in education is ‘fundamentally “sorting and selecting” people’, privileging particular knowledges and educational pathways. This was exemplified in this research by one self-identified working-class participant, Beth, whose Grammar school friend’s parents insisted she change her A-levels to Sciences rather than the languages she had longed to study. Similarly, pupils are encouraged to aspire to university entrance rather than trades, while A-levels are considered more valuable than BTEC<sup>17</sup> qualifications. This arbitrary thinking comes to seem ‘only right and proper, “natural” ’ (Thomson, 2014:90). Although everyone is invited to join in, the rules of the game are devised by the dominant (Mills, 2008a), yet accepted by all. So middle-class students, with high levels of academic capital, which Bourdieu contends is ‘the guaranteed product of the combined effects of cultural transmission by the family and cultural transmission by the school’ (2004:23), are expected to continue to university. These middle-class students are pitted against their working-class peers who are less likely to possess the academic and social capitals required to ‘successfully navigate through the system’ (Lampert *et al.*, 2016:37). This latter group are less likely to be academically successful and may come to believe that education is ‘not for the likes of us’ and so ‘truncate’ their educational destinies (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990:158) thereby reproducing inequality and leaving the field clear for the members of the dominant group.

While all agents share the same essential interests relevant to a particular field, they may bring differing amounts of capital and understandings of how that capital may be deployed to their advantage – it is not an even playing field. Furthermore, Bourdieu argues that within education, the cultural capital of the middle-class is acknowledged and prized, while the capital of the lower classes is consistently devalued. He explains:

... in every field we shall find a struggle, the specific forms of which have to be looked for each time, between the new comer who tries to break through the entry barrier and the dominant agent who will try to defend the monopoly and keep out competition. (Bourdieu, 1993:72)

---

<sup>17</sup> BTEC is the commonly used acronym for the Business and Technology Education Council. BTECs are regarded as vocational, work-related qualifications. These tend not to be offered in Grammar schools in NI as they promote what are considered more rigorous, academic A-levels

It is this competition and defence of the monopoly that will be explored in this research as, within the field of education in NI, selection is in place to maintain the ‘entry barrier’ to the Grammar school, the domain of the dominant classes, or of those who can afford additional tuition. Crucial in such situations are the type of habitus that an individual has and the resources or capital they have at their disposal, and this third concept will now be outlined.

## Capital

Bourdieu expands the notion of capital beyond the economic, and this section explores his forms of capital: economic, cultural, social, and symbolic which actually refers to the other three capitals when they are ‘perceived and recognized as legitimate’ (Bourdieu, 1987:5). Cultural capital is examined in some detail and the impact capital may have on education, potentially creating social inequality, is considered.

Bourdieu defines capital as a ‘power resource’ (Swartz, 2008:48) within any given field. Capital allows its holder to appropriate profit within the social sphere and Bourdieu’s interest is in the processes that allow the dominant classes to monopolise the advantages of capital for their exclusive benefit (Goldthorpe, 2007). He illustrates particularly how those in power can maintain their dominant position with regard to subordinate classes. He explains capital is one of:

... the main factors of differentiation which account for the differences observed in a given social universe... [capital] can become efficient, like aces in a game of cards (Bourdieu, 1987:3)

This gaming analogy is one that Bourdieu often drew on to explain how capital advantages some groups over others. Bourdieu’s concept of capital was developed to explore inequality, as economics alone, he maintained, could not explain the disparities in educational achievements of children from different social classes (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1979:8). His interpretation of ‘capital’ has enabled culture to be perceived as a resource (Lareau and Weininger, 2003:567) that allows access to opportunities for those who can acquire it.

Bourdieu (1986:242) depicts capital as ‘accumulated labour’ and capital requires, and is the product of, investment. This, like any other investment, secures a return (Reay, 2004a). Any kind of asset – goods, ideas, character or accomplishments – may function as capital ‘if and only if it is ascribed value’ (Broady, 2014:100). Bourdieu proposes that capital

presents in three fundamental guises. Most recognisable is economic capital in the form of financial and material resources, including property or assets which are easily converted into money. This ‘is at the root of all other forms of capital’ (Bourdieu, 1986:252) and its value is common across all classes and fields. Secondly, social capital is apparent in connections that afford status through affiliations with relatives, friends and acquaintances. Bourdieu defines this as ‘membership in a group ... a “credential” which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word’ (1986:248). This group membership may provide a network of connections opening up access to opportunities for social advancement or employment, a ‘repository of potentially available assets ready to be activated when required’ (Broady, 2014:102). Finally, cultural capital, evidenced through education and symbolic goods, is discussed below but all forms of capital are convertible into economic capital, with high levels of capital imparting advantage and status in society.

Cultural capital is central to education and, Wacquant asserts, is a major determinant of life chances as ‘under the cloak of individual talent and academic meritocracy, its unequal distribution [helps] to conserve social hierarchies’ (Wacquant, 2008:262). This leads to inequality in schools as working-class children may be automatically disadvantaged compared with their middle-class peers who arrive in school familiar with books and linguistic capital, and often predisposed to learn. Furthermore, cultural capital cannot be acquired overnight (Bourdieu 1986:245) with Lareau and Weininger (2003:88) also noting ‘it is critical to stress the socially determined character’ as it requires prolonged exposure, and (normally) economic capital, to realise.

Cultural capital exists in three forms: *embodied*, ‘a system of manners characteristic of a social position’ (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990:119); *objectified*, in cultural goods including books and art; and *institutionalised*, evident in educational qualifications (Reay, 2004a:75). Cultural capital is physically ingrained in children from their infancy, from the language, accent and vocabulary used around them, how they move, their manners – things that are valued in their home life and in which they are ‘inculcated’. This embodied form cannot be ‘divorced from the person’ (Moore, 2012:108). As explained above, the habitus is the literal physical embodiment of cultural capital and requires an investment of time and effort to be realised (Bourdieu, 1986). So parents who value music invest economic capital in lessons to enable their child to learn an instrument and the child practises to become competent, accumulating ‘embodied’ cultural capital evidenced in technical skill and musical knowledge. Similar investments might be made in sport, languages or art which

will likewise be realised as cultural capital and embodied as ‘biological singularity ... subject to a hereditary transmission’ (Bourdieu, 1986:245), influencing how we move, speak and present ourselves, and this inheres in the habitus. As Beth, a self-identified working-class research participant, explained, it can be easy to identify the advantaged children in classrooms, *‘they go to music lessons and dance and homework’s done to perfection’*. Bourdieu suggests such investment is invisible and becomes misrecognised (explained in Chapter 4) as natural ability, grace and talent (Mills, 2008a).

Objects too signify cultural capital, in the form of books, artwork, music represented through institutions such as libraries and theatres – artefacts requiring prior exposure for familiarity and understanding (Bourdieu, 1986). Objectified cultural capital also includes belongings such as cars, houses or, for school pupils, mobile phones – items that individuals use to position themselves within society, often chosen as indicators of social class.

Finally, ‘institutionalised’ cultural capital, conferred through academic credentials, is a powerful means of social reproduction. Increasingly governments have viewed education as a means of tackling inequalities and emphasis has been placed on formal qualifications (Webb *et al.*, 2002:111), impacting across society as a whole as qualifications are required for employment. The dominant class choose which cultural arbitraries are ‘valued’, taught within the curriculum and examined. So, Beethoven is valued over Beyoncé and, presented as part of a curriculum, only the former is likely recognised as what Bourdieu (1990a) would term ‘legitimate’ culture. This unquestioned acceptance of cultural arbitraries is *symbolic violence* which, as explained in Chapter 4, leads to their ‘naturalisation’, resulting in social classifications being transformed into academic classifications (James 2015).

Bourdieu and Passeron (1990:142) assert that the examination ‘is the clearest expression of academic values and of the educational system’s implicit choices’ and in this way the ‘acquisition of legitimate culture and the legitimate relation to culture is regulated’ (1990:142) thereby inculcating the dominant culture. Furthermore, examinations create the ‘illusion of neutrality and independence of the school system with respect to the structure of class relations’ (1990:141) and also ‘distract inquiry from the elimination which takes place without examination’. Not only do examinations enable education to appear neutral and democratic, but they also remove attention from the fact that many students are excluded or have self-eliminated prior to those exams.

For Bourdieu cultural capital is particularly demonstrated through ‘academic ‘capital’:

the guaranteed product of the combined effects of cultural transmission by the family and cultural transmission by the school (the efficiency of which depends on the amount of cultural capital directly inherited from the family).

(Bourdieu 2004:23)

Levels of confidence and entitlement are key features of cultural capital (Reay, 2004a) as the dominant class familiarise their children with ‘high status’ activities (visiting museums, attending concerts) and, for example, engage in discussion and sharing of opinions. This, as stated above, is embodied within the habitus, often conferring self-assurance and confidence as well as a breadth of knowledge around those cultural arbitraries that are often valued in school. Ball (2010:159) suggests that, increasingly, middle-class parents actively invest in opportunities to enhance the educational performance of their children ‘thus reproducing class structures and class inequalities’. Furthermore, this is not questioned by those (dis)advantaged by such investment, leading to some having a sense of ‘entitlement’ while others have low self-expectations.

Bourdieu (1984;1990b) argues that cultural capital is directly implicated in creating social inequality. The possession of cultural capital varies with social class, yet the education system (ES) ‘assumes middle-class culture, attitudes and values in all its pupils’ (Mills, 2008a:84) which, I argue, is an unacknowledged injustice. Middle-class parents instil cultural capital in their children providing the school with what it prioritises, so these children succeed in education ‘under the misconception that they must have innate talent’ (Atkinson, 2012:737). Bourdieu recognised that this advantaged middle-class children in schools, challenging thinking that academic success was due to natural abilities:

[it] made it possible to explain the unequal scholastic achievement of children originating from different social classes by relating academic success, i.e., the specific profits which children from the different classes and class fractions can obtain in the academic market, to the distribution of cultural capital between the classes. (Bourdieu,1986:243)

This highlights ‘fundamental structural inequalities’ (Loveday, 2015:578) which I suggest continue as the ES advantages those with access to various capitals while disempowering those whose access is already limited.

## Summing Up

In this chapter I have discussed Bourdieu’s three signature concepts – habitus, field and capital – to show how, together, they generate an individual’s practice. The habitus, an

internal framework inculcated from childhood, and which draws upon individual and collective history and experiences, manifests itself in our everyday exchanges in which we display our ease or discomfort in varying fields. While operating below the level of consciousness (Mills and Gale, 2010) the habitus orients our practice according to the various capitals it can draw on and the level of congruence (Ingram, 2018) within the field. In referring to the facets of habitus here, I pave the way for data analysis framed by these facets in Chapter 7. While each field is ‘an arbitrary social construct’ (1990b:67), Bourdieu understood each as a site of struggle in which individuals compete to accumulate capital. Importantly, some individuals will not necessarily know the rules of the game, and, indeed each field has its own logic of practice. It is here we see the dialectic between habitus and field as the field mediates what individuals do in specific circumstances and will be dependent on the capital they have available (Bourdieu, 1990b). However, despite the field being ‘profoundly hierarchized’ (Thomson, 2012:71), the individual still exercises agency and has the potential to change, or at least to modify her individual habitus.

Capital, conceived by Bourdieu as a resource, is the product of an investment of which there are three forms: economic, social and cultural. Cultural capital, which may bestow confidence and assurance, is particularly important to this study because, as I explained above, it has the potential to create and reproduce social inequality. I deploy Bourdieu’s concepts to investigate students’ perceptions of the ES and to consider how to begin to disrupt the reproductive structures that currently exist. Specifically, my aim in conducting this research is to enable students to recognise their own privilege. In the following chapter, I explore how Bourdieu’s theory of social and cultural reproduction uses these concepts, capital, habitus and field, to unearth inequalities.

## Chapter 4: Sophisticated Mechanisms of Reproduction

### Introduction

Bourdieu's theory of social and cultural reproduction illustrates how the dominant class masks the relationship 'which it surreptitiously records, under cover of formal equality, between the qualifications obtained and inherited cultural capital' (Bourdieu, 1990b:133). This theory offers a lens through which to understand some of the mechanisms by which social advantage is transformed into educational advantage in Northern Ireland (NI).

McKnight asserts that:

Success is considered to be just reward where it has been achieved on the basis of merit and effort but a social injustice where it has been gained as a result of parental wealth and status. A society in which success or failure of children with equal ability rests in the social and economic status of their parents is not a fair one. (2015:i)

This unfairness is aggravated by an education system (ES) which actively disadvantages working-class children while advantaging their middle-class peers. There are two aspects to this problem, first is the impact on education due to the perpetuation of class-based inequality manifested in NI through our selective ES (Gallagher and Smith, 2000; OECD, 2013). The second element, of most concern in this study, is the seeming (in)ability of teachers to recognise and/or address these inequalities as highlighted by Dunne and Gazeley (2008). As already noted, teachers in NI come from predominantly middle-class backgrounds and have been academically successful with most having attended Grammar schools. Lupton and Hempel-Jorgensen (2012:616) insist that:

Teachers need the tools to be able to interrogate the ways in which economic and social class relations in society... affect students' experiences of learning.

Accordingly, then, this study is premised on the argument that Initial Teacher Education (ITE) needs to foster better critical understandings of the impact of socio-economic (dis)advantage amongst student teachers.

The current political agenda encourages schools to target academic success and raise attainment, which, given the neoliberal performance targets used to inform parental choice and comparative international performance, has led to a much greater focus on ability-grouping (Dunne *et al.*, 2011; Hallam and Parsons, 2013). Ability-grouping takes a number of forms including 'setting', with children placed in ability groups across a year group for classes in subjects such as literacy and numeracy, and 'streaming' with children banded within the class by ability. In post-primary schools whole classes may be streamed as high-

achieving or low-achieving. Ability-grouping is intended to improve student performance (Wilkinson and Penney, 2014), but as Francis *et al.* (2017:2) explain this ‘confuses educational attainment with a notion of innate potential academic “ability” ’ which they contend should not be viewed as a fixed measure, but one that is malleable and contingent on a range of societal factors. In practice, however, Francis *et al.* argue that the ES treats ‘ability’ as ascribed and thus the perception is that inequalities in educational outcomes are to be expected, if not inevitable. Grouping by ability has become standard practice in the UK despite research finding it provides at best limited value (Hallam and Parsons, 2013). Indeed, it may promote social segregation (OECD, 2014) with students from working-class and minority ethnic backgrounds disproportionately represented in the lower bands (McGillicuddy and Devine, 2018). These within-school selection strategies have significant impacts on pupils which Macqueen (2103) describes as ‘grouping for inequity’ and they may lead to the reproduction of educational inequality.

Working with Passeron, Bourdieu outlined his theory of reproduction based on research with Higher Education students in the 1970s in France. Despite being written 40 years ago and in a different field, Bourdieu’s explanation for the persistence of inequalities and the lack of motivation for change resonated with my own experiences. In ‘Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture’ (hereafter ‘Reproduction’), Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) sought to explicate the:

... sophisticated mechanisms by which the school system contributes to reproducing the structure of the distribution of cultural capital and, through it, the social structure. (Bourdieu, 1990a:vii)

van Zanten asserts that, for Bourdieu, the school has replaced the church as the ‘major agency for socialization and legitimation in modern societies... [playing] an essential role in the symbolic reproduction of the social order’ (2005:672), although religion is still important in education in NI. Bourdieu and Passeron argue that the ES’s apparent autonomy:

... enables it to serve external demands under the guise of independence and neutrality, i.e. to conceal the social functions it performs and so to perform them more effectively. (1990:178)

This argument struck me as one worthy of investigation with students and informed this research as I sought to understand their perceptions through interviews as outlined in Chapter 6. ‘Reproduction’ offers an account for how the power and ideas of the dominant class come to seem natural and legitimate, through acceptance of doxa which enable *symbolic violence*, the subtle imposition of an arbitrary culture through pedagogic action

(education both at home and school). Pedagogic action is delivered through pedagogic work, a process of inculcation of the cultural arbitrary, as Chapter 3 explained. This cultural arbitrary expresses the values, codes and notions of the middle-class, by transmitters (teachers), to receivers (learners) as Bourdieu and Passeron describe them. Symbolic violence, the unquestioned acceptance of cultural arbitraries, is central to understanding how class inequalities are reproduced through education, as Wacquant explains:

... the social order masks its arbitrariness and perpetuates itself by extorting from the subordinate practical acceptance of, if not willed consent to, its existing hierarchies. (Wacquant, 2008:264)

Doxa are central in masking this ‘arbitrariness’ of the social order as they are a ‘taking-for-granted of the world that flows from practical sense’ (Bourdieu, 1990b:68) and this chapter will begin by outlining three forms of symbolic domination that underpin Bourdieu’s theory of reproduction: doxa, symbolic violence and misrecognition. I then examine mechanisms that facilitate reproduction, particularly linguistic capital and selection, so elucidating the systematic relationship between social class and educational outcome.

## Doxa

Key to functioning effectively within a field is having a ‘feel for the game’ (Bourdieu, 1990b:66) developed through doxa, the ‘undisputed, pre-reflexive, naive, native compliance with the fundamental presuppositions of the field’ (1990b:68). When habitus is functioning within a familiar field it ‘no longer requires the deliberate act of thinking carefully about each and every move before acting’ (Nolan, 2012:204); it acts unthinkingly as everyday bodily practice as outlined in Chapter 3. Bourdieu asserts that doxa are this ‘relationship of immediate adherence’ between habitus and field, where there is near perfect equivalence, it is a ‘taking-for-granted of the world’ (1990b:68). Thus, the cultural practices and doxa inherent within a field interact with habitus (as both history and everyday bodily practice) and affect, influence and often reproduce social relations (Webb *et al.*, 2002). When the rules of the field appear natural and go unquestioned an individual’s role may be complicit; they may act without ‘conscious awareness’ (Nolan, 2012:205). Finola, a research participant self-identifying as working-class, explained:

*I honestly can’t decide if I agree with academic selection because it was good for me and I don’t feel that I would have got to where I am if I didn’t go through it but I can understand that it can have negative impact...*

Having benefitted from academic selection, the practices, assumptions and embodied beliefs within the field are ‘naturalised’. For Finola, power is not perceived as power, it is

misrecognised. Others may have felt the ‘negative impact’ of failure, and may accept the doxa of academic selection and, ‘an internalized “sense of limits” ’ (Deer, 2012:115), of their place in the world. This of course depends on how the habitus has ‘developed in response to the environment to which the individual has been exposed’ (Ingram, 2018:206) which will lead to reproduction or alternatively, as Mills (2008a:83) posits, such experiences may be ‘generative of opportunities for self-enhancement’ and I return to this in Chapter 7.

Doxa are critical in the NI context, as they have enabled education to become stagnant. Deer asserts that as a form of symbolic power, doxa ‘requires that those subjected to it do not question its legitimacy’ (2012:116-7), and a number of students in this study appear to be unable to recognise doxa let alone question them. Doxa work effectively to stabilise fields, which can lead to fields reproducing, particularly those such as education, where ‘arbitrary social construct[s]’ (Bourdieu, 1990b:67) become accepted without question and act as a form of symbolic violence. Walther (2014:9) argues that symbolic violence, in the form of doxa, impose on individuals ‘the sense of our place and the feeling of what is possible and what not’, a ‘potential cruising radius’.

## **Symbolic violence**

Webb *et al.* (2002:118) propose that for Bourdieu, a principal form of symbolic violence is ‘pedagogic action, or teaching the ways of the world’, which has become a responsibility of the school rather than of parents. Pedagogic action is required so that society’s arbitrary power relations can be absorbed. While this is not a physical violence the effect is as significant, enabling those in privileged positions to preserve their dominance over others. Symbolic violence is:

... the way in which people play a role in their own subordination through the gradual internalisation and acceptance of those ideas that tend to subordinate them. It is an act of *violence* precisely because it leads to the constraint and subordination of individuals, but it is also *symbolic* in the sense that this is achieved indirectly and without overt and explicit acts of force or coercion. (Connolly and Healy, 2004:15, original italics)

Thus, symbolic violence is tacitly accepted by both the dominant and subordinated, both are complicit and Lawler (2011:1423) argues neither group is fully conscious of its operation. This is because these power relations are misrecognised, as explained below. I argue that academic selection is one doxa in the field of education in NI that acts as a form of symbolic violence. As Helen commented about the eleven-plus:

*It's ridiculous they're gearing children up for failure... there's going to be that percentage of children who will never be able to cope with it and preparing them in classrooms is going to highlight the ones that really can't.*

Bourdieu (1990b) maintains that it is through this internalisation of structures and perceptions (the doxa) that symbolic violence is accomplished, advantaging some individuals while positioning others as subordinate. Symbolic violence is an ‘organic process’ (Connolly and Healy, 2004: 16) whereby individuals through their experiences of the social world come to accept fundamental structural inequalities. Their habitus-as-history aligns with their habitus-as-everyday-practice to enable reproduction. This is a form of misrecognition on the part of both the dominated and the dominant as I shall exemplify from my data in Chapter 7.

## Misrecognition

Misrecognition is the implementation of power, ensuring that ‘cultural privilege and power is positioned as ascribed (rather than achieved) and is thus justified as natural and legitimate’ (Archer, 2008:102). Misrecognition is the ‘linchpin in solidifying an amenable relationship’ between dominant and dominated (Scott, 2012:532), and it may lead teachers to fail to recognise everyday practices in our social world as inequalities or to fail to recognise the powerful role that social background has in their appreciation and evaluation of children’s engagement.

In the educational context Bourdieu deems misrecognition as ‘the way in which teachers’ judgements on their pupils transmute social classifications into school classifications’ (Nice, 1990:xxiv). James maintains that, for Bourdieu, misrecognition is inherent within practices specific to given fields, and their associated capitals. ‘Recognition’, in French ‘connaissance’ and the verb for ‘knowing’, would mean that an agent was familiar with practices within a field and knows how to conduct themselves. Misrecognition on the other hand is:

... the process whereby power relations are perceived not for what they objectively are but in a form which renders them legitimate in the eyes of the beholder. (Bourdieu, 1990a:xxii)

Bourdieu’s misrecognition is related to misattribution (James, 2015) whereby agents fail to understand the underlying power relations at play.

Bourdieu demonstrates through empirical research that while ‘pedagogic action’ appears to create equal opportunities within education, this is not the case (Grenfell, 2012:156).

Rather the dominant classes determine the curriculum, language and cultural capital that are valued and assessed (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990). This misrecognition of the education system as fair and neutral makes ‘the educational system one of the fundamental agencies of the maintenance of the social order’ (Bourdieu, 1984:387). As Deer (2012:116) explains:

Explicit physical force is replaced by implicit social habits, mechanisms, differentiation and assumptions whose “natural” strength and legitimacy reside in the misrecognition of the arbitrary nature of their socio-historical emergence and reproduction.

It is such misrecognition which this Dissertation seeks to explore, as I sought to examine if students tend to accept current doxa without question. Indeed, as my data indicates, even if they may be aware of inequalities within education, some of the participants here appear to be resigned to these as the way things are.

These three concepts – doxa, symbolic violence and misrecognition – are forms of symbolic domination (Schubert, 2012) and allow us to examine how the social world functions. I now turn to Bourdieu’s theory of reproduction in education and explore how these concepts work alongside language (linguistic capital) and selection as ‘sophisticated mechanisms’ through which social advantage is transformed into educational advantage.

## Reproduction

The working-classes entering an ES that advances a façade of neutrality, find that they struggle to conform and may be classed as non-academic (Atkinson, 2012). As Bernstein articulates, education cannot compensate for society. Evaluating advantaged pupils who possess attributes favourable to school achievement against those who lack such attributes leads to ‘the notion of deficit’ (1970:345) so lowering the ‘expectations and motivations’ of both teachers and pupils. This ‘deficit’ perception leads to the ‘fixing of failure’ in these pupils (Reay, 2006:299) and may impinge on habitus-limiting expectations and self-confidence. Lupton and Hempel-Jorgensen, (2012:606) contend that children’s self-perception as learners, embedded within their habitus, may have a profound impact on their future orientation to learning. This ‘can create and amplify exclusion’ (Pollard and Filer, 2007:3), creating ‘subjective expectations’ and ‘truncating their educational destinies’ (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990:158). ‘Fixing’ of pupils, which may occur through ability-grouping, ‘classifies and defines them’ (McGillicuddy and Devine 2018:89) and symbolic violence is enacted upon them as they accept their positioning, legitimated by the

authority of the teacher. Commenting on one teacher's observation that high-achievers develop confidence, those in the middle get on with it, and lower-achievers are used to being 'at that end of the scale', McGillicuddy and Devine explain:

Positioning learners as used to being at that end of the scale is to assume a complicity, an acceptance of who they are and what they are to become, a symbolic act of violence in that the internalisation of the structure of ability grouping overtly positions children as subordinate in the classroom. (2018:96)

Bourdieu asserts such deficit construction of working-class pupils is not only symbolic violence, but also a form of misrecognition. Teachers may fail to recognise the powerful role that social background has in their appreciation of children's engagement with education. Thus the ES acts as 'huge classificatory machine... impos[ing] the legitimate exclusions and inclusions which form the basis of the social order' (Bourdieu, 1990a:x).

As the ES is misrecognised as neutral, the role of social origin in predetermining educational destiny appears not to be a contributory factor. Children are misrecognised as 'bright' or 'dim' rather than recognising that children's performances are 'socially, culturally and economically "made up"' (Ball, 2010:162). Grace, one of my interviewees, commented on how in nursery settings some advantaged children arrived in school ready to learn '*they'd been exposed to counting and language at home*'. These children are being primed to succeed. As already noted, Aoife stated:

*the ones that haven't had the same opportunities at home, they're put in the lower groups and the teacher differentiates based on this... like, initial opinion – and this makes this 'gap' get bigger and bigger between them.*

Aoife understands that educational differences are misrecognised with some children considered as 'gifted' rather than their advantaged backgrounds being acknowledged. Bourdieu and Passeron (1979:22) noted 'the greater or lesser affinity between class cultural habits and the demands of the educational system or the criteria which define success within it'. So education has been reinvented as 'an aspirational project for the self' (Reay, 2013:66) with those who do not succeed often labelled as lazy and/or lacking in aspiration. Hartas cautions:

Parents, no matter how good or effective they are cannot overcome structural problems of poverty to maximise their children's educational opportunities and life chances. (Hartas, 2015:3)

While schools claim that allocating pupils to groups is based predominantly on prior attainment 'elided with a notion of ability' (Dunne *et al.*, 2007:20), in practice many pupils with low prior attainment are placed in middle or higher sets. Dunne *et al.* (2007:24) also identified a 'strong social class effect on set placement' with pupils from higher socio-

economic backgrounds much more likely to be assigned to higher sets regardless of prior attainment. Similarly, Boaler *et al.* (2000:632) found that pupils from lower socio-economic backgrounds are disproportionately allocated to lower groupings. This confirms that:

... while this sorting process may be defined as objective, in reality it is a subjective undertaking, with non-academic factors playing a significant role in determining ability group level assignment. (McGillicuddy and Devine, 2018:89)

This, arguably, is misrecognition in action. Furthermore, not only do teachers tend to underestimate the extent to which pupils are misallocated ability-groups (Francis *et al.*, 2017) but there is limited, if any, mobility between sets or groups (Hallam and Ireson, 2007). This ‘consolidation of early disadvantage...widens the attainment gap’ (Dunne *et al.*, 2011:489) as children progress through school, as Aoife noted. Dunne *et al.* (2011) also question the reliability of teacher judgements in streaming learners, which is significant to these pupils’ future educational careers (Araújo, 2007). Indeed, Hallam and Parsons (2013:394) caution that decisions about ability groupings have consequences not only for individuals ‘but also for society as a whole as opportunities for social mobility are limited’. One of the first factors to consider here is pupils’ linguistic capital, and how the habitus embodies, and is embodied by, language and speech in every day bodily practice.

### **Language**

Using a theoretical model which interrelated linguistic capital and degree of selection, Bourdieu and Passeron bring to light the systematic relationship between social class and educational outcome. They proposed that:

the unequal social-class distribution of educationally profitable linguistic capital constitutes one of the best hidden mediations through which the relationship... between social origin and scholastic achievement is set up. (1990:114-5)

In ‘Reproduction’, they had intended to treat the pedagogic relation as ‘a simple communicative relation’ (1990:107) – hence the terminology of transmitters and receivers – but this was quickly challenged as it became obvious that this was completely inefficient as not all ‘receivers’ understood the message. Their reference to Well’s epitaph<sup>18</sup> is apt here:

---

<sup>18</sup> In Bourdieu and Passeron’s ‘Reproduction in Education Society and Culture’ (1990), one of the epitaphs at the beginning of Book 2, Chapter 1 ‘Cultural Capital and Pedagogic Communication’ is taken from H.G. Wells’ novel ‘Men Like Gods’ (1923).

When I think to you, the thought, *so far as it finds corresponding ideas and suitable words in your mind*, is reflected in your mind.  
(original italics, 1990:71)

Some children will ‘receive’ the message while others will not and this will be largely dependent on the hereditary transfer of linguistic and academic capitals that have been developed in their homes and which has/has not been absorbed as part of their habitus. Significant here is habitus-as-history and whether it has enabled appropriate linguistic skills for everyday-bodily-practice within the field of education. Bourdieu and Passeron show that language is not neutral but is, rather, an instrument of symbolic power with accent, grammar and speech idioms signalling class positions and with middle-class language accepted as ‘correct’ and valued. While the purpose of the school is apparently to teach and socialise pupils, Bourdieu emphasises that ‘schools teach students *particular* things and socialises them in *particular ways*’ (Schubert, 2012:184, original italics). Such particularity suggests that teachers will be most efficient if they have pupils who share their language style and are able to ‘decode’ the linguistic messages allowing those teachers to inculcate the ‘correct’ linguistic and cultural habitus. Working-class children who use colloquial language will automatically be disadvantaged as linguistic capital is the ‘primary principle underlying the inequalities in the academic attainment of children from the different social classes’ (1990:71). Bourdieu and Passeron question how such a system persists ‘even when the information transmitted tends towards zero’ (1990:107-108), with working-class children getting left behind as they fail to interpret the teacher’s intentions, expressed in language and practices to which they cannot relate. In this study, Emma, a self-identifying middle-class participant, experienced this with a group of English as Additional Language (EAL) pupils while on placement. They were lagging behind but not, Emma believes, through lack of ability:

*It was just hard for them to get out what they wanted to say ... I felt that they were falling behind because there's all that extra – well there's such a big barrier and it just took them longer to do things so they would just fall behind ... the teacher just expected them to get on with it.*

Lacking the linguistic capital to understand, these pupils are left behind, leading to increasing underachievement. Often, rather than teachers slowing the pace, pupils are made to feel they are failing in the classroom. This applies similarly to other disadvantaged pupils whose first language may be English but are unable to keep up with the progress/pace of the classroom.

Schools' heavy reliance on middle-class linguistic and cultural capitals (Reay, 2001:334), immediately distances working-class children from what is expected, so advantaging those more affluent. This contributes to reproducing inequalities by 'creating an illusion of democratization coupled with continuous processes of segregation and exclusion' (van Zanten, 2005:682). Middle-class parents invest in their children from early on, engaging in 'concerted cultivation...to stimulate their children's development and foster their cognitive and social skills' (Lareau, 2011:24) enrolling them in maths and language-related classes (cognitive) and music, drama and sports groups (social). Horgan, researching in NI, found that the greatest differences between the youngest dis/advantaged children related to 'learning-readiness' and linguistic competence; poor levels of speech and language development presenting in many schools in disadvantaged areas were 'shocking' (2007:11). 'Channelling and streaming' (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990:83), however, occurs from the outset with young children regularly 'selected' by linguistic capital. Children either have the linguistic capital required by school and are attuned to learning, or, even from the earliest stages, there is a 'mechanism of deferred selection which transmutes a social inequality into a specifically educational inequality' (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990:158). This affirms Bourdieu and Passeron's proposition that:

the success of all school education, and more generally of all secondary pedagogic work, depends fundamentally on the education previously accomplished in the earliest years of life. (1990:43)

The attainment gap widens as children move through school and working-class pupils 'disproportionately suffer the disadvantages associated with being poorly located within competitive educational hierarchies' (Dunne and Gazeley, 2007:412), demonstrating 'the educational mortality rate can only increase as one moves towards the classes most distant from scholarly language' (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990:73). van Zanten proposes that the middle-class are already advantaged as curricular content and the purpose of education has been 'strongly connected to [middle-class] interests and values' (2003:108). Thus, James (2015:106) argues, 'social difference is converted through educational action' with middle-class children appearing well-motivated and intelligent.

McGillicuddy and Devine (2018:89) note that higher ability-groups tend to receive both better teaching and a 'more content laden and challenging curriculum'. Despite this, Boaler *et al.*'s (2000) research found a third of pupils in higher-ability groups, were unhappy given the fast pace and high expectations teachers had of them. These pupils cited the tendency for procedural pedagogies with little emphasis on explanation alongside pressure to retain their placement – and status – within top groups. Teachers assigned to high-

achieving pupils may believe that these children are clever enough to grasp concepts independently without detailed explanations (Boaler, 1997). Wilkinson and Penney (2014:419) highlight the irony that in some cases, high-achieving pupils may in fact miss opportunities for ‘sophisticated and creative learning’. In contrast, Haberman (2010) observed the ‘mind-numbing, mundane, useless, anti-intellectual acts’ in which pupils in lower groups are often engaged. Pupils in these groups often encounter ‘transmission’ pedagogies and are upset and frustrated with teachers’ low expectations of them, while also aware that ‘their opportunities for learning were being minimised’ (Boaler *et al.*, 2001:638). These groups are unlikely to be taught by subject specialists and Francis *et al.* (2017) explain that frequent change in teacher it is not unusual for these groups. Boaler *et al.*, cite one lower-ability pupil’s reaction:

... they don’t think they have to bother with us. I know that sounds really mean and unrealistic, but they just think they don’t have to bother with us, cause we’re group 5. (2000:637)

Nuttall and Doherty (2010) assert that this can lead to pupils becoming disaffected and disengaged with schooling. These contradictory findings highlight a tension between school sectors that became apparent within my research. At times transmission pedagogies were used in Grammars as high-achieving pupils were ‘*spoon-fed*’ (Emma) and told to learn materials off-by-heart. While this did at times occur in Secondary schools, my participants talked of the emphasis placed on holistic development in Secondaries with Kate describing pupils being engaged and motivated through active learning strategies.

One of the key processes for reproduction is realized through the imposition of ‘legitimate’ exclusions and inclusions enacted through ‘unequal selection and unequal selectedness’ (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990:72). This particular attention to detail, differentiating between ‘selection’ and ‘selectedness’, epitomizes how Bourdieu and Passeron scrutinize practice, revealing the impact of social class and demonstrating the ‘fluid nature between structure and agency’ (Canny and Hamilton, 2018:639). Significant for these processes of selection and selectedness is linguistic capital, as ‘the understanding and use of language are the major points of leverage for teachers’ assessments’ (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990:73).

## Selection

Selection is usually an overt, objective process (a structure) based on universal criteria for categorisation such as an entrance test for a school; it becomes subjective should one choose to take it (agency). Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) also use the term ‘selectedness’

which is more abstract and concealed; they argue that the ES categorises children based on arbitrary assumptions taken to be ‘natural’ or common-sense, choosing some over others, so children whose parents read and relate positively with them are articulate, confident and may be viewed as clever and engaged; others with less parental-interaction and guidance may be perceived as unambitious or disinterested (see also Araújo, 2007; Jægar and Møllegaard, 2017). This may lead to the exclusion of certain categories of children ‘masked by the fact that the social function of elimination is concealed by the overt function of selection’ (1990:52). Indeed, Reay (2017:26) claims that the ES acts as a selection agency or as an ‘academic sieve’.

Archer *et al.* (2017:305) note that schools ‘engage in considerable work to either explicitly, or implicitly, channel pupils into making the “right choice”’. This pedagogic work, accomplished in school and congruous with family habitus and accumulated capitals, they argue, facilitates social reproduction. It encourages and enables high-achieving pupils, who Ball (2010) suggests have often had significant economic and cultural investment to acquire top-group status, to make demanding subject choices for examinations. Location of pupils by ability is misrecognised as ‘a reflection and a product of their ‘natural’ (innate) ‘talents’ (or lack thereof)’ (Archer *et al.*, 2018:122). Top-set pupils regularly make demanding subject choices for examinations – decisions viewed as ‘right’ and ‘natural’ – while lower-ability (frequently working-class) pupils often self-select out of more challenging examinations that might allow greater access to further educational opportunities. Archer *et al.* (2017:307) contend that this is symbolic violence in action, with such decisions being misrecognised as attributable to skill and talent on behalf of higher-ability (often middle-class) pupils or as ‘a result of their own failings’ on the part of working-class pupils.

Teachers play a significant role in pupils’ educational experiences and achievement (Dunne *et al.*, 2011). Bernstein suggested that:

the organisation of schools creates delicate overt and covert streaming arrangements which neatly lower the expectations and motivations of both teacher and taught. (Bernstein, 1970:344)

Ball (2010:157) asserts that schools are ‘distinctly class biased’ working both through organisational procedures and teacher expectations to produce ‘institutional classism’ which will favour some children over others. Teachers respond differently to pupils based on their perception of pupils’ abilities, whether or not these are accurate (Francis *et al.*, 2017). Indeed, Boaler *et al.* (2000:641) claim that expectations created by pupil placement

in a particular group override the teacher's awareness of a pupil's actual capabilities; pupils are *constructed* as successes or failures by the ability-group in which they are placed. Wilkinson and Penney (2014) argue that stereotyping comes into play with teachers 'pigeon-holing' learners – those who are high-achieving are clever and applied, while lower-achieving pupils may be considered limited and disinterested. Araújo (2007) purports that teachers tend to think of high-ability groups as comprised of 'ideal' pupils; not only are they capable, but are also perceived as having positive attitudes towards learning. She also reports that other factors can influence teachers' expectations, explaining that EAL pupils, despite being clever, engaged and interested, are channelled into lower-ability groups as these are considered more 'natural' given their linguistic skills may be limited, and they might keep other high-achievers back. Not all teachers agree with such decisions and Araújo cites one teacher's concern relating to social justice:

I've worked in systems where students who were in the lower groups have not had the same quality of teaching, or the same access, or the same materials ... *they've been second classed*. So, whenever anybody says setting, it reminds me, it sort of touches that nerve inside of me that thinks of inequality.  
(Araújo, 2007:250, italics added)

As previously argued, it is teachers who through the pedagogic work undertaken, 'funnel and filter students into set social spaces' (McGillicuddy and Devine, 2018:89), based on teachers' discernment and expectations. Moreover, this 'sorting process' is subjective and not necessarily based on academic characteristics (Muijs and Dunne, 2010).

In NI, the eleven-plus is a good example of this, as it validates academic selection providing the 'illusion of neutrality and independence' (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990:141) in education while also concealing 'the elimination which takes place without examination' (selectedness). What is masked are the various degrees of selection and exclusion that pupils have gone through by the time they reach eleven. Affluent children have often been valued within school and tutored outside school, while working-class children who have not had similar investment may decide they are not 'good enough' and may be less likely to achieve their potential. With respect to NI, Leitch *et al.* explain:

... the current system of academic selection favours those parents with the financial means to pay for private tutors to help their children prepare for the transfer test. (2017:51)

Middle-class parents 'hoard' opportunities using economic capital to benefit their children at the expense of those from less-advantaged backgrounds (McKnight, 2015). Consequently, the 'meritocracy' of the eleven-plus conceals social selection as academic selection 'legitimating the reproduction of the social hierarchies by transmuting them into

academic hierarchies' (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990:153). 'Selectedness' is also evident in recruiting student teachers, most of whom possess similar institutionalised capital. In NI, ITE applicants must demonstrate fluency and confidence in speech and manner at interview, embodying cultural capital to parallel their academic achievements. This demonstrates how the ES perpetuates itself through 'students equipped with the linguistic and cultural capital – and the capacity to invest it profitably – which the system presupposes and consecrates' (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990:99).

This 'selectedness' gives apparently objective results as it appears that those who lose out educationally locate the cause of their failure not in pre-existing social conditions and the biases constructed in the ES, but in themselves. These processes are both structured (by the field of education) and structuring (accepted by the habitus of those who succeed and those who fail). Furthermore, unequal selectedness may eventually nullify the effects of unequal selection by class as those working-class children who do succeed are often over-selected relative to their peers; this appears as, or is misrecognised as, social mobility, rather than 'surviving' the system.

Moreover, the curriculum taught to lower ability-groupings could be described as 'impoverished' which can lead to a lack of engagement and pupils' thinking and understanding is limited (Muijs and Dunne, 2010:392). In my research, Emma discussed how one disadvantaged school aimed to raise achievement by narrowing the curriculum. She objected:

*If you push Numeracy and Literacy and they're not good at those things they'll just think education's not for me, or I can't do certain things...*

This emphasis on core areas while important may deny these disadvantaged pupils access to the wider curriculum thereby potentially limiting and excluding them. Additionally, and as noted earlier, curricular breadth is regularly supplemented for middle-class pupils whose parents use economic capital to develop and secure their cultural capital through private music, art and dance lessons.

Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) examined the pedagogic action, the work of schooling, employed by institutions to deliver the cultural arbitrary, 'the taken for granted "culture", normative assumptions and power relations within an institution' (Archer *et al.*, 2016:300) which go unquestioned. This pedagogic action is a form of symbolic violence, 'insofar as it is the imposition of a cultural arbitrary by an arbitrary power' (Bourdieu and Passeron

1990:5). Pedagogic action is exercised by teachers who are ‘specialised agents’ (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990:57) and are ‘complicit within this process of socialisation’ (McGillicuddy and Devine, 2108:97). Moreover, Bourdieu and Passeron (1990:13) assert that teachers act with ‘pedagogic authority’, which they define as the:

power to exert symbolic violence which manifests itself in the form of a right to impose legitimately... the arbitrary power which establishes it and which it conceals.

Thus, teachers, as specialised agents, are ‘channelling and streaming’ children by ‘ability’ using ostensibly objective measures, which may actually be based on perceptions and expectations (Dunne *et al.* 2011:405). McGillicuddy and Devine (2018:97) assert that this process of symbolic violence ‘is most profound in its impact because of the seemingly ‘neutral’ manner in which it is implemented’. This ‘fixing’ of children into groups by those in authority, ‘classifies and defines them’ (2018:89). Furthermore, it establishes the high ability-group as ‘clever’. Archer *et al.* (2017:307) propose that such designation confirms a ‘relational construction’ of others being ‘not clever’. As already noted, the pupils accept these positioning as justified and the natural order of things. This is the subtle process of social reproduction at work:

So it has to be asked whether the freedom the educational system is given to enforce its own standards and its own hierarchies...is not the quid pro quo of the hidden services it renders to certain classes by concealing social selection under the guise of technical selection and legitimating the reproduction of the social hierarchies by transmuting them into academic hierarchies.

(Bourdieu and Passeron 1990:153)

This is the legitimation of social and academic positioning and as Archer *et al.* (2017:307) make clear, it is the working-class pupils who seem most likely to ‘internalise messages about who is/is not ‘good enough’.

Many people in NI believe in selection and Grammar schools as ‘turbo-chargers of social mobility’ (Sieghart, 2012). Reay (2006:291) dismisses such a fallacy: that schools alone can make a difference, asserting that the recent emphasis on school effectiveness – good teachers will enable children to progress so facilitating social mobility – is misguided. She suggests that the ES in the UK is ‘characterised by stasis, its intractable continuities rather than its fluidity’ (2006:294). This contradicts Goldthorpe (2007) who criticises Bourdieu for misconstruing contemporary education as reproductive as he presents evidence from the 1970s that education enabled upward mobility. Bourdieu vociferously challenges this and contends that contemporary ES ‘channel individuals towards class destinations that largely ... mirror their class origins’ (Weininger and Lareau, 2007:888). Reay suggests that

social mobility ‘operates as an effective form of symbolic violence, as a justification for growing levels of inequality’ (2013:665). The selection of children transferring to post-primary schools in NI is a perfect example of such misrecognition appearing as a meritocratic system providing equal opportunities for all. What is masked are the degrees of selection and exclusion that pupils have already undergone and the different habitus and capital they bring to this, continually advantaging the dominant class.

Bourdieu and Passeron maintain that teachers further social reproduction. However, rather than being complicit and active in social reproduction, it occurs ‘behind the backs of the agents engaged in the school system...and often against their will’ (Bourdieu, 1990a:ix). Bourdieu and Passeron make clear that the ES ‘monopolizes the production of agents appointed to reproduce it’ (1990:60) which may lead to ‘inertia’ in education. Teachers themselves have gone through processes of selection and selectedness and the ES equips:

the agents appointed to inculcate with a standard training... [and] teaching tools... as instruments of control tending to safeguard the orthodoxy of schooling. (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990:58)

Thus the curriculum, teaching materials and pedagogies have all been arbitrarily decided, and through their ‘happy unconsciousness’ (1990:108) teachers conserve the system. Furthermore, the most successful inculcation takes place through ‘implicit’ pedagogy where information is not explicitly shared. Rather than the ‘transmitter’ altering the pedagogic message, the onus is on the receiver (pupil) to have the ‘capacity to decode it’ (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990:99). This implies that the learners are expected to have the appropriate levels of linguistic and cultural capital and wider knowledge that may have been developed through their experiences at home, through books, travel, discussion, so allowing them the capacity to access the ‘pedagogic message’. This relates back to the (in)effectiveness of pedagogic communication, how ‘If the student fails to be what he ought to be... then all the faults...are on his side’ (1990:111-2). When pupils fail to meet teacher expectations, they come to believe they are undeserving, they are to blame, rather than recognising that the structure of the system may have disadvantaged them from the outset.

## Summing Up

While it appears that education is a level playing field, I have argued, following Reay (2011) and drawing on Bourdieu and Passeron (1990), that processes of selection and exclusion are entrenched from the outset. So, teachers arguably misrecognise processes

which lead to inequity within our selective system as those with economic and social means can ensure their children do not slide below the ‘glass floor’ (McKnight, 2015).

This chapter has outlined Bourdieu and Passeron’s theory of reproduction and explained some of the ‘sophisticated mechanisms’ used in its execution. These are achieved through the unquestioned acceptance of the doxa, misrecognised as ‘natural’, which often leads to symbolic violence. The school system valorises inherited cultural capital, particularly linguistic capital, and economic capital is deployed to push middle-class children ahead. I have demonstrated how ‘selection’ is used in schools and explained how the ES in NI transforms social advantage into educational advantage. The next chapter outlines perceptions of class and how neoliberal policies have led to misrecognition within education.

## **Chapter 5: Perceptions of Class**

### **Introduction**

In this chapter I pursue the argument that class is constituted of ‘complex processes and practices’ (Reay, 2006:289) which may help understand how class inequality within education in Northern Ireland (NI) is perpetuated. This chapter is in four sections. Initially I examine what class is, how it is understood, ascribed and largely ignored and then secondly, explain how Bourdieu understands class. The third section considers class in the classroom and demonstrates how neoliberal conceptions of the entrepreneurial self and government rhetoric have led to class being misrecognised within education, and society more generally. Furthermore, it presents research related to the invisibility of class in the classroom. The fourth section illustrates how we have become reliant on stereotypes provided by neoliberal discourses and considers prior research related to how class may shape student teachers’ expectations of learners.

### **What is Class?**

Class is something that we are born into and has a profound impact on our living conditions, aspirations, beliefs, sense of self and status within society. Yeskel (2008) defines social class as groups within society who share similar economic and social positions based on income, wealth and status in relation to others who may have more or less. Bottero (2009:8) concurs, ‘Class is about unequal resources and status, and the social hierarchies to which they give rise’. Key to these definitions is that class is relational, it is both subjective (how we experience it) and objective (dependent on our access to material and/or social assets) (Yeskel, 2008:4). Bourdieu, as noted in Chapter 3, contends that our habitus is both structured and structuring, and the same applies to our class habitus – certain things are considered within our reach, others are ‘not for the likes of us’(Loveday, 2015:572) and this is often dependent on our classed thinking.

Skeggs (2009) proposes two perspectives on class; the first derives from Marx’s (1867/1977) assertion that class is economically determined by an individual’s access to the means of production. Marx defined two groups – the bourgeoisie who owned and controlled the means of production and the proletariat who worked for them. The bourgeoisie were the ruling class and dominated the proletariat as, he argued, economic control leads to political and ideological control. Central to the Marxist conception of class

is an antagonistic relationship, a struggle between exploitation and control. Marx (1977, np) asserts that ‘It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness’. This can lead to an unquestioning belief that one’s position in society is determined and an acceptance of society as unequal and exploitative and this accords with the contention made in Chapter 4 that doxa impose on individuals ‘the sense of our place and the feeling of what is possible and what not’ (Walther, 2014:9). Marx’s definition of class is problematic as it is reductionist, at least in comparison to the accounts given by those below.

The second perspective attempts to ‘conceptualize occupational groups in a hierarchical order’ (Skeggs, 2009:36), initially conceived in the seventeenth century in order to assign a ‘value’ to people for taxes and governance. Sociologists, including Goldthorpe and Marshall (1992), have developed taxonomies of occupations, however such studies prioritising statistical research focusing on occupation:

... occlude[s] the more complex ways that class operates symbolically and culturally, through forms of stigmatisation and marking of personhood and value. (Savage *et al.*, 2013:222)

Taxonomies offer little insight into the way that class is lived and experienced. Rather than relying on the sociological perspective (Marx; Durkheim), Cannadine (1998) notes distinctions based on perceived social differences. He presents three models of class – that of a hierarchical society in which each person knows their place and the preservation of the stable social order is of prime importance; a tripartite society of upper, middle and lower classes; and, an adversarial version of a society based around ‘us’ and ‘them’. These, Cannadine argues, while ‘*imagined* versions of the social order’ (1998:103, original italics), have had durability and resonance in public thinking, due to the language used to describe these conceptions – the vocabulary of ranking and ordering – the language of class.

Cannadine emphasises that these are over-simplified representations, but capture common perceptions well. Indeed, in this post-modern society, there is a recognition that ‘social perceptions and social identities are multiple rather than single’ (Cannadine, 1998:97). Pakulski and Waters (1996) argue that class is ‘dead’, or as Beck contends, a ‘zombie-category’ (cited in Slater and Ritzer, 2001:216) that lives on in the minds of social scientists but lacks meaning in a world characterised by processes of individualisation, However, Cannadine (1998:109) asserts that:

class as hierarchy or as upper-middle-lower or as ‘us’ and ‘them’, class as ways of seeing society and seeing ourselves, is still very much alive.

It is also very much alive for those who feel the effects of class in their everyday existence with Skeggs (1997:7) suggesting that those who ‘ignore or make class invisible’ do so from a position of privilege and abdicate their responsibility to those who are impacted by the ‘deprivations and exclusions it produces’. Bottero suggests that class is an ‘inherently comparative concept’, ranking individuals in relation to one another and descriptions of class ‘generate distinctions of social worth’ (2009:10-11) which becomes very clear in my research. Skeggs (1997) agrees, explaining that class emerged as a means of categorising those who were ‘respectable’; to be respectable was to be ‘worthy’ and to ‘belong’ while also embodying moral authority – those fit to sit in judgement of ‘others’. So, ‘Respectability became a property of the middle-class individuals defined against the masses’ (Skeggs, 1997:3). Skeggs (2004) asserts that when class is defined through culture (what a person does and how they act), it becomes dislocated from the economic (their income or assets) and this in turn locates it within the moral (are they valuable members of society?). This sense of valuing individuals as moral and worthy becomes a key factor in classification by class (Sayer, 2005; Savage *et al.*, 2001), whereby representations of the masses of the working-class are often pathologised – as lazy or benefit-scroungers – which shapes our understanding of stereotypes, those ‘others’, not like us. In this study, Méabh, a self-identified middle-class student, suggested that working-class Secondary pupils ‘*Just don't try because everyone else isn't trying*’. When asked if they had been disadvantaged by the eleven-plus, she problematised the pupils rather than the process, ‘*They couldn't really be bothered working for it anyway*’ thereby exemplifying Méabh’s moral stance whereby she pathologises the working-class as lazy. Bottero (2009:10) cautions that such stereotyping can lead to ‘invidious comparison[s]’ and, ‘when people begin to talk about ‘class’ their accounts shift easily from social description, to social evaluation, to social abuse’, and such stigmatisation will be discussed further below. Atkinson proposes that, for Bourdieu, class is fundamentally about how the individual experiences social and cultural differences within society, and that each individual has a ‘need and desire to be recognised by others’ (2015:24) and his understanding of class is now explored.

## Bourdieu’s Understanding of Class

Bourdieu developed a new paradigm of class, which assumes ‘a cultural mode of analysis to produce understandings of class in terms of both process and structure’ (Archer and Francis 2006:31), used in the work of Skeggs (1998, 2004), Reay (2009), Savage *et al.*

(2015) and Atkinson (2015, 2017). Central to Bourdieu's interpretation of class is the continual competition between players, a view of society that is essentially agonistic (Wacquant, 2008:264). Bourdieu understood that is was:

only by being granted a name, a place, a function within a group or institution can the individual hope to escape the contingency, finitude and ultimate absurdity of existence. Human beings become such by submitting to the [according to Bourdieu] 'judgement of others, this major principle of uncertainty and insecurity but also, and without contradiction, of certainty, assurance, consecration'. Social existence thus means difference, and difference implies hierarchy, which in turn sets off the endless dialectic of distinction and pretension, recognition and misrecognition, arbitrariness and necessity. (Wacquant, 2008:265)

This (mis)recognition (explained in Chapter 4) is fundamental to class hierarchies, as to be valued or deemed worthy is to be judged so in relation to, and often at the expense of, others. Significantly, Bourdieu postulates that class is an arbitrarily assigned definition that conveys real social consequences (Skeggs, 1997).

Bourdieu asserts that it is the *access* that one has to resources that are the 'factors of differentiation' (1987:3) when it comes to class. As explained in Chapter 3, he contends that there are four factors, or capitals, economic, cultural, social and the fourth, symbolic. Atkinson (2017:3) defines symbolic capital as 'the power to have one's version of reality accepted and even taken for granted'. This legitimacy comes through acceptance of a capital's validity, whereby a property in central London is recognised to be more valuable than a similar property in Belfast (economic capital) or a degree from University of Glasgow might carry more kudos than one from another university (cultural capital); while arbitrarily decided these are symbolically more valuable. Furthermore, Bourdieu views an individual's location within society as multi-dimensional, so social position is determined not only by the volume of capitals possessed but also in how their 'portfolio' (Crossley, 2012:87) of various forms of capitals are composed. Savage *et al.* (2013:223) assert, this enables 'fine-grained distinctions' between people. Bourdieu demonstrates that class, while concerned with economic assets, is imbued with cultural and social differentiations which are fundamental to our culture and identity. Furthermore, individuals work to optimise the capital they have:

Individuals and families continually strive to maintain or improve their position in social space by pursuing strategies of reconversion whereby they transmute or exchange one species of capital into another.  
(Wacquant, 2008:271)

Class is produced through a dynamic relationship between classes, ‘one class’s advantage is another’s loss’ (Skeggs, 2009:36). For those who have limited capitals this may lead to cultural and symbolic domination in addition to economic exploitation (Reay 2014). Thus, for Bourdieu, class is implicit:

encoded in people’s sense of self-worth and in their attitudes and awareness of others – in how they carry themselves as individuals. (Savage, 2000:107)

Furthermore, Bourdieu saw a ‘direct link between position and disposition’ (Crossley, 2012:91). This, Bourdieu (1991:235) insists, means we have a tacit ‘sense of place’ or ‘class unconsciousness’, which often leads to an unquestioning acceptance of privilege or limitation. Helen, a mature, self-identified middle-class participant, demonstrated this in this study, in her perception of Grammar school entry requirements ‘*It’s well, “We have the cream of the cream and we only accept As”*’. Conversely, Aoife, a self-identified working-class participant, cited a struggling child comparing herself with advantaged peers ‘*This is hard for me and they’re saying it’s easy, so I obviously am stupid*’. This child accepts the doxa apparently unaware, understandably perhaps, of the additional advantages others have and most importantly believing this to be her ‘rightful place in the social world’ (Maton, 2012:57).

For Bourdieu, class is in continual formation, it is ‘made by and in the interests of those who have access to power and the circuits of symbolic production’ (Skeggs, 2004:3). Bourdieu contests that cultural characteristics ‘fix’ some groups while enabling others to be mobile and, significantly, class is not pre-determined, rather its is ‘a set of contestable relations; it is not a given, but a process’ (Skeggs, 2004:117). Sayer clarifies this well, explaining that the process of making class cannot be curtailed:

cultural and other non-economic forms of capital cannot themselves be directly bought, for they require processes of social osmosis, embodiment, learning and self-change which can take considerable time – generations in some cases. (Sayer, 2005:78)

This ‘process’ of making class builds on Bourdieu’s conception of class as constituted from volume and composition of various capitals along with one’s trajectory in social space as stocks of capitals in each sphere wax and wane over time. Atkinson (2015:33) maintains that as account is taken of the various determinants, this provides a more nuanced measure of class fractions. Bourdieu understood that there were ‘no rigid boundaries’, but that human nature constantly ‘carves up the world into categories and groups’ (Atkinson, 2015:55) and, as Cannadine stated, these are ‘*imagined* versions of the social order’ (1998:103). This recalls Bottero’s (2009) reference to ‘invidious

comparisons', we compete for recognition, to be deemed worthy, to be considered more valuable than others. As Bourdieu maintained, the symbolic power of class results in shame and embarrassment for some and a sense of entitlement for others (Savage *et al.*, 2015). One of the key strategies for securing advantage in the class competition has been investment in education and the next section will consider how a range of government discourses over the last thirty years have led to class 'disappearing' from view in schools.

## Class in the Classroom

This section first of all considers how neoliberal thinking has significantly impacted on education, before considering research demonstrating that class is often treated as 'invisible' in education, and outlining the consequences of this for student teachers.

Nowhere is there a more intense silence about the realities of class differences than in educational settings. (bell hooks, 1994:177)

Class, despite being ubiquitous, is not articulated. Indeed, as governments have progressively embraced neoliberal thinking over the last thirty years (Skeggs, 2004; Burn and Childs, 2016), the structural issues/concerns related to class (housing, labour market, migration as well as education), have increasingly been misrecognised through various discourses. These include discourses of marketisation, accountability, meritocracy, and individualisation which have led education to focus on parental choice, narrowing the achievement gap, raising aspirations, and social mobility (Reay, 2006; McGregor, 2009; Ball, 2018). As a result, the emphasis has moved away from the causes of inequality being perceived as structural, to making individuals responsible for their own problems (Gillies, 2005; Gorski, 2012). Increasingly the 'problem' is being attributed to those who are disadvantaged – they lack aspiration, they can do well if they work hard – so the onus is placed on the individual to succeed (Francis and Hey, 2009; Smyth, 2016). The solutions are increasingly left to schools to resolve. For example, the shift in policy and practice in the early 1990s led Barber to assert that:

whereas under the old order there was a tendency to blame the system, society, the class structure – anyone other than schools themselves – for underperformance, now there is no escape. (Barber, 1996:131)

This was evident in this study as Emma, a self-identified middle-class student who had herself struggled academically, talked of the pressure her teacher was under, even with young children in a disadvantaged school:

*They'd to have modelled writing things in their books as evidence, and I think the teacher was under a lot of pressure from the co-ordinator to meet targets.*

Such targets hold teachers accountable and increasingly the onus is pushed back onto pupils and their families to ensure that they achieve. In this section, I outline how ‘class’ has fallen out of use in political discourse around education as representations of class have led to stereotyping and a resulting ‘deficit culture’. This is leading to those already at a disadvantage being further disadvantaged through teachers’ lack of understanding and appreciation for the gulf that lies between the working-class habitus/culture and that from which they have come.

Archer (2011:136) claims there has been ‘an erasure of the language of social class’ which Atkinson (2015) attributes to three significant changes in modern society, namely the onset of post-industrialisation, the emergence of new cultural practices and the rise of neoliberalism. In the last forty years there has been a steady decline in the UK economy away from manufacturing towards service industries (Rhodes, 2016) resulting in clerical and managerial posts that require qualifications which has led to an expansion of education (Atkinson, 2015). There have also been significant changes to employment – many permanent jobs have been replaced by short-term, zero-hours contracts – which impacts both stability and community as younger people find it harder to get work that will support mortgages and family life. The upshot, the ‘knowledge economy’ emphasises education that develops ‘human’ capital, providing skills and qualifications to give individuals an edge in the employment market (Rizvi and Lingard, 2009).

New cultural practices have emerged due to various factors including the breakdown of communities arising from deindustrialisation leading some to seek work beyond their home communities, exposing them to different cultures, food and music. Access to the internet through mobile devices has opened up a world of art, media and fashion that may have previously been associated with particular classes (Savage *et al.*, 2015:101). For example, films often use classical music while stand-up comedy (once associated with working-men’s clubs) has become standard on primetime television. Indeed, reality television has broken down cultural/class barriers with politicians, sports and television personalities featuring in such programmes as *Strictly Come Dancing* which appeal across the social spectrum. Rising incomes (for some) and greater availability of credit has widened access to activities previously considered ‘highbrow’, such as cruises and festival-going (Atkinson, 2015). Arguably these practices have created cultural ‘omnivores’ and changes to ‘accepted’ tastes (Friedman *et al.*, 2015:2) which may render class less important if not defunct (Pakulski and Waters, 1996). While there may be a broader range

of tastes that appeal across classes, I suggest that class inequalities have not waned but are simply changed in form, particularly as the middle-class increasingly ‘manufacture’ academic advantage (Reay, 2011) through investing in education.

Deindustrialisation and new cultural practices are consonant with the neoliberal turn that has become embedded within society due to government policies (Angus, 2012).

Neoliberalism ‘seeks to create an individual who is an enterprising and competitive entrepreneur’ supporting a shift from the liberal concept of the self-interested individual who seeks to free herself from state intervention ‘to “manipulatable man” ... created by the state and encouraged to be “perpetually responsive”’ (Olssen *et al.*, 2004:136-137).

Furlong (2013:30) suggests that neoliberalism has ‘become the defining political and economic paradigm of our time’. It is contended that neoliberalism’s key themes –the primacy of the market, privatisation, individualisation – have become embedded in our ideas and practices (Hulme and Menter, 2011; Gillies, 2011), our habitus, and are made evident through the policy technologies of the ‘market, management and performativity’ (Ball, 2013:39).

These technologies lead to a ‘crisis of trust’ (O’Neill, 2002) as, in order to be accountable, professional practice prioritises control over integrity. A good example of such a technology is the development of competences as discussed in Chapter 2 which Maguire (2014:779) asserts may lead to ‘prescriptions about what constitutes best practice’ and, she argues, there is more emphasis on technical skills in an attempt to ‘teacher-proof’ classroom practice which may detract from a focus on teacher values and judgements.

This is clear in the shift in government discourses away from the language of class towards that of individual responsibility. However, Gillies (2005:83) suggests that despite theorists of modernity declaring the ‘irrelevance of class’, the gap between rich and poor is steadily growing. Theorists, including Beck (1992) and Giddens (1991), have argued that with the demise of secure employment, free movement of migrant-workers, the pervasiveness of globalisation and expansion of consumerism, there has been an opening of markets and an increased emphasis on the individual. Skeggs claims that successive governments have gradually manoeuvred to create an *‘individualist discourse’* (2004:81, original italics) with moral overtones. Terms such as ‘duty’ and ‘deal’ came to the fore (Fairclough, 2000:39), and those who do not honour their civic duties, are considered morally suspect (Skeggs, 2004). Thus, governments transfer their responsibilities onto others through political

discourses such as that of social exclusion which, Levitas suggests, emphasise the way in ‘which poverty inhibits or prevents social participation or the exercise of full citizenship’ (1998:128).

This ‘individualization of social life’ has been ‘highly instrumental in levering class off the academic agenda’ (Gillies, 2005:836). Indeed, Giddens (1991) proposes that within a meritocratic society people are ‘responsible risk-takers’ espousing their individual obligations.

From this perspective, prosperity derives from being the right kind of (middle-class) self, while poverty and disadvantage is associated with poor self-management. (Gillies, 2005:837)

Through this focus on the individual, middle-class experience is made normative (Savage, 2000) with the corollary that the disadvantaged are devalued and portrayed as deficient as ‘society has a duty only to *offer* not ensure opportunity’ (Francis and Hey, 2009:226, original italics). It is through such discourses, that ‘the culture [or habitus] of the working-class, rather than the structures ... create inequality’ and ‘are seen to be problematic’ (Skeggs, 2004:87). In this way, class divisions are drawn between those who take responsibility and those who need to be reformed. Indeed, in 2014, David Laws the Minister for Schools in the UK, commented on the underachievement of white working-class children:

Many of the problems with low attainment in school are due to factors beyond the school gate: parental support, of lack of it; parental aspirations; poverty in the home environment; poor housing; and lack of experience of life. (Laws, 2014:27)

While Laws acknowledges poor housing as a factor, his assertion locates the deficit with working-class parental attitudes. Skeggs (2004) argues powerfully that the rhetoric used by government has led to the dominant ‘legitimatis[ing] their own interests, to make moral claims’ (2004:95). So, the socially excluded are no longer victims but unable to self-govern, while poverty and disadvantage once viewed as issues of inequality have been reframed as individual ‘life choices and conduct’ (Gillies 2005:838). This pathologisation of the working-class and normalisation of middle-class values and experiences (Reay, 2006) is the ‘misrecognition’ of class, as Gillies (2005:840) explains ‘class remains implicit but it is made invisible thereby denying the validity to central issues of social justice’.

A raft of education policies relate to social mobility, intended to create a fairer society (Milburn, 2012) and provide opportunities for all (Greening, 2017). However, Yeskel argues that:

Despite the rhetoric of education being the path to economic stability and success, a closer look at the reality of the system reveals deeply embedded class inequality. (2008:7)

The educational system continues to perpetuate rather than reduce class differences and it creates a ‘deficit model of working-class achievement’ (Brown, 2013:678). Brown suggests that social mobility is premised upon the educational field being a ‘meritocracy’ where ‘social differences are removed to reveal innate character and ability’ (2103:688). This, he argues is a misconception, as to be achievable, the state would need to ‘level the playing field’ by eliminating external inequalities. This would need to take account of the curriculum and pedagogies experienced by different classed-groups as discussed in Chapter 4 rather than simply focussing on exam results, league tables and ‘performativity’ (Ball, 2003). Reay (2012) suggests this might be achieved through strategies including revalorizing working-class knowledge and broadening out what is considered educational success beyond academic qualifications. However, she cautions that:

The most intractable barrier to a socially just educationally system is the hearts and minds of the more privileged and powerful in society. As long as the upper and middle-classes remain invested in the belief of their own social and intellectual superiority they will continue to associate fairness in education with their own children winning what is an extremely unfair educational contest. (Reay, 2012:593).

Thus, rather than a meritocracy in the UK there is a ‘performocracy’ (Brown, 2013) in which success is what matters, based around a model of market individualism. This enables those (normally middle-class) with a greater ‘portfolio’ of capital to reap success as they bring ‘concerted cultivation’ (Lareau, 2011) to bear, investing in education and cultural knowledge which has become a key tactic in securing advantage in class competition (Bottero, 2009; Sullivan *et al.*, 2018).

Ball suggests that children’s school ‘performances’ are often not due to ability or effort, but the ‘outcome of a collective effort of the whole family’ (2010:158). This demonstrates the neoliberal focus on individualism, with the individual having to work on the ‘reflexive project of the self’ (Giddens, 1991). In this way, the education system functions as a ‘great sorting machine’ (Brown, 2013:691). Reay (2013) asserts that rather than addressing social inequalities, evidence shows that the UK remains one of the most unequal societies within

OECD countries, and indeed, the myth of social mobility she contends is ‘a crucial lynchpin in neoliberal ideology’ (2013:664).

### The invisibility of class within education

‘Class’ has become increasingly invisible in education, with teachers reluctant to discuss or acknowledge it (Hall and Jones, 2013), which permits inequality to fester, actively advantaging middle-class children over their working-class peers (Horgan, 2007). Reay expresses this powerfully, class is:

everywhere and nowhere, denied yet continually enacted, infusing the minutiae of everyday interactions while the privileged, for the most part, continue to either deny or ignore its relevance to lived experience.  
(Reay, 2006:290)

So, while education aspires to treat children from different socio-economic backgrounds on a level playing-field, this reluctance to acknowledge class and achievement is a perfect example of misrecognition. Reay (2011:2) describes this as ‘the equivalent of flattening the field of bumps before a small neighbourhood team takes on a professional one’. Class is implicit in our everyday social interactions and influences everything that we do, which is significant for teachers who, from their often privileged positions, may not recognise the impact their classed-practices can have on their pupils. Bourdieu (1984:387) explicitly challenges this perception of education as a neutral field:

Misrecognition of the social determinants of the educational career... gives the educational certificate the value of a natural right and makes the educational system one of the fundamental agencies of the maintenance of the social order.

That education should be perceived as an agency maintaining the social order is significant as this study intends to examine students’ perceptions of class within education.

Students often have limited awareness of the potential impact disadvantage can have on education (Horgan, 2007). Despite their lack of awareness, Reay asserts that:

class is deeply embedded in everyday interactions, in institutional processes, in struggles over identity, validity, self-worth and integrity even when it is not acknowledged. (2005:294)

It was these everyday interactions and institutional processes that this research aimed to examine.

Ingram (2018) has also researched such struggles over identity, exploring how working-class boys reconciled their identity with educational success. Her research is of particular interest to my study as Ingram was examining working-class boys who were academically

successful in both Grammar and Secondary schools in Belfast (NI). This was significant in that there are certain commonalities with some of the participants in my study which includes some academically successful working-class students and, of course, the two educational fields of Grammar and Secondary schools. Ingram investigated the ‘connection or disconnection between the influences of home/neighbourhood and the influences of school in shaping identity’ (Ingram, 2018:3) of working-class boys. Using innovative visual methodologies, including video-elicitation and plasticine model-making, boys created their own ‘visual representations of their identities’ (Ingram, 2018:92) allowing her insight to the differing ways in which they viewed themselves both inside and outside school. This enabled Ingram (2018:218) to better understand how these boys’ habitus, their successful learning identities, were affected by the educational fields, by ‘their experiences within, and their relationship with, the school’. From this research Ingram constructed a ‘habitus typology’ developing an understanding of the complex processes involved in negotiating two distinct and ‘not wholly compatible fields’ (2018:63).

Ingram maintains that for some, particularly middle-class, pupils there is a high degree of congruence between their habitus and what is expected in school, which ‘purvey[s] middle-class values’ (2018:66) and allows these pupils to move effortlessly in this field. There may, however, be tension or resistance in how working-class pupils’ habitus negotiate the educational field, causing ‘habitus interruptions’ which become more pronounced in academically-oriented Grammar schools. In these instances, Ingram argues that there are four responses available to the habitus in how it incorporates the structures of the field. She suggests that there are two ‘disjunctive’ responses, whereby the habitus incorporates ‘the schemes of perception’ from one field and rejects the other .The first of these is the ‘abandoned’ habitus in which, Ingram argues, the structures of the new field (in this case the field of education) usurp the original habitus; this might lead to a working-class pupil adopting middle-class accent, mannerisms and attitudes. The second is the ‘reconfirmed’ habitus, which effectively rejects the structures of the new field – the two fields are misaligned and the primary habitus overrules efforts to change it. This may well lead to tension, or conflict within the educational field. Alternatively, there are two ‘conjunctive’ responses: the ‘reconciled ‘habitus which integrates the differing schemes of perception between the two fields allowing the individual to navigate both successfully, or the destabilised habitus in which the individual ‘oscillate[s] between two dispositions and internalise[s] conflict and division’ (Ingram, 2018:69).

This is a fascinating study that provides nuanced understandings of how the habitus negotiates being working-class and academically successful, particularly in the Grammar field. While there are certain similarities between Ingram's research and this study, the majority of participating students here (with a few notable exceptions) have demonstrated a congruent habitus with their post-primary school. This is one of the reasons why I have undertaken this study as students who have been educationally successful are now going on to teach pupils who may find that their habitus are discordant with the field they are entering – that of education – and they may often be unfamiliar with the rules of the game, the expectations and doxa they will encounter. Hence I argue that it is essential that students come to understand their privilege and to become aware of the ways in which they may 'misrecognise' the supposed fairness of the education system in NI. Previous research into students' reactions to (dis)advantaged pupils will be considered below. But first, as has been shown, government discourses, including those of social exclusion and social mobility, insinuate that lack of success is caused by individual behaviours and attitudes which has another unwelcome consequence – it creates particular representations of class which act as stereotypes.

## Stereotyping

This section initially explains how stereotypes can represent others in a negative way. It then demonstrates that such representations of groups may influence how they are perceived within the field of education. This reinforces the deficit culture outlined above. Finally, I consider how government discourses create deficit constructions of working-class pupils.

Blum (2004) defines stereotypes as false generalisations arising from social or cultural processes, that assign members of a group particular attributes – Asian students are hard-working, Americans are loud –views that are often 'resistant to counterevidence' (2004:288). Martin *et al.* (2014:1777) argue that the value of stereotypes 'lies in their capacity to act as mental shortcuts'. Beeghly (2015:680) maintains that we use these general representations to categorize individuals and, from this, form expectations about them. As false generalizations, Blum argues stereotypes 'are a form of morally defective regard of persons' (2004:271). Even when favourable, such as a teacher perceiving Asian pupils to be hard-working, an Asian pupil requiring support may be disregarded by the teacher as her preconceived schema would categorise this pupil as successful (Czopp *et al.*, 2015). Furthermore, this pupil may feel 'depersonalized' as the teacher may not view her

as an individual (Czopp *et al.*, 2015:454). Thus stereotyping may contribute towards prejudice as it ‘involves a negative affect toward a group, or a disposition to disvalue it’ (Blum, 2004:254).

Stereotyping may be utilised as a means of ‘systemic oppression’ (Gorski, 2012:304) as ‘individual attitudes coalesce into popular perception’. This, Blum asserts, may lead to ‘moral distortions’ common to all stereotypes, including moral distancing, inability to see a group as diverse and ‘masking individuality’ (2004:274). This is problematic as the disenfranchised find it more difficult to dispel stereotypes than the privileged who often produce counter-narratives defending their advantage (Wooddell and Henry, 2007). Bauman (2005:78) asserts that the dominant have clear consciences ‘reached by the twin measure of moral condemnation of the poor and the moral absolution of the rest’. Skeggs proposes that stereotypes can be a form of misrecognition. She maintains that:

Representations are powerful tools for both revealing and concealing the attribution of value to particular cultures and persons, giving us frameworks by which we mis/recognize and interpret others... Representations are central to inscription, positioning, embodiment of value, exchange and the perspectives we take. (2004:99)

This is evident as advantage is often viewed as ‘ascribed rather than achieved’ (Skeggs, 2002:4) while those within the ‘circle of privilege’ (Choules, 2007), take their social advantages for granted – and I argue, this often pertains to students. Misrecognition also occurs at the bottom of the social hierarchy where the working-classes are ‘positioned and fixed’ (Skeggs, 2004:4) through the neoliberal discourses outlined above. Thus, structural inequalities are ignored and instead the poor and marginalized are perceived as ‘deficient social type[s]’ (Bottero, 2009:7). Mac an Ghaill (1996:302), researching with disadvantaged pupils, objected to academics and teachers locating lack of educational success within working-class pupils rather than in factors beyond their control. As one of his participants stated, ‘what is really dangerous is that [academics] have the power to create these images’ (1996:302). Through stereotyping reinforced in government discourses and educational policies, social class has been euphemized and translated into personal and cultural deficiencies, regarded as a ‘culture of poverty’. This assumes that the disadvantaged share a ‘consistent, predictable set of values and behaviors’ (Gorski, 2012:305). This paradigm is disseminated, Gorski (2008) argues, through two strategies, firstly, by drawing on established stereotypes and then through disregarding systemic conditions that reproduce educational (and social) inequalities. This is problematic within Initial Teacher Education (ITE) as, Ladson-Billings (2006:105) asserts, it has led to

students espousing a ‘poverty of culture’ whereby they use the ‘culture of poverty’ as an excuse for failing to meet the needs of pupils from poorer home backgrounds. Bottero (2009:14) emphasises that ‘class’ is always about more than just describing social conditions,’class labels are not just attempts to reflect the social world, but are also attempts to shape it’.

This stereotyping of learners, due to class, gender and/or race, which may construct difference as ‘deficient or deviant’ (Bhopal and Rhamie, 2014:319), amplifies inequalities. ‘Educational channelling and streaming’ (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990:83) can be all too clearly seen in schools and Gillborn argues that stereotyping may result in:

inequalities [that] become encoded as a *personal quality* – a deficit within the child – rather than as a *product* of discriminatory social processes. (Gillborn, 2010:273 original italics)

The ‘fixing of failure’ in these pupils (Reay, 2006:299) may impinge on habitus-limiting expectation and self-confidence creating subjective expectations as explained in Chapter 4. Archer (2008:97) suggests that policy discourses of raising standards and achievement focus on testing and performativity placing ‘primary responsibility for action (and hence ‘blame’ for low aspirations/achievement) with pupils and parents’. Such policies simply intensify ‘social class polarisation’ (Gazeley and Dunne, 2007:413). Gorski (2012:313) argues that such ‘deficit ideology’ comes about not through the gap in achievement but due to the inability of the working-class to access opportunities. In the current ‘individualized and competitive culture’ (Reay, 2009:24) while the achievement gap is acknowledged, there is little recognition of the intense middle-class preoccupation with educational achievement, where failure is unacceptable. In this way, stereotyping, government discourses and educational policies that disparage the working-classes are acts of symbolic violence:

If there is any terrorism, it is in the peremptory verdicts which, in the name of taste, condemn to ridicule, indignity, shame, silence ... men and women who simply fall short, in the eyes of their judges, of the right way of being and doing; it is in the symbolic violence through which the dominant groups endeavour to impose their own life-style. (Bourdieu, 1984:511)

Many disadvantaged children ‘fall short’, in the eyes of students who have not considered the social inequalities these children would need to overcome in order to meet the expectations placed on them. Often there are deficit constructions of working-class pupils and these will now be discussed.

### Deficit constructions of working-class pupils

Garmon (2004:202) maintains that the beliefs and attitudes student teachers bring to ITE serve to act as ‘filters for subsequent learning’, akin to Bourdieu’s habitus. Given that students have been academically successful, attributing this to their own intelligence and hard work, research has found that they often misrecognise underachievement in others less-advantaged than themselves as lack of aspiration, or laziness (Mills and Keddie, 2012; Thompson *et al.*, 2016). Students can be naïve and may hold stereotypical views of working-class learners, believing that these learners ‘bring attitudes that interfere with education’ (Sleeter, 2001:95). Santoro and Allard (2005:868) identify that students, at ease in the dominant culture, may not have questioned the power relationships that have enabled their academic success; they are ‘fish in water’ (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992:127). Indeed, Picower (2009:197) asserts that through their life experiences students have gained ‘hegemonic understandings’ about culture and difference. These ‘hegemonic understandings’ refer to students’ internalized ways of making meaning about how society is organised, through habitus and doxa which as Deer (2012:116-7) explains, ‘requires that those subjected to it do not question its legitimacy’.

Thompson *et al.* (2016) assert that educators ‘often lack a critical perspective on context’ (2016:219) relying instead on their middle-class norms and students often hold ‘deeply ingrained’ attitudes to disadvantage and poverty. They suggest that defining the issue in terms of pupils’ lack of ability to achieve rather than considering barriers that may impede achievement leads students to ‘deficit thinking and stereotyping’ (2016:216). Indeed, in this research, Orlaith attributed her working-class peers’ failure in the eleven-plus to them ‘*not being bothered*’. As shown above, stereotyping may construct difference as ‘deficient or deviant’ (Bhopal and Rhamie, 2014:319) so amplifying inequality. Mills (2009) researching students’ dispositions towards social justice in schools, found that disadvantaged pupils are attributed with deficits ascribed through their social class with less expected of them. She maintains that schools ‘compound this educational inequality’ (2009:281) by streaming pupils in ability-groups. This is of real concern, as this doxa may lead to disadvantaged pupils internalising and accepting ‘ideas and structures that tend to subordinate them’ (Connolly and Healy, 2004:15), a form of symbolic violence. Thus, working-class pupils can be stereotyped by teachers who assume everyone should hold middle-class values and attitudes (Mills, 2008a:84) and who do not relate to their pupils’ home contexts (Thompson *et al.*, 2016). Furthermore, Lampert *et al.* (2016:37) suggest that middle-class teachers may send pupils ‘messages about the distribution of power and one’s

place within society' so limiting these pupils' habitus and educational trajectories. Therefore, schools can be limiting or liberating (Van Galen, 2010), dependent on the habitus and classed-experiences that shape such encounters. Dunne and Gazeley (2008) draw attention to the lack of preparation ITE courses offer around working-class and disadvantaged issues and I now go on to outline some of the ways in which class may shape students' expectations of learners.

### **How social class shapes students' expectations of learners**

The pervasiveness of misrecognition in education led me to encourage students to question their own 'positioning' (Mills, 2008b:50) and examine their assumptions. 'Typically, white middle-class prospective teachers have little or no understanding of their own culture' (Ladson-Billings, 2006:96), rarely interrogating their privileged status due to the homogeneity of population and lack of diversity within ITE (Montgomery and Smith, 2006). Having experienced academic success, students' habitus will likely be attuned to that of the educational system (Hoadley and Ensor, 2009). Mills (2008a;2008b) explains that students often fail to understand how their privileged positioning has contributed to their academic success, misrecognising this as talent and hard work. Bourdieu and Passeron assert that the school 'confers on the privileged the supreme privilege of not seeing themselves as privileged' (1990:210). One student interviewed by Mills (2008b:54) noted it was the 'weightlessness' of her positioning, her unacknowledged privilege, which led her initially to view less-privileged learners through a deficit lens and this constructed learners as the 'problem' (Santoro, 2009). Similarly, Dearbhla, a self-identified middle-class student interviewed for this study, said of pupils in a disadvantaged school, '*Children were very uninterested and didn't want to learn*'. She has come through a highly-selective system here in NI and like most student teachers has succeeded academically (Lambe and Bones, 2006). Hall and Jones (2013:420) assert that that 'the difficulty many people have in articulating social class is part of its enduring power' which can be seen in research examining how class shapes students' expectations of learners.

Mills (2009:282) suggests teachers have a significant role in 'effect[ing] change in the lives of children' which may enable them to redress injustices. If this pertains, and I suggest it does, this addresses Bourdieu's critics' claim that habitus is static and any implication thereof that there would be no point in trying. Mills (2009) research on social justice in education found that students held lower expectations of disadvantaged learners while priority was given to the 'socially conforming' (middle-class) groups. Mills

(2008a;2009) surmised that students' pre-existing dispositions are instrumental in shaping their expectations of learners, and despite completing similar ITE courses, some are keen to transform disadvantaged pupils' experiences while others accept the status quo. Garmon (2004) proposed three dispositional factors – openness, self-awareness/self-reflectiveness, and commitment to social justice – which he argues are important predictors of students' readiness to develop sensitivity to pupils from different social and cultural backgrounds from their own. Garmon cautions that education courses and placement experiences may be ineffective in changing students' perceptions but may simply reinforce stereotypical views for those who do not display openness to change. In this study Orlaith, a self-identified middle-class participant, exemplified this, commenting on disadvantaged children's lack of engagement, '*the rest of the class are doing maths, they just sit there and don't do anything*'. She fails to account for potential barriers that may inhibit their learning.

Hall and Jones (2013) examined beginning teachers classed experiences working in schools. The participants in their study had no experiences beyond their own middle-class education until they taught in working-class schools. They found these teachers reluctant to talk about class, and when pressed claimed 'I don't feel particularly affiliated to a social class' (2013:423). Such statements however belied the research findings as these participants sought strategies to deal with their classed-selves including normalising middle-classness, distancing oneself from one's class and struggling to talk about class openly. Their attempts to make class 'invisible' had various impacts including overlooking important class-based differences between teachers and learners and failing to recognise 'the troublesome and complex role' class plays within education (Hall and Jones, 2013:426). It was interesting in this research to collect similar data. When asked what social class she came from, Grace, one of my participants, immediately stated '*working-class...because everyone goes out to work*'. Asked if, as a potential teacher, she might be considered middle-class, she replied that she wasn't '*posh or wealthy*' and to claim middle-class status '*might seem a bit ... pretentious*'.

Gazeley and Dunne's (2005; 2007) research focused on the significant differences in outcomes experienced by pupils from different social classes. Students acting as school-based researchers explored their understandings of class and underachievement interviewing teachers and pupils in placement schools. This led to a greater 'awareness of [students'] preconceptions about the influence of the home on educational achievement'

(Gazeley and Dunne, 2007:410) as well as providing insights into the role of the teacher in constructing pupils as ‘underachieving’. Initially, Gazeley and Dunne reported that students resisted notions of class and tended to associate ‘deficit’ attitudes with working-class pupils – they were uninterested and poorly motivated – while middle-class learners were considered to have more positive educational ‘orientations’ (2007:415). These student-researchers observed that many teachers held stereotypical views about pupils and their parents, favouring the middle-classes. This ‘tendency of teachers to displace the causes of underachievement from aspects of their pedagogy was explicitly connected’ to the teachers’ classed-background (Gazeley and Dunne, 2007:419). Their research concluded that ITE is not effectively preparing students to address ‘the most persistent of educational inequities, the social class attainment gap’ (2007:421). Gazeley and Dunne suggest, like Reay (2006), that there is an urgent need to acknowledge classed processes and examine how these operate in schools and through teachers in order to address working-class underachievement.

More recent research into ITE courses in England and Scotland explored the views held by students relating to poverty and achievement (Ellis *et al.*, 2016; Thompson *et al.*, 2016). These studies show that students generally associate low achievement with family backgrounds and cultural factors rather than with either school or socio-economic issues. Four potential reasons for pupil underachievement were identified by middle-classed participants in Thompson *et al.*’s (216:223) research including ‘parental deficit’, ‘student deficit’, school responsibility, and socio-economic factors. This illustrated that students see aspirations (of both pupil and their family) as more important than class, and fail to take account of the link between class and (under)achievement. Ellis *et al.* (2016:496) recognise that students’ social and cultural assumptions must be challenged if the ‘long-established patterns of belief’ are to be changed. These studies show that students come to ITE with beliefs and attitudes (*habitus*) that are in keeping with the dominant education system. As Lupton and Hempel-Jorgensen state:

Teachers need the tools to be able to interrogate the ways in which economic and social class... affect [pupils’] experiences of learning, as well as the ways in which performance and competence pedagogies, applied in specific socio-economic contexts, can serve to reinforce hierarchies and inhibit learning.  
(2012:616)

In order for them to recognise how class is implicit in our everyday actions and relationships, students would first need to acknowledge their privileged positions as academic achievers and interrogate the benefits and advantages their class affords them.

Maybe then they will be in a position to question the stereotypical views held of working-class learners and understand that teachers' expectations of pupils are powerful means of raising (or lowering) aspirations and achievement. My intention is that this research will be the first step in helping students to recognise their classed positioning and to consider the educational inequalities that are reproduced through our current system.

## Summing Up

This chapter has examined some understandings of class and the significance it has as experienced rather than simply a categorization. Bourdieu's view of class was outlined and his understanding of education as a key strategy for securing advantage in society led to the next section on class in the classroom. Here, I demonstrated how neoliberal thinking has significantly impacted on education, and this has largely made class 'invisible' in education. This has implications for students and was one of the concerns I wished to address through this study. To do so, it was important to outline previous research on students' positioning as this informed my research. Given that students have been academically successful, they have been 'winners' in the education game, and so it was essential that I examined particular representations of class which act as stereotypes as these are used to enable the misrecognition of social class and can lead to deficit perceptions of working-class pupils. This chapter concluded by considering prior research on how class shapes students' expectations of learners. The next chapter outlines the methodology I chose for conducting my research.

## **Chapter 6: Methodology**

### **Introduction**

This chapter begins with the research design and context explaining how I aimed to explore students' understanding of class and selection and their role in creating educational inequalities while hoping to raise student teachers' consciousness of how their attitudes, and resulting actions, might reproduce inequalities. I then provide further theoretical context as I outline Bourdieu's approach to research followed by his proposals for an examination of practice. Recognising that I, too, am a product of the field of education in Northern Ireland (NI) and have to continually question the doxa around which that field, and my habitus, have been constructed, a short section on reflexivity is included. This leads into the methods used and I conclude by taking account of ethical considerations and measures of goodness for research using the approach outlined here.

### **The Research Design and Context**

In designing empirical research to address how I might begin to understand the processes whereby class and selection create educational inequalities, and how students might become more aware and cognisant of these processes, I engaged in a 'sense-making process that would take account of a multitude of dynamic elements and interactions' (Fox and Slade, 2014:552). Current government policies (DENI, 2009; 2011) focus on raising attainment and narrowing the achievement gap between middle- and working-class pupils with Avis (2006:111) warning that this focus on improving educational practice means 'a social-economic problem becomes transmogrified into an educational one'. Indeed, in classroom-observations of students and some of the brief data extracts already included here, I have noted that many ascribe low-achieving pupils' difficulties to lack of interest or aspiration rather than recognising that there may be underlying issues affecting pupils' performance and attitudes to school (Lupton and Hempel-Jorgensen, 2012). I wanted the outcomes of this inquiry to lead to consciousness-raising so students might have a better understanding of the learners they encounter thereby leading them to question why our schools are failing these children (Waters, 1998).

This led to the over-arching research question:

- To what extent is it possible to enable student teachers to recognise how ‘social class’ and cultures of academic selection may create inequalities in education in NI?

Initially, I had considered undertaking Action Research, but realised that this was not feasible with the various demands made of the students and my own teaching schedule. It could be easy to be over-ambitious and so, rather than aspiring to an overtly critical and transformative approach, I hoped that the outcomes of this research might lead to interventions that caused students to alter their thinking and action in order to avoid reproducing injustices. My aspiration was that the outcomes of this research would encourage future students to think more carefully about educational inequalities, in keeping with the GTCNI’s aim that teachers should be reflective and activist professionals. My plan was for this study to inform changes to the B.Ed. curriculum and requirements for students on placement, encouraging them to interrogate their experiences of how class and cultures of selection impact on learners in schools, as will be explained in the final chapter.

Tawney, writing in 1931, asserted:

Initial teacher training has lost its way in relation to social class and until it begins to discover the central role class plays in education social class will remain ‘the hereditary curse’ of English education. (cited in Reay, 2006:303)

Nearly eighty years later, I am concerned that this still applies. Through this research I begin to address this fundamental task of discovering the central role that class plays in education with respect to examining students’ habitus and how their attitudes towards class, as often demonstrated through academic selection, may allow inequalities in education in NI to continue.

Geelan proposes that:

the tension between our values and aspirations, on the one hand, and perceived shortcomings of our practice, on the other, is the dynamo that drives our attempts to improve our practice through thoughtful inquiry. (2001:180)

In order to develop such ‘thoughtful inquiry’ I adopted aspects of a critical/constructivist perspective within an interpretative paradigm, as such an approach had the potential to reveal underlying social relations (Harvey, 1990), examining how structural and ideological forms affect them. I wanted to make visible ‘the “silent” demons lurking behind the institutional practices in public education’ for these are often misrecognised and perpetuate ‘an already neutral state of mind about the world of education and its goals for society’ (Waters, 1998:23). Rather than maintaining the ‘illusion of neutrality and

independence of the school system' (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990:141), my research intended to encourage students to question assumptions and identify the doxa, often sources of inequalities, that they might misrecognise as 'normal'. Fook proposes that this may be facilitated through critical reflection, which:

enables an understanding of the way (socially dominant) assumptions may be socially restrictive, and thus enables new, more empowering ideas and practices. Critical reflection thus enables social change beginning at individual levels. (Fook 2006:4)

As I believe reality to be socially constructed rather than an entity that can be observed and measured objectively, this research is conducted within an interpretivist paradigm, using qualitative data. I follow Guba and Lincoln (1994:110) in that 'realities are apprehendable in the form of multiple, intangible mental constructions, socially and experientially based, local and specific in nature'. This signifies that meaning is socially constructed through interaction with others. As Lander (2011:354) asserts, 'Socially constructed meaning is mediated through some sort of cultural lens which will be influenced by the students' social and cultural background', and the lens employed here will be Bourdieusian. I wanted to facilitate interaction with participants that would move beyond what they immediately thought or said, to engage with their attitudes and perceptions and to come closer to an understanding of *how* they know, made evident through their practice. This led to the use of methods that would be conversational and interpretative in nature (Guba and Lincoln, 1994) in order to give participants a voice so that I could begin to understand their perceptions and attitudes towards class and selection.

This interpretative perspective supports the use of abductive approaches in providing a 'best explanation' of the meaning of the phenomena observed. As Morgan (2007:71) suggests abductive reasoning moves 'back and forth between different approaches to theory and data' seeking the most likely explanation. In this research, interpretivism seeks to explain how and why agents create social meaning using Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, field and capital, alongside the data generated. Åsvoll (2014:291) suggests that abduction 'implies looking for and exploring potential explanatory patterns within the facts of a phenomenon'. This approach allowed me to bridge the gap between deductive and inductive approaches and meant that, as the researcher, I had to make intuitive leaps to allow me to offer a satisfactory interpretation of the findings. This led to a 'dialectical relationship' (Galman, 2009:473) between interpretations which were reviewed using *a priori* themes alongside analysis of data, in a mutually clarifying, iterative manner.

Working in a small university college of approximately 1,000 students, primarily concerned with four-year undergraduate ITE programmes (primary and post-primary), I am responsible for the organisation and preparation of students for placement-learning in schools. As Nolan (2014a) indicates, students view these placement experiences as the most significant part of the ITE course and a vital influence on their developing professional practice and nascent teacher identity. Brown (2008) however, cautions that increasingly, placements are about compliance and regulation, and as highlighted in Chapter 2, it is important that they go beyond a technicist approach (Maguire, 2014). Students may tend to emulate practice observed without question (Kriewaldt and Turnidge, 2013) often accepting doxa unthinkingly, especially as they view the co-operating teacher as critical to their success on placement (Clarke *et al.*, 2014). While many practising teachers are critical in their thinking and practice, others, as Chapter 5 has shown, may misrecognise the cultural and social capital that learners bring to school as ‘ability’. Thus, my research sought to interrogate students’ perceptions of NI’s selective education system and to explore whether they were aware of how class might (dis)advantage pupil achievement.

The participant group for this research were third year student teachers as those in the earlier stages tend to be more concerned with the technical aspects of teaching and their own facility to plan and manage classes (Day 1993) than with thinking critically about their nascent practice. This group were chosen as they have more experience of reflecting on their practice, generally have greater awareness of pupils as learners and a budding understanding of the socio-political contexts in which children learn (Edward-Groves and Gray, 2008). My own experience has been that, when questioned to explain pedagogical or sociological issues, students at this stage can articulate and rationalise their practice following reflection. Final year students were considered but discounted as the research was to be conducted over a full academic year and as final year students have longer placements and more significant pressures, it may have been difficult to ensure participation. An additional factor was that, while known to the third year cohort, I had no teaching or assessment with this group so going some way to reducing ‘power relations’ within the tutor-student relationship (Lander, 2011:355), as discussed later. The research was conducted in three stages: a survey of the full student cohort (128) in early December; focus groups held in early January (as the cohort began a lecture series on Education and Inequality) involving 17 volunteers and, finally, 10 semi-structured interviews conducted

with individuals (following their four month period of placement and exams) from May to June.

The first survey phase of the research was exploratory as I aimed to get a sense of students' perceptions of, and attitudes towards selection and class. This survey was also designed to provide background information and so it investigated this cohort of students' classed-backgrounds, academic histories, and views on selection within schools, to give a baseline data set. The survey was also intended to allow me to develop a better understanding of students' thinking around class and selection so enabling themes and questions for the second and third stages of the research to be developed and refined. These latter phases employed focus groups and interviews respectively to further probe into the 'how' and 'why' questions (Guest *et al.*, 2013:21), so adding depth and richness allowing me 'to deal with the complexity of social phenomena' (Punch, 2009:294) and factors that impact on students' perceptions. Gathering data in these ways allowed for 'crystallisation' which, as Richardson explains:

combines symmetry and substance with an infinite variety of shapes, substances, transmutations, multidimensionalities, and angles of approach. Crystals grow, change, alter, but are not amorphous. Crystals are prisms that reflect externalities *and* refract within themselves, creating different colors, patterns, and arrays, casting off in different directions. What we see depends upon our angle of repose. (Richardson, 2000:934)

This matches my positioning as I am not aiming to produce or believe I could produce a single, valid truth but I want to recognise the 'multidimensionalities' around the issues explored. Crystallisation is very much in keeping with Bourdieu's habitus, as 'reflecting externalities' while also having the facility to 'cast off' in different directions. The next section outlines Bourdieu's approach to research which was consonant with my approach as his concepts help:

to unearth engrained educational issues, such as inequalities regarding access to education or educational trajectories of the social classes, and the ramifications of the different opportunities derived from such differentiations. (Murphy and Costa, 2015:4)

## Bourdieu's Approach to Research

Costa and Murphy (2015:3) explain that Bourdieu developed his conceptual tools in order to 'understand, explain and disclose inequalities at different layers of society'. Bourdieu stresses the importance of employing data alongside theory as the social world is the 'product of social constructions, yet also more than such constructions' (Rawolle and Lingard, 2013:117). It is such social constructions that this research aims to uncover.

Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) propose three stages should be used to investigate a specific field, firstly examining the specific field in relation to the field of power. Secondly, mapping out the relational structure of the differing positions held by agents and institutions ‘who compete for the legitimate form of specific authority of which this field is the site’ (1992:104). Thirdly:

one must analyze the habitus of agents, the system of dispositions they have acquired by internalizing a determinate type of social and economic condition and which find in a definite trajectory within the field under consideration a more or less favorable opportunity to become actualized.

(Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992:104-5, italics added)

This approach allows the researcher to reveal the ‘stance’ or positioning of an individual within a given field through examining the ‘correspondences’ between field and individual (Thomson, 2012). As Chapter 3 explained, the acquired habitus is ‘actualized’ through immersion in the social and economic conditions of a given field. Bourdieu contends that the field also ‘mediates what agents do in specific social, economic and cultural contexts’ (Thomson, 2012:73); field and habitus form a dialectic which generates practices that (re)produce the social world, that is simultaneously making them. So, for example, and as Lareau (2011) contends, the parent of a middle-class child struggling with reading may not hesitate to intervene, seeking support and additional resources from teachers, seeing this as an ‘entitlement’, whereas a working-class parent might be reluctant to question the teacher’s practice. I recognise that this generalises both classes and there is the danger of homogenising these groups, but maintain this gives us some insight to classed practices. The habitus of different agents ‘mediates’ how they act, dependent on the available capital, coupled with expectations, tending to reproduce the milieu they are accustomed to. Sometimes, previous experiences are so ingrained within the habitus that the current field may not change perspectives. This can be seen with some students who have been taught using transmissive pedagogies; previous pedagogic action in the Grammar field has been successful, so despite the current field of ITE encouraging the use of active learning strategies some habitus are resistant to change (Mills, 2008a) as Chapter 7 will illustrate.

Thomson (2012) alerts us to some other issues with field, including the problem with ‘borders’ that are often fuzzy and ill-defined, and also that there can be too many fields. Indeed, as this study is dealing with the field of ITE and considering students who are preparing to work in the fields of primary and post-primary education, the borders are not well defined and these fields have many overlaps. Following Thomson (2012:77), Bourdieu’s explanations include four levels: the field of power, in this case society in NI;

the field under consideration, which here is education in NI; the specific field – primary/post-primary schools/ITE in NI, and, finally, the agents in the field who constitute a field in themselves, namely the students with whom I work.

In keeping with the three-step approach above, I have condensed the first two levels of ‘field’ previously outlining education within society in NI (in Chapter 2), firstly overviewing the segregated nature of education system, explaining how it is framed particularly by religion and academic selection, before narrowing to the specific field of ITE. This will be augmented through this research with an exploration of the second and third stages which consider the positions occupied by students, poised to become teachers, within the educational system and an attempt to investigate their habitus. Doing so, I aim to begin to make visible the hidden, to recognise what so often is misrecognised or unrecognised within the system, as indicated in Chapter 4 and which I aim to elucidate in my analysis of the data.

Grenfell (2012:228) proposes that Bourdieu’s philosophy ‘is very much one individual’s approach, and is about the individual’s place in the social world’. Although one way we in which we shape our place in the world is through education, Rawolle and Lingard (2013:120) assert that educational inequalities are ‘embedded in the structure and functioning of institutions of education, in their curricula and pedagogies’. This makes Bourdieu’s approach apt to examine how students view education in NI, to see if they recognise the ‘structure and functioning of institutions’ and their role within these. To consider not just the objective structures of education in NI, but also the subjective contexts through which these structures are understood and experienced, I use Bourdieu’s concepts of field and habitus examined through students’ practice.

Grenfell and James (1998:15) contend that ‘if habitus brings into focus the subjective end of the equation, field focuses on the objective’. Using focus groups and interviews I explored students’ habitus through their attitudes and opinions, to comprehend how they view the field and, by focussing on what they ‘do’, to understand their practice. Bourdieu sought to reconcile what he believed to be false dichotomies of objectivism and subjectivism, of structure and agency, and I used these ‘thinking tools’ as a means of linking the macro (the overall field of education) and micro (individual students’ experiences). To understand how agents act Bourdieu explores two opposing world views, as Wacquant explains:

The social world is thus liable to two seemingly antinomic readings: a ‘structuralist’ one that seeks out invisible relational patterns operating behind the backs of agents and a ‘constructivist’ one that probes the ordinary perceptions and actions of the individual. (Wacquant 2008:267)

When used alone, either structuralist (objective) or constructivist (subjective) accounts of practice fall short of explaining how and why agents act. Bourdieu develops habitus to explain how ‘we can only “intend” what is available to us within a culture’ (Webb *et al.*, 2002:36), claiming that the ‘structure’ of our social milieu is already ‘predefined by broader gender, racial and class relations’ (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992:144). This ‘social world’ is explored here and I consider if the limitations students may place on themselves or others are due to the doxa held (see Chapter 4) which may impact on the choices that they believe are available. Using habitus and field Bourdieu suggests we can explore the dialectic relationship between the subjective and the objective. Bourdieu and Passeron express this well – they describe an examination of habitus as:

the site of the internalization of externality and the externalization of internality, [which] can fully bring to light the social conditions of performance of the function of legitimating the social order.  
(Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990:205)

In other words, we internalise the values, beliefs and habits of our class, race, and gender, as experience in the various fields in which we operate, and by so doing perpetuate the social order. Nevertheless, Wacquant asserts that:

neither habitus nor field has the capacity *unilaterally* to determine social action...it takes the...correspondence (or disjuncture) between mental structures and social structures, to generate practice. (2008:269, original italics)

However, using habitus alongside field, Bourdieu explores how social structure and agency ‘correspond’ to generate practice. To explain any social occurrence then, we must interrogate both the agent’s habitus as well as examining how the field in which she operates is constructed along with her position in the field. Such an interrogation acknowledges that those who occupy dominant positions often act to conserve the status quo while those in subordinate positions may challenge it (Wacquant, 2008:269). So, as will be demonstrated, in this study most Grammar pupils have been shaped by their privileged positioning within education and they generally succeed in education. As I have already suggested, my hunch was that students, with habitus developed through being academically successful, might not adequately consider that they should question their own positioning and how that might inform the ‘stances that teachers and schools sometimes take in relation to their students’, potentially accepting (under)achievement as the ‘way things are’ (Mills and Gale, 2010:253).

### Examining practice

In ‘Distinction’, Bourdieu (1984:101) maps his theoretical framework using the formula:

$$[(\text{habitus}) (\text{capital})] + \text{field} = \text{practice}$$

Bourdieu was insistent that his theory of practice used empirical data and I employ this methodology to examine students’ practice. Using this critical sociological framework, I research students’ awareness and understanding of the inequalities inherent within the education system and explore whether they understand the challenges faced by some of the learners they encounter. A further aim of the study was to consider under what circumstances students might be more critical of, and likely to challenge, the status quo. It is important that ITE encourages students:

... to ask why and how our school systems are failing our children, instead of why and how these children are failing our school systems. (Waters, 1998:4)

Riseborough (1993:156) contends that teachers have ‘subjectivities’, formed through their habitus, ‘which accommodate, appropriate, colonize, resist and which make them co-producing agents in the social production of schooling’. My concern at the start of the study was that students’ habitus are well attuned to the field. In order to have been successful they have played by the rules (Thomson, 2014:90) and may accept educational doxa as truth. These students are likely to resemble ‘fish in water’ and take the world around them ‘for granted’ (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992:127). Hall and Jones (2013) have highlighted the ‘selected’ nature of many ITE students with their limited social mix and success in education. This, Reay (2011:3) asserts, may mean they lack awareness, at times verging on ignorance, of the lives of others. I set out to examine if these comments might apply to ITE students in my institution in NI, as I was aware that these students are often deeply imbued with the practices and doxa of the field of education here. I hoped to encourage students to question the apparent neutrality of education in relation to class (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990). As novices ‘lacking practical mastery’ (Finlay, 2008:13) students have yet to form well-developed personal theories of teaching and learning and often follow routines mechanically, such as streaming children, even though they may recognise the unfairness of this. Kate, a self-identified working-class participant, acknowledged this during a focus group.

*There were some English as an Additional Language kids, and they were all in the lowest groups. There was one of them who definitely should have been moved up – but it wasn’t that – they were so capable...*

She recognises that these pupils' inability to communicate and work quickly with the dominant language relegates them to lower-ability groups, and she is beginning to question this practice while not yet able to provide an alternative. Costa and Murphy (2015:3) maintain that a study of habitus enables us to 'access internalised behaviours, perceptions, and beliefs that individuals carry with them' which translate into practice and hence my decision to use Bourdieu's thinking tools to begin to unpack such internalised behaviours and perceptions. By initiating discussion and inviting students to describe, reflect on and potentially question both practice observed and their perceptions of that practice, I hoped to prompt a more reflective stance that encouraged students to consider 'the complex and value-laden process of education' (GTCNI, 2007:6), thereby encouraging their development as reflective activist practitioners.

Bourdieu's thinking tools provide a means to interrogate classed practices in primary education in NI:

Together with its stable mates habitus and capital, [field] offers an epistemological and methodical approach to an historicized and particular understanding of social life. Field was not developed as a grand theory, but as a means of translating practical problems into concrete empirical operations. (Thomson, 2014:79)

To begin to translate practical problems into concrete empirical operation – in this case to recognise and address inequality – I needed to engage students with what Wacquant terms 'the single most distinctive feature of Bourdieu's social theory, namely, its obsessive insistence on *reflexivity*'(original italics, 2008:273).

### Reflexivity

Bourdieu proposes that in order to examine the social world effectively, the sociologist or researcher needs to be cognisant of 'the constraints that bear' upon them and how this may 'affect the knowledge they produce' (Wacquant, 2008:273). He suggests that, to do so, the researcher must first consider their own personal identity, including gender, class, ethnicity and education, before examining their location within the 'intellectual field' (rather than within the more general social setting). The most dangerous source of bias he warns against is that the researcher avoids assuming a contemplative stance:

...that causes her to (mis)construe the social world as an interpretive puzzle to be resolved, rather than a mesh of practical tasks to be accomplished in real time and space – which is what it is for social agents. (Wacquant, 2008:273)

Like the students with whom I planned to engage, I had been academically successful. From a middle-class background, I went through the selective eleven-plus exam and, ‘naturally’, coming from a family of teachers, attended an all-girls’ Grammar school, never questioning that I would go on from there to university. As Chapter 3 explained, habitus is ‘conditioned by one’s position in the social structure’ (Edgerton and Roberts, 2014:198) and mine had embedded a way of thinking, behaving and aspiring in keeping with the social circumstances and lifestyle in which I had been brought up. After teaching in primary schools in both the United States and NI, I took up a role in ITE 20 years ago. My three children have all undertaken the eleven-plus and been successful in schools, so my perspective on education in NI was that it was good and fair. I then began a Doctorate in Education with the University of Glasgow and it was through my studies there that I encountered philosophers, sociologists and researchers who challenged my conceptions of the social world, and the intellectual field I inhabit. Indeed it was only in engaging with Bourdieu and other researchers influenced by his thinking (including Reay, Archer and Mills) as part of these doctoral studies, that the scales fell from my eyes and I began to recognise the extent of inequalities that were perpetuated through the system. Given this background, I was very aware of the need for reflexivity and indeed aware that it is difficult to maintain. Sikes (2006:105) reminds us that research is ‘neither neutral nor innocent practice’ and that those engaging in research ‘support their own identity work’ (2006:108). However, as stated in the introduction:

Where someone is accustomed to seeing their daily and strenuous efforts as an educator in generally positive terms, it will seem difficult and quite possibly perverse to be asking in what sense they are part of a system that generates inequalities. (James, 2015:107)

This meant that I had (indeed, ‘have’) to recognise the ‘mesh of practical tasks’ (Wacquant, 2008:273) that constitute the social world in which we ‘practice’ and to question the ‘daily and strenuous efforts’ undertaken, to ensure that I did not simply add to the (re)production of inequalities. This led me to choose a range of research instruments to investigate how we construct our everyday practice and to strive to maintain a reflexive approach throughout the study.

## Methods

The following sections set out the research instruments used to gather data, namely a survey, focus groups which employed projective techniques, and individual interviews (see Appendix B for data collection instruments), before explaining how the data was analysed.

## Survey

The initial phase of the study was a survey exploring students' attitudes and perceptions to social class and NI's selective education system. This survey instrument, useful for collecting data from a large group (Matthews and Ross, 2010), enabled me to collect initial base-line data, both facts and opinions, allowing me to gather demographic information and to 'get a feel' for students' views. This survey was conducted before students were formally introduced to issues related to educational inequalities in their course, so that responses were not influenced by prior theoretical knowledge or tutorial discussions, but drew on students' personal views and experiences. The survey was in the form of a short questionnaire conducted with one cohort of students ( $n=128$ ) and administered following a regular lecture. However attendance was lower than expected. As the lecture ended, I came in and explained the rationale for the research (verbally and through a plain language statement) following the University of Glasgow's (UoG) and BERA's (2018) ethical guidelines. Students were informed that they were free to leave (which some did) and I stressed that no student would be disadvantaged if they chose not to participate. Those who remained then completed the questionnaire. Aware that I was in a position of power, I made clear to the group that the questionnaire was anonymous and optional; consent was assumed if the student chose to complete it, which 84 students did. As Denscombe (2010) maintains, questionnaires are useful for gathering accurate information, including peoples' attitudes, from large groups in a short space of time and this was my aim.

Considerable thought was given to designing the self-administered questionnaire (see Appendix B) to elicit appropriate data which would produce a 'picture of the population' (Burgess, 2001:8). Completing the UoG's ethical approval process had encouraged me to think carefully about what I wanted to find out and how. In order to generate appropriate questions, relevant literature was reviewed and key issues targeted. This led to eight sections that might be categorised into four broad areas of inquiry:

- (i) factual information was sought through closed questions to provide insight on students' social and academic background (for example, type of post-primary school attended; parental occupation);
- (ii) students' motivations for becoming teachers were ascertained through a ranking exercise (for example, making a difference to children's lives);
- (iii) ranking items (semantic differential questions [Trochim, 2006]) were also used to probe students' perceptions of children's barriers to learning (for example, students

were asked to rank the impact different factors might have on pupils' learning such as level of interest in school, support from home); and  
(iv) experiences of, and attitudes towards, academic selection were interrogated using dichotomous questions (for example, students agreed/disagreed with statements such as 'I benefitted from going to Grammar school').

These questionnaires were piloted with three final year students who were familiar with the B.Ed. programme. They helped reveal unanticipated problems with wording and instructions, as well as allowing me to check for clarity and focus following advice to do this from Blaxter *et al.* (2010). For example, one pilot student suggested that the initial descriptors used for social background were too economically-based and proposed that I employ those used by retail stores in surveys instead. This meant students chose one of five categories ranging from 'Higher managerial/professional' to 'Unemployed' rather than choosing a monetary-banding of family income. Another advised that a ranking exercise should be used in the 'motivations for teaching' section rather than written responses. As this was an exploratory survey the analysis mainly used descriptive analysis largely based around frequency counts.

While the survey did give me an overview of students' social and academic backgrounds and some sense of generic attitudes to selection and barriers to learning, this instrument was possibly too broad to be useful beyond that. I was aware that, as Soni-Sanhia (2011:523) suggests, some issues being addressed were 'too complicated to fit into the neat categories of the questionnaire', such as those related to barriers to learning. This was compounded as data generated relating to students' views suffered from the shortcoming that no explanation was required that may have elucidated their thinking (Denscombe, 2010). For example, some data generated did not add significantly to this research, such as that about motivations for becoming a teacher. What was notable were responses related to social class which tended to be equivocal and this fits Sayer's (2005) assertion that direct questioning about class is often met with unease and evasion. In retrospect, this was a challenging instrument to design but its benefits, while limited, enhanced my initial understanding of students' perceptions of class and academic selection across the whole data set. Chapter 7 presents a fuller discussion of the survey findings on the understanding that this data was intended and was used only as a starting point, an initial base-line. The next stage of research employed focus groups which I now outline.

### Focus groups

Panyan *et al.* (1997:43) contend that as major obstacle to change is often ‘attitudes rather than knowledge’ and that focus groups are ‘an excellent vehicle for capturing attitudes’; this encouraged my selection of this research instrument. As they can elicit information on individual, group, and interactive levels simultaneously, focus groups can be an efficient means of data collection (Cyr, 2015). Additionally, focus groups allow the researcher to reveal ‘dimensions of understanding that often remain untapped by more conventional data collection techniques’ (Kitzinger, 1995:300). Munday asserts that focus groups enable the researcher to:

observe the processes through which individuals construct their own realities  
...as a group who share common values and ways of understanding  
themselves and their world. (Munday, 2006:98).

Focus groups were chosen to gather information prior to individual interviews as Sagoe (2012:1) suggests that one of their key characteristics ‘is the insight and data produced by the interaction between participants’. Kitzinger (1995:299) concurs, suggesting that focus groups are better than other research tools for exploring knowledge and attitudes as these may not be ‘entirely encapsulated in reasoned responses to direct questions’. However, Cyr cautions that they ‘can induce social pressures similar to those that exist in the real world’ (2015:12) which may lead to conformity (Panyan *et al.*, 1997). Generally, I did not find that students conformed in their views, as they were ready to disagree, to express and defend their varying opinions although, in a paired interview, the students tended towards consensus on several occasions. While focus groups were used as a means of encouraging participants to reflect on and re-evaluate their own perceptions, beliefs and experiences (Sagoe, 2012) of class and selection, I had to be aware that some who might have disagreed with views expressed may have chosen not to articulate or debate such views.

Focus group discussions were organised in three phases (see Appendix B). Initially, students were asked about their experiences of, and attitudes towards, the eleven-plus. Cyr (2015) maintains that focus groups are useful for exploratory work and while not meant to be representative of the general population, the dynamic, social setting of the focus group can ‘engender collective responses on a particular issue, as participants dialogue and debate about different perspectives’ which ‘reveals how social processes unfold and how opinions evolve’ (Cyr, 2015:18). When these students were in primary school, most pupils were expected to take the test (as Chapter 2 explained), so all but one student, who was not from NI, had experience of preparing for and taking the eleven-plus in primary school.

This introduction led into discussions around parental/school expectations, tutoring and labelling. The second phase was based on vignettes, a form of projective technique discussed below. The final phase broached students' experiences of teaching children from different social backgrounds from their own and/or their experiences of children they had worked with who had been deemed to be underachieving. Kitzinger proposes that the main advantage of focus groups is the interaction they generate which, in the potentially sensitive discussion around class and academic selection (dis)advantaging children, I hoped might 'highlight (sub)cultural values or group norms' (1995:300). Through focus groups, I sought to investigate if students understood or acknowledged potential barriers to learning such pupils may have encountered.

Six weeks after the survey, students from this cohort were invited by email to participate in these focus groups. This dovetailed with the commencement of lectures on educational inequalities. There was a reasonable response with 25 students indicating a willingness to participate. The choice of four potential meetings resulted in 17 participants contributing to three focus groups. These students were self-selecting and well-disposed to discussion around class and selection. However, as George (2012) cautions, this may have meant that I missed soliciting alternative views of others who may have had negative experiences or other reasons for choosing not to discuss these topics and I return to this in the limitations section of the concluding chapter. Three focus groups were organised and while groups of five to seven participants were invited to each, the first group had eight participants, the second seven and in the third, only two of five students who had committed to come did so, making this a paired interview rather than a focus group.

Given that I was a lecturer known to all participants, I had anticipated that I would need to be alert to 'power differentials' (Shelton and Barnes, 2016:169) although discussions appeared to be unimpeded by my presence. While conscious that I was not neutral, but an authority figure in this context, on several occasions lively conversations bounced around me. George (2012:257) argues that this is a benefit of focus groups as 'participants both query each other and explain themselves to each other', in effect disregarding my presence.

Table 1 presents some basic information relating to the focus group and interview participants including their age, self-identified class, ITE course undertaken, if they passed the eleven-plus and the type of post-primary school attended. The final column denotes whether students have taken a placement in a disadvantaged school as I was interested in whether students' previous experiences of disadvantaged schools influenced their

perceptions, as Chapter 5 has shown students' perceptions and attitudes can act as 'filters for subsequent learning' (Garmon, 2004:202). This was why I also refer to the Free School Meal Entitlement in post-primary schools because, as explained in Chapter 2, this is an indicator of deprivation and may give a sense of participants' social background.

**Table 1: Focus group and interview participants**

Focus group participants	Age	Classed-identity	Course	Passed eleven-plus	Post-Primary school type	Post-Primary school enrolment	% Free school meal entitlement	Disadvantaged school placement
<b>Group 1</b>								
Aoife*	25	WC	Primary	N	Secondary	400	65%	Y
Beth *	20	WC	Primary	Y	Grammar	850	6%	Y
Cara*	21	MC	Primary	Y	Grammar	1100	5%	N
Derbhla*	21	MC	Primary	Y	Grammar	900	12%	Y
Emma*	20	MC	Primary	Y	Grammar	1200	6%	N
Finola*	22	WC	Primary	Y	Grammar	900	12%	Y
Kate	21	WC	Primary	N	Secondary	1500	35%	Y
Lara	20	MC	Primary	-	Secondary	1500	(n/a)	N
<b>Group 2</b>								
Grace*	20	WC	Primary	Y	Grammar	1400	15%	N
Helen*	48	MC	Primary	Y	Grammar	850	7%	Y
Ide*	22	MC	Post-Primary	N	Secondary/Grammar <sup>+</sup>	200	25%	Y
Jenna*	20	MC	Post-primary	N	Secondary	1250	20%	Y
Meabh	22	MC	Primary	Y	Grammar	600	12%	N
Niamh	21	MC	Post-Primary	Y	Grammar/Secondary <sup>^</sup>	850	15%	N
Ronan	21	WC	Post-Primary	Y	Grammar	700	9%	Y
<b>Group 3</b>								
Orlaith	21	MC	Primary	Y	Grammar	850	7%	Y
Peigí	21	MC	Primary	Y	Grammar	700	6%	Y

\*interviewed following placement

+ transferred to Grammar school for A-levels

<sup>^</sup>Grammar school amalgamated with non-selective schools in participant's fourth year

The third column 'classed-identity' was offered by some of the participants, at times directly, at other time indirectly. In those cases when participants did not declare, I have assigned a category here based on available information from discussion in both focus group and interview. The fact that all were ITE students, and all but one had taken the eleven-plus exam, enabled participants to be in a position to discuss 'their views, perceptions, motives and reasons' (Punch 2009:147) as 'insiders'.

Having asked students to respect others' views and agree on the confidential nature of discussions (explaining that could not be guaranteed), all focus groups were audio-recorded with participants' permission, as outlined in the ethics section at the end of this chapter. While most participants contributed readily to the focus groups, I noted that in one group one student remained quiet. While this may be indicative of a more reserved personality, I was aware, at the point of transcription and analysis, that this participant may as Sagoe (2012) suggests, have been uncomfortable or not in agreement with others, or simply tacit in their acceptance of others' opinions. Indeed, Grace at the interview stage when asked about Grammar schools admitted that '*I think they're a good idea, [whispered] I know that's controversial*'. This had not been the consensus in her focus group. Tracy (2010:843) advises that in qualitative research it is as important to note 'who is not talking and what is not said' in providing thick description (one of her proposed criteria for credibility in research) which I heeded at the transcription and analysis stages.

While several references were made to learners' backgrounds during group discussions, I hesitated to discuss class explicitly as I was concerned that this might lead student responses and indeed I found a reluctance to discuss classed-backgrounds openly. In their research, Hall and Jones (2013:420) also encountered a 'failure to specifically raise the issue of social class' suggesting the topic was 'frequently met with silence'. They suggest that this may be interpreted as a perception that class is no longer important, as Chapter 5 explained, but they also speculate that 'the difficulty many people have in articulating social class is part of its enduring power' (Hall and Jones, 2013:420). This issue also arose at the interview stage and will be discussed further in Chapter 7. This meant that there were few references to class as a (dis)advantage for learners and an unwillingness to discuss this beyond a discussion of schools in very disadvantaged areas.

Focus group discussions were all transcribed and the data captured analysed using thematic analysis. Focus groups were useful in generating rich and enlightening discussions and, as Kitzinger (1995:302) posited, enabled consideration of how 'ideas develop and operate within a given cultural context'. In retrospect I could have pushed students further and I failed to make explicit the link between class and teacher expectations of children in schools. This is a shortcoming on my part, as Mills (2009) asserts that the increasing disparity between (often) middle-class teachers' and pupils' cultural backgrounds can impact negatively on pupil attainment and self-perception and I missed an opportunity to probe students on this issue as noted in the final chapter.

## Vignettes

In order to ‘elicit cultural norms derived from respondents’ attitudes and beliefs about a specific situation’ (Barter and Renold, 1999:np) vignettes were used during focus groups as a modified form of projective technique and in order to encourage participants to think carefully about causes of inequality in education. Jeffries and Maeder define vignettes as:

... incomplete short stories that are written to reflect, in a less complex way, real-life situations in order to encourage discussions and potential solutions to problems. (2011:163)

Having used vignettes previously in a trial study I found them to be useful in focussing students on issues and enabling a discussion of sensitive matters in meaningful ways that are ‘indirect’ yet not ‘passive’ (Jeffries and Maeder, 2011:164). Similarly, Tettegah (2005:373) recognises that vignettes are potentially valuable for scrutinizing phenomena ‘to explore social attitudes and problem solving involving ... negative social attitudes’ allowing participants’ opinions to be shared, and thinking challenged, in non-threatening ways. I found vignettes appealing as they encouraged participants to reflect on their own identities ‘as social beings in our gendered, racialized, and class-oriented society’ (2005:379). By drawing on such projective techniques, I was able to draw participants into offering suggestions or insights to scenarios that could avoid a personal reaction if participants chose to do so. This was in keeping with my intention that, as a by-product of this research and the questions asked, students should adopt a reflective approach to their practice which ‘emphasises the *individual in social contexts*’ (Fook, 2006:2, original italics) encouraging them to question their assumptions if they were willing to do so.

I chose to use two vignettes based on Multiverse materials<sup>19</sup>. The first vignette, designed to get students to consider the attributes of an ‘ideal’ pupil, was adapted from Reay’s (2004c) ‘Mostly Roughs and Toughs’ article. This examined working-class children’s experiences of ‘demonized’ inner-city comprehensives showing how these children struggle to remain engaged with education. The second was based around extracts taken from a Multiverse project ‘Addressing working-class underachievement’ (Gazeley, 2007) with participants asked to identify barriers to learning that pupils might encounter in a range of scenarios (from poor behaviour/home circumstances/teaching styles and so on – see Appendix B). At the end of each scenario I presented a short exercise – choosing descriptors to describe ideal learners and listing barriers to learning – as I anticipated students would take varying times to read the vignettes. While these exercises led to rich conversations, in retrospect,

<sup>19</sup> Multiverse was a website funded by the Teacher Development Agency (2003-2010) for teacher educators and student teachers addressing the educational achievement of pupils from diverse backgrounds.

they were time-consuming, particularly as students had plenty of ideas and observations to share. This may be partly due to the resonance of the scenarios with students' experiences. This 'ability to reverberate and affect an audience' (Tracy, 2010:844) is a further criteria for quality in qualitative research. Moreover, some students became involved in detailed partnered discussions (not sharing with the group) while others chose to complete these exercises individually and in silence. Despite these reservations, there was evidence that, following Will *et al.* (1996:39), the projective techniques allowed participants to respond freely as 'they are not stating explicitly how they personally act, believe or think' but responses did tend to mirror their own beliefs. This became apparent as one conversation became very animated in discussing the impact of labelling and teachers' expectations of pupils leading to one student holding forth on the negative impact this issue had on her own self-perception in school.

Discussions around vignettes, while having drawbacks as noted, did provide good insights and real 'information-richness', a measure of validity proposed by Morrow (2005:55).

Focus groups were useful in providing 'socially grounded insights into aspects of personal and social life' (Warr, 2005:200) which is important given the 'field' in which this research is situated. In transcribing group discussions I recognise that at times I was too quick to intervene and there is a danger that this resulted in 'socially desirable' responses. At other times, I played 'devil's advocate' to elicit alternative perspectives following George (2012:261). In one discussion, participants were suggesting that Secondary teachers were better at engaging learners than Grammar school teachers and I asked them to reconsider based on their experiences. These initial phases (survey, focus groups using vignettes) were conducted prior to students undertaking an eight-week school placement after which ten participants were interviewed. Explanation of how the focus group data was analysed will be discussed below after outlining the interviews conducted.

## Interviews

I chose to use semi-structured interviews to allow opportunities for reflection (Wolgemuth *et al.*, 2015). Given that students are just beginning to develop personal theories of teaching and learning, interviews were considered useful in allowing them to 'become aware of significant contextual features' (Finlay, 2008:13) and particularly the impact of (dis)advantage and selection within education. Another important feature semi-structured interviews offer is flexibility and, Bryman (2012:471) explains, the emphasis is on 'how the interviewee frames and understands issues and events' which may provide insight into

students' thinking. Given that a Bourdieusian lens was being employed, Roulston's (2010:219) observation that the dialogue between participant and researcher elucidates 'how members of society assemble what comes to be seen as rationality, morality, or social order, and locates culture in action' is apposite. Lampert *et al.* remind us that:

All teachers, irrespective of their social or cultural background, enter universities and the workforce with their habitus bound to their own distinct class-constructed values and related ideology. (2016:36)

Davies too proposes that 'every agent's habitus embodies unique characteristics as well as shared experiences' (2015:178). By using individual interviews alongside focus groups, I hoped to build a better understanding of the commonalities and differences in students' experiences and so be in a position to produce rich data with that would inform my understanding of the interplay between field and habitus in this research. Indeed:

... a teacher's individual life experiences and past personal choices profoundly shape how teacher education is interpreted, curriculum is developed, and instruction is enacted in the classroom.  
(Cochran-Smith *et al.*, 2012:32)

Following placements, all focus group participants were invited to one-to-one interviews and, while 12 volunteered, due to examination-timetabling and scheduling issues interviews were held with 10. These interviews investigated in greater depth students' awareness of the impact of class on children's learning and were intended to probe their opinions on academic selection. Following similar themes to those used with focus groups, interview protocols (Appendix B) sought more detail on personal experiences and addressed observations of selection, with specific reference to grouping by ability during placements. The interview protocol was used quite flexibly to so that I could 'probe individual participants' stories in more detail' (Knox and Burkhard, 2009:567) and interviews lasted between 30 and 75 minutes dependent on student engagement. A short, composite profile, constructed from all of my interactions with each participant, is provided in Appendix E as I am aware that excerpts were selected from the data and do not give a holistic sense of each person. These profiles attempt to redress this.

Exploring experiences and choices made would, I had hoped, allow me to consider how to challenge students' assumptions and disrupt their thinking and for some students it clearly did so, as will be discussed in Chapter 7. The interviews were time-consuming and challenging as I constantly sought opportunities to probe and obtain detailed responses, while also attempting to allow participants to share their thoughts and attitudes without impediment. It was important to engage fully while being non-directive (Yin, 2011:136).

At times I found that students ‘calibrate their answers and behaviours’ (Davies, 2015:177) in response to what they imagined I valued or was keen to hear, so I reassured them that there were no ‘right’ answers. But, generally, these accounts were reflective and participants seemed to be open about their personal experiences and perceptions of selection in school. This accorded with Wolgemuth *et al.*’s (2012:354) proposal that interviews are ‘opportunities for self-reflection, appraisal, catharsis, being listened to, responded to emphatically, and to being validated’. A good example was Aoife, an interviewee who had ‘failed’ the eleven-plus. While a section of this quote was cited in Chapter 4 it is included again here as it explains her views on selection:

*Ability grouping? I don’t know if I believe in it... ‘Cos like, so initially when children come into school, schools like a middle-class value system and norms, so like the children that show these norms and values, attitudes and behaviour and oral language, they’re seen as the ones that have more ability. Whereas the ones that haven’t had the same opportunities at home, they’re put in the lower groups and the teacher differentiates based on this, like, initial opinion – and this makes this ‘gap’ get bigger and bigger between the two classes. And I just don’t think... I don’t know... I don’t know that I believe in that and by the time that they do get to 11 years old, these ones believe they can do it and the ones that were kind of like left behind – they’re just ...well they haven’t been selected to do the eleven-plus... like I’m not smart’.*

Even this student, who has turned out to be very academically successful despite having been labelled as a failure at the age of eleven, is cautious in raising her concerns about an issue that is ardently debated in NI. She clearly recognises the issues but is only beginning to formulate and appraise her personal response, which runs counter to the institutional academic habitus to which she has been exposed.

As previously noted, I again hesitated to discuss class with interviewees as I was concerned that this might embarrass students, but in retrospect believe that this could have added useful perspectives. As I transcribed interviews over that summer, I regretted that I had not at least asked participants what social class they believed they themselves came from. I was able to follow this up with five participants who inquired how my research was going. I took this opportunity to explain that I had failed to ask about their own classed-backgrounds and was able to elicit some interesting perspectives that will be discussed in Chapter 7. The data collected from focus groups and interviews was detailed, extensive and rich with careful analysis required to do it justice, and I now explain this analysis.

### Analysis and organisation of the data: some challenges

The first phase of data analysis was ‘immersion’, becoming wholly familiar through listening to, then transcribing the data, and noting initial ideas. Transcription was a time-consuming process that Bird (2005:228) designates as ‘an interpretive act’, a research activity in itself. McLellan *et al.* (2003) assert transcription is the first site of data reduction with judgements on what was included or omitted and how a silence might be interpreted. Davidson (2009:41) reminds us transcripts are ‘interpretive and constructed’ in nature and should remain as open as possible and hence I decided to record all spoken words. However, I still had to make decisions including how to note pauses, unfinished sentences, and emphasis in speech and so developed a transcription protocol (see Appendix C). Despite being time-consuming, Bird (2005) suggests that this is when analysis and evaluation of the data begins. I was also aware that in these ‘interpretive and constructed’ transcriptions I had to be mindful, not only of my positioning, but also of the student I was recording. As Denzin and Lincoln assert:

... 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. (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000:19)

As I transcribed, links started to become clear with respect to Bourdieu’s theory of reproduction, and the conceptual tools and literature that had informed my thinking and I noted such links. This ‘memoing’ (Punch, 2009:179) allowed me to note where there were possibilities for exploring how field or habitus were demonstrated through discussion.

Braun and Clarke (2006) propose an approach to thematic analysis which:

... examines the ways in which events, realities, meanings, experiences and so on are the effects of a range of discourses operating within society.(2006:81)

Their six-stage analytic process consists of: familiarisation with the data; generating initial codes; searching for themes; reviewing themes; defining and naming themes, and producing a report (2006:87). They insist that analysis must engage deeply with the data, yet move beyond this, to develop assertions related to the research (Clarke and Braun, 2013:122). As I was investigating how the education system might be complicit in helping ‘to make and to impose the legitimate exclusions and inclusions which form the basis of the social order’ (Bourdieu, 1990a:x), I had Bourdieu’s conceptual tools in mind in the generation of codes and seeking themes. I also wanted to ensure that I did not inhibit or ignore themes emerging from the data and so I sought to develop a ‘dialectical relationship’ (Galman, 2009:473) between these and *a priori* themes. Using uncoded

transcripts I immersed myself, ‘reading in an active way – searching for meanings, patterns and so on’ (Braun and Clarke, 2006:87). The initial coding exercise was data-driven and I worked methodically through transcripts trying to develop an idea of how codes could be collated into various themes that began to emerge.

I began with the focus group transcriptions and reading through, line-by-line, generated exploratory ‘open’ codes in an inductive approach which allowed the data to determine the coding. As I continued, I collapsed these initial codes into more focused codes. For example, in focus group one, when asked about experience of eleven-plus testing in school Cara stated:

Well we used to do tests in school, I think we started maybe after Christmas in P6, and you were doing a paper every night, but well like some people would be going home and some people, their parents were teachers and their parents would be doing it with them and they would be going into school the next day and be getting 70 or whatever out of 75 ... and I remember you were just sitting watching everybody.

This extract contains five codes: school preparation (yellow), supportive home background (green), indicator of class (blue), academic achievement (red) and comparison to others (pink). As multiple codes emerged I began the analytical work, as Neale (2016:1097) proposes, ‘while coding involves a degree of conceptual thinking, the main analytical work occurs after coding’. This meant that I began by pulling statements into simple matrices in a word document (as suggested by Neale, 2016) and having pulled similar codes together, began to collapse these down into themes. So for example, codes listed as: competition; tailoring; labelling; stretching; ignoring needs; catering for all; differentiation; teaching easier; stereotyping, and lost interest, all eventually fell under the theme of ‘Grouping for inequity’.

Following this initial coding exercise, I then began again reviewing clean transcripts employing a theory-driven, deductive approach using themes from the literature that had generated my initial questions. Galman (2009:473) describes this iterative process as ‘top down and bottom-up approaches to examining the data’ and I believe that this was useful in enabling me to make connections between emerging and pre-existing themes. The ‘ongoing reflexive dialogue’ (Braun and Clarke, 2006:82) enabled me to consider various perspectives on the data from both inductive and deductive approaches. Themes were identified through the re-evaluation and recursive interaction of data using these approaches. I then returned to further uncoded transcripts, this time employing Bourdieu’s conceptual tools. As Braun and Clarke suggest:

... thematic analysis conducted within a constructionist framework cannot and does not seek to focus on motivation... but instead seeks to theorize the sociocultural contexts, and structural conditions, that enable the individual accounts that are provided. (2006:85)

In analysing the data I was mindful of where and how examples of field, habitus and capital were exemplified. These were noted and a conscious decision to integrate analysis and discussion of these conceptual tools was made rather than to deal with them as distinct as I believed that it would be impossible to disentangle them. I chose instead to use context-bound examples from my findings and to discuss these with reference to Bourdieu's theory and more contemporary literature. As alluded to earlier, Bryman (2012:401) suggests this approach is abductive as 'what distinguishes abduction is that the theoretical account is grounded in the worldview of those one researches'.

While ten interviews were conducted, as well as three focus groups, four of the five themes that I choose to discuss arose initially from the data generated in focus groups, possibly as the questions asked in both contexts were similar. I initially began the analysis and discussion with findings from the focus group before adding further detail garnered from interview data, which was woven throughout in order to provide a richer interpretation with additional depth. The initial themes were 'othering', distinction, grouping for inequity and concerted cultivation. In analysing the interviews a number of other thematic areas became apparent. I found that interviewees were continually comparing themselves, their schools, and their attitudes to work and life, to others. This seemed to be a means of 'measuring' self and academic/social progress. I thought about treating this as a separate theme but, after some reflection, decided it sat quite naturally as an extension of 'distinction'. That decision drew on Bourdieu's (1984) research which maintains that we develop a sense of self through comparison with others, and that differences of taste are used as the basis for social judgment. The final theme had bubbled below the surface in the focus group discussions, and interview participants' continual references to making a success of themselves through hard work and the pressure they were under to perform led to discussion around the neoliberalisation of education.

In considering how to present these themes, I initially intended to use the three facets of habitus – habitus-as-history, habitus-as-everyday-bodily-practice, and habitus as both generative and deterministic/reproductive – as the organising structure. I attempted to locate my findings within these three facets in various ways, but found that while certain aspects of the data fitted quite well, much more sat outside this framework. I came to

realise that using habitus alone omitted much of the rich information gathered. This data was broader and related to practice which, as Chapter 3 explained, is not the result of an individual's habitus alone, but rather the '*relations* between one's habitus and one's current circumstances' (Maton, 2012, pp.50-51, original italics). So, in order to develop a coherent narrative encompassing the facets of habitus while allowing for a discussion of practice, I amended the three sections to The Impact of History, Everyday Practices, and Reproduction and Transformation of Inequalities in Education,

Analysis was a challenging process and when transcribing, as noted above, I realised at times I intervened too quickly, a weakness Munday (2006:95) identified, as she would 'redirect a discussion that seemed to be going off topic'. I recognise that this was a shortcoming on my part and on a few occasions may have stopped students from sharing valuable insights. In retrospect, I think that I may also have been overambitious in the scope of this study. I might more usefully have focussed on just one of Bourdieu's conceptual tools and this might have led to a clearer configuration of that concept, but I have found that having to think through the Bourdieusian lens has been both demanding and rewarding in forcing me to consider the context in which I practice. I am also aware that there are many other issues in the data in addition to those that I have chosen to discuss, and I discuss all of these limitations in the final chapter. The next section considers ethical deliberations and also the measures of goodness that enable rigour, especially trustworthiness, with such qualitative data.

## Ethical Considerations and Measures of Goodness

Tracy (2010:846) maintains 'ethics are not just a means, but rather constitute a universal end goal of qualitative quality itself'. Hence ethical considerations overlap with measures of goodness and rigour and I maintained that overlap throughout. Tracy (2010) suggests that there are four areas for consideration: procedural, situational, relational, and exiting ethics. The first, procedural ethics, includes key features such as the importance of accuracy, fidelity and the avoidance of deception as well as ensuring confidentiality and respect for participants. To ensure this was addressed I sought to respect and safeguard participants' choices and information. I explained the study in detail following UoG ethics protocols – verbally for the survey and in writing for the focus groups and interviews – and clarified for students their right to withdraw from the research at any time, along with clear assurances of confidentiality and anonymity (ethics approval is included in Appendix A). At each point students had the choice to opt-in to surveys, focus groups and interviews

rather than having to opt out. Farrimond (2016) posits that an element of choice is ethically important and I wanted to allow students the autonomy to decide if they wished to participate at every stage of the research.

Consistent with UoG and BERA's (2018) guidelines, students' consent to participate and for interviews to be audio-recorded was sought in advance, and information on how the data was to be used was provided. Additionally, while students were asked to be discreet about focus group discussions they were cautioned that, due to the group nature of these sessions, total confidentiality could not be guaranteed. In keeping with assurances given to preserve anonymity students are referred to throughout by pseudonyms. Data gathered was treated confidentially and kept in secure storage throughout (hard copies in a locked cabinet and recordings/documents on a password protected computer). Students were offered the option of reviewing transcripts to ensure accuracy and while four acknowledged receipt, and three reviewed transcripts, none proposed changes.

Situational ethics emerge from a thoughtful consideration of a particular research environment and it was necessary, at every stage, to evaluate the ethical decisions made. Ellis (2007:4) suggests that these may refer to the 'unpredictable, often subtle, yet ethically important moments that come up in the field'. This meant that I had to be responsive to students' realisations, and at times frustrations, with the situations in which they found themselves. For example, during a focus group a student became visibly upset talking of a classroom incident related to a disadvantaged child's difficulties in school. I had to ask myself if the ends justified the means while acknowledging that her emotional response to a child in need provoked others to think more deeply about the expectations teachers have of pupils<sup>20</sup>. This made me think carefully about the ethics around such discussions and as Wolgemuth *et al.* (2012:354) assert, these may provide opportunities for both reflection and catharsis but do require ethical awareness.

Tracy's third category, relational ethics, is also highly relevant to this research context. Ellis (2007:4) asserts that relational ethics 'recognizes and values mutual respect, dignity, and connectedness between researcher and researched'. As a lecturer working with the potential research participants, I was conscious of power relations around the lecturer-student relationship and recognised that this had to be carefully managed. BERA (2018)

---

<sup>20</sup> The part of the conversation that caused upset was discussed sensitively by the group and following the focus group I did ask the student if she would like to meet with a counsellor. She assured me that the discussion in itself had been cathartic.

suggests one way of managing this was to make my role as researcher explicit to participants. Additionally, in keeping with UoG and BERA (2018) guidelines, I sought ‘gatekeeper’ consent making management aware of the nature and purpose of the research undertaken. Even having taking these steps, I was aware that students might ‘feel a subtle social pressure to conform’ (Farrimond, 2016:81) to my expectations and so ensured I was not responsible for assessing any coursework or placements for students who volunteered to participate to assuage any such pressure. I was cognisant, and raised this with participants, that there was a clear benefit for me in this research (contributing to a post-graduate award) and clarified to them that it was important to me that they, too, should benefit from participating, through gaining enhanced professional and social insights which I believe they did evidence in discussions at interview. A further element of relational ethics is that it was essential, when transcribing and analysing data, that I attempted to be as close as possible to the meaning conveyed by students and on several occasions I confirmed by emailing individuals that I had accurately interpreted discussions. Finally, Tracy (2010) proposes that ethical considerations continue beyond the data collection stage, ensuring that data is analysed accurately. While it may be difficult to anticipate or control how research is interpreted or used, it is important that consideration is given to presentation and dissemination to ensure that research outcomes are used constructively and I sought to follow this guidance.

Overlapping with ethical considerations, Williams and Morrow (2009:577) suggest there are three categories of ‘trustworthiness’ which researchers should attend to, namely ‘integrity of the data, balance between reflexivity and subjectivity, and clear communication of findings’. I sought to ensure that all three categories were fully addressed and briefly illustrate this. Three data sources have been used to attempt to ensure the data gathered is meaningful as Williams and Morrow (2009:578) suggest that quantity, as well as quality, is ‘key to filling out categories or themes’. Morrow (2005:253) asserts that an understanding of context is also essential for ‘understanding the meanings that participants make of their experience’ and Chapter 2 provides the contextual backdrop for this research. Balancing reflexivity and subjectivity has been a challenge and, as the earlier part of this chapter has dealt with reflexivity in some detail, I simply state here that in exploring students’ attitudes and perceptions using Bourdieu’s tools of habitus and field, I have been aware of my own subjectivities throughout and return to this in Chapter 8. Finally, Williams and Morrow propose that there should be clear communication of findings because, in order to meet their criteria for trustworthiness, research must be

meaningful and have value to a given discipline – what Morrow (2005) terms ‘social validity’. This implies that the research should have an impact on a given field, in this case ITE and student teachers’ engagement with (dis)advantaged learners. Ideally the research will encourage further dialogue about professional preparation and practice and potentially ‘contribute to social justice and social change’ (Williams and Morrow, 2009:580), and I address this in reflections on and recommendations arising from this research in Chapter 8.

## **Summing Up**

This chapter initially explained the research design and context of my study by outlining how I sought to understand the processes whereby class and selection create educational inequalities. I then described Bourdieu’s approach to research before explaining how he proposes that practice should be examined. Recognising that I, too, am a product of the field of education in NI, I included a short section on the importance of reflexivity. Following this the methods used to gather, and then analyse the data were presented. Finally, ethical considerations and measures of goodness were discussed and the next chapter will provide an analysis and discussion of the findings.

## **Chapter 7: Measuring Up - Are We Distinctive?**

### **Introduction**

To reiterate, Maton reminds us that practice cannot be understood in terms of habitus alone for ‘habitus represents *but one part* of the equation; the nature of the fields they are active within is equally crucial’ (2012:5, italics added). The data presented here considers how habitus interacts with field, drawing on available capitals to generate practice: in other words, using Bourdieu’s well-known formula of ‘[(habitus) (capital)] + field = practice’ (1984:101). While the sections in this chapter are organised around habitus, they make close reference to *practice* demonstrating that habitus exists in an inextricable relationship with field and capital to such an extent that it makes most sense to discuss one while also discussing the others.

As explained in earlier chapters this research sought to explore student teachers’ attitudes towards ‘social class’ and academic selection and to encourage them to consider the extent to which these create inequalities within the Northern Ireland (NI) education system. As I have also discussed, Bourdieu and Passeron’s (1990) theory of social reproduction asserts that the dominant class’ ideas are those perceived as ‘legitimate’. This research also aimed to raise awareness and I hope, to encourage students to start to challenge their assumptions, question how their values are shaped and critique NI’s education system. This is the beginning of a journey that I hope will continue as students gain experience in classrooms and reflect on the (dis)advantages and challenges children from various classed-backgrounds face enabling them to critically evaluate supposedly ‘legitimate’ ideas about class. Bourdieu’s signature concepts of habitus and field were applied to the observations and perceptions that students presented of processes and practices that may advantage the dominant class. In this chapter I use the core facets of habitus as presented in Chapter 3 – habitus as history, as everyday practices, and as having generative potential – to frame the presentation and discussion of themes. By using these facets as organisational structures in presenting the analysis of the data I hope to demonstrate students’ emerging awareness and understanding (or lack thereof) of the systemic inequalities inherent within education and to consider what progress they are making towards becoming reflective activists.

This chapter sets out the findings of the research which was conducted over an academic year in three stages: a survey of the student cohort (n=128) in December, focus groups involving 17 volunteers held in January and, finally, 10 semi-structured interviews

conducted with individuals selected from the focus group participants from May to June and following a four-month gap during which they undertook placement and exams. Here I present and discuss my findings drawing on relevant previous research and interrogate the data generated using Bourdieu's conceptual tools. The chapter is organised in four main sections. The first section presents an analysis and discussion of the survey findings, providing an overview of the cohort of students' own social and academic backgrounds before considering their motivations for becoming teachers. The survey then went on to explore the factors that students believed impacted on children's learning and finally investigated their perceptions of academic selection. Having outlined the demographic background and tentatively explored this group of students' perceptions of academic selection, focus groups and interviews provided qualitative data from which five themes emerged and these are discussed in three sections relating to the core facets of habitus. A brief overview of these sections and the themes they frame will be presented after an analysis and discussion of the survey findings.

## **Analysis and Discussion of Survey Findings**

As noted, the initial survey was designed as a scoping exercise to provide a demographic backdrop of the students involved in this research, and to get a sense of their attitudes and perceptions of social class and academic selection within education in NI. Students applying to study at the small university college in which I work are academically successful. The entry grades required to study this over-subscribed B.Ed. course are high, and an interview is required to determine suitability for teaching. Applicants at interview must demonstrate fluency and confidence in speech and manner, embodying cultural capital to parallel their academic achievements. This demonstrates how, as noted earlier, the education system perpetuates itself through selecting students demonstrating the linguistic and cultural capital that the system values and 'presupposes and consecrates' (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990:99)

At the outset, it is important to state a duality in the data collected which should be acknowledged. Participants have been high-achieving pupils, mostly drawn from dominant, middle-class groups whose dispositions 'closely match those encouraged by schooling' (Mills, 2009:282). This raises an interesting perspective as I became aware that my participants, as student teachers, are both a product of the education system which they have come through and that they are becoming 'agents' within this system. This was indicated by their responses to questions in both the survey and in discussions in which

they often paralleled their own experiences alongside their perceptions of the impact of issues on practice. So, for example, when questioned about ability-grouping they did not always distinguish between their personal experience and their professional perceptions and observations. This is important if they are to ultimately recognise how educational practices may create inequalities despite such disadvantage often being beyond their own privileged experiences.

In researching students' perceptions, my instinct was, and indeed still is, that their habitus is attuned to academic success and as the selection test has validated and facilitated this success, they had not questioned the fairness of it, misrecognising it as talent and hard-earned achievement. Indeed, as Bourdieu and Passeron have demonstrated, even those who have not been academically successful accept the symbolic violence of selection; they too are complicit in allowing themselves to be dominated, and do not question or challenge their relegation to less 'prestigious' schools. Rather they accept the educational doxa – the unquestioned belief that this is how the world is – that in NI, selection enables those who appear 'bright', but in reality have access to the cultural and linguistic capital, to go to Grammar schools, which in turn enables further academic success. Thus, as Chapter 4 explained, the 'meritocracy' of the eleven-plus is 'concealing social selection under the guise of technical selection and legitimating the reproduction of the social hierarchies by transmuting them into academic hierarchies' (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990:153). So, I wanted to explore students' views to understand how these doxa become accepted.

84 students chose to complete the survey which, as previously explained, was based around four sections:

- (i) students' social and academic background;
- (ii) students' motivations for becoming teachers;
- (iii) students' perceptions of factors that impact on children's learning; and
- (iv) perceptions of academic selection and ability-grouping.

While 84 students completed the survey, one or two respondents did not answer all questions, for example relating to their age or whether they were tutored for the eleven-plus. The response rates shown below with respect to each of the questions are based upon the actual number of students responding to the particular question.

### Student teachers' social and academic background

In the initial section asking students about their social background, it is clear that, as has been explained, social class is a contested term and rather than being fixed is fluid in nature. Indeed, Grenfell (2012:220) maintains, class is a construct and it is easy to '(mis)take constructs as things in themselves rather than as sets of relations'. Such constructs are the product of history shaped by one's classed habitus (as Chapter 3 explains) and it is only in relation to others that they have meaning for us. This was evident in the responses to the first item in the survey in which students were asked to indicate their perceived social standing by placing themselves on a ladder, with an explanation that it might represent where people stand in society. Those who are wealthy and secure are at the top of the ladder (rank 7), whereas those with no jobs and little income would be at the bottom end (rank 1). A significant number (17.8 %: n=15) did not place themselves on the ladder. Of those who did, no respondent placed themselves in the top or bottom categories (7 and 1 or 2), while the majority (65.5%: n=56) positioned themselves in categories 4 and 5. Only 13.1% (n=11) placed themselves as a 3, while 2.3% (n=2) chose 6. Although a crude measure, I believe this may be a reasonable representation of the socio-economic student profile as participants perceive themselves. What is interesting are the statements many students made explaining where they chose to place themselves on the ladder. It reviewing these I found certain discrepancies. The following statements are all from respondents who chose '5':

*From a family both good paying/long term jobs - I went to a good Grammar school that is very middle-class.*

*My parents are from working-class background but worked hard to provide a middle-class lifestyle. They have been good with their money and worked hard. I went to a Grammar school and my parents always valued education highly.*

*I am in a comfortable position on the ladder with an extremely supportive family who are in permanent jobs.*

*Although I am from a working-class family, and we don't have a lot of money, the opportunities that I have been given through education, school etc. are amazing (travelling, learning)*

*Not classed as being in poverty and have had a good education.*

As can be seen, these students view their social standing as comfortable, though the latter statements indicate that they do not regard themselves as affluent. We can compare these statements with the following from respondents who chose '3'.

*I'm from a working-class background, with financial struggles, but I have had a good education*

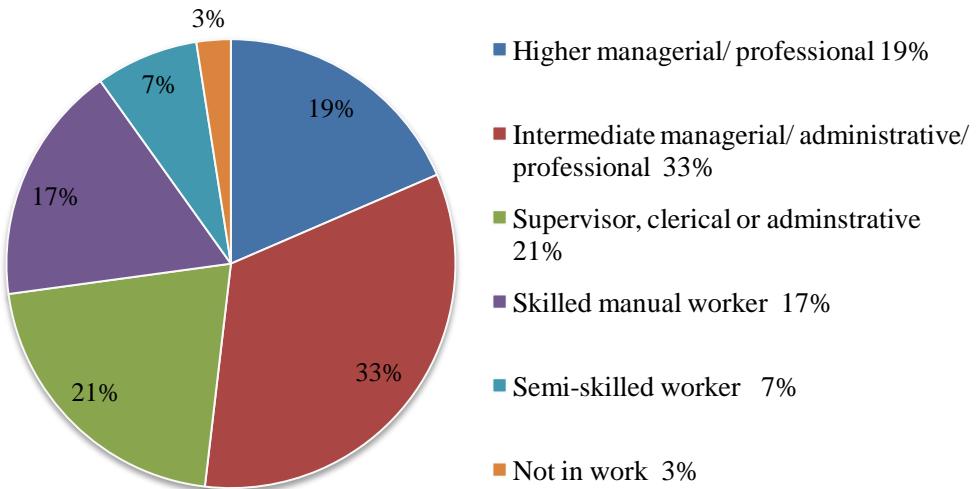
*Low income family. Had financial difficulties in previous years. Would have a comfortable life, but by no means well off. Only two children of family of five educated at degree level. Father is a skilled manual worker and mother is a housewife.*

*I have a good education to date, good financial situation along with social stance in society*

Again, the first two statements explain the ranking well while the third demonstrates some ambiguity particularly compared to those who nominated ‘5’.

Later in this section, respondents were asked more directly about their social background. Firstly, students were asked to classify themselves as working-class (47.4%: n=36), middle-class (51.3%: n=39) or upper-class (1.3%: n=1), then to choose the occupational group of the main income-earner in their home (based on the NS-SEC<sup>21</sup>), results are shown in Figure 1:

**Figure 1: Students' perceptions of their social background**



While it is clear that the first three categories here – managerial/professional/administrative/supervisory/clerical – are arguably middle-class (and could be considered to be reasonably advantaged) what is masked is that 22% (n=9) of students who assign themselves to the highest two categories of the SEC also consider themselves to be

<sup>21</sup> NS-SEC: The Office of National Statistics has constructed the National Statistics Socio-economic classification (NS-SEC) to measure the employment relations and conditions of occupations, see <https://www.ons.gov.uk/methodology/classificationsandstandards/otherclassifications/thenationalstatisticssocioeconomicclassificationnssecrebasedonsoc2010#category-descriptions-and-operational-issues> (accessed 6 February, 2019).

working-class. Of those opting for the three lower categories, 43.5% (n=10) consider themselves to be middle-class.

This demonstrates that, as previously discussed, perceptions of class are contested. Sayer (2005) maintains that direct questioning about class is often met with unease and evasion. Indeed, Savage *et al.* (2001:875) contend that class is not simply descriptive but a ‘loaded moral signifier’. Skeggs (2004) describes the tension around this construct. In recent decades there has been a shift away from class as an economic classification towards a moralistic stance, with the working-class often stereotyped negatively but, also, to be ‘upper’ class may have negative connotations. Perhaps the respondents from the latter three categories are trying to distance themselves from these negative representations, and may well be indicating by positioning themselves as middle-class that they have worked hard and are now ‘respectable’ (Sayer, 2005). Conversely, 22% (n= 9) of respondents who may be perceived by others to be middle-class identify as working-class. Sayer (2005:171) argues that this may be because they want to be seen as ‘ordinary’ and unpretentious, and perhaps, do not want to be held responsible for perpetuating inequality. Skeggs (2004:114) sums up these stances well: ‘Representations illustrate both confusion and ambivalence at the heart of understanding contemporary social class positioning’ and this appears to be the case in this data.

There were significantly more female respondents than male (74:10) which accords reasonably well with the cohort profile. All but two respondents (2.4%) were under 24 years old. The majority of these students went to selective Grammar schools (73.5%: n=61) with the remainder attending non-selective schools. A small number (4.9%: n=4) transferred to Grammar schools to complete A-levels. Regardless of school type, all students were academically successful having at least nine GCSEs. While 73.1% (n=60) had 3 or more ‘traditional’ A-levels, a further 23.1% (n=19) obtained a mix of A-levels and vocational qualifications and only 3.8% (n=3) of respondents had alternative qualifications. This is indicative of a highly conservative ‘traditional’ academic intake, with students having high levels of cultural capital. As previously noted, Wacquant asserts that cultural capital is central to education and is a major determinant of life chances as ‘under the cloak of individual talent and academic meritocracy, its unequal distribution [helps] to conserve social hierarchies’ (2008:262). This misrecognition of academic success as based on ‘individual talent’ is at the heart of class inequality rather than being recognised as being ‘socially, culturally and economically “made up”’ (Ball, 2010:162).

Students were then asked about the academic selection exam which the majority of them took in their final year in primary school (four did not do so as alternative transfer arrangements were in place in one area of NI). Of those who sat the eleven-plus, 89% (n=65) passed it and went on to Grammar schools, while 11% (n=8) failed and transferred to non-selective schools. 28.8% of respondents (n=21) – all classifying themselves as middle-class – who took the eleven-plus received private tuition and only 2 of those students subsequently failed the test. Given that the habitus is ‘the principle of production of practices’ (Burke *et al.*, 2013:166) I felt it was important to get a sense of the correspondence between habitus and field, which led to the next question.

Students were asked if they enjoyed post-primary school and if they felt that they belonged from the outset. All but four respondents (4.8%) enjoyed school while 18.3% (n=15) did not feel that they ‘belonged’. Notably 93.3% (n=14) of those who initially felt uncomfortable at post-primary school attended Grammar school (only one student attending a non-selective school did not feel they belonged) and of these respondents, 73.3% (n=11) were working-class. While the numbers here are small, of those working-class pupils attending Grammar school 38.5% (n=10) stated that they did not belong which may be due to a disjuncture between the field and habitus, they may have felt like ‘fish out of water’. I noted this to follow up at the interview stage. A final question in this section asked students if their post-primary school treated all pupils equally. This was included as Reay (2006:290) contends that while class is ‘everywhere and nowhere, denied yet continually enacted, infusing the minutiae of everyday interactions’ we often fail to recognise how class is ‘enacted’ in practice. While the majority (78.3%: n=65) of students perceived that had been treated equally, 21.6% (n=18) did not, with the majority of this latter group having attended Grammar schools. While no further explanation was sought at this point, this was an issue that was revisited in the later stages of the research.

### Motivations for becoming teachers

The second section asked students about their motivations for becoming teachers. This was a ‘fishing trip’ to see if there were any strong attitudes related to social justice, the issue raised here and explored further in the interview stage. Students had six options and were asked to rank these from 1 (most important) to 6 (least important for you). While a small number of students failed to rank these, valid responses indicate that students rate making a positive difference to children’s lives as more significant than other options:

**Table 2: Students' motivations to become teachers**

NB: scores are based on responses to 1=most important, to 6= not important to me

	Average response
I wanted to make a positive difference to children's lives	2.4
I am passionate about my subject and teaching is a good way to share that passion	3.5
My parents/friends suggested I would make a good teacher	3.3
Good education helps shape people's lives and I believe that I can contribute to that	3.5
I get on well with young people	3.8
Teaching is a useful initial degree to have with many good career prospects and options	4.4

Of course these go in descending order of importance to students in ranking their motivations to become a teacher.

### **Factors impacting on children's learning**

My reading around selection and class had made it clear that students can construe pupils' lack of achievement as lack of engagement or aspiration rather than considering the barriers to learning that children may face, which in turn can lead to stereotyping (see Chapter 5). This led to a section that surveyed students' perceptions of the importance of various factors in impacting on pupil achievement. Students were asked to respond to a series of statements according to the impact they thought each had on pupils' learning. Of the 11 items in this section, four related to pupil habitus, including level of interest in school, level of aspiration, natural ability and the expectation of the individual that she will do well. Four items related to the school, the field in which individuals are placed: the level of behaviour in classes, the encouragement teachers give, that classes are engaging and finally that schools expect much from the pupil. The last three items related to the level of support from the home, the importance of education being valued at home and parents expecting their children to do well. Each item was ranked individually (not in comparison to others) as having no impact, a little impact, quite an impact and significant impact as well as the option for the student to state that they considered this factor unimportant.

It was clear that students perceive that the school has the greatest impact on pupils' learning, with 83% (n=67) of respondents considering the level of encouragement from teachers, and 61% (n=49) the level of pupils' engagement within the classroom as being the most important. More students (32%: n=25) attributed schools' expectations of pupils as having a more significant impact than parents' expectations (29%: n=23) or pupils' personal expectations (27%: n=22). 81% (n=65) of respondents noted that a pupil's level

of interest in school was an important factor though only 13% (n=10) thought that their natural level of ability was very important.

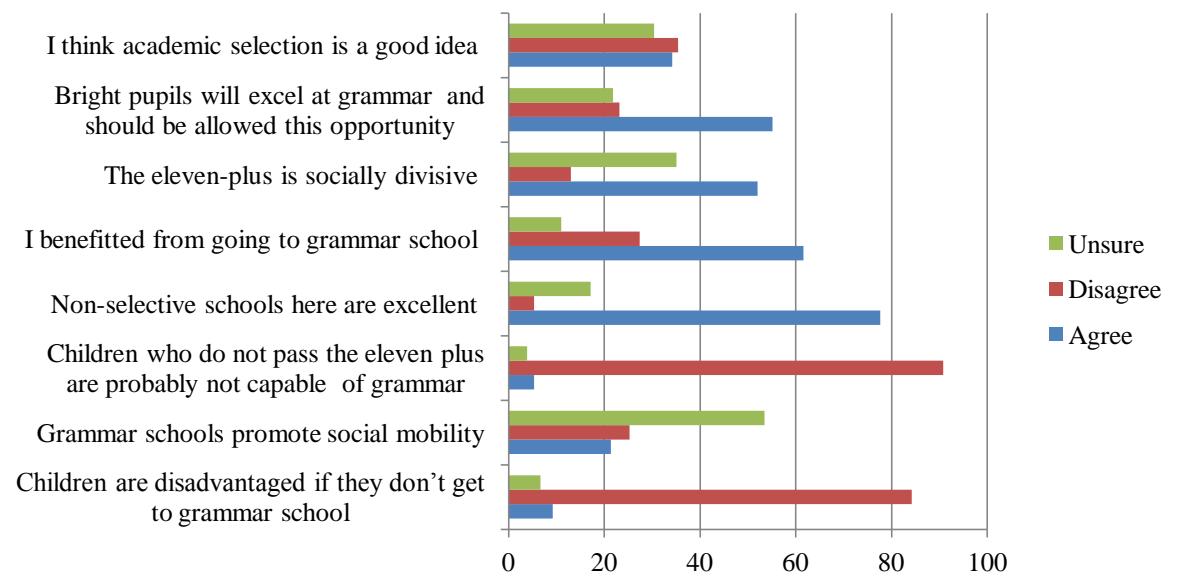
**Table 3: Students' perceptions of factors impacting pupils' learning**  
(with most frequent choice in bold)

Number of participants = 84	No impact	A little impact	Quite an impact	Important impact	I do not think this is important	Total number of responses
	No. (%)	No. (%)	No. (%)	No. (%)	No. (%)	No. (%)
Level of interest in school	0 (0%)	2 (2%)	14 (17%)	<b>65 (81%)</b>	0 (0%)	81 (100%)
Level of behaviour in class	0 (0%)	5 (6%)	35 (43%)	<b>41 (51%)</b>	0 (0%)	81 (100%)
Level of encouragement from teachers	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	13 (16%)	<b>67 (83%)</b>	1 (1%)	81 (100%)
The pupil's level of aspiration	0 (0%)	3 (4%)	35 (44%)	<b>42 (52%)</b>	0 (0%)	80 (100%)
Level of engagement in class	0 (0%)	6 (7%)	25 (31%)	<b>49 (61%)</b>	1 (1%)	81 (100%)
Level of support from home	0 (0%)	4 (5%)	28 (35%)	<b>47 (59%)</b>	1 (1%)	80 (100%)
Natural level of ability	1 (1%)	32 (40%)	<b>36 (45%)</b>	10 (13%)	1 (1%)	80 (100%)
Education is valued at home	0 (0%)	8 (10%)	32 (40%)	<b>38 (48%)</b>	2 (2%)	80 (100%)
Parents expect children to do well	1 (1%)	13 (16%)	<b>40 (51%)</b>	23 (29%)	2 (3%)	79 (100%)
The school expects much of pupils	1 (1%)	15 (19%)	<b>34 (43%)</b>	25 (32%)	4 (5%)	80 (100%)
The pupil expects to do well	0 (0%)	11 (14%)	<b>46 (58%)</b>	22 (27%)	1 (1%)	80 (100%)

The data gathered here mirrors recent government discourses around school effectiveness and schools' responsibility for (and capability to) overcoming inequalities (Burn and Child, 2016) and it also echoes the neo-liberal turn towards individual responsibility. Francis and Hey (2009:227) suggest working-class educational failure has been reconfigured as 'underachievement' which is explained by an individual's 'lack of hard work and ambition', rather than a recognition that systemic inequalities might pertain. What these students may be underestimating, or misrecognising, is the level of 'concerted cultivation' (Lareau, 2011) whereby middle-class parents invest in their children's experiences and achievements exerting 'a very powerful influence on the academic progress of children' (Ball, 2010:157).

### Perceptions of academic selection

The final section of the survey asked students about their perceptions of academic selection, specifically the eleven-plus, and also included some statements around teachers, streaming, assessment and social backgrounds. As can be seen in Figure 2 below, responses to statements (some which are paraphrased here for presentation) demonstrate mixed views on academic selection.

**Figure 2: Students' perceptions of academic selection**

As Figure 2 illustrates, respondents are divided as to the benefits of academic selection, and 52% ( $n=40$ ) agree that the eleven-plus is socially divisive. Despite these views, more than 60% ( $n=45$ ) believe that they benefitted from going to a Grammar school. The second item here again demonstrates that despite concerns that selection is divisive, 55% ( $n=43$ ) believe that pupils should be allowed the opportunity to attend Grammar schools. This is obviously contentious as the final item shows that only 9% ( $n=7$ ) of respondents think that pupils would be disadvantaged in attending non-selective schools – and surprisingly a third of this small number went to non-selective schools themselves.

Academic selection remains a highly contentious issue in NI (Gardner, 2016) as Chapter 2 explained and Gallagher and Smith's (2000:45) report is still relevant:

... the high academic standards achieved by Grammar schools. The corollary of this is that a selective system appears to produce a longer tail of low-achieving schools... a selective system produces a disproportionate number of schools which combine low ability and social disadvantage in their enrolments, thereby compounding the educational disadvantages of both factors.  
(Gallagher and Smith, 2000:45)

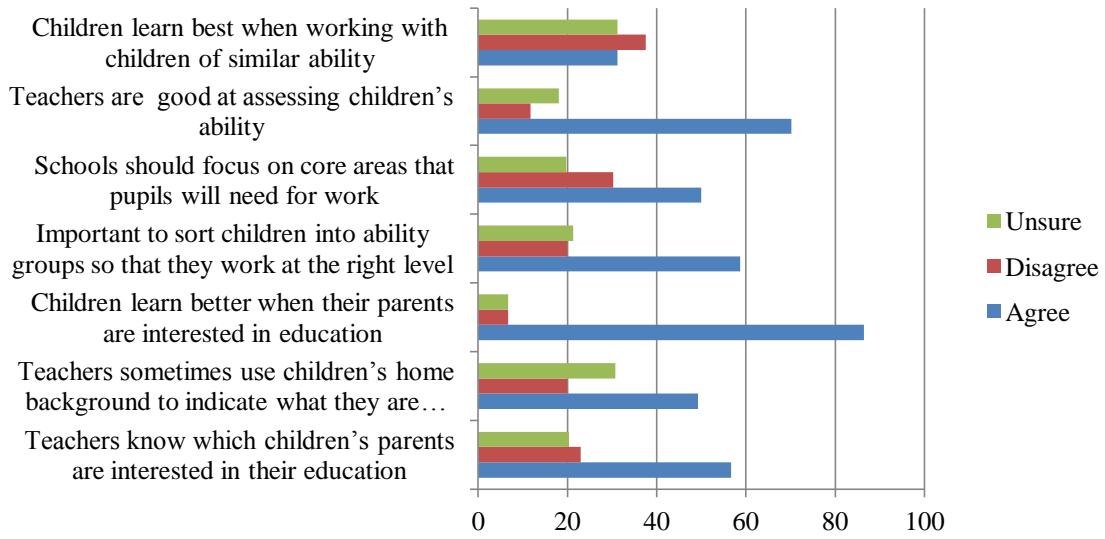
Given their academic achievements, the students participating in this survey do not appear to have been educationally disadvantaged. They were among the last to take the compulsory test which has now been replaced with an optional selection test that approximately 65% of those transferring to post-primary school continue to take (Meredith, 2017). Rather participants have largely benefitted from selective education and even if they have attended non-selective schools, they have been ‘channelled and

streamed' achieving high levels of academic success and have escaped the 'hidden injuries of class' (Sennet and Cobb, 1972). These respondents are advantageously 'located within competitive educational hierarchies' (Dunne and Gazeley, 2007:412) and all have benefitted from the educational system.

The second set of items in this section asked students to respond to statements around ability-grouping in a similar fashion. Again, I hoped that responses to these statements would allow me to get a feel of students' perceptions which I could then delve into in greater detail at the interview stage. Figure 3 below summarises responses, and as can be seen, students seem unaware of research around the inequalities that can be perpetrated by ability-grouping. Many will have experienced such streaming in schools themselves and this has become one of the field's uncontested doxa – the way things are – and as this approach has worked for them, they have no need to contest it. As discussed previously, pupils who are most advantaged by streaming are those who match teacher expectations and absorb information quickly (Wilkinson and Penney, 2014) which these academic achievers have been able to do. Their habitus in this case, is well attuned to the field and as Hall and Jones assert:

the normalisation of middle-class practices in schooling ... render[s] social class as invisible in relation to middle-classness, whilst simultaneously distancing... working-class children. (Hall and Jones, 2013:418)

This acceptance of practices that advantage the dominant, leads to 70% (n=54) agreeing that teachers are good at assessing pupils' ability as well as 59% (n=44) agreeing that pupils work better within ability-groups; the doxa of ability-grouping is accepted as good practice by these students. Views are more mixed around children working with others of similar ability, which belies the consensus around streaming. Students' perceptions around children's classed-backgrounds are more evident here as 87% (n=64) agree that parental interest factors into achievement. This supports Ball's (2010:160) contention that education is 'an investment for which individuals who reap the rewards of being educated (or their families) must take first responsibility'. While this was not as significant a factor in an earlier question perhaps students are now drawing on their personal experiences. Students do perceive that teachers have some knowledge of pupil home background, and this was a question that I wanted to follow up in interviews, given the evidence Dunne *et al.* provide that there is a 'strong social class effect on set placement (2007:24).

**Figure 3: Students' views of factors related to ability-grouping**

This survey provided a useful backdrop giving me a sense of students' perceptions around class and selection. It is clear that these students have benefitted from the education system and may not yet be ready to recognise how children can be (dis)advantaged by their backgrounds. This brings me to the concerns that instigated this research, firstly the impact on education due to the perpetuation of class-based inequality particularly manifest through selection, and secondly the (in)ability of students to recognise and/or address this inequality within the system.

### Themes Arising from the Research

Having outlined and explored findings from the survey, focus groups and interviews were then used to provide qualitative data from which five themes emerged. Four of the themes discussed arose initially through the findings of focus groups and then data gathered from interviews was woven through in order to provide a richer interpretation with additional depth. These five themes are framed in three sections which use the facets of habitus discussed in Chapter 3 and as shown in Table 4 below. Habitus is a potentially useful concept which, rather than examining attitudes and perceptions, can unearth the underlying dispositions which 'incline agents to act and react in certain ways' (Thompson, 1991:12), and these sections consider the *practice* generated by habitus, capital and field interactions.

The first section to be discussed frames findings through the 'Impact of History', aligning this with discussion in Chapter 3 of habitus-as-history. This shows how students' habitus

has been shaped by their family upbringing, how families invest in education, and the resulting educational expectations and I have labeled this theme ‘concerted cultivation’.

**Table 4: Presentation of thematic analysis**

Facet of habitus	Section	Theme	Sub-theme
Habitus-as-history	The impact of history (pp.125-135)	Concerted cultivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investment</li> <li>• Match between home/school contexts</li> <li>• Parental expectations</li> <li>• Parental expectations with schools</li> </ul>
Habitus-as-everyday-bodily-practices	Everyday practices (pp.135-150)	Distinction: Measuring Up  The neoliberalisation of education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A feel for the game</li> <li>• Markers of class</li> <li>• Simply the best: winners and losers</li> <li>• Comparisons and measuring up</li>   <li>• Pressure to perform</li> <li>• The impact on practice</li> <li>• Competition</li> </ul>
Habitus as having generative potential and not, necessarily, being reproductive	Reproduction and transformation of inequalities in education (pp.150-169)	Othering  Grouping for Inequity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Normalising middle-class achievement</li> <li>• Selection: creating subjective expectations</li> <li>• Second-class learners: accepting the label</li> <li>• Channelling and eliminating those who don't fit</li>   <li>• Selective education in NI: students' views</li> <li>• Channelling and streaming: social reproduction in action</li> <li>• Pedagogies employed</li> <li>• Teacher/school expectations</li> <li>• Selection works for some – or does it?</li> </ul>

I chose to discuss parental interactions with schools in this section (which arguably also fits within habitus-as-everyday-bodily-practice) as here my participants recall their own experiences. These are practices developed from the interaction between habitus, available capital and field. Furthermore, participants' own observations demonstrate how history becomes embodied ‘in the form of dispositions that remain powerfully linked to economic and cultural background’ (Reay, 2019:10), and it is these classed-differences that I explore here.

The next section presented is ‘Everyday Practices’ arising from habitus-as-everyday-bodily-practice and so focussing on students’ experiences of schools, both as pupils *and* in their placements as they learn to become teachers. This section presents data which led to two themes. The first theme discussed, ‘distinction’, drew on Bourdieu’s (1984) research of that name, which maintains that we develop a sense of self through comparison with others, and judge others based on differences of taste. It was clear that all participants had a ‘feel for the game’ and an understanding of how to succeed within education, evident through the focus group and interview discussions around their familial practices, as well

as in their observations of practices and experiences as student teachers in schools. Some participants demonstrated markers of class, a sense of confidence and entitlement, revealing their own habitus-as-everyday-bodily-practice, which enabled them to compete and be ‘winners’. However, competition for distinction creates not only winners but also losers. Interviews provided further insight into practices that added an additional thread to this theme showing how the participants gauged themselves in relation to other people, evidence that we are continually comparing and measuring up against others.

The next theme in ‘Everyday Practices’, the ‘neoliberalisation of education’, had bubbled below the surface in focus group discussions and interview participants’ continual references to making a success of themselves through hard work and the pressure they were under to perform. The data shows how this emphasis on performance has had a significant impact on educational practices in schools, leading to competition and individualism.

The third section considers ‘Reproduction and Transformation of Inequalities in Education’ linked to the Chapter 3 discussion of habitus as having generative potential and not, necessarily, being reproductive. The data is discussed in two themes which draw out the tensions between participants’ own experiences of schooling and demonstrate how their classed identities can create conflict with their emerging attitudes towards, and practices of, being a teacher. The first theme discussed is ‘othering’ which arose when, during focus group discussions, a number of students defined themselves and their experiences as ‘normal’ without recognising that this constructed others as ‘not normal’. This theme was arguably evident as a result of the selective educational processes commonly used in NI which create a two-tiered education system through which difference is emphasised. Moreover, learners who are designated as ‘other’ often do not query their positioning in an acceptance of the symbolic violence perpetrated against them and consequently this may limit their expectations. The final aspect of this theme is stereotyping and labelling whereby teachers expect less, and fail to challenge, pupils who do not conform to the ‘dominant’ (middle-class) social expectations, thereby reproducing inequalities.

Finally the theme, ‘grouping for inequity’, was one which I had expected to encounter, given the evidence from previous research on the role of selection in creating educational inequalities. This theme initially examines students’ perceptions of the selective education

system in NI before going on to consider how pupils in all stages of education are streamed and the impacts that can have. It became clear that some students could identify social and educational reproduction in action, apparent through the pedagogies employed, as well as the expectations that teachers and schools had of learners. Some students had positive examples of streaming but for most streaming simply reinforced practices of social and academic segregation. This offers a further example of how closely intertwined these facets of habitus are and how they seep into one another as it is through everyday practices in schools that are misrecognised as fair that may lead to reproductive practices.

## The Impact of History

The data presented and discussed in this section illustrates that the middle-class work to secure their advantage and the expectations that this group have of their children leads them to engage in ‘concerted cultivation’. This theme considers how middle-class families invest in their children providing them with a sense of entitlement and the ability to engage with adults ‘as relative equals’ (Lareau 2011:2), reflecting the social conditions in which the habitus is acquired. We see, too, how habitus is ‘embodied history’ (Bourdieu, 1990:56). This enabled a consonance between home/school habitus which is discussed through students’ perceptions. Wilson (2016) has demonstrated how social background has a greater influence on educational achievement in NI than in other developed countries and parental expectations are discussed before the final aspect of this theme, the level of parental engagement with schools.

### Concerted Cultivation

As Chapter 3 explained, the habitus is the ‘product of history, that is, of social experience and education’ (Bourdieu, 2002:45), and so inevitably it reflects the social conditions within which it is acquired. Considering habitus-as-history reveals the impact of the past in the present, not just of the individual but of the family and this can be clearly seen in children’s formative years as social experiences and education intersect in powerful ways. Working to secure advantages can be seen in education whereby middle-class families encourage children to develop in ways that are aligned with the expectations and habitus of the school. As explained in Chapter 3, Lareau (2011) found different approaches to child-rearing practices between middle- and working-class families, with middle-class parents encouraging ‘concerted cultivation’ (2011:244) while working-class parents promoted the ‘accomplishment of natural growth’ (2011:238). While very generalised, and with many

exceptions, Lareau determined that middle-class parents readily intervened in their children's education and were at ease in negotiating the field of education. Such practices, she maintains, correspond with the 'dominant set of cultural repertoires' (2011:4) concerning child-rearing determined by a small group of health and educational professionals who effectively influence the behaviour of a large number of parents. Working-class parents, rather than nurturing a sense of entitlement in their children, encouraged them to be more constrained. Furthermore familial experiences with institutions were more distant with parents turning over educational responsibility to professionals.

### ***Investment***

It became clear in all focus group discussions that middle-class parents in NI also strategized in order to advantage their children. Students discussed the differing ways in which parents drew on their own previous experiences in, and knowledge of, education, with some navigating the field with confidence and a sense of entitlement in ensuring that their children were catered for, while others had more negative experiences reinforcing for them that academic success was 'not for the likes of us' (Loveday, 2015:572). This happened in a number of ways including investing in their children, consonance with the institutional habitus, parental expectations and parental involvement with institutions.

Bourdieu (2000:210) asserted that it was the 'presence of the past in the present which makes possible the presence in the present of the forth-coming' and all participants (except Lara from England) recalled their preparation in school and home for the eleven-plus. Discussions around 'summer packs' of past papers that parents paid for brought reminiscences and tales of holiday homework. Méabh caused hilarity as she told how she cried the day her mummy told her she could have a day off (she didn't want it) while Niamh remembered doing tests on a family holiday in Portugal. Others talked of daily practice papers in school and being quizzed by parents on scores, of comparing your marks to your friends, knowing you were 'clever' or worrying you weren't. It is clear that most participants were encouraged and supported at home, with many admitting that their parents spent time reviewing material with them. Cara recalls:

*... you were doing a paper every night, but well like some of [my friends'] parents were teachers and they'd be doing it with them and they would be going into school the next day and being getting 70 or whatever out of 75... and I remember you were just sitting watching everybody.*

All but one of the interviewees also talked about extensive support and interest from home in preparing them for the eleven-plus and subsequent ‘official’ examinations. The expenditure of time and energy by their parents ensured enhanced educational performance thus securing advantage and reproducing class structures and inequalities. As Bourdieu asserts academic capital is:

the guaranteed product of the combined effects of cultural transmission by the family and cultural transmission by the school (the efficiency of which depends on the amount of cultural capital directly inherited from the family). (2004:23)

Such investment continues as was evident in students’ experiences on placements. All groups talked of (middle-class) children being tutored for the eleven-plus, indeed Beth suggested that this was a social status symbol, ‘*It’s ingrained in parents “My child needs the eleven-plus, my child needs to do this” because they did it*’. The value of going to Grammar for these middle-class children is not even questioned – it is simply regarded as ‘de rigueur’, natural and necessary. These indicators of parental support demonstrate concerted cultivation. Finola encountered a family from her placement school in a charity shop, where the father was encouraging his children, including a pre-schooler, to choose four or five books each. Several students spoke of the emphasis parents placed on homework and indeed a third of participants were involved in some type of paid tutoring ranging from working with autistic children to eleven-plus and GCSE/A-level coaching. Helen, in her interview, explained that in her son’s middle-class primary school he was the only one in his class not being tutored as she believed working with him herself at home was sufficient. She related her more recent experience in a middle-class placement school:

*Ach, at least half the class were being tutored in P6<sup>22</sup>...and I was approached several times to see if I would tutor.*

She also queried if perhaps the significant investment of £40 per hour might be regarded by some parents as an overt status symbol as well as ensuring their children were as primed (and advantaged) as possible. Here we see middle-class parents investing in their children with economic capital funding academic support and Leitch et al. (2017:51) argue that the ‘current system of selection favours those parents with the means to pay for private tuition’. This finding was similar to Gallagher and Smith (2000:29) who determined that not all families could afford to offer such support:

...parents from socially disadvantaged areas are less likely to pay for coaching because of the cost and because they expect local primary schools to provide adequate preparation.

---

<sup>22</sup> Children in Primary 6 are 9-10 years of age.

Like Lareau's families, those from socially disadvantaged backgrounds were more likely to consider 'education as the job of educators' (2011:199) and expected teachers to be responsible for ensuring that their children learned what was required. The importance of home/school congruence will now be considered.

### ***Match between home/school contexts***

It was clear from most discussions that advantaged children in middle-class schools were thriving and they were 'fish in water' with the primary habitus established at home consonant with the post-primary institutional habitus. Peigí talked at some length about her differing experiences in affluent and disadvantaged primary schools. As she said, middle-class parents helped with homework, sorting out any confusion and:

*Even the conversations that the parents have with the kids when they're in the car or at the dinner table – it's amazing the difference that that makes!*

In contrast, Kate offered a working-class child's experience:

*She didn't understand the homework and said to mammy, 'Could you help me?' and mammy was like, 'I don't even know what you're doing'...She couldn't help, so there's an argument in the house and the child comes into school the next day stressed.*

This nicely demonstrates Bourdieu and Passeron's contention that:

An educational system based on a traditional type of pedagogy can fulfil its function of inculcation only so long as it addresses itself to students equipped with the linguistic and cultural capital – and the capacity to invest it profitably – which the system presupposes and consecrates without ever expressly demanding it and without methodically transmitting it. (1990:99)

Middle-class children are expressly supported in their home environment, and attention is given to developing their linguistic and cultural capital so allowing them to 'succeed' in education. The 'criteria' for success not always clearly stated and, indeed, working-class parents may well by under the impression that the school will 'methodically transmit' the expectations that will be required for success, which in fact they often fail to do.

Some participants were increasingly reflecting on the social circumstances of the learners in classrooms as the research phases progressed, exhibiting early traits of reflective activist teachers (as discussed in Chapter 2) as they were beginning to act as inquirers and analysts 'who weave reflection into their professional role by collecting and analysing data from their daily practice' (Dalmau and Gudjonsdottir, 2002:103). These tended to be the students who had opted for placements in disadvantaged schools. Beth articulated the disjunction that a working-class child might face in the classroom:

*It's hard for a child; a child is at home and they are allowed to sit in front of the T.V. and eat their dinner, they're allowed to throw things on the floor, they're allowed to do this and they're allowed to do that, and then they come into school... They have to learn a whole new set of rules and that can be quite confusing 'cos the whole thing juxtaposes one with the other.*

Evidently, she is beginning to recognise that some pupils had more challenges than simply learning facts and figures. As Lareau asserts, parents, both middle- and working-class, 'were scarcely aware that they were orienting their children in specific ways' (2011:239).

As Bourdieu and Passeron propose:

Because learning is an irreversible process, the habitus acquired within the family forms the basis of the reception and assimilation of the classroom message. (1990:43)

Family backgrounds shape habitus in ways that are classed, with middle-class children often acquiring capitals and practices that will be in keeping with those expected in schools. This was illustrated in Cara's interview as she compared two children from different classed-backgrounds.

*Megan said to me 'My mummy cut my sandwiches into triangles today because she knows we're doing shapes' ... the other wee one just didn't even know the shapes at all.*

Beth was also aware of how children's home backgrounds correlated with school expectations:

*You know the children who come in and go to music lessons and dance and do this and homework done to perfection and signed and their reading is done... and others [role plays teacher] 'Did your mummy do your reading last night?' [role plays child] 'No she forgot' [role plays teacher] 'Well I'll hear yours tomorrow...' And the teacher's thinking your mummy didn't do your reading so I'm not hearing your reading today – but that's not that child's fault.*

This exchange resonates with Gazeley and Dunne's (2007) research finding that there may be reduced teacher expectations for working-class children. Grace too, compared children she had observed in a nursery setting where different classed-backgrounds were evident watching children at the sand tray. Some of these three year-olds spoke fluently, counting shapes, using adjectives, verbalising their actions while others 'wouldn't have a clue'.

Grace suggested that '*some had been exposed to the counting and the language at home and some weren't – that would be dealt with in P1*'. What Grace fails to note, at least in this extract, is the considerable advantage those exposed to key skills, developing linguistic and cultural capital at home, will have in advantaging them as they begin formal schooling while those children without such advantages may never catch up (Sullivan *et al.*, 2018).

This gap may come about partly through the expectations that parents have of their children and the emphasis placed on education and I turn to these issues now.

### ***Parental expectations***

Compared with other OECD countries, according to Nolan (2014b:93), social background has a greater influence on educational achievement in NI thus ‘tending to reproduce hierarchies’. Parental aspirations to get their children into Grammar schools, which produce better results (DENI, 2017), have led to an expansion of Grammar places (Wilson, 2016). This is having a negative impact:

...more disadvantaged pupils are sorted into poor-performing schools which parents will increasingly seek to avoid if they can place their children elsewhere. (Wilson, 2016:98)

The Grammar/Secondary divide, Nolan (2014b:93-94) contends, leads to ‘a class distinction with high concentrations of socially disadvantaged pupils’ in Secondary schools. Indeed, Wilson (2016:120) argues that a range of data from the Department of Education NI demonstrate that ‘segregation [both class and religious] remains the leitmotif of the system’.

The first focus group talked about the expectations parents had of their children for the eleven-plus drawing on both their personal experiences and those garnered from placement schools which, while somewhat limited, provide some background. Aoife, herself from a working-class background, explained that her own parents did not place any pressure on her but were delighted that she had done well. She suggested that perhaps working-class parents had negative experiences and did not help with homework as they did not know or were unsure what was required.

*Maybe the education system failed them so they have a negative view of it as well, so that could ripple through like ...that's why people in socially-disadvantaged areas don't do well in comparison to others?*

This ‘rippling through’ echoes findings from Leitch *et al.*’s research (2017:29) which identified the ‘intergenerational transmission of educational failure’ as a significant inhibitor to educational achievement. They found that parental experiences of educational failure often led them to have low expectations for their children’s academic achievement as well as negative attitudes to schooling. Aoife’s comment led to a long conversation on advantage/disadvantage and evidence emerged that some of the group had begun to account for this. Aoife summed it up well:

*Yes, it's like your home life, your role models are your parents, so if they're doing something and you don't see it as wrong because your parents are doing it, then you're being shouted at in school for it, it kinda like confuses them.*

Participants were very aware that middle-class parents ‘invested’ in their children, in keeping with previous literature (Reay, 2004a; Ball, 2010). It appeared that working-class children did not have much educational monitoring or as many organised activities, as Peigí noted:

*In my P7 class last year, they were never going to say, but their mums and dads didn't understand the questions so they were never going to help them, and a lot of the time they were just doing their homework as quick as they can to get out to play so that they were out of the house.*

This parallels Lareau’s (2011:3) ‘accomplishment of natural growth’ with working-class children left to their own devices or at least with parents unable to help. In contrast, middle-class children had many after-school activities organised. Parental expectations placed pressure on the children too which Horgan’s (2007) research also found. Helen explained how eighteen months before the transfer test, nine- and ten-year old children were ‘scared they were falling behind’ as friends in other schools had started practice tests:

*The first day they did a paper when I was there, there were five or six girls in tears a couple of boys shaking, I don't know... I looked at them and thought those children are ten...*

Cara had similar experiences saying ‘*They're just children and they don't need that pressure – they actually get so stressed about it*’. Children are aware of what is expected and each focus group mentioned the demands and resulting strain that children felt and transcripts are full of references to ‘pressure’, ‘stress’, ‘nerves’ and ‘fear of failure’. Students appeared to view this as a rite of passage, something that (mostly middle-class) children naturally do in order to transition to Grammar. At times I was surprised by the students’ lack of understanding of the classed differences between children as exemplified in Lara’s somewhat naïve statement:

*I thought coming from a lower socio-economic background would have a positive effect...there are not so many expectations ...for the children's own mental health there's so much stress that the middle-class put on their children at such a young age and then go through the transfer test... and I thought the children from the working-class backgrounds would be happier in themselves with their parents saying 'You just go to school and try your best and you behave for the teacher' and that's their only expectation, whatever, there's no pressure on them.*

This misrecognition of the situation demonstrates how Lara’s habitus does not allow her to consider possibilities alien to her experience and is structured through her positioning in

the social hierarchy which is significantly different to those she refers to. However, it also links to her desire to ensure pupil happiness and wellbeing. This positioning also leads to different approaches when dealing with schools as I now illustrate.

### ***Parental interactions with schools***

Lareau (2011:242) contends that middle-class parents have no hesitation in intervening to advantage their children and their habitus, with its sense of ease and entitlement, facilitates engagement with schools. Concerted cultivation also appears to hold the ‘promise of being capitalized into social profits’ (2011:244). A good example of this came from Lara, placed in an affluent primary school, who told of how parents regularly dropped in after school to ask about children’s progress. One parent asked how she could stretch her capable eight year-old’s vocabulary and the teacher suggested encouraging her to use a thesaurus ‘*the next day she had a thesaurus and a dictionary on the desk*’. Economic capital was immediately deployed to develop linguistic capital and arguably enhance the child’s symbolic capital among her peer group as acquiring these resources enable her to stand out as being ‘distinctive’ as her parents’ perception was that she needed to be stretched.

Bourdieu and Passeron contend that:

... educationally profitable linguistic capital constitutes one of the best hidden mediations through which the relationship... between social origin and scholastic achievement is set up. (1990:116)

Not only does linguistic capital differentiate the holder, use of language signifies social position:

the literary disposition towards language which is proper to the privileged classes, who are inclined to make the choice of language and the manner of its use a means of excluding the vulgar and thereby affirming their distinction.  
(Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990:117-8)

This example, allied with Peigí’s earlier commenting about, ‘*even the conversations that the parents have with the kids when they’re in the car or at the dinner table*’, demonstrates how middle-class parents develop children’s linguistic capital and reasoning and may well accrue benefits from their efforts with such interactions enabling advantages from an early stage. Indeed, these are, Bourdieu (2004:17) argues ‘the best hidden and socially most determinant educational investment[s]’.

Conversely, Helen discussed different practices among parents in the socially-challenged school where she had undertaken a placement. She observed:

*Sometimes the parents don't value [education] at all – they nearly see it as a disadvantage to be too educated because, like, you'd be laughed at, or you won't fit in or whatever.*

There is a tendency for class to be experienced through cultural differentiation and Helen's comment evokes Sayer's (2005) assertion that people do not want to appear pretentious, they do not want to appear to be 'something they are not' (Bourdieu, 1984:321). This may lead working-class parents who themselves may have had detrimental experiences of education, to be reluctant to engage with professionals and institutions (see also Leitch *et al.*, 2017). In the discussion about parental expectations cited above, Aoife mentioned working-class parents' negative educational experiences to which Kate added:

*They've been failed by the education system so they don't actually know how to do [maths homework] either... so all in all, they're kind of stuck in a vicious circle because... who is going to help [their children]?*

These parents may feel alienated from school and so may be much less likely to intervene and more inclined to maintain a distance from the institution (Lareau, 2011). Unfortunately this lack of engagement can be misinterpreted as lack of interest as exemplified by Derbhla who, in her interview, expressed frustration that only one of 24 parents turned up for parent-teacher conferences in a socially-disadvantaged school. While her teacher was more understanding, Derbhla was clearly shocked by their absence which clearly jarred with her middle-class habitus:

*I became more aware that maybe [children] weren't getting very much... the parents at home weren't encouraging education. I found that whenever I was teaching them, they'd just be like... they wouldn't be interested. You'd try everything to make them interested, you would get some who are bright and would do well but others would just sit there and 'Naw, I wanna play x-box' or 'I wanna play PlayStation' and I was like 'What....?'*

She contrasts this with another placement in an affluent school where the class had organised an assembly. This time, '*every parent showed up – every parent* [emphasised]–*they booked off work, they were there*'. It was clear in this depiction of the two schools that Derbhla believed that the middle-class parents were 'doing right' by their children – raising them properly – while she virtually resorted to stereotyping the working-class families with no mention of the difficulties, economic constraints and cultural differences that they might have been facing.

Aoife talked about how a newly-arrived Romanian child struggled in school as his English-language skills limited his progress. The school, in a deprived area, did all it could to support new-comer children offering homework clubs, extra language classes and

including parents as much as possible. The mother's English was fluent and the teacher had asked her to practise English with the child at home, which the mother ignored.

Explaining this, Aoife suggested:

*You don't really know if she understands this education system. I think the teacher said this was his first year in education in general and I don't think the parents knew that it was important – probably coming from a different culture.*

Here the parent has perhaps chosen to protect their home culture, which may potentially hamper the child's progress in school. Grace provided other insights relating her host-teachers' experiences of parent-teacher conferences. In a school drawing children from various socio-economic backgrounds, parents fell into two cohorts; '*involved*' (mostly middle-class) parents and those who were '*not really interested*' (mostly working-class).

The teacher explained to Grace that:

*'They'll want to be drilling me on the transfer test'. So I really think that if the parents are seen to be more involved the teacher feels that they need to be more on the ball, they have to answer to the parents.*

Gillies (2005) noted that parents with access to a range of social, economic and cultural capital, drew on these capitals to consolidate their advantage and 'invested heavily in their children's education as a method of transferring this privilege' (2005:842). The data gathered here would support this assertion and demonstrates that, in this field, capitals are successfully deployed to secure advantage. Furthermore, the middle-class home furnishes children with the habitus (attentive, disposed to learn) and capitals (social, linguistic and symbolic) that allow them to appear school-ready and well-disposed to learning from an early age thereby securing an immediate advantage as they provide the school with what is expected (Atkinson, 2012).

What is of concern is some students like Derbhla have difficulty in breaking with preconceived 'hegemonic understandings' (Picower, 2009:197). Her conservative habitus leads her to revert to negative stereotyping of the working-class children she teaches (Gorski, 2012) as she interprets the differing familial approaches through her middle-class values. This lack of understanding on the part of students leads Lampert *et al.* to surmise that:

the teaching profession constitutes a prime site that reflects the middle-class ideologies that potentially perpetuate the institutional bias entrenched in mass schooling. (Lampert *et al.*, 2016:35)

This is a common finding in both literature reviewed and my data, that middle-class habitus match closely the values and standards that the school consciously, or even unconsciously,

seeks to promote and legitimate (Mills, 2008a; Thompson *et al.*, 2016). This is often facilitated by the everyday practices that schools engage in as will now be discussed.

## Everyday Practices

As explained earlier, habitus can be a useful means of unearthing the underlying dispositions which ‘incline agents to act and react in certain ways’ (Thompson, 1991:12) and it is the actions and reactions, the practices, that students both engaged in and observed in schools, that are discussed in this section. I begin here with the second theme, distinction, which considers practices in education wherein certain (middle-class) habitus have an advantage as they have developed ‘a feel for the game’. Furthermore, this group strive to distinguish themselves and there is a constant comparison and competition with others. This leads to the third theme, the neoliberalisation of education, which had been a strong undercurrent in focus group and interview discussions with participants’ continually referring to the pressure they were under to perform. The data shows how this emphasis on performance has had a significant impact on educational practices in schools, leading to competition and individualism.

### Distinction: Measuring Up

The second theme identified was ‘Distinction’, whereby differences of taste are used as the basis for social judgment. It was clear in my research that all participants had a ‘feel for the game’ within education, and this will be discussed initially. Some of the markers of class will be outlined before I go on to illustrate how the competition for distinction impacts on winners and losers. Having identified this theme initially through focus groups, interviews provided additionally important insight into how we gauge ourselves in relation to other people – we are continually engaging in everyday practices of comparing and measuring up.

#### *A feel for the game*

For Bourdieu, class is fundamentally about how the individual experiences social and cultural differences within society. These classed differences are subtly played out and, to use Bourdieu’s analogy of a game, critical to positioning on the pitch (within a field) is having a ‘feel for the game’. Bourdieu has defined this as habitus developed through prolonged immersion (1990c:113). Social fields, as explained in Chapter 3, have structures and rules, often not overtly expressed, which players follow despite their arbitrariness

(Nolan, 2012). These rules, the doxa, go unquestioned and, for many, become innate. As players vie for positions their habitus (as everyday-bodily-practice) and capital place them at a (dis)advantage as they need to understand not only the rules of the game but how they may be skilfully deployed in order to win. The familiarity that participants had with the selective academic game became apparent in our discussions and I was struck not only by their knowledge of the rules of play and the self-assurance demonstrated in their engagement with the group discussions, but also how their habitus had been infused with distinction, ‘a sense of one’s place... which always involves a *sense of the place of others*’ (Bourdieu, 1990c:113, original italics). Bourdieu explains that ‘distinction’ is relational and comes about through:

Being the product of the conditionings associated with a particular class of conditions of existence, it unites all those who are the product of similar conditions while distinguishing them from all others. And it distinguishes in an essential way, since taste is the basis of all that one has – people and things – and all that one is for others, whereby one classifies oneself and is classified by others. (1984:56)

While Bourdieu is referring to the aesthetic choices people make which creates class-fractions actively distancing one social class from others in society, this might also be applied to academic choices.

### ***Markers of class***

Here in NI there is an aspiration that middle-class children attend Grammar schools and the socio-economic background of parents is key to the type of schools to which children apply; this ‘appears to perpetuate a system of social segregation’ (Kelleher *et al.*, 2016:213). As Ainscow *et al.* (2012:40) indicate, selective schools siphon off middle-class pupils leaving their non-selective counterparts with ‘increasing proportions of students from less advantaged backgrounds’ which can lead to a vicious circle of low esteem and poor results. These distinctive markers of class were apparent in subtle ways in discussion. Ronan explained that being one of the few from his village going to Grammar school in the nearby town, made him ‘*special*’ while Grace, when asked if she was valued at school, responded ‘*Oh definitely! I was – this makes me sound so full of myself ... I was known to be one of the top in my year*’. While quite a modest character, it was clear that Grace enjoyed the recognition. These markers of class become imbued within these individuals’ habitus-as-everyday-bodily practice, giving them a sense of assurance. Cara was told on her first day at Grammar that ‘*it was an institution of excellence*’ and that with effort on their part, pupils would excel. Niamh displayed a similar pride in her school:

*It was like ‘The Castle’ and if you got to ‘The Castle’<sup>23</sup>, you were doing really well. Where I’m from is really rural...and if you didn’t get into ‘The Castle’ you went to, well [names Secondary schools]*

The inference is that these other options are not as prestigious or desirable – implicit here is that these alternatives are Secondary rather than Grammar schools. Cara is honest in admitting that ‘we probably felt we were better than everyone else’, distinction becomes embedded within the habitus-as everyday-bodily-practice, and she identifies with Grace in recognising her previous lack of insight into the favoured environment of their schools. Here we see this marker of distinction – attending Grammar school – as creating ‘particular social relations of privilege and subordination’ (Archer *et al.*, 2016). Niamh explained how, in her fourth year in Grammar, they had a rude awakening when there was an amalgamation with two smaller Secondary schools. The influx of pupils from less advantaged backgrounds was a culture shock and as Niamh explained, ‘*the Grammar teachers just couldn’t cope*’, which will be discussed further below. With the amalgamation, the school became non-selective and this led to an astute comment from Méabh:

*Strange – when there’s a ‘barrier’ there, the special or ‘better’ ones go to that school, then everybody wants to go there, whereas when you take that away, one’s [school]as good as the other*

Another literal marker of class that several participants noted was teachers’ awareness of pupils’ home backgrounds. Jenna, who did not herself distinguish pupils based on their backgrounds, reported teachers telling her:

*Oh, look after that child because their daddy’s a heart surgeon, or that one because her mum’s the local GP.*

This sense of being special led to the next aspect of this theme, subjective expectations which are now discussed.

### ***Simply the best: winners and losers***

A further aspect of this sense of distinction is evident in Beth’s portrayal of her experience in what is perceived to be an eminent Grammar school:

*As soon as you walk into that school, Bishop Henry, you’re there with the ‘smartest’ children in Glaslough, and there are expectations – you are a Bishop Henry student and you will come out with 10A\*s at GCSE and you will come out with 4As at A-level – when expectations are placed on you, we perform to them.*

---

<sup>23</sup> As noted, all school names and town names as well as participant names, have been replaced with pseudonyms to maintain confidentiality.

This particular school's emphasis on achievement and the institutional habitus was evidenced by Grace (in a different focus group) who commented that while pupils of this school were very academically prepared the same did not hold for their holistic development which I shall discuss in the next section. However, these pupils were made distinctive and '*conditioned into thinking that they are the top*' (Grace). Here we see pedagogic action, as explained in Chapter 4, being used to shape the habitus-as everyday-bodily-practice, ensuring that these pupils have a sense of confidence and distinction. These high expectations on the part of schools can yield results. Gallagher and Smith (2000:9) report a 'Grammar school effect' and pupil achievement at GCSE 'appears to be related more to gaining entry to a Grammar school than to any other factor'. They reported that Grammar teachers believed their pupils had achieved 'significant success' by gaining Grammar places and expected that these pupils 'should be capable of, and aspire towards, high achievement in the future' (Gallagher and Smith 2000:12). This contrasted with Secondary teachers who saw 'rebuilding their pupils' self-confidence' as the priority after these pupils had been labelled failures following the eleven-plus. As noted in Chapter 2, these findings, and Niamh's claim, are evidenced in the stark difference in exam performance between Secondary and Grammar school pupils with 50% compared to 95% respectively achieving 5+ GCSEs at grades A\*-C, including English and maths (DENI, 2017:8). One further, regrettable consequence, reported by Gallagher and Smith (2000) and echoed in comments made by participants, was that post-primary pupils from both sectors were aware of 'a different level of social standing and position' between schools. Gallagher and Smith continue: '... among the Secondary pupils there [was a] sense of resentment that former friends now saw themselves as somehow or other better than them' (2000:10). Unfortunately, even twenty years ago this report identified that the selective system had created the perception of 'winners and losers' with the winners accessing Grammar schools and the losers having to go elsewhere and from the evidence gathered in this study it would appear that little has changed.

These findings arguably substantiate Bourdieu and Passeron's assertion that:

Examiners' judgments ... retranslate and specify the values of the dominant classes in terms of the logic proper to the education system...Class bias is strongest [where it is] implicit [with] diffuse criteria... an occasion for passing total judgments armed with the unconscious criteria of social perception on total persons, whose moral and intellectual qualities are grasped through the infinitesimals of style or manners, accent or elocution, posture or mimicry, even clothing and cosmetics...or bourgeois ease and distinction, or universal tone and breeding. (1990:162).

Many Grammar pupils, both in the data and generally, display these ‘diffuse criteria’ – a sense of confidence and entitlement, and those electing to become teachers, from Grammars and Secondaries, have achieved high academic standards. As noted, interviews are used to filter for suitability for teaching and those ‘selected’ demonstrate good use of language which also affirms distinction. This theme of ‘distinction’ was initially identified through focus groups data and, in the interviews, I sought to determine where this sense of distinction came from. One striking characteristic emerging from interview data was that all participants, to varying degrees, compared themselves with others, and everyday practices in schools encouraged them to do so as will now be elucidated.

### ***Comparisons and measuring up***

Helen explained that in her primary school class, the teacher told the class of thirty ‘*If you can look around and put eight people ahead of you who are better than you academically, you’re not getting an A*’. As previously stated, Bourdieu (1984) asserts that ‘distinction’ is relational and it became clear from the data that:

... in every judgement of themselves a measurement is made against others. In this process, the designated other ... was constructed as the standard to/from which they measured themselves. (Skeggs, 1998:74)

In all focus groups and in seven interviews students directly referred to comparing themselves, or pupils in their classes, to others; ‘measuring up’. Beth, in her interview, expanded on her experiences at Grammar and the imperative for academic excellence. Beth is clearly a capable, articulate and reflective student, describing herself as ‘*one of the smarter ones*’ from her primary school and she explained she was the first generation in her family to go on to university. Bishop Henry ‘attracts students who are motivated, dedicated to the pursuit of academic study, and committed to achieving excellence’ (taken from school website) and this forms the basis of its institutional habitus. The school prides itself on consistently achieving outstanding academic success which ranks it among the top schools in the United Kingdom. Pupils conform to institutional dispositions that emphasise academic achievement and continuance to Higher Education is expected. While Beth chose to go to this Grammar, on reflection she admitted that she had not really fitted in from the outset, ‘*everyone was so serious*’ and she stated that in many classes ‘*I was thinking OMG! I don’t know these things*’. This is an example of disjuncture. Beth has apparently encountered a mismatch between habitus and field and Bourdieu proposes that:

In all cases where dispositions encounter conditions (including fields) different from those in which they are constructed and assembled, there is a *dialectical confrontation* between habitus as structured structure, and objective structures. In this confrontation, habitus operates as a structuring structure able to

selectively perceive and to transform the objective structure according to its own structure while, at the same time being re-structured in its makeup by the pressure of the objective structure. (Bourdieu, 2005:46-7, original italics)

As a result Hardy (2012:144) asserts, ‘new opportunities are created by altered field structures’. As will be seen, Beth negotiated the field to find her own path. She related how she felt she led a double life with school friends who prioritised studying and achievement, very different from home:

*At Bishop Henry I had this circle of friends that who were d-d-d-d-d-d-d-d [she makes a robotic sound]... and then at home this group of friends be like 'Let's go on our bikes, let's go do this or that' and even then I would think 'Oh my goodness ... the difference!'*

Viewed by her home friends as ‘a genius’ who didn’t have to try, Beth felt very pressured in school compared to others there:

*... everything that I had I had to work really hard for – it wasn’t just something that came naturally to me – but I think I worked really hard for it because I always felt that I had to keep up with the people around me.*

Beth has learned how to negotiate both fields, that of her working-class background as well as the highly academic Grammar environment where she was capable but did not quite feel that she ‘belonged’. A talented athlete, Beth competed at national level fully supported by the school until GCSE preparation began, and the insistence on academic attainment curtailed her participation.

Having been very academically successful at GCSE, and doing four A-levels, Beth was passionate about Art but quickly realised that this was not considered an appropriate avenue for her capabilities. She explained that:

*teachers were actually quizzing me – 'Why are you not doing Law? We'll put you in the Oxbridge class' and I was like, I don't want to go to Oxbridge!*

Beth resisted the attempt to channel her into an educational trajectory that was not of her choosing. The school attracted and cultivated talented, intelligent pupils, who came mostly from affluent backgrounds. Some of Beth’s friends are now studying astrophysics, medicine and dentistry:

*They were very, very intelligent, driven people from the age they started in that school and because they were my circle, I was like I need to keep up, and I don't feel ... if I didn't have those friends I would've – not necessarily got the same qualifications – but they were in competition with each other all the time.*

In this pressured academic environment, Beth felt compelled not only to keep up, but to keep her own counsel:

*... some people I went to school with wouldn't... mmm ... wouldn't speak to someone because they think 'I can't have an intelligent conversation with you'. There would have been people who wouldn't have spoken, 'There's Beth, she's an Art student...' I would have felt sometimes, not that I wasn't worthy but ... (long pause).*

Here, we see Beth comparing herself to others, measuring up and feeling compared by others. This gives us some awareness of how these others assert their dominance in the field through ‘attitudes of cultural superiority and inferiority ingrained in their habitus in daily interactions’ (Reay, 1995:360). Indeed, I would speculate that the pupils in this school are ‘actively cultivating social distinction’ (Reay, 1995:367) in the form of exceptional and particular academic achievement, which will in turn enhance their symbolic capital and social status. While Beth finds her individual trajectory, Bourdieu (1990c:116) reminds us that habitus is ‘the product of social conditionings, and thus of a history’. She resists the ‘social conditioning’ of the institutional habitus and, while feeling rebuffed, she does not allow this to detract from the choices that she makes. So while the habitus tends towards reproduction, it may find alternatives. Once again, we see here the entwinement of habitus as a product of history, informing everyday practice while enabling agency. Mills (2008a:108) argues that an individual has the potential for either a predominantly reproductive habitus, whereby they ‘recognise the constraint of social conditions and conditionings and tend to read the future that fits them’ or a transformative habitus as they ‘recognise the capacity for improvisation and tend to generate opportunities for action in the social field’. Beth exemplifies such a transformative habitus as she complied with field practices in school, in that she was a high academic achiever (which she credited to the competitive nature of the field), but still made choices counter to those proposed by the school. I return to these differing habitus below, and in the final chapter.

Other participants also highlighted how comparisons illustrated the competitive nature of schooling, another feature of the field that became evident through interviews. Emma, a middle-class, affluent student related how pressure was applied:

*... the pressure put on you to do well was ridiculous [emphasised] and you were compared – like [teachers] used to call out the class average marks – it was very competitive.*

Reay (1995:360) asserts that habitus is ‘inextricably linked to transmission within the family’, and interviews highlighted how the primary habitus instilled at home often matched that of the institution. As Cara revealed:

*My sister got an A in the eleven-plus and that was ‘normal’ so I had to get an A in the eleven-plus and the same with my two younger brothers as well, it kind*

*of went on up – not that we were competitive – to like GCSE. She set the standard and we all knew what we had to get.*

She states this matter-of-factly, it is not up for debate, so even while she denies being competitive her middle-class habitus expected high achievement in school. There was clearly a high degree of consonance between Cara's habitus and the field and, while she recognised that others were not as comfortable, she said it 'worked for me'. She also made an interesting statement:

*Belvedere is kind of like Marmite ... there were the people who really, really successful and loved it ...and then there were some who absolutely hated it. Belvedere was very Catholic and stuck to the rules and like you weren't even allowed to wear make up until fourth year... they changed the uniform so you couldn't roll your skirt up, so it was very kind of like strict like that. But some people absolutely hated it and would be like slagging it all the time and I was so defensive – if you don't like it leave!*

I would describe Belvedere as a conservative Grammar school and, probing her on this commentary, it became apparent that those who did not enjoy school tended to be those who were not academically successful and/or flouted the rules; their everyday practices did not correspond with those expected by the school. This again is an example of a dialectical confrontation, with a clash of habitus resulting in marginalisation for some, which Cara may have interpreted as aggression from those who did conform to the dominant institutional habitus.

What did become clear throughout was that Grammar schools were perceived to be better schools embodying greater symbolic capital, considered to produce better academic results resulting in them being institutions of distinction. As Emma noted, when asked what school she went to, others would respond '*You must be so smart, you must be so posh*', these were features associated with Grammars. Helen, a mature student and mother talked of how important the eleven-plus had been in her children's school community:

*It's a status symbol I think, the whole eleven-plus, working towards the transfer test, the whole thing, it's a status symbol... Maybe that's why it is so important that our children go to Grammar schools – it's a status symbol.*

While selection and, at a later stage, public examinations create the 'illusion of neutrality and independence' of schools in relation to class (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990:141) they also 'distract inquiry from the elimination which takes place without examination'. The eleven-plus makes the education system here appear neutral and democratic, but this takes our attention away from the fact that many are already excluded, or have self-eliminated, prior to exams. The next theme, the neoliberalisation of education, pursues this emphasis

on performance showing that it has had a significant impact on educational practices in schools.

### The Neoliberalisation of Education

Chapter 5 demonstrated how class has increasingly been made invisible in the classroom through various neoliberal discourses which have led to a focus in education on parental choice, narrowing the achievement gap and social mobility (Reay, 2013, Ball, 2018).

Loveday (2015) maintains that such discourses place the onus on the individual to succeed while structural impediments are depreciated. As Gove (2012) stated in a speech at Brighton College:

We live in a profoundly unequal society. More than almost any developed nation ours is a country in which your parentage dictates your progress. Those who are born poor are more likely to stay poor and those who inherit privilege are more likely to pass on privilege in England than in any comparable country. For those of us who believe in social justice this stratification and segregation are morally indefensible. And for those of us who want to see greater economic efficiency it is a pointless squandering of our greatest asset – our children.

Even in this exhortation, while class and its attendant (dis)advantages are recognised, the focus remains on apparently sensible everyday practices, economic efficiency and avoiding waste. The resolution that Gove proposes to this problem is that pupils must have ambition and work hard, that there is the opportunity for success for those who apply themselves, that there are opportunities for social mobility. Reay (2013:663) refutes this assertion suggesting that this ‘clearly distracts attention from larger systemic processes that are making hierarchies steeper and opportunities more restricted’. Moreover, this focus on social mobility acts as a ‘powerful mechanism of unconscious denial’ (2013:663), having no real impact on the classed educational status quo, thereby acting as a ‘crucial lynchpin in neoliberal ideology’ (2013:664). This situation is mirrored here as, explained in Chapter 2, there are ‘class-based motivations for academic selection’ which have a ‘socially segregating effect on Northern Ireland’s children’ (Gardner, 2016:353).

This neoliberal turn was evidenced in the data in three distinct ways. Firstly, it was noted through interviews and focus groups that there is a ‘pressure to perform’ which applies not only to pupils but, in this era of league tables and accountability, schools which are constantly being measured and compared through the results that teachers ‘produce’. Secondly, this emphasis on performance has displaced what education, arguably, should be about – holistic development, and equipping young people with ‘appropriate knowledge, understanding and skills’ (EONI, 2007:3), skewing the curriculum to focus on what is

assessed and prioritising results. Thirdly, this move towards the marketisation of education means, as Reay (2013:667) eloquently phrases it, that ‘the dominant middle-class culture... is increasingly characterized by selfish individualism and hyper-competition’, and with competition there are losers as well as winners. All of these features have been alluded to, at least are discernible, in various data extracts above but this final thread of this theme will show that it is those who have the appropriate capitals at their disposal who have the means to succeed. Others are considered to be lacking in aspiration and not prepared to work hard enough (Gillies, 2005).

### ***Pressure to perform***

The data gathered clearly demonstrates that ‘performativity’ is rife as an everyday practice in schools. Ball (2013:57) suggests ‘performances stand for, encapsulate or represent the worth, quality or value of an individual or organisation within a field of judgement’.

Echoing the discussion of competences in Chapter 2, Ball explains that it is now the logic of accountability and managerialism that takes precedence over the professional judgements of teachers and there will be some discussion of statistics and ‘culling’ of pupils later in this chapter in the section on ‘othering’. Beth commented on the pressure to perform, especially as pupils approached officially recognised exams:

*As soon as it got to fourth year, you are in this cycle, you are a statistic – like I was repeating exams all the time<sup>24</sup> ...Bishop Henry is an exam factory.*

Jenna reiterated this in her interview as she discussed the difference between teaching Secondary and Grammar classes. She explained how she had the same age groups in the two different schools yet there was a significant difference in everyday practices between the schools. Having enjoyed a practical, skills-based approach in the Secondary the year before, she found the expectations in the Grammar setting considerably more demanding. Some pupils couldn’t keep up with the faster pace, but:

*... because the school was striving, only naturally, for the highest grades, those students needed to learn so much more... I couldn’t go any slower, I had that sort of pressure, and I think the kids are then more aware of the pressures...*

When probed about this she told of how the Grammar pupils were made aware of different types of questions, of grade boundaries and constantly coached on the way to respond to gain marks, and reminded to address the criteria they had been given at the start of the course. She admitted that there was reference to these in the Secondary, but a less-pressured approach. She also noted that a consequence of the faster pace in the Grammar

---

<sup>24</sup> At the time participants did GCSEs pupils took modules that contributed to the final GCSE which could be repeated to raise the final grade.

was that they finished the course earlier and spent much more time on revision and exam technique. This confirms Bourdieu and Passeron's (1990:82) assertion that this focus on examinations 'masks the whole system of relations between differential selection and the social and scholastic factors of that selection'. As has been shown social and academic selection in NI has led to children being channelled into two different types of schools and the various capitals that they have at their disposal come into play within the specific fields. Participants related that Secondary schools tend to adopt more experiential, holistic approaches (which will be discussed below) while Grammars tended towards a transmissive pedagogy in preparation for exams. This highlights the tension noted in Chapter 4, that Wilkinson and Penney (2014:119) found high-achieving students may in fact miss opportunities for 'sophisticated and creative learning' and are instead exposed to 'rote learning orientations' in order to complete exams.

These findings did not only apply to post-primary schools, but to primaries as well. Méabh worried that:

*It's an awful lot of pressure on kids so young to do exams and from then, at such a young age to be always thinking, 'Oh! I need to do my best'*

Similarly Cara cited above stated that children '*get so stressed about it*'. This worry was carried into post-primary schools and Beth was, again, eloquent about the impact of performativity, '*I am an anxious and nervous person and I can genuinely tell you that came from my [Grammar] school*'; this field clearly has influenced her habitus. When probed to see if this pressure had perhaps come also from the home environment, she flatly rejected this explaining that she had had to become a perfectionist at school, '*It was the atmosphere I was in – it wasn't healthy... [long pause]*'. This exemplifies ways in which neoliberal expectations have become embedded in the field (Angus, 2012) which, as explained in Chapter 3, Bourdieu and Wacquant view as sites of competition for the 'specific profits that are at stake in the field' (1992:97). The specific profits in this case are academic and symbolic capitals in the form not only of recognised exam qualifications but also of results that feed into school league tables and comparative benchmarks (Ball, 2013), local 'prestige' and, for pupils, which pave the way to university courses. The institutional habitus too, has been impacted by these neoliberal expectations and, through the pedagogic work undertaken, has shaped the individual habitus to be competitive, agile and responsive (Gillies, 2011). The neoliberalisation of education has also affected the practice in the field and I now turn to this.

### ***The impact on practice***

Selective education creates ‘social imbalance’ (OECD, 2013:69) as previously outlined in Chapter 4, and a consistent finding in assessment-focussed education systems is the skewing and narrowing of the curriculum (Dunne and Gazeley, 2005; OECD, 2013). Ball suggests that this focus on assessment neglects, ‘the social and moral purposes of education’ (2010:162). The NI curriculum is intended to be ‘balanced and broadly based’ (EONI, 2007:3) in order to prepare pupils ‘for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life’. However, in practice, curriculum breadth has suffered due to the focus on assessment and testing. References to narrowing of the curriculum permeated focus group and interview discussions. Aoife explained how a good friend, passionate about the Arts, had just started teaching and was struggling to come to terms with the narrow focus:

*You just don't have time because of what is expected of you from the top and you've to tick all these boxes... You just have to do what management tells you that you need to do.*

Aoife herself found this problematic. In a recent primary placement, children were working towards statutory tests in literacy and numeracy, which she explained became the main focus of weeks of teaching and learning, *‘It was so boring – I was bored and the kids were bored as well!’*. Complaining about over-assessment in primary school, and resulting underachievement, Beth too noted the emphasis on literacy and numeracy and how these were the only areas against which children were measured. Commenting on the current NI policy document (DENI, 2011) outlining the strategy to improve outcomes in literacy and numeracy, she remarked:

*‘Count, Read, Succeed’ – succeed at what? Just because you can count and read doesn't mean you can succeed... They could be an amazing artist, an amazing musician or innovator if you just gave them the opportunities to allow them to achieve – it all comes down to what is being assessed and what is the point of assessing it all?*

Beth rejects the prioritising of academic results over personal formation (Colwill and Gallagher, 2007) as previously discussed in Chapter 2. Once again, these students indicate their readiness to question current educational practices as they recognise these may be detrimental to learners, and so they are displaying early characteristics of reflective activist teachers.

Not only curriculum breadth but pedagogical approaches are affected by neoliberal thinking. Ide, a twin, articulates the differences in approach between the Secondary she attended and the Grammar her twin went to:

*Secondary schools, in terms of environment, created you, developed you more as a person...it was more about the whole school experience, whereas [twin] would have talked about statistics and the importance was on attainment and driving towards your goal, and self-awareness...In Secondary it was more about the whole person, not just the academic.*

Here, we can see Bourdieu and Passeron's theory of social reproduction in action as the pressure to produce results pushes Grammars towards achievement while Secondary schools take a more rounded approach. As I suggested in Chapter 4, rather than teachers being complicit and active in social reproduction, this occurs 'behind the backs of the agents engaged in the school system...and often against their will' (Bourdieu, 1990a:ix). I would suggest that few teachers intend to deliver a narrow curriculum in a didactic way, but the demands of the education system have led to teachers' 'happy unconsciousness' (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990:108) of their role in conserving the system through their acceptance of everyday practices. Moreover, Chapter 2 discussed concerns that a competence-based approach to ITE asserts, can create mere technicians with little understanding of the knowledge and values underpinning the complex contextual choices teachers make on a daily basis (Maguire, 2014:6). These participants demonstrate that by reflecting critically on such situations they have moved beyond a technicist approach towards that of reflective activists.

This pressure to succeed has led to competitiveness being a feature of the field and a feature embedded within students' habitus. They have constantly strived to achieve and succeed and competition and comparison with others is considered standard practice. What has been misrecognised by these educational achievers is that when there is competition there are those who will not succeed, who may be considered failures and will now be discussed.

### ***Competition: winners and losers***

In order to secure academic advantage, Ball (2010) confirms that middle-class parents are increasingly investing economic and social capital in their children, from tutoring, extra-curricular activities to educational materials and software, they are progressively taking responsibility for their children's education. Indeed, Reay (2013:665) declares that education has become 'reinvented as an aspirational project of the self' and continues:

... middle-class parents heavily invest and constantly strategize to ensure that their children have a better chance of a fair chance than other people's children. (2013:666)

This was evident in the data as previously outlined in the section on Concerted Cultivation, with participants discussing the prevalence of tutoring at both primary and post-primary levels. Skeggs (2004:54) argues that, in this way, ‘class is displaced and effaced’ through the neoliberal focus on ‘mobility and individualisation’. Beth exemplifies this focus in her comment:

*People would be competing with each other all the time but they wouldn't say it... [long pause] and it was covert... people were continually... well they did become very competitive with each other and there's a sense of angst to do well...*

As discussed in Chapter 5, Skeggs (2004) contends that government discourses such as those around raising achievement and social mobility, have allowed the middle-class to ‘legitimate their own interests, to make moral claims’ (2004:95). In this way government discourses enable the middle-class to abdicate their power and privilege while both distancing themselves from, and pathologising, the working-class. This will be exemplified in the next section by Orlaith who distanced herself from those working-class pupils who had not been successful in the eleven-plus and ended up in the local Secondary. She, like most of the other participants, attributed her success to individual effort, a view that permeated all focus groups. As Niamh articulated ‘*...if you're willing to work hard enough you'll do well wherever you go*’. This implies that those who do not do well simply did not work hard enough. Skeggs (2004:43) maintains that such representations have moral overtones, ‘placing responsibility for structural inequalities upon those that are subject to them’. This enables educational inequalities to be misrecognised as a lack of interest and effort on the part of those who are less advantaged. These representations derive from the neoliberal conception that hard work and effort are all that are needed to succeed and it others and often vilifies those who are deemed failures.

Competition was used as an incentive in schools to motivate pupils with Méabh relating how naming and shaming was used.

*One of our teachers used to hand out results after we did each exam in order of who did best... and it would've been pure competition – he said that it's the competition that drives this class...*

While others in her group found this example disquieting, Peigí, in a different group, suggested that competition in her Grammar encouraged pupils to excel, ‘*You're pushed more and you're more motivated*’. She continued, suggesting that achievements were lower in Secondary school because if ‘*you were the highest there's nobody to keep you driven*’. This once again demonstrates that these students often misrecognised their

privileged positioning. They constantly compare themselves with others and fail to understand that there will be some who will be deemed failures and devalued through competition. As Skeggs (2004:63) articulates ‘self-responsibility and self-management ... become the mechanisms by which class inequality is reproduced and refigured’. Competition perpetuates a landscape in which there are both winners and losers in the educational game.

### **Reproduction and Transformation of Inequalities in Education**

In this final section, I attempt to draw out the tensions of participants’ own experiences of schooling and demonstrate how their classed-identities may create conflict with their emerging attitudes towards, and practices of, being a teacher. Thompson reminds us that particular practices should not be seen as the product of the habitus alone but as ‘the product of the *relation between* the habitus, on the one hand, and the specific social contexts or “fields” within which individuals act, on the other’(1991:13-14, original italics). This section thus considers the relations between particular habitus interacting with educational fields, at micro-, mezzo- and at times macro-levels.

As Chapter 4 explained, Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) suggest that teachers may further social reproduction. However, rather than doing so wittingly, this may occur ‘behind the backs of the agents engaged in the school system ... and often against their will’ (Bourdieu, 1990a:ix). This is due to teachers accepting the doxa, unquestioningly accepting educational inequalities that appear as natural. Mills (2008a:79) asserts that while Bourdieu has been ‘(mis)represented as a determinist ... there is transformative potential in his theoretical concepts’ which may allow schools and teachers scope to improve pupils educational possibilities. To do so will mean that educational differences, often misrecognised as individual giftedness rather than families investing in cultural capital (concerted cultivation) to provide their children with social and educational advantage, must be seen as just that. These doxa, the ‘taking-for-granted of the world that flows from practical sense’ (Bourdieu, 1990b:68) must be recognised and challenged.

For some of my participants, it became clear in interviews that they accept the doxa unquestioningly and their positioning may lead to a reproductive approach to practice. Others, the data show, are beginning to recognise inequalities and exhibit the potential to act as change agents and reflective activists who may question and, if necessary, challenge current practice. Two themes are discussed here: ‘othering’ and grouping for inequity. The

theme of ‘othering’ arose when, during focus group discussions, a number of students defined themselves and their experiences as ‘normal’ without recognising that this constructed others as ‘not normal’. This theme was arguably evident as a result of the selective educational processes commonly used in NI which create a two-tiered education system through which difference is emphasised and, often, reproduction is facilitated. Moreover, learners who are designated as ‘other’ often do not query their positioning in an acceptance of the symbolic violence perpetrated against them and consequently this may limit their expectations. The final aspect of this theme is stereotyping and labelling whereby teachers expect less, and fail to challenge, pupils who do not conform to the ‘dominant’ (middle-class) social expectations. This is followed by the theme grouping for inequity, which examines mechanisms of reproduction in the field of education in NI, showing how some students, and indeed teachers, misrecognise everyday practices as fair and thus may tend to reproduce these.

### **‘Othering’**

In discussions and interviews, students tended to present their experience as ‘universal’ which Mills and Keddie (2012:11) argue enables an ‘unmarked... classed frame from which the “other” is judged’. Hall and Jones (2013) explain how the acceptance – and normalisation – of middle-class values and practices in schools has rendered class ‘invisible’ which simultaneously distances working-class pupils and culture and this will be shown below. Students’ failure to examine or even acknowledge their privileged position enables inequalities to be reproduced (Choules, 2007) and makes many students complicit in exercising hidden power in preserving their positions – their habitus seek to ensure they maintain a dominant position in the field. Indeed, and as previously noted, Bourdieu and Passeron maintain that the system ‘confers on the privileged the supreme privilege of not seeing themselves as privileged’ (1990:210). Thus ‘othering’ is created in a number of ways. Firstly, students’ assumptions that they are ‘normal’; this not only means they fail to recognise their privileged position but also establishes ‘others’ as not normal. Another means of ‘othering’ is through a significant practice in the field of education in NI, selection which creates a two-tiered education system and difference is emphasised. Next, those who are designated as ‘other’ often do not query this positioning in an acceptance of the symbolic violence perpetrated against them and their habitus limit the range of choices that they deem available. Finally, the demand for high academic standards within the field enables teachers to employ practices that segregate learners, channelling

and at times eliminating them by normalising middle-class values and achievement which I now outline.

### ***Normalising middle-class achievement***

Allard and Santoro (2006) assert that one aspect of the teacher educator's role is to challenge students to examine their classed positioning and to offer experiences that may enable them to begin to understand their assumptions not only of their learners, but of themselves in order to avoid simply reproducing what are reproductive practices. Engaging in focus groups, students through sharing their own experiences and observations began to unpick their hegemonic understanding of their own classed-positions as 'normal'. I work in a similar context to Ladson-Billings (2006:107) who stated, 'most of my students are white, middle-class...they are surrounded by people who look, talk, and perhaps think as they do'. In a group discussion about schooling, we see Grace begin to understand this:

*I don't know, I think, when I was at school I thought that we came from pretty wide ranging backgrounds, but when you look back now you think maybe we didn't, maybe we were all pretty similar, but I think if it works for you, you think it's wonderful because it worked for you.*

Grace demonstrates an 'awakening of consciousness' (Bourdieu, 1990c:116) as she acknowledges her relative fortune and I shall return to Grace later. However, a problem that arose from this positioning of middle-class as 'normal' meant that those who were different were 'othered'. Moreover, as these students fail to recognise their privileged class status, they attribute their academic achievements to personal effort (Choules, 2007).

Orlaith, a middle-class student who had been tutored for the eleven-plus commented:

*I got into Grammar school, then I wanted to do well. I worked hard for my GCSEs and everything whereas ones that went to Secondary schools that I knew, just didn't really work much ... but that might have been because they were in an environment where everybody was kinda not bothered with working hard to do well...*

This extract, and further comments, indicate misrecognition in action. Orlaith believes that she has 'earned' her privilege through her hard work and effort while she views those who went to, in her words, '*rough*' Secondary schools as lacking in aspiration, and in with the '*wrong crowd*' which she perceives will limit their achievements. Unwittingly, Orlaith's comments indicate that her inclination is to ascribe deficit to these pupils and, left unchallenged, she may act in ways that reproduce inequalities. This echoes Gazeley and Dunne's (2007:415) observation that students have 'already internalised understandings of social class' allowing them to 'construct explanations for the educational underachievement of working-class pupils that located the problem within pupils and their

homes'. Orlaith reinforces this later when asked about any shortcomings there might be to Grammar schools; rather than problematising the type of school she has gone to, she instead disparages peers who went to Secondary school:

*Mmmm, only really the fact that obviously if you don't do well enough then you have to go to a Secondary school and then, from a young age, from first year onwards, you are seeing kids like... you know that they obviously weren't smart enough to get into a Grammar school – so it does separate kids out that way...*

This 'separating the kids out' is a form of 'channelling and streaming' (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990:83), a mechanism of reproduction employed by the dominant culture to differentiate and 'create a cycle of privilege' (Canny and Hamilton, 2018:642). The next means of othering is through selection.

### ***Selection: creating subjective expectations***

Selection allows class to be misrecognised as 'natural' ability and intelligence whereby middle-class pupils with appropriate capital are accepted into what are considered to be 'better' schools. By projecting negative values onto working-class Secondary pupils, Orlaith may be attributing value to her middle-class self thus creating distinction. Skeggs (2004:46) maintains that 'we have entered a time when speaking of class is not acceptable (even distasteful)', instead we now position ourselves in relation to others. Here we see neoliberalism in action as Orlaith positions herself as an 'agile body' (Gillies, 2011), 'smart', socially mobile and ready to succeed as opposed to those who are '*not bothered*' thereby immobilised, leading to the 'fixing of failure' in the working-classes (Reay, 2006:299).

This deficit view of Secondary schools was exemplified across all focus groups. Aoife, who had attended a Secondary school, was quite forward in explaining the preconceptions that peers had of her school:

*I got good grades in my GCSEs and others are like, 'But you went to St. Peter's High'...people do have this sort of like view of it as being not as good – if you get me?*

Her peers questioned how she had accumulated appropriate academic capital in what they considered a second-rate school. This perception of Secondary schools as problematic was confirmed by Jenna when she related that fellow students, prior to their first Secondary placement<sup>25</sup>, were '*terrified*', as Jenna explained, '*they expected warzones...and backlash – they were that bad!*'. As Sleeter (2008:1950) asserts students' 'prior life experiences,

---

<sup>25</sup> Post-primary students must undertake a placement in a Secondary school in their second year; they are only allowed to opt for Grammar placements from their third year onwards.

beliefs and assumptions ... act as powerful filters through which they interpret teaching, students and communities'. Here we see how working-class students are pathologised and become 'problems to be managed' (Allard and Santoro, 2006:117), and Secondary schools undervalued. These are views that must surely be challenged and it is essential that student teachers begin to recognise that such thinking is problematic if education is to offer opportunities for change. Moreover, as will be seen in the next section, as a result of symbolic violence Secondary students often accept such labels.

Helen, a middle-class, mature student, provided another perspective of this issue in her interview when she disclosed that her youngest son had 'failed the eleven-plus'. This came as a shock, as his three brothers had '*breezed through the test*' and were at Grammar school, thus creating an anomaly and positioning him as 'other'. She describes how her eleven-year old was '*devastated*' and then further disappointed when a formal appeal failed and so he went to the local Secondary school. Helen was starkly honest and self-deprecating as she admitted:

*I didn't want Matt to go to Orchardville – I'll be perfectly honest ... I was shocked and surprised when he got to like it and realised, 'Oh! Oh – they're doing proper work there ... Oh my goodness he's reading a novel!'*

These last remarks were sarcastic as she mocks her own prejudices and recognises her 'othering' of the Secondary school. She admitted that her assumptions were unfounded and her son flourished in the environment where his abilities were recognised and encouraged. She explains that Orchardville allowed her son to meet a range of other pupils from different ethnic and classed-backgrounds which she acknowledged was a '*great experience or him*' and something he would not have encountered otherwise. She later returned to her preconceptions, deriding herself as she says:

*I don't know what I thought they'd be doing with them there ... I thought it would be all woodwork ... you know – which it wasn't – it clearly wasn't. And their teaching and teaching strategies, I found, very good, and I found no different ... a friend, kept reminding me that the teachers in those schools – in those schools - [again realising that she differentiates between them] actually have to go through a teaching degree as well, they're not just 'Ah here, you'll do!' ...[she laughs]*

Encountering a disjuncture between habitus and field, Helen had to re-evaluate her thinking. Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) propose that class habitus determines educational success or elimination in the form of subjective expectation:

... the attitudes from the different social classes towards work or success, depending on the degree of probability and improbability of their continuing into a given stage of education. (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990:157)

This internalisation of objective possibility as subjective expectation is a feature of the (middle-class) habitus which has shaped Helen's behaviour and thinking. Her subjective expectations were that her children aspired to obtain a place in a Grammar. Her youngest son's failure to do so meant that he could not meet these classed-expectations. Rather than simply acquiesce, Helen explained how the family drew on their cultural and social capital; she conferred with friends and professionals who understood how to question the practices in the field – here the selection process – and set about gathering information from educational bodies on how they could appeal. This required considerable time, research, structured reasoning and linguistic capital as well as an understanding of how the field operated. It also is illustrative of habitus:

... a system of lasting and transposable dispositions which, integrating past experiences, functions at every moment as a matrix of perceptions, appreciations and actions and makes possible the achievement of infinitely diversified tasks.(Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992:18)

While unsuccessful in this instance, we see how Helen's middle-class, confident, educated and socialised habitus utilises a range of capitals allowing her to negotiate this field in an attempt to impact practice.

Despite her fears, Helen has come to realise that Orchardville is not 'deficient' as she had previously misrecognised it. As Bourdieu and Passeron assert:

Thus it may be that an educational system is more capable of concealing its *social function* of legitimating class differences behind its *technical function* of producing qualifications... (1990:164, original italics)

Helen's experiences have, on reflection, led her to be more open-minded and ready to question current doxa around Secondary school and she is beginning to think critically about the 'purposes and consequences of education' (GTCNI, 2007:9). The expectation is that the Grammar is the 'best' school, fit for the dominant group while Secondary schools suffice for others. What seems clear from Helen's experience is that the real function here was social rather than academic selection and, in this case, her son was 'channelled' into the 'wrong' school for his social background, thereby 'othering' him. This has led her to recognise her acceptance of the doxa, her unconscious bias against Secondary schools considering them to be not as good as Grammar schools. This realisation generates opportunities for change in her thinking and dispositions towards a more transformative habitus. What is of concern however, is the readiness with which many working-class pupils accept this 'othering' which will now be discussed.

### ***Second-class learners: accepting the label***

Compared to Orlaith's perception of her Secondary peers, Jenna had a different experience of Secondary pupils during her placement in a dynamic and forward-thinking Secondary where pupils were encouraged to aim high and apply for university. Rather than Jenna seeing these pupils as 'deficient', she maintained that they fix failure within themselves.

She suggests the push for university applications may be:

*... ruining the kids self-esteem. We did a UCAS session, and I said to some of the girls, 'Where do you want to go?' – and they were embarrassed to tell me they wanted to go to the Tech<sup>26</sup>. Now some of those girls are going to go on and own their own beauty salons, they're going to go on to plumbing, engineering, get their NVQs work their way up – and they're embarrassed to say 'I'm going to Tech' ...*

While Jenna herself recognises their potential, the pupils concerned appear ashamed of their lack of aspiration. Despite the school's efforts, this may be regarded as a manifestation of symbolic violence as to these pupils university is 'not for the likes of us' (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990:157). Here we see 'selectedness' in action as while it might be argued that while these pupils have been encouraged to be socially mobile, through their subjective expectations they limit themselves, so truncating their educational destinies (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990:158). While Jenna does not do so, the pupils she works with have eliminated themselves from Higher Education. They have developed 'a sense of one's place which leads one to exclude oneself from places from which one is excluded' (Bourdieu, 1984:473). Orlaith, in the earlier example, positions herself as hard-working and responsible apparently following the neoliberal discourses discussed in Chapter 5, which allows her to adopt a moral stance in relation to Secondary pupils, positioning them as irresponsible. This emphasis on personal responsibility is one of the mechanisms by which inequality is reproduced (Skeggs, 2004). This contrasts sharply with the self-confidence and entitlement the middle-class students exhibit: they do not question that university was the natural progression from school paralleling Reay *et al.*'s work (2009).

It was not only pupils' self-imposed limits that participants related to me that created 'others', but the practices within the field that lead teachers to focus on academic success. Méabh explained how on returning to school to do A-levels, some teachers reviewing pupils' grades announced '*You don't need to be here – away you go*'. According to Méabh, these pupils had B grades at GCSE, and the teacher, fiercely aware of school expectations, ejected pupils he deemed unlikely to maintain his superb exam results. This led Niamh to

---

<sup>26</sup> 'Tech' is a colloquialism for Technical College, an institute of Further Education offering vocational routes to students considered to be non-academic.

comment that ‘*Schools are obsessed with statistics*’ and others to share similar anecdotes of pressure to perform for external assessments. Ronan expressed this forcefully stating that Grammar pupils who did not perform to expectations at GCSE were ‘*culled*’ and not allowed to return for A-levels, relegating these pupils to a lesser status. Similarly, Helen related how her teacher was proactive in ‘othering’ less capable pupils in primary school. Working towards the eleven-plus, some children were taken out of the room to be kept occupied:

*It wasn’t like they were doing the same sort of thing we were doing in class but at a level suitable to them ... they were doing crafts sometimes, cut and sticking...*

This provoked frustration within this group and a heated discussion about streaming which, immediately before, they had agreed was a valuable pedagogical approach – and this will now be discussed further.

### ***Channelling and eliminating those who do not fit***

Ide in interview told how she observed a capable child from a socially-deprived area being ‘othered’ by teachers in his Secondary school, who labelled him ‘problematic’:

*There was this fella, Mike, who had behaviour issues, but that was just to get attention ... his home life was not great and his behaviour – well he was punished a lot. You’d hear ‘Mike’s playing up a lot today, whatever’s wrong with him?’, but he wasn’t pushed academically because he was just seen as a problem.*

She found this frustrating as she was able to establish a good working relationship with this pupil, and believed that his home circumstances were not being taken into account.

Looking after his younger sister while his single mother worked in the evenings, she found the school’s approach unsympathetic compared to what they considered to be co-operative pupils, who ‘*wear the uniform properly, come from a “proper” family, teachers know mum and dad – that sort of thing*’. This finding echoes that of Thompson *et al.* (2016) where barriers to learning are ignored and the fault is fixed with the learner. Shim maintains that ‘habitus generates practices that correspond to the structuring properties of the social fields within which it was acquired’ (2012:213). Middle-class teachers expect their pupils’ to conform to *their* practices – linguistic expression, modes of thought and behaviour, cultural standards – which reflect dominant social expectations (cultural capital). Those meeting these standards are affirmed whereas pupils rejecting these may be seen to be disruptive; this is social reproduction at work. Mike’s abilities and potential to achieve are misrecognised (masked by his behaviour) by the school, who fail to take account of his home circumstances. In this way, Hall and Jones (2013:417) argue, the school itself is ‘seen

to play an active role in (re)producing class inequalities in wider society'. However, Ide appreciates that there are barriers to learning; in this way she is demonstrating a potentially transformative rather than reproductive habitus.

To return to Grace, it became clear in discussions that some students were beginning to recognise that perhaps our education system was not as fair as they had assumed. While it '*worked for them*' (a consistent response from the groups) Grace began to question the doxa, '*What about the rest of the people it didn't work for? There's a problem there because the system should be working for everybody*' acknowledging that perhaps she has been looking at it through '*rose-tinted glasses*'. While Bourdieu contends that the habitus is capable of transformation when it confronts a challenging situation or realisation as evidenced in Grace's insight, such transformation is 'never radical' (Bourdieu, 2000:161). Furthermore, Bourdieu also explains that the habitus is a product of social conditioning, and so Grace cannot see the irony when she continues '*... it got me here, but I probably – no probably is not the right word – I would have got here anyway*'. This illustrates Reay's contention that:

Habitus can be used to focus on the ways in which the socially advantaged and disadvantaged play out attitudes of cultural superiority and inferiority ingrained in their habitus in daily interactions. (Reay, 2004b:436)

Those students from middle-class backgrounds are mostly unaware of the 'cultural superiority' they embody in their ways of thinking and being, and so they misrecognise the source of their advantage and are themselves products and perpetrators of symbolic violence. This is developed in the next theme.

In discussing the theme 'othering' I have sought to consider how practice is constructed, as Wacquant (2014:5) reminds us through 'the conjunction of disposition [habitus] and position [field]'. So we see Orlaith's access to economic capital (that paid for tutoring) converted to academic capital allowing her to enter the 'privileged' Grammar field where there is consonance with her habitus and she is a 'fish in water'. She perceives Secondary schools, like Aoife's inquisitors, as second-rate and for 'others'. This was also emphasised by Jenna's peers who were '*terrified*' of the prospect of placement in these schools as they viewed Secondary pupils as unruly and undisciplined. This is reinforced in the doxa of the field whereby schools in NI are academically and, by default, socially, segregated (Francis *et al.*, 2017). Helen vividly illustrated this in her account of her family's experiences when their subjective expectations were not met and her son was 'othered' by peers who perceived Secondary school as second-rate leaving him feeling '*devastated*' and '*ashamed*'.

This contrasts with those pupils who choose not to apply to university, to ‘other’ themselves. These examples alongside the selective practices students referred to in schools normalise middle-class values and expectations. While selection and, at a later stage, public examinations create the ‘illusion of neutrality and independence’ of schools in relation to class (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990:141) they also ‘distract inquiry from the elimination which takes place without examination’. The eleven-plus makes the education system here appear neutral and democratic, but this takes our attention away from the fact that many are already excluded, or have self-eliminated, prior to exams. This emphasis on selection both by perceived academic ability and classed-background leads to the next theme, ability-grouping.

### **Grouping for Inequity**

This section returns to the issues raised by Francis *et al.* (2017) in relation to grouping as outlined in Chapter 4. Focussing on practice, it begins with the thoughts of participants on the selective post-primary system in NI (including the view of the only participant who had not come through this system) before considering how streaming may impact on the pedagogy and practices experienced and observed in schools. This shows how participants perceive the common practices, or doxa, within schools and here it is possible to see how some are beginning to exhibit a transformative habitus and reflective activist traits, as explained in Chapter 2, while others continue to misrecognise the system as fair.

#### ***Selective education in Northern Ireland: student teachers’ views***

During interviews, participants were asked about their personal experiences and attitudes towards academic selection at eleven, and their thoughts on Grammar schools. In ‘Reproduction’, Bourdieu argues that the processes ensuring the dominant group maintain their privileged positioning occur ‘behind the backs of the agents engaged in the school system...and often against their will’ (Bourdieu, 1990a:ix). It is important to remember that these students hold a relatively privileged position having succeeded in the education system, and so, it was not surprising to see that some tended towards reproducing the functioning and logic of the field in the manner that they had experienced it. Bourdieu explains how an agent may adopt a complicit and reproductive role:

The earlier a player enters the game and the less he is aware of the associated learning ... the greater is his ignorance of all that is tacitly granted through his investment in the field and his interest in its very existence and perpetuation and in everything that is played for in it, and his unawareness of the unthought presuppositions that the game produces and endlessly reproduces, thereby reproducing the conditions of its own perpetuation. (1990b:67)

These ‘unthought presuppositions’ are the doxa, the unquestioned arbitrariness that enable fields to function for the benefit of the dominant. In this way agents are complicit in that they simply do not recognise their role in reproducing the field, as they have not questioned what has been presented to them as the natural order of things. This was an important finding as, unless students begin to think critically about the existing system, they may simply perpetuate the inequalities inherent within it. This is where it is essential that they begin to think like the ‘reflective activists’ the GTCNI (2007) aspire to, so that they may become problem solvers and change agents.

That academic selection should take place is one of the accepted doxa of education here. Seven of the ten interviewees had gone to Grammar schools and it was interesting to note that five tended to be defensive of Grammars, as the following extracts show:

*Well I don't know anything other than Grammar schools. I don't know how I would have turned out if I hadn't gone* (Cara)

*They worked for me and... I'd say... oh... I have a biased viewpoint because they worked for me, so I think they're a good thing... if you show a natural ability.* (Grace: quite firmly and positively)

*As much as I don't know how I feel about academic selection, and I can see the impacts that it can have on young children, and it can't always be right, for me personally, it did work so well.* (Finola)

These responses are powerful examples of misrecognition, ‘an alienated cognition that looks at the world through categories the world imposes, and apprehends the social world as a natural world’ (Bourdieu, 1990b:140-141). These students have accepted academic selection. Even though Grace and Finola are aware it is flawed, and despite ongoing, increasing debate about the matter, they still view academic selection as ‘normal, natural and necessary’ (Nolan, 2012:205), even while beginning to recognise that these practices are inequitable.

Other students had differing views. Aoife who had gone to a Secondary school was honest in admitting that despite sitting the exam ‘*I didn't even know what eleven-plus was*’. From a disadvantaged area, she had failed the eleven-plus and gone to Secondary school – it was clear that this selection test was not considered important in her home, a further example of subjective expectation. Beth on the other hand, had gone through the Grammar system, but has thought carefully about the impact that selection has had on the curriculum, narrowing the focus to those areas that are assessed. She was articulate in the potential harmful impact this may have and her passion for Art, which had been neglected during the months of preparation prior to the tests, comes through:

*Well that's what the eleven-plus is – it's literacy and numeracy. Just because someone isn't an artist doesn't mean that they can't think like an artist... the problem solving skills, the lateral thinking skills – that's higher intelligence, not that you remember where a comma goes. Those are the people who will really make changes that will have an impact, they have the ability to think in different ways and are resilient and determined, not that they can solve an equation.*

Beth views the significant focus on literacy and numeracy as detrimental to pupils' holistic development, and it is clear that she is already demonstrating her facility to act as a reflective professional as she 'weave[s] reflection into [her] professional role by collecting and analysing data from [her] daily practice' (Dalmau and Gudjonsdottir, 2002:103). The last words in this section are Lara's, a student from England who did not do this test and was perceptive in her comment about education in NI:

*I can't believe the importance that Grammar schools are given. I don't understand why you'd section off different children and say 'Well, this group of children, these are our best ones'. It's really sad though that you'd say these are the ones that are going to do well and we're going to put more time and effort into these ones, let's see how they go... Even for a teacher that's oppressive...*

Lara's comment exposes the 'masked' filtering that occurs – the best are sent one way, and she suggests, receive more time and effort while others have fewer opportunities and less support. Thus selection, overtly the eleven-plus in NI, is used as a means of enabling education to appear as neutral and democratic (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990:141) diverting attention from those who have already self-eliminated or been excluded. As well as the two-tier post-primary provision in NI, 'channelling and streaming' happens in all school sectors as will be discussed.

### ***Channelling and streaming: social reproduction in action***

A very telling discussion took place in the second focus group when Niamh explained that her previous Grammar school was now non-selective. Helen thought this was great and asked was there no selection at all to which Niamh responded '*There's no selection – they do an entrance exam and are streamed*'. Students appear to misrecognise streaming; they do not question it and fail to see it as a form of selection, but rather just accept it as how schools are organised. As all of them have gone through some type of streaming in their own education they simply assume that this is the way that things should be. The institutional habitus they have encountered have had selection embedded and so they do not 'feel the weight of the water and...take the world about...for granted' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992:127). Several participants admitted that their school had channelled them into particular subjects. These participants' perceptions are similar to Beth's experience

when she was made to feel that her choice of subjects were ‘beneath’ her. In this way we see selection at the macro-level, but it was clearly apparent in more nuanced ways as well. Chapter 4 considered the range of explanations Francis *et al.* (2017) identified for the poorer progress of those pupils assigned to lower groups. These included the allocation of pupils to groups; the quality of teaching including the pedagogy and curriculum employed; teacher expectations; pupil perceptions, and, finally, how these factors together lead to a self-fulfilling prophecy which reinforces (under)achievement in learners. These everyday practices will now be addressed with reference to my data.

Ide explained how in her previous Secondary placement, while the school stated there was no streaming, one class was comprised of ‘*very economically deprived pupils*’ all from one estate. No explanation was given for this grouping other than they were ‘*difficult to manage*’. While she found she could engage the group she was disappointed about how ‘*their form teacher spoke about them, it was clear that she had lower expectations for them*’. She was particularly dismayed as she realised that ‘*it did impact on them hugely – they knew*’. Here we see Ide’s potential as a reflective activist with a transformative habitus as she reflects critically on practice and finds it wanting as this approach will most likely limit these learners’ expectation of themselves. Other than this example, students had limited knowledge of how pupils were allocated to groups although two commented on large numbers of English Additional Language (EAL) pupils placed in lower-ability groups. This may be due to their limited linguistic capital and as Bourdieu and Passeron assert:

The influence of linguistic capital, particularly manifest in the first years of schooling when the understanding and use of language are the major points of leverage for teachers’ assessments, never ceases to be felt...at every level of the educational system. (1990:73)

These learners are potentially thwarted within a system that is structured so as to disadvantage those without the prerequisite skills to succeed and furthermore may consolidate this disadvantage as the gap between those with the linguistic skill will likely widen quickly. Peigí commented that even at age five pupils knew that ‘*we get the easy work*’ and she was very aware that this would continue and children in lower-ability groups would have difficulty moving out of these assigned groups. This echoes previous research discussed in Chapter 4, that ability grouping simply widens the achievement gap between high- and low-ability learners (Dunne and Gazeley, 2007; McGillicuddy and Devine, 2018). This is a form of symbolic violence as children are channelled and streamed into ability groups that may lead to the ‘fixing of failure’ (Reay, 2006:299) in these pupils and,

as they conceive themselves as less capable, that may limit their future orientation to learning (Lupton and Hempel-Jorgensen, 2012), and simultaneously reinforces the success of others. Orlaith responded to Peigí's comment reminding her that there were often (usually middle-class) parents, who were inclined to intervene. She suggested that teachers paid attention to these children as the parents were '*watching you from the sidelines*'. This accountability to parents is consonant with practices discussed under the theme of concerted cultivation, and is likely to reproduce advantage. In her interview, Aoife provided further insights into the potential harm that grouping can have – while already cited in the Introduction her words are so powerful they are included again here. She didn't agree with ability-grouping, explaining:

*...initially when children come into school, schools like a middle-class value system and norms, so like the children that show these ... they're seen as the ones that have more ability, whereas the ones that haven't had the same opportunities at home, they're put in the lower groups and the teacher differentiates based on this like, initial opinion – and this makes this 'gap' get bigger and bigger*

Aoife, even at this early stage within her teaching career, exhibits traits of the reflective activist, as she reflects on and questions everyday practices. Her explanation of ability-grouping is a clear demonstration of Bourdieu's theory of reproduction in action, in which dominant habitus are consonant with the field and as a result these pupils are misrecognised as 'clever' and 'engaged' (Hall and Jones, 2013; James, 2015) while those less-advantaged may be dismissed as lacking engagement and interest. Another factor to consider are the pedagogies used with different groups as this can affect achievement.

### ***Pedagogies employed***

Participants in various focus groups talked animatedly of their experiences of the pedagogies used, both in their own education and those that they had observed on placements, exemplifying the duality mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. Streaming was pervasive and groups discussed to varying degrees how they had been streamed in schools. Discussion in two different groups about amalgamations between Grammar and Secondary schools led to insights about different pedagogies employed. It became clear that participants perceived many Grammar school teachers to be 'transmitters' of knowledge with far fewer demands placed on them than Secondary teachers. Ronan, in an observation at a high-achieving Grammar school, cited the maths teacher, '*It's dead on – they just teach themselves, you just give them it, you don't have to do much with them*'. This resonated with Helen, a mature student, who told the group that her children's Grammar teachers suggested that '*you just scatter the seed and they grow themselves*'.

Ronan clearly found this frustrating, '*There's a perception from the public that Grammar school teachers are the better teachers*'. Both students here display a willingness to question current practices so displaying early signs of reflective activist teachers and transformative habitus. Ronan, like Niamh, was concerned that when the Grammar and Secondary schools amalgamated, the Grammar teachers would not cope with the transition. Ide, who had attended a Secondary to GCSE and then transferred to Grammar for A-level, agreed saying she found the Grammar environment wholly academically-oriented with little emphasis on '*skills and capabilities – it was all content*'. In another group, participants talked about being '*spoon-fed*' at Grammar – everything was presented to you and as Emma said '*all you had to do was just learn it off*'. Two participants had previously discussed differing approaches with Beth having been exposed to '*death by PowerPoint*' in Grammar school, whereas Kate's Secondary school prioritised active learning and dialogue. As Kate summarised it '*Beth was given content whereas we were given experiences*'. She did wonder if this was one of the reasons that Secondary schools were '*not getting the grades*'. These perceptions contrast with much of the literature on streaming, which argues that it is the lower sets that tend to be taught didactically (Haberman, 2010; Nutall and Doherty, 2014). However, they may reflect Boaler *et al.*'s (2000:641) observation that teachers considered that high-ability pupils 'did not need help or time to think'. All groups talked about the significant emphasis Grammar schools placed on academic achievement which they speculated could be at the expense of good teaching, and Aoife suggested this led to a '*memory game*' and '*if you don't have a good memory, the system fails you*'.

Primary schools too, had differing approaches dependent on the socio-economic context. Peigí described working in a '*tough*' school in which, as behaviour management was challenging, the teacher tended to use limited pedagogies. This finding is similar to Lupton and Hempel-Jorgensen's (2012) where teachers kept a strong control on what was taught which often led passive learning. Peigí wanted to use creative approaches and active learning which the teacher vetoed:

*She was like 'No, they have no imagination – you needn't be doing that'.  
Everything is text-book based which really isn't getting their attention.*

The teacher had decided that the pupils were unimaginative which Peigí perceived as potentially compromising pupils' engagement in and orientation to learning. Derbhla had also undertaken a placement in a very deprived area and explained how she struggled as a novice teacher to even get the children's attention. She reported that the teacher

consistently tried to engage them but tended towards structured activities with '*children in their seats, not much group-work*'. This limited pedagogy as a way of managing behaviour was consonant with Wilkinson and Penney's findings (2014). In the second school Derbhla expressed her concerns to the teacher about managing the class:

*She basically said to me that the socio-economic difference between the two schools was vast and there would not be an issue ... Even the motivation to learn in the second school was completely different.*

Reporting the teacher's view, Derbhla ascribes the differing motivations to learn to pupils' home backgrounds. Emma had a similar experience with EAL learners whom she explained really struggled as they had very limited English. The teacher, she explained, was under pressure to meet school targets which were to be evidenced through children's work. As a result, even though some became disinterested, these pupils were expected to engage in modelled-writing exercises. These pupils 'just didn't know what was being said' and Emma was told by the classroom assistant to:

*'Just write it for them'. But I wanted them to write for themselves, they needed help ... if you write it all they're not going to progress.*

This gives some insight into students' perceptions of the pedagogy of the differing schools, and indeed the pressures that teachers can be under. What is of interest to me is that some students are beginning to question current practices while others simply accept them.

These limited pedagogies, Lupton and Hempel-Jorgensen assert, are inequitable:  
...loaded in favour of those schools serving more advantaged students and thus serving to reproduce rather than overturn existing inequalities (2012:610).

Of course, attention to pedagogy overlaps with teacher/school expectations and these will now be discussed.

### ***Teacher/school expectations***

Jenna had previously completed a placement in a challenging Secondary and was about to embark on a placement in an affluent Grammar school. Content for some classes was similar and when she discussed her plans with the Grammar teacher she was told that what she had taken six weeks to cover last year was to be completed in three '*even if the pupils don't understand, you're moving on to teach this topic – they'll learn it off*'. Listening to this, Ide expressed exasperation explaining that in her own experience of Secondary, '*I developed more as an individual and as a person*'. In contrast, Emma's Grammar experience '*was very competitive and it pushed you, like it didn't matter whether you wanted to or not, you were doing it*'. However, she did concede, '*If I didn't go to a school*

*that didn't push me like that I'd maybe not be here'*, affirming Crossley's (2012:91) assertion that Bourdieu saw a 'direct link between position and disposition' as Chapter 5 explained. Méabh, too, noted the emphasis on competition in her schools as she cited one teacher '*it's the competition that drives this class*'. As noted earlier, Grace had reported that Bishop Henry School focussed on academic rather than holistic development. This later had consequences as there was a high university drop-out rate from these school-leavers which Grace explained:

*They're conditioned into thinking that they are the top, and when they go to really good universities they realise that they're not the top and then they panic and they can't cope.*

Ide also found that peers who had gone to Grammar at times had unrealistic expectations. These students '*panicked*' in university when they didn't get A-grades, she reported that '*it was drilled into them that they had to reach the top*', and they perceived anything less as unacceptable. These expectations of achievement clearly impact on pupil perceptions as demonstrated here and they are in stark contrast with the expectations noted earlier of Jenna's embarrassed pupils, who limit their possibilities.

Emma, in her interview, provided two contrasting examples of teacher expectations that had significant impact on her progress. She told of how a primary school teacher constantly reassured her and encouraged her in Maths, which she initially found very difficult. This encouragement paid off, '*I thought that I was amazing even though I wasn't but then I worked at it and enjoyed it*'. This encouragement and high expectation on the part of the teacher correlates with Hallam and Ireson's (2007) research which found that high teacher expectations can improve student performance. Her GCSE physics teacher was quite different, constantly critiquing and disparaging her, and in marking her work he would comment '*The only person in class to get this wrong*' or '*Obtuse*' and she surmises that as a result she hated going to class '*and I wouldn't learn anything*'. Emma has thought deeply about these differing approaches and as a result, she understands the importance of having high expectations of pupil progress, one of the criterion of the reflective activist teacher and in line with a transformative habitus. Aoife also had clearly thought in some depth about teacher expectation and the impacts of grouping because of her personal experiences. Her eight year-old niece was previously cited in Chapter 3 and here Aoife expresses concern that expectations may limit her:

*She is aware of the groups in her class and anytime I'm doing her homework with her she says 'I'm in the Triangles – we're the middle group' and I tell her 'Eva you can move up into the Squares' [the top group] and she doesn't know*

*that. I don't think the teacher's said you can move up and down groups – she just thinks she is stuck in this group because that is the way it has been.*

Archer *et al.* (2017:307) contend that it is pupils from a working-class background, such as Aoife's niece who seemed most likely to 'internalise messages about who is/is not 'good enough''. Aoife, too, recognises that teachers may limit their pupils and the insights into practice that she shares show that she displays a transformative habitus, working to make a difference to her pupils' lives as will be discussed further in Chapter 8.

Beth also spoke powerfully about the negative impacts that a teacher's low expectations can have on learners' self-conceptions. In the following extract, she tells of how during placement she encountered a capable, dyslexic pupil who was struggling and was being limited by the lack of acknowledgement of his barriers to learning. She was discouraged by his teacher's attitude:

*If you have one good teacher they can change your life. I felt that she was really hindering this child... What she was giving him was completely unattainable for him so he couldn't be bothered, he couldn't do it and that was not fair... It really annoyed me – so what hope did that child have? He was coming to school and couldn't do anything in school – nothing – he was intelligent but couldn't write it down and he couldn't concentrate because he couldn't genuinely do the work. I felt that that child was really being let down. What is the point going to school if your teacher doesn't invest in you?*

This child with dyslexia has been automatically disadvantaged as linguistic capital is the 'primary principle underlying the inequalities in the academic attainment of children' (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990:71). Beth's concern with the 'purposes and consequences of education' (GTCNI, 2007:9) and capacity for critical reflection indicate that she too is on her way to becoming a reflective activist teacher. These findings show how streaming and grouping by ability at both macro- mezzo-and micro-levels leads to pupils' subjective expectations which as the following section shows, can be positive. It also was becoming clear through the data and students' reactions that habitus, rather than being determined does have the capacity for agency.

### ***Selection works for some - or does it?***

Some students did share positive and less rigid experiences of streaming. Ronan, placed in a rural Secondary school explained how the maths streams were fluid and pupils could, and did, change between sets on a regular basis. Requiring all maths classes to be timetabled simultaneously, maths teachers taught topics at various levels and pupils switched between classes on a weekly basis, which Ronan found '*super flexible!*'. Similarly Jenna's personal experience of attending a comprehensive with a Grammar stream was that her education

was '*tailored to suit me*', as she was placed in differing streams for different subjects – once again selection '*worked for me*'. Helen talked at length about the excellent practice she observed during placement in a challenging school in a deprived area where mixed-attainment grouping was, she thought, very successfully used to engage and extend pupil learning but others were more circumspect. Ide decried the classification of bottom stream pupils as '*the crayon class*', and unfortunately these pupils accepted this label, '*they thought that about themselves and would have said that about themselves*'. Emma sums this up effectively, '*When you put a label on them, that's them in their box and they can't break out of that*'. These pupils are experiencing practices that shape, and limit, their habitus – the expectations that teachers have of them can determine their aspirations and may mould their habitus, curbing their self-belief and ambitions.

To recall Bourdieu's (1984:101) formula, '[(habitus)(capital)] + field = practice', we see how these elements combine to illustrate reproduction in action, particularly but not exclusively in second-level education in NI. Middle-class pupils' habitus naturally align with the dominant institutions (Grammar schools) that they attend and the linguistic, cultural and social capitals that they hold correspond with the ethos valorising academic achievement which enables the accumulation of further symbolic capital (in the form of academic qualifications). As Wacquant reminds us, while habitus guides practice internally:

... field structures action and representation from without: it offers the individual a gamut of possible stances and moves that she can adopt.  
(2008:269)

However, for some the field will simply replicate the habitus when there is consonance, whereas for others these 'moves' may be constricted by previous experiences in the field which may lower expectations (Reay, 2004b).

Practices are competitive and expectations are high with considerable pressure placed on pupils to perform in Grammars evidenced by data in this study (see also OECD, 2013; Gardner, 2016). Secondary schools are more inclined than Grammars to emphasise practical and experiential learning: as Ide explained, they have more focus on '*skills and capabilities*' with, it would seem, not the same emphasis on developing academic/symbolic capital. Practices here appear to be focussed on holistic development and encouraging pupils to be aspirational. In outlining how the education system works to conserve the status quo, Bourdieu and Passeron assert that:

...knowledge of the social conditions of the production and reproduction of that gap, that is, knowledge both of the modes of acquisition of the different class languages and of the scholastic mechanisms which consecrate and so help to perpetuate inter-class linguistic differences. (1990:127)

In this way we see educational inequalities reproduced through the differential acquisition of valued capitals, masked class discrimination and through selection. These are the ‘pedagogic actions’ (discussed in Chapter 4) undertaken in each field which inculcate the habitus of their respective students, and enable the habitus to accept the system as legitimate. The pedagogic actions constitute the doxa of the field, ‘the self-evident truths’ (Bourdieu, 1991:129) consisting of shared opinions and unquestioned beliefs that bind participants to one another. This allows inequalities, arbitrary values assigned by the dominant culture, to be misrecognised as simply the way things are. Thus individuals form subjective expectations conditioned by objective probabilities. It is clear that the dominant group work to secure their advantage.

## Summing Up

This chapter initially provided the survey results on the demographic background of this group of students and tentatively explored their perceptions of selection. Focus groups and interviews were then used to generate data from which five themes emerged. These themes have been presented through students’ perceptions in this study which were then linked to relevant theoretical and empirical work. The data have been analysed and discussed and themes are framed within three sections organised around habitus and make close reference to practice, so demonstrating the inextricable relationship between habitus, field and capital.

The first section, ‘The Impact of History’, arising from the facet of habitus-as-history, framed the theme of concerted cultivation which demonstrated how middle-class parents invest in their children to ensure social and educational advantage. The second section, ‘Everyday Practices’, arising from the facet of habitus-as-everyday-bodily practice, framed the themes of distinction and the neoliberalisation of education which discussed practices in education wherein certain (middle-class) individuals have an advantage as they have developed ‘a feel for the game’. Furthermore, focus group and interview data clearly demonstrate that neoliberal mechanisms such as performativity and accountability are shaping everyday educational practices. The final section ‘Reproduction and Transformation of Inequalities in Education’, arising from the facet of habitus as having

generative potential and not, necessarily, being reproductive, framed the themes of othering and grouping for inequity which considered some current practices in schools, showing how some participants accepted the doxa and tended towards reproductive practices while others were exhibiting reflective activist traits and transformative habitus.

What became clear throughout this chapter is the significant overlap between the themes. The data shows that my participants were, or increasingly became, aware of inequities within education. However, they often did not understand how these inequalities came about and were enabled. Students often failed to understand and recognise that many of the attributes that schools value are ‘constructed’ by pupils’ backgrounds. Those children coming from homes with well-educated and successful parents enter the education system with high levels of linguistic and social capital which the school prizes ‘thus succeeding within [school] under the misconception that they must have innate talent or a gift’ (Atkinson, 2012:737). Furthermore, competition is often promoted as a good thing by parents, teachers and schools, and so becomes embedded within the student habitus. Competition endorses the neoliberal construct of successful individuals as acquisitive, mobile and responsible individuals (Skeggs, 2004) which suits the middle-classes while potentially alienating the less advantaged. This enables hierarchies of difference and comparison whereby those who are neither mobile nor successful are deemed to be lazy and irresponsible rather than acknowledging that economic constraints and social disadvantage may pertain as significant factors. There continues to be a tangible ambivalence around class with people wanting to be seen as ‘ordinary’ and unpretentious as ‘they do not want to be held responsible for perpetuating or agreeing with inequality’ (Skeggs, 2004:116). It is such misrecognition and misunderstanding that I have encouraged students to consider.

What has emerged is that the status quo will likely continue if students’ habitus are reproductive. My data suggests that it is only when students have encountered some type of disruption or disjunction within the field, or have given some thought to existing conditions whether through conditions they encounter or due to prompting from a mentor, that they begin to question the equity of the system. The following chapter will outline how using Bourdieu’s thinking tools has allowed me insight to students’ habitus so enabling a better understanding of how and why they might act the way that they do in practice.

## Chapter 8: Conclusion

### Introduction

This final chapter begins with a brief review of each previous chapter highlighting and synthesising salient issues. I then discuss how Bourdieu's thinking tools have allowed me to examine practice. As noted in the previous chapter, the main themes used to analyse the study data were: othering; distinction; grouping for inequity; concerted cultivation, and the neoliberalisation of education, and these were framed within three sections relating to the facets of habitus. Working with those themes allowed me to probe Bourdieu's key concepts and to unveil the power structures and struggles within the social world with respect to the small portion of that world examined in this study and inhabited by my participants. This chapter will outline how using Bourdieu enabled me to uncover students' thinking and attitudes that lead me to a better understanding of how and why they might act the way that they do in practice in classrooms in Northern Ireland (NI). As I reconsider each of Bourdieu's concepts used in my analysis and synthesise those concepts with the data from the study, the literature and previous related empirical research, and my reflections on the processes and outcomes of the study, I can now conclude that the study suggests six key findings. The initial five key findings relate quite directly to the five Bourdieusian concepts as follows:

- i. students see the education system as fair: misrecognition
- ii. there is a gearing children up for failure: symbolic violence
- iii. student teachers' experiences lead to differing approaches: habitus
- iv. education is regarded as a mechanism for securing advantage: capital/habitus
- v. neoliberal influences impact practice: field.

A sixth finding was the willingness the student participants demonstrated for engaging with research and learning. This was an unanticipated finding to emerge from the data collection and analysis and is a salutary lesson for me and, arguably, for other teacher educators. Moreover, this finding has, as I shall suggest, implications for defending Bourdieu's concept of habitus against charges that it is fixed or static. As will be shown, with some prompting students readily began to move beyond their current thinking to begin to challenge the status quo and exhibit early traits of reflective, activist teachers and a transformative habitus.

I shall discuss each finding, acknowledging that, of course, there is some overlap between them, and suggest their implications for my current practice. I then outline limitations of

my study and propose further potential research arising from it. I reflect on how this research has influenced my professional practice before suggesting three recommendations for developing the Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programme in which this study is located. In the final section of this chapter I consider how this research contributes to the existing body of literature before a final concluding commentary.

## Review

In Chapter 1, I outlined this study explaining that it was motivated by concerns that the education system perpetuates inequalities. I had concerns that students coming into ITE misrecognised the system as fair and so the key aim of this research was to see if my concerns were valid and to develop a better understanding of students' perceptions of the impact of both class and selection on education in NI. As I embarked on the research I had hoped that researching these issues might encourage current students to start to consider, and better understand, the processes whereby class and selection create educational inequalities. It was my intention that insights gained from my study might then enable me to make gradual but meaningful changes to the ITE programme. This led to the overarching research question:

- To what extent is it possible to enable student teachers to recognise how 'social class' and cultures of academic selection may create inequalities in education in NI?

As this concluding chapter will indicate, my data suggests that it is possible to enable student teachers to recognise that 'social class' and cultures of academic selection may create inequalities in education in NI. I contend, too, that this research has demonstrated that it is possible to raise students' consciousness as most study participants now seem to have a better understanding of the practices they encounter so allowing them to recognise, and potentially to begin to address, inequality in education. As Grace stated towards the end of our interview:

*I think that this [discussion] has forced me to look at some of the key issues in education at the minute whereas before, I think if I didn't have to think about them I probably just wouldn't have – I would just have gone along with it ... now I'm actually thinking about these issues and seeing their relevance for me and for the children I'll be teaching.*

Of course, asking the group to attend to any issues, here to issues of social class, academic selection and inequality, is likely to increase their awareness of those issues but it will not, necessarily, change their views on those issues. I suggest, and discuss later, how the study

participants' views did change and I return to consciousness-raising and changing views in the implications sections of this chapter.

Chapter 2 established the context of education in NI premised on the view that an understanding of 'field' is critical to how students' habitus have been shaped (Bourdieu, 1990b). The chapter goes some way to explaining how and why the students in my study, and arguably beyond my study, think and react in the ways that they do. The chapter outlined how education in NI evolved and described the two-tier post-primary school system which, despite attempts to reform it, continues (Gardner, 2016). The chapter also explained how ITE policy in NI gradually devolved from that in the UK following the introduction of professional competences (GTCNI, 2007). Competence-based approaches can lead students to focus on the technical and practical aspects of their developing practice and, as Edward-Groves and Gray (2008) assert, additional support may be needed if these student teachers are to engage critically with the purposes and contexts of education as the GTCNI intend, especially if these students are to become reflective, activist practitioners. My data support that claim revealing that such reflection is crucial. Those applying to ITE have been academically successful and may disparage and misrecognise those less fortunate and successful than themselves. Some participants did perceive disadvantaged pupils as lacking in interest and application as noted in Chapter 7 and exemplified by Orlaith's comment: '*they couldn't really be bothered*'. My findings also reveal that many students did misrecognise practices that might allow inequalities to fester as they suggested they tended to focus on practical aspects of their teaching rather than on wider social/political or moral/ethical educational issues as detailed below.

Bourdieu's theory of practice and the interlocking concepts of habitus, capital and field, were introduced in Chapter 3. Bourdieu's concepts were useful in investigating students' perceptions of the field of education and allowed me to consider how to begin to recognise the reproductive structures that currently exist. Chapter 4 presented Bourdieu's theory of social and cultural reproduction which was used as a lens through which to understand some of the mechanisms that allow social advantage to be transformed into educational advantage in NI. Bourdieu's concepts have proved useful enabling me to investigate how both students' practices, and my own, are constructed. As habitus is the framework structuring students' practice, analysing their practice through their perceptions, attitudes and actions enabled insight into the habitus. The discussion in Chapter 7 and below demonstrates that using Bourdieu's theoretical constructs revealed how students' habitus,

operating in the field of education in NI, often led to reproductive practices, as taken-for-granted beliefs and opinions went unchallenged.

Chapter 5 explored perceptions of class and explained that, increasingly in the current neoliberal climate, class is made invisible through discourses of accountability, individualisation, and competition. For Bourdieu, class is fundamentally about how the individual experiences social and cultural differences within society (Atkinson, 2015), and this chapter considered previous research on students' experiences of such differences within classrooms. That research, particularly the work of Gazeley and Dunne (2005;2007), Mills(2008b;2009), Thompson *et al.* (2016), has suggested that making class 'invisible' has various consequences including overlooking important class-based differences between teachers and learners and failing to recognise 'the troublesome and complex role' class plays within education (Hall and Jones, 2013:426). This complex role is exemplified by two extracts from the data:

*Beth: And the teacher's thinking 'Your mummy didn't do your reading so I'm not hearing your reading today'.*

*Jenna: I was actually told by teachers 'Oh, look after that child because their daddy's a heart surgeon, or that one because her mum's the local GP'.*

The first extract, relating to an event observed in a disadvantaged school, illustrates how the teacher effectively punishes the child due to the mother's perceived lack of engagement. The second demonstrates how those who are advantaged are prioritised and valued. As Chapter 7 explained, class can be more than descriptive and can be a 'loaded moral signifier' (Savage *et al.*, 2001:875). My study builds on previous research, corroborating findings that students often misrecognised the role that class plays within education. Moreover, even though this is a small-scale study and findings are limited as discussed below, my work indicates that cultures of academic selection do constitute a key doxa in the field of education in NI to the extent that they go uncontested and so the inequalities created may be aggravated when combined with class-based differences.

Data were gathered using an interpretative approach including focus groups and interviews, and were viewed through the Bourdieusian lenses of habitus, capital and field in my examination of students' practice as Chapter 6 explained. Following an initial exploratory survey to provide demographic information, focus groups and interviews yielded rich data that were interrogated using both previous empirical research on class and student teachers as well as Bourdieu's conceptual tools in order to consider how educational inequalities may remain largely unchallenged in NI. Furthermore, the theme

the neoliberalisation of education was unanticipated but emerged from the data. Research instruments worked effectively although, in retrospect, I may have generated too much data and could have discarded the survey as it was focus groups and interviews that generated meaningful, rich data as noted in the limitations section below. Previous research provided useful starting points for analysing the data. This process required that I had to constantly step back and review my assumptions and preconceptions in just the same way as I had to consider students' understanding of practice. Here Bourdieu's thinking tools allowed me to delve into how and why students think and act the way that they do. I was also aware that these constructs are not without criticism and, as noted in Chapter 3, the use of habitus may appear determinist (Jenkins, 2002) and may neglect our innate reflexivity (Archer, 2007). However, I would counter these criticisms as will be discussed below. The methodology chapter led into analysis and discussion of the findings in Chapter 7.

Chapter 7 initially presented findings of the survey delineating students' own social and academic backgrounds, their perceptions of factors impacting on children's learning and academic selection. The five themes which had been identified – 'othering', distinction, grouping for inequity, concerted cultivation and the neoliberalisation of education – were then analysed and discussed using current literature alongside Bourdieu's thinking tools. While some of the outcomes of this research were anticipated by and corroborate previous research, others were surprising as will be explained in the following section after a discussion of how Bourdieu's constructs allowed me to come to a better understanding of current practices. Below I also outline some implications arising from this study.

### **Using Bourdieu's Concepts as a Lens to Examine Education in Northern Ireland**

In considering how to present this final chapter, I sought in Chapter 7 to capture key themes in the data and gave some insight into students' perceptions, practices and understanding of the field. However, on reflection, those themes alone do not adequately capture the undercurrents that transverse and permeate the data. Grappling with how to express these, I came to appreciate that Bourdieu's conceptual tools had enabled me to unearth how practice is shaped and in turn had given me insight into the overlapping 'undercurrents' which I now term key findings. This was particularly useful in the NI context where actors often accept the status quo without question. As developed below, selective schooling is one of the doxa in NI and it is often easier to simply accept such

practice than challenge it. Bourdieu's concepts have allowed me to unearth students' perceptions – while they may assert they reject inequalities this is not always apparently realised in practice. As Bourdieu (1990b) asserts, it is the interaction of habitus (working with available capital) within a field that generates the logic of practice. It has been useful to employ Bourdieu's constructs to examine how those who are dominant often play out attitudes and practices to protect their cultural superiority, ingrained in their being. The data also revealed that disadvantaged pupils often accept the inferior mantle bestowed upon them. Significantly Ide explained, '*It's a lot to do with the perceptions of other people that lead them to perceive themselves in a certain way*'. It is such thinking and practice that I had hoped, and continue to hope, to make students aware of and to encourage them to challenge. Consideration of these key findings allows me to contribute to the current limited literature on students' perception of social class in NI as well as their views on cultures of academic selection. My aspiration now is to use and extend this research to enable me to work with students by encouraging them to adopt more socially just practices. The first key finding from my study is that the students misrecognise the education system as fair.

### **Students misrecognise the education system as fair: Misrecognition**

Significantly, my research identified students who largely accept the status quo, without question, not least because it '*worked for me*' (Grace). While education aspires to treat children from different socio-economic backgrounds as equal, students are often reluctant or unable to acknowledge class and the impact it may have on achievement. This enables academic selection to contribute to inequality as participants perceived working-class pupils' lack of ability to achieve as the 'problem' rather than considering potential barriers to learning. The data showed that the participants 'lack a critical perspective on context' (Thompson *et al.*, 2016:219), accepting the fallacy of social mobility (see Chapter 5) and so regarding the education system as fair and neutral. This study's findings confirm that view and, here, many participants failed to recognise cultures of academic selection as problematic. The post-primary system has, despite attempts to reform it (see Chapter 2), continued with Grammar schools, viewed as a means of consolidating cultural and symbolic capital, '*jealously guarded by the middle-classes who benefit most from [them]*' (Gardner, 2016:358). I maintain, and my data confirms, that many of the students who apply to ITE are middle-class and, having come through the Grammar route, appear to misrecognise their privileged positioning as fair and neutral. To repeat one participant's claim cited in Chapter 7:

*As much as I don't know how I feel about academic selection – and it can't always be right – for me personally, it did work so well. (Finola)*

Furthermore, and affirming findings from previous studies (Santoro, 2009; Brown, 2013), these academically successful participants misrecognise their advantage, viewing themselves as ‘normal’ and thereby ascribing deficit to others who may not have been as successful or advantaged or who may not have worked as hard as them. This normalisation and acceptance of middle-class values has increasingly rendered class invisible, as discussed in Chapter 7, and this can further distance working-class pupils. This acceptance of a selective system that favours the dominant group is a perfect example of misrecognition, and the doxa – those unquestioned values and practices – within a field are taken for granted as both necessary and normal. Doxa function as ‘sophisticated mechanisms’ (Bourdieu, 1990a:vii) enabling reproduction as many participants failed to recognise that education is not fair, but rather depends on the available capital as the dominant secure their privilege through investing to succeed in education. The data presented under the themes of othering and distinction illustrate misrecognition well. This was exemplified by Orlaith disparaging her Secondary school peers, Emma and Cara, explaining how one constantly compared oneself to others and by Helen describing Grammars as ‘*a status symbol*’. Unearthing these findings did not surprise me as I, too, had unthinkingly accepted the education system, misrecognising it as fair and convincing myself that the ‘bright’ disadvantaged pupils would achieve in spite of the challenges they faced and I return to my own changed views later in this chapter.

My data leads me to suggest that, unless challenged in their thinking, students do risk perpetuating inequality. This is evident in Cara’s comment about selection:

*...there does need to be some kind of streaming so that you can differentiate for the lower ones and push the higher ones.*

Even some of those who had come through Secondary schools left me somewhat dismayed as they advocated for Grammars because these would allow ‘bright’ children to ‘*really achieve*’ (Jenna) and as it became clear that the study participants perceived Grammars as ‘better’ schools. It sometimes takes a shock or rupture to expose doxa as unfair exemplified by Helen’s youngest son not passing the eleven-plus, an event which changed her views.

*I would love to say get rid of it – it's horrible ... it changes with your experience because with my first three I would have said 'I'm an advocate for the transfer, it's a great system of 'separating' them – for want of a better*

*word. There has to be some kind of sieving, getting the school that's best for your child'. But then, having seen the reverse, when it doesn't work...*

This event has sparked an ‘awakening of consciousness’ (Bourdieu, 1990c:116) in Helen who now has a more realistic understanding of how the system works for less advantaged learners. Helen has begun to recognise that there may be a tension as her own experience was that the ‘*school that's best*’ did not turn out to be a Grammar. There are other tensions here which students may have to recognise and negotiate including family circumstances and parental expectations. In some homes, success in education may be an alien experience and many homes may, for example, not have the physical space to allow children to study. Pupils’ aspirations may be constrained by parental expectations that children complete their education as soon as possible in order to work and bring in money.

### *Implications:*

A vital concern emerging from this study, corroborating previous research (Sleeter, 2008; Ellis *et al.*, 2016), is that unless students think critically about the existing system, they may simply perpetuate inequalities inherent within it. If they can begin to recognise how power and privilege are unevenly distributed amongst different groups, they may begin to understand that they benefit from this inequitable distribution. My data suggests that participants need encouragement to, and support in, reflecting on their *own* classed identities as learners who will become teachers, recognising that they have successfully navigated the system. Such reflection is very much in keeping with the policy guiding teacher education in NI which proposes that teachers should have ‘a sense of moral purpose and responsibility’ (GTCNI. 2007:5). One way of realising this goal is through professional dialogue and I return to this later. This study illustrates that students need prompting to understand that education valorises middle-class values. Students should also be encouraged to challenge the stereotypes, and deficit models of disadvantaged learners that many hold. Additionally, if their lack of awareness is not challenged, these students may become teachers who, like those in Leitch *et al.*’s (2017) study, may inhibit pupil progress due to their low expectations, as discussed below. This leads to the next finding which is that selective practices create the conditions for the exercise of symbolic violence.

### **Gearing children up for failure: Symbolic violence**

The data revealed that not only did student teachers misrecognise inequalities in education, but pupils who were being treated unfairly also accepted this treatment, believing that the ‘fault’ lay with them. Indeed, Bourdieu and Passeron, (1990:111-2) assert, ‘If the student

fails to be what he[sic] ought to be...then all the faults...are on his side'. My data allows me to contend that acceptance of fault is facilitated by practices that are misrecognised as natural and normal, such as ability grouping, and in NI academic selection. However, Helen eloquently objected to the eleven-plus:

*It's ridiculous they're gearing children up for failure... there's going to be that percentage of children who will never be able to cope.*

Horgan (2007:15) argues that all children have high aspirations and that even those from impoverished backgrounds 'do not start out expecting little from life'. I suggest that it is their failure in schools that lowers these children's aspirations. Derbhla captured this well explaining that failing the eleven-plus was telling children '*you're not smart enough to go [to Grammar]*'. Practices such as ability grouping create the conditions for the exercise of symbolic violence, 'the subtle imposition of systems of meaning that legitimize and thus solidify structures of inequality' (Wacquant, 2008:264). It is this capacity to 'legitimise' structures, like the eleven-plus, that causes concern.

Mills and Gale (2010:18) assert that 'what is problematic for Bourdieu is the fact that the established order is not seen as problematic'. I found that a significant number of participants believed that the current system of academic selection should continue as they do not see it as problematic. Indeed, I was shocked to find that even students who had gone through Secondary schools themselves, viewed Grammars as superior. Ide, when asked her views on Grammars, explained:

*See, I used to be pro-Secondary until I taught in one – then I realised that there are those students who are brighter and are sometimes held back*

This is an example of misrecognition of legitimising structures. Ide believes that the Secondary system is not working effectively as those pupils who are very 'bright' are not being stretched. By implication she believes that Grammars are needed to cater for clever children. Rather than appreciating that education should have the flexibility to address all pupils' needs, she condones a system in which pupils are sorted and streamed apparently believing that this will cater for all. Misrecognition can also mask symbolic violence for those who are disadvantaged by the system. This was exemplified in Jenna's story of pupils' reluctance to apply to university, opting instead to go to 'Tech'. Jenna's pupils, through their subjective expectations, limit themselves. This provides a good illustration of Bourdieu's definition of symbolic violence. He suggests that it is 'gentle, invisible violence, unrecognized as such, *chosen* as much as undergone' (Bourdieu, 1990b:127, italics added). Jenna's pupils choose to place limits on themselves and seem not to dare

aspire beyond what they perceive to be their ‘potential cruising radius’ (Walther, 2014:9). Even though the Secondary was encouraging pupils to raise their aspirations, they were afraid to fail and chose instead to go to ‘Tech’ yet Jenna recognised that ‘*they’re ashamed to say that*’. These pupils are complicit in symbolic violence gradually internalising and accepting ‘those ideas that tend to subordinate them’ (Connolly and Healy, 2004:15). My data suggests that students are beginning to recognise such unfairness but, as it is often deeply embedded and accepted, systemically they do not know how to begin to challenge and address this.

### *Implications:*

Symbolic violence manifests itself in two ways: firstly, through teacher misrecognition; and, secondly, as disadvantaged pupils often accept assigned stereotypes. Enabling students to understand this will mean that they will need to be encouraged to think critically about the system. They will need assistance in recognising that teachers’ perceptions are often not neutral but class related (Reay, 2006; McGillicuddy and Devine, 2018) and that practices such as ability-grouping position learners within a hierarchy. Students need to be encouraged to problematise such thinking, but to do so they need to be guided to understand the mechanisms that enable inequality so that they might begin to challenge them, thus developing them as ‘reflective and critical problem solvers’ (GTCNI, 2007:9) with transformative habitus that might pull against reproduction. However, a further concern is that ITE students, as well as school pupils, may have a ‘potential cruising radius’ (Walther, 2014:9). They may lack an appreciation of the changes that they may be able to effect. I believe that it is essential that students, through supported inquiry and discussion, come to understand that they can make a difference, albeit small, in the lives of those pupils they will teach. Indeed, as explained below, even an hour long discussion in a focus group resulted in many participants reconsidering their assumptions. Based on these findings I suggest that students need to be and, importantly, *can* be encouraged to recognise that individuals form subjective expectations conditioned by objective probabilities (see Chapter 7). They also should be encouraged to understand that they can be instrumental in raising expectations and this leads to a discussion of students’ habitus.

### **Student teachers’ experiences lead to differing approaches: Habitus**

This study’s findings demonstrated that not only can individuals’ habitus impact on their own decision-making but that student teachers can influence and shape the habitus of the

pupils they teach through the expectations they have of them. Rather than being static, the habitus, acquired through lasting exposure to particular social conditions and ways of thinking, is generative, possessing the potential for agency (Bourdieu, 1977). Indeed Reay (2004b) suggests that habitus may be viewed as a continuum. Figure 4 suggests how the participants might be positioned on the continuum between reproductive and transformative habitus based on data gathered in this study (see also Participant Profiles in Appendix E for a more contextually rich account of each participant). I would not, however, want this depiction to imply any sort of precise ‘measurement’. It is, rather, a depiction of where I would locate each participant at that particular moment in time when I completed my study with them.

**Figure 4: Interview participants’ placement on a continuum of the habitus between reproductive and transformative**



However, while habitus does allow for agency, it predisposes individuals towards ways of behaving. Mills (2008b) proposes that habitus, while having scope for modification, tends to fall into two categories: reproductive and transformative. I suggest that Mills’ argument might be taken further as the data made evident that these student teachers may influence the habitus of the pupils they teach through their expectations of them. As Bourdieu posits:

... habitus, as the product of social conditions, and thus of history (unlike character) is endlessly transformed, either in a direction that reinforces it, when embodied structures of expectation encounter structures of objective chances in harmony with these expectations, or in a direction that transform it and, for instance, raises or lowers the levels expectations and aspirations. (Bourdieu, 1990c:116)

My findings confirm that when the habitus is compatible with the field, practice tends towards the reproductive. However, data indicated that some participants displayed a transformative habitus as discussed below.

### ***The reproductive habitus***

My research demonstrates that participants who exhibit a reproductive habitus do so in two ways: firstly by accepting the status quo and, secondly, by constraining their expectations of their disadvantaged pupils which consequently may limit pupils’ self-expectations. Several participants seemed unable, at least at the start of this study, to see social

conditions in any other way than ‘the way things are’. As discussed above, they ‘normalised’ their experiences, lacking an appreciation that others struggle. This concurs with Jenkins’ description of Bourdieu’s social world, previously referred to in Chapter 3, which:

... ultimately remains one in which things happen to people, rather than a world in which they can intervene in their individual and collective destinies.  
(Jenkins 2002:91)

Some of the participants in my study appear to lack imagination in viewing different options for those working-class pupils they teach. The data evidenced this when the participants related their perceptions of these pupils. For example, Grace, talking of her boyfriend’s working-class primary school, stated apparently as a matter of fact: ‘*no one was expected to do [the eleven-plus] and so you’d opt in – nobody did*’. Rather than challenging pupils’ social conditions these were simply accepted. Similarly, the data suggested that other study participants, including Orlaith and Méabh, have not seemed to experience discord or conflict between their habitus and the field of education and so this may be why they tend to misrecognise the system as fair. They accept that academic selection ‘*does separate kids out*’ (Orlaith) and seem content to limit these pupils’ potential rather than think of alternatives. While Méabh acknowledges that the eleven-plus ‘*can have negative impacts*’, she still maintains that, ‘*I wouldn’t have got to where I am if I didn’t go through Grammar*’. Even while she recognises the potential harm, she still is reluctant to advocate for the possibility of change as the system worked for her. This may indicate that she may be likely to reproduce practice at this point in time.

Secondly, I found that participants who veered towards reproductive habitus often communicated low expectations to learners. Data illustrated this finding with Dearbhla, a conscientious middle-class student, clearly taken aback in her disadvantaged placement school by what she perceived as pupils and parents’ lack of engagement. Most importantly for this study, her responses suggested that she seemed unable to see past their lack of interest suggesting that ‘*when parents aren’t interested it’s pointless trying too hard*’. What Dearbhla fails to do is consider why parents appear uninterested and she reads their apparent lack of interest as disinterest. She attributes her own academic success to consistent work and effort and her habitus, formed within *her* social/cultural context and orienting her actions, displays reproductive traits. Dearbhla is inclined to position disadvantaged students in deficit terms constraining what she imagines as viable for these learners thereby ‘defining limits upon what is conceivable’ (Codd, 1990:139). I suggest

that, at this point, her reproductive habitus limits her expectations potentially restricting her disadvantaged pupils' conception of what is possible for themselves. Méabh, like Derbhla, has stereotyped the pupils explaining that '*they get into the wrong crowd and just don't try*'. Again, she fails to consider the reasons underlying their lack of engagement. Ronan, more aware of the impact low expectations may have, related how a class were told by their teacher that only four pupils would be passing the eleven-plus, suggested that this '*creates such a sense of failure from such a young age*'. Ronan recognised that the teacher's lack of expectation for these pupils was contagious.

These findings echo criticisms of Bourdieu, by Giroux (1983), Jenkins (2002) and Archer (2007) previously discussed in Chapter 3, which negate agency and the capacity for change. However, if Bourdieu's concept of habitus was limited in such ways, my findings would have been quite different. I suggest that Bourdieu does not deny agency, rather it is to be found in the dialectical relationship that teachers have with the system in which they work. I found that participants who showed reproductive traits have not had personal experience of failure. Furthermore, they tended to choose placements in schools similar to those they themselves attended. They have not had to confront first-hand some of the challenges underprivileged pupils may encounter. I propose this lack of experience has meant they have not had to address, nor reflect on, others' difficulties, engendering reproductive tendencies. As the next section shows, other participants displayed different dispositions.

### ***The transformative habitus***

Bourdieu (1990b:64) maintains that the habitus, is 'a matrix generating responses' and reminds us that habitus 'is not fate' (2005:45). As Reay explains:

... while habitus reflects the social position in which it was constructed, it also carries within it the genesis of new creative responses that are capable of transcending the social conditions in which it was produced.  
(Reay, 2004b:434-5)

Such creative responses can be seen in other participants who have a more transformative habitus; they recognise aspects of education as unfair and see beyond the constraints pupils face encouraging their potential.

Emma, a middle-class, affluent participant had struggled in school until her parents deployed time and tutors (capital) enabling her to progress, illustrated this well. She related

contrasting experiences of teachers; one who encouraged her, another who derided her. I would suggest that their differing expectations will influence the way she will practice as she seeks opportunities for improvisation, disrupting the status quo. This was demonstrated in her intervention with struggling EAL learners and how she sought to support their progress. She recognises the importance of pupils succeeding even at small tasks and is adamant that they should not be labelled as '*that's them in their box and they can't break out of that*'. Emma is clearly exhibiting characteristics of the activist professional (Sachs, 2000) as she both evaluates current practices mindful of the effect that these have on the welfare of her learners. Also middle-class Ide, who 'failed' the eleven-plus, advocated on behalf of a disruptive pupil, recognising that he was capable despite challenging home circumstances which she perceived had constrained his teachers' views of him. Working with disadvantaged youngsters, Aoife too, the first in her family to go to university, recognises and has keen insights into the injustices of the system. These students recognise flaws within the system whereby certain groups may be denigrated and work to raise expectations – a feature noted as significant by all participants. These students' habitus are transformative and very much in keeping with GTCNI's aspiration that teachers will actively seek to improve children's life chances acting as reflective and activist practitioners.

All interviewees identified at least one teacher who had made a significant difference to their lives. Key to these interventions was that these teachers inspired and challenged students raising their expectations of themselves. While some from affluent homes may well have been successful without teachers' encouragement, others from working-class backgrounds credited particular teachers with raising their expectations and self-esteem.

As Beth explained:

*Yea, self-esteem, self-worth that's probably one of the biggest things – it doesn't matter where you're from, if someone really believes in you – you can do this – then yea, I can... you will perform to what is expected of you.*

Students became animated in interviews with many stating such teachers were those they wanted to emulate. Some of these students had previously struggled, with some failing the eleven-plus, others repeating A-levels, and this had dented their self-belief and sense of assurance. Teachers' encouragement and high expectations led to gradual changes in habitus. It was clear in this research that these participants recognised that they, too, could make differences to the lives of the children they encountered, encouraging and refusing to

'label' children, and finding aspects to praise including, perhaps especially, with the most disadvantaged learners.

This research confirmed that ability-grouping can lead to some pupils becoming disillusioned. Hallam and Parsons (2013:396) assert that 'highly structured grouping legitimises the differential treatment of pupils', and it is such differential treatment that some participants evidenced and sought to counteract. Rather than 'fixing of failure' in pupils (Reay, 2006:299), Emma, Beth and Aoife all talked about attempting to break this cycle with disadvantaged learners, supporting and encouraging them. Rather than simply delivering 'cultural arbitraries' and meeting standards, these participants related how they tried alternative pedagogies, slowing the pace and working within pupils' limited linguistic/academic capital. It is evident that these students are already 'seeking a deeper understanding of their practice ... to inform their thinking and decision making' (GTCNI, 2007:9) as reflective and activist professionals. While their interventions were short-term due to the nature of placement, it was clear that pupils benefitted and began to recognise that they could achieve. However, without being sustained, interventions may not impact pupils' habitus.

#### *Implications:*

There are significant implications here for ITE and I argue, following Mills and Keddie (2012), that student teachers need support in recognising and problematising educational inequities, particularly their own role in perpetuating such unfairness. Choules (2007:474-5) suggests that it is only when students are encouraged to examine their privileged positioning that 'the beneficiaries of injustice [begin] to see themselves as implicated and having some collective responsibility for the perpetuation of injustice'. Then they may be in a better position to consider more socially just practices, so meeting the GTCNI's expectation that teachers will be concerned with the 'purposes and consequences of education' (2007:9). The expectations that teachers share with their pupils are significant as 'fixing' children into groups can classify and define them (McGillicuddy and Devine 2018:89) and the next section considers how education can be used to secure advantage.

#### **Education as a mechanism for securing advantage: Capital/Habitus**

A significant finding in this study was that all but one of the study interviewees talked at length of parental investment in children through, for example, supporting them with reading, homework and preparing them for tests. Arguably this may be how parents seek to

convey social advantage, ensuring that their children have ‘a better chance of a fair chance than other people’s children’ (Reay, 2013:666). I am concerned that students having had this experience themselves may expect such a level of engagement. Seven focus group participants were tutored for the eleven-plus, getting ‘extra help’ (Jenna). It was clear from the data that the eleven-plus was viewed as a means of accessing a preferential and advantageous environment. Sullivan *et al.* (2018:778) assert that selective education is an effective educational mechanism ‘through which parents can seek to pass on their advantages’; this was particularly evident in the themes of distinction and concerted cultivation.

Bourdieu’s (1990a:x) conceived of education as a ‘huge classificatory machine’ which concealed its ‘social function of legitimating class differences behind its technical function of producing qualifications’ (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990:164). This social function was clearly exemplified by Helen’s efforts to secure a Grammar place for her son, after he failed the eleven-plus, as she fought his ‘misclassification’ drawing on her considerable cultural capital. Participants explained how middle-class families invested in various ways in their children leading to both educational advantage and a sense of assurance. Reay (2017) argues this allows them to feel at ease and confident about their options. These findings echo Bourdieu’s concerns that:

the social universe is the site of endless and pitiless competition... It is struggle, not ‘reproduction’, that is the master metaphor at the core of his thought.  
(Wacquant, 2008:264).

Wilson (2016) claims that social class has a greater influence on educational achievement in NI than in other developed countries. Findings echoed this as participants discussed parental interventions as a key factor in children’s success (or not) at school. Such interventions can lead to stratification in economic, religious and ethnic terms and consequently as Kelleher *et al.* (2016:205) explain ‘increased social segregation’ as motivated parents exploit their capital to ensure their children’s educational success. My findings demonstrated that parents strive to pass on and secure advantage.

Conversely, what was less obviously evident but still clear in my study, was that working-class parents are interested in education but may be less well equipped to provide support due to their ‘own essential skills deficits’ (Leitch *et al.*, 2017:30). This study found that some parents hesitated from intervening in their children’s education having been labelled failures themselves. Several participants noted that that ‘*the parents just don’t know how to*

*do the homework*'. As, Aoife commented '*Maybe the education system failed [working-class parents] so they have a negative view of it*'. Here habitus-as-history impacts on the children who are not able to access the same type of home support available to more advantaged others. It became clear in data that some participants were increasingly reflecting on the social circumstances of pupils in classrooms and beginning to recognise the significant impact those circumstances may have. Jenna noted some Secondary pupils, comparing themselves to pupils in the nearby grammar school, '*thought they were second best and stopped themselves from even trying to do well*'. Here I speculate that there may be a reluctance to do well, as these pupils may potentially become 'misfits', as Helen astutely observed that educational success may alienate children from their working-class communities.

### *Implications:*

Engagement with critical reflection will be significant if students are to be able to recognise inequality and understand that they can be instrumental in change. I contend that such change is crucial if the potential of every child is to be recognised and nurtured. A consequence of academic selection is that high-achievers may be 'creamed off' and disadvantaged students 'are sorted into poor-performing schools' (Wilson, 2016:98). Participants noted that these pupils come to see themselves as second class, with limited options. I need to consider how students can be encouraged to recognise such impacts. To do so they will need to understand the field of education, how current discourses work to conceal disadvantage and to begin to ask searching questions. Through discussions they may together begin to consider explanations for pupils' (and parents') lack of engagement or apparent disinterest in education.

### **Neoliberal influences impact practice: Field**

Practice is dependent on how an individual's habitus and cultural capital interact within a given field. It was clear from the data that neoliberal discourses of self-improvement and competition pervaded the field. Disturbingly, such approaches may alienate some learners potentially labelled 'failures' through apparent lack of achievement. I was struck by how participants talked of experiencing pressure to be academically successful with high expectations from home and school. All interviewees credited their academic success to their own efforts '*everything that I had, I had to work really hard for*' (Derbhla). Grammar experience was that '*you're pushed more and you're more motivated*' (Peigí); this emphasis on academic success and competition as a good thing was encouraged by the

competitive institutional habitus, prioritizing results as academic and symbolic capital, convertible to recognition and prestige. Even for pupils facing barriers to learning the message students understood was that hard work and application, habitus-as-everyday-bodily-practices, equalled success regardless of home circumstances, and it became clear that participants often interpreted those who did not succeed as those simply not trying hard enough.

My findings suggest that the importance some students, families and schools placed on achieving high results significantly devalued holistic development. Data indicated that the eleven-plus dictated what was taught in schools, focussing on literacy and numeracy, echoing findings from OECD (2013). Several participants discussed how the wider curriculum is being neglected, closing off significant areas such as the Arts and PE, which children might find very valuable, and indeed potentially limits habitus formation as access to art, physical education and music may be curtailed. However the middle-class has the capital to invest in developing symbolic capital for their children. Aoife objected:

*What we currently do is not good enough. Those children who come in who haven't had the opportunities for music and dance lessons – ‘cos that's where middle-class children are getting it – outside of school... I'm passionate about us having a broad curriculum and I think that if there was real breadth, children would achieve better across the board.*

She sees through the semblance that schools reward talent and effort fairly and recognises that such pupils are advantaged by their cultural capital, embodied in their habitus and developing their sense of confidence and assurance. The remediation of such injustices is 'increasingly seen to be the responsibility of the individual suffering the injustice rather than the collective responsibility of society' (Reay 2012:4).

This is disquieting as many participants, all of whom are future teachers, appear to have uncritically accepted neoliberal concepts of the responsible and entrepreneurial self as outlined in Chapter 5. While participants have personally been successful caution is required as “success” cannot be delineated without reference to its Other, failure’ (Francis and Hey, 2009:229) as explained above. A number of participants related how they observed teachers lowering expectations and restricting pedagogic approaches for disadvantaged pupils, including in Peigí’s ‘tough’ school in which text-book activities dominated and in the example of Emma’s classroom assistant who did the writing for the EAL learners. These are further examples of symbolic violence as noted above, as pupils may come to believe they are undeserving, they are to blame. Thus, systems of ‘symbolic

domination' (Reay, 2017:96) lead to pupils being held responsible for their own failure rather than recognising that the structure of education has disadvantaged them from the outset. Such practices are, of course, contrary to the GTCNI's (2007) expectation of reflective professionals.

Accountability, another feature of the neoliberal educational landscape, was clearly evident in my data as participants noted that schools' emphasis on human capital, ensuring that pupils are prepared for the world of work, has led to a hierarchy of subjects and a narrowing of the curriculum. This was evidenced in Helen and Beth's discussion of 'desirable' subjects, which was echoed in most focus groups and interviews. It was also clear that the curriculum was constrained by teachers wanting – or needing – to get 'results'. As Aoife noted:

*I had all these creative ideas for school but the teacher wouldn't let me teach them – her focus was on literacy and numeracy.*

All students talked of the demands made of teachers for results and this came at the cost of creativity. Beth suggested that creativity:

*is really, really undervalued... a person can have so many ideas, we need inventors...and they don't necessarily have to be scientists – we need lateral thinking skills*

#### *Implications:*

As neoliberalism promotes education as human capital, teacher educators must surely work to challenge this reductionist stance and support students 'to develop a questioning and critical attitude' (Biesta, 2007:470). There are implications for students who should be supported to recognise that pupils who have been 'othered' and disadvantaged by our education system 'deserve to be treated in a more dignified, engaged and respectful manner' (Angus, 2012:245), a clear expectation from GTCNI (2007). Students, as future teachers, have to be supported to see beyond the 'technical' demands made of them if they are to effectively deal with the complex and value-laden contexts in which they will work (Liakopoulou, 2011), and the following section suggests how this can be facilitated.

#### **Students willingness to engage in reflection on their practice**

As stated in Chapter 1, I was delighted with participants' level of engagement in discussions related to this research. As a result of this study, I now appreciate that teacher educators can learn much from listening to, and learning from, students' perspectives. Engaging with students who are on the cusp of becoming teachers was a stimulating and

challenging experience. Some had chosen to participate as they had clearly thought previously about the issues and had given consideration to these matters. Others were simply interested as academic selection is a contested matter in NI and they came along ready to share their opinions. What I had not anticipated was their level of engagement, their willingness to talk openly, both in focus groups and interviews, and their readiness to consider others' views. In this sense, discussions were not only a means of gathering rich data but, as Sagoe (2012) explains, working collaboratively or contributing to research can be empowering for participants, and such professional dialogue and collaboration is advocated by the GTCNI (2007).

Students apparently enjoyed being asked about their views, being listened to and, consequently, conversations were lively and often thought-provoking and they apparently encouraged students to think about how and why we act in the ways we do. In some cases, I was shocked, both personally and in terms of the findings of this research, by the participants' acceptance of inequalities and their lack of understanding that they could make a difference. Jenna, who had come through Secondary herself, advocated for raising pupils' expectations and told of how Secondary pupils felt ashamed compared to Grammar peers. Then at the end of the interview she stated that '*our system works really well... you do need to have that academic environment where some pupils are able to achieve*'. However, on the whole I was heartened by their responses, which at times simply needed some probing to encourage them to think through the consequences of the practices in which they engage, as Finola commented '*I was oblivious how ability groups limited [pupils] before – I feel like I've had my eyes opened!*'.

#### *Implications:*

This finding was encouraging as opportunities for discussion persuaded many participants to voice their thinking, consider their assumptions and, collectively, begin to examine alternatives. What surprised me was the minimal effort required to engage students. Little more than a nudge was needed to begin rich and at times powerful conversations that started them thinking about the purposes of education for all learners. These implications lead to a series of recommendations that I will discuss after recognising some of the limitations of this research and suggesting further research.

## Limitations of the Research and Suggestions for Further Research

This research, like all research, has limitations. I identify some of these, along with suggestions for further research emerging from the current study's findings. My research presents considerable detail about a small group of student teachers' perceptions of the impact of class and selection on education in NI. However, the detailed qualitative nature of the data I was seeking restricted the number of participants in my study and thus I refer to several measures taken to address the trustworthiness of the findings. The participants were selected for 'information richness' (Morrow, 2005:259) thereby addressing the research's credibility. The data they provided were able to provide 'thick descriptions' not only as experienced first-hand in the NI education system but also in their observations of how selection and class influenced practice in placement schools. While I am grateful to those participants who contributed to focus groups and interviews, I am also aware that there were others who, for various reasons, chose not to participate. It would have been interesting to capture some of these silent voices and investigate if their perceptions were similar to participants' views.

Examining education in NI, attention is often drawn to religious/cultural segregation (Nelson 2010; Gardner, 2016) rather than socio-economic differences. This study has considered student teachers' perceptions of class and the interpretative, qualitative nature of the research means that these findings are particular to the context and I do not suggest that these might be extrapolated widely which is another limitation. However, I do believe that there may be commonalities between my findings and others from similar investigations with student teachers if conducted in NI or other countries. Korstjens and Moser (2018) propose that a measure of trustworthiness in qualitative research is its potential transferability and I believe such a consideration pertains here.

Neoliberal policies have infused education with accountability measures and a focus on performance (Ball, 2013; Reay, 2017). Drawing participants from an education system in which they have been successful, a further limitation is that those who might be considered educational 'losers' have not been represented. Future research could usefully extend to such groups although my focus here was precisely on the relatively successful and ways in which success might contribute to reproduction of the status quo. Seeking to disrupt that status quo had meant that, initially and as noted in Chapter 6, I had intended to undertake Action Research (AR). My experiences of working with students throughout this study

would encourage me to do so in future. The participants showed not only enthusiasm but, with some prompting, considerable perspicacity about the educational system which leads me to suggest that AR would be a valuable methodology for scrutinising practice. Kemmis and McTaggart define AR as:

a form of collective self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own social or educational practices, as well as their understanding of these practices and the situations in which these practices are carried out.

(Kemmis and McTaggart, 1988:1)

All too often, students – and teacher educators – have few opportunities to articulate their understandings of the practices they observe and develop (Finlay, 2008). Smith (2008:74) maintains that our backgrounds ‘prefigure our practices as educators’. Using AR could encourage collective self-reflective enquiry into students’ practices located within educational contexts. An element of such AR might be to encourage them to engage with educational ‘losers’ who were missing from this study. Encouraging students to consider how discourses and indeed practices are socially-constructed may allow them to begin to challenge deficit thinking around working-class pupils; given current participants’ willingness to engage I believe that this would prove a valuable catalyst for change.

Throughout this research process, both when interviewing participants and analysing then discussing data, I was aware that I was veering towards working in binaries which belie the diversity of class groupings. While these allowed me to discuss generalities around working-/middle-classes there is the danger of homogenising these groups. While this approach did enable me to provide some insights into perceived ‘generic’ classed practices, I was also aware as I delved into issues with participants that I was working across intersections of class, gender, religion and at times ethnicity which may have masked their perceptions of class itself. While my focus on class might be considered a limitation itself, I recall Milner’s assertion that:

In the frequently incanted quartet of race, class, gender and sexual orientation, there is no doubt that class has been the least fashionable... [yet] class remains the single most powerful determinant of life chances. (Milner, 1999:9)

An area for further research arising from this might be investigating students’ perceptions of equity as more intersectional including ethnic/racial diversity and inclusion in practice particularly apt in NI now as the numbers of immigrant children to schools has sharply increased over the last five years. Similarly, another avenue for further research may be to consider the religious context of NI, an area that I have not addressed here. Bourdieu

enabled me to analyse and understand students' experiences and perceptions of class through their discussion of practice. Having explicitly reflected here on the strengths and limitations of Bourdieu's concepts for making sense of the NI context, I can see how it might be fruitful to pursue specific further research focused on the intersections, the multiple axes, of the NI context. I suggest, for example, that religious divisions may have reproduced inequalities – the different school systems, the economic organisation of the country – aware that this is going well beyond this study and could be contentious.

There has been very interesting research undertaken by Leitch *et al.* (2017) examining patterns of educational achievement in several case studies of disadvantaged areas of NI. This study considered home, school and policy factors influencing differences in educational outcomes. This research might usefully be built upon to examine if intersections of religious faith and class have been instrumental in shaping expectations of educational success in some locations with Bourdieu's thinking tools affording further insights across these intersections. As Chapter 2 explained, a culture developed whereby Catholics often used education as a means of escaping inequality (McManus, 2015) and there is the potential to investigate this further, particularly with student teachers within a Catholic university college.

As Reay (2006:290) maintains, class is 'everywhere and nowhere, denied yet continually enacted' permeating our everyday experiences. I now acknowledge that I too had previously been instrumental in 'masking' the role of class within education denying that it 'really' contributed to inequality. I am aware, and now recognise, that I bring my own habitus, ways of thinking and reacting to this research. Costa and Murphy (2015) suggest that reflexivity is achieved by making implicit understandings of practices and experiences explicit. Rennie (2004:183) defines reflexivity as 'self-awareness and agency within that self-awareness'; this research has come about through agency following an epiphany as I studied Bourdieu and came to understand how I too had misrecognised the educational system here as fair. Middle-class, academically successful, my background mirrored many of the students I now work with. It has been challenging to identify my implicit assumptions and biases, and also to try to avoid over-compensating for these in interpreting the data presented. To counteract this I have engaged in critical conversations with colleagues and students, trying to ensure that analyses were realistic and honest. A good example of my implicit assumptions was evident in interviews and I now regret that I did not explicitly link students' experiences and understandings of class with their perceptions

of teacher expectations of children in schools. As Chapter 6 noted, I hesitated to discuss class with interviewees concerned it might cause unease, but in retrospect believe that this could have added alternative and additional perspectives. My reluctance may be partly due to my positioning as a researcher on the inside (Hall and Jones, 2013) and I have to question if in avoiding this discussion was I complicit in making class invisible. I now believe I should have been more direct and transparent in my questioning.

Finally, I wonder if I may have been overambitious in the scope of this study. The survey, while producing significant amounts of data, did not drill down to a level of detail and qualify answers that might have helped me understand responses more fully. It did provide useful insights into widely held perceptions and the anonymity of this instrument possibly allowed real candour but limited data. This was an additional data source, useful in achieving ‘adequate variety’ in the evidence gathered another measure of trustworthiness (Morrow, 2005:255) although the data was limited here. However, I have found that having to think through the Bourdieusian lens has been both demanding and rewarding in forcing me to consider the context in which I practice. Indeed, I have had to think through how habitus, capital and field interweave, and have come to understand the nature of practice as a lived experience rather than a theoretical exercise. There are other issues, such as the emotional impact of class, buried within data, that have not been unearthed and I recognise that I have been selective in themes that I have chosen to discuss. There is the potential to draw further on this data, presenting, for instance, a case study examining how labelling and academic struggle may impact on learner identities and emotions as noted above.

### **Reflecting on my Professional Practice: What Next?**

This research has been challenging and engaging and I have learned much throughout this process. Key to this has been engaging in critical reflection. Bourdieu asserts that sociology has an important task in:

unmask[ing] self-deception, to cause one “to think in a completely astonished and disconcerted way about things you thought you had always understood” .  
(Bourdieu, 1991:207)

Bourdieu views research as more than producing knowledge, but through viewing society in a different way, it may help generate change. This research certainly has made me think in ‘astonished and disconcerted ways’ about practices that have until recently gone unquestioned in my own personal and professional practice. Selective education has been

part of the warp and weft of society in NI, enabling my working-class father to go to Grammar school in the 1940s. It has also allowed Catholics a means of overcoming discrimination (McManus, 2015) and opened opportunities for social and economic change as Chapter 2 explained. Such changes were concrete and tangible in my own upbringing as my father's Grammar education allowed him access to university and a middle-class career. Opportunities provided by Grammars have meant that these schools are revered as tangible means of social mobility. It has been challenging to critique this system particularly as I lay myself open to charges of hypocrisy having benefitted from them, both personally and for and through my children. I was advantaged from the outset in that my habitus corresponded with the field of education. I was well versed in the rules of the game. I had also accepted the doxa that education here was fair, that 'bright' children would succeed. However, it is not only the eleven-plus that I examine here, rather all the 'sophisticated mechanisms' of selection that are used in schools. These have led to a culture of deficit that has been created through the lack of attention to, and understanding of, social class. As Reay (2006:289) suggests, class is a 'potential monster that grows in proportion to its neglect' and this research has considered how this lack of awareness of, or complacency about, class may perpetuate inequality and injustice.

Mills and Gale propose that:

to be of practical and emancipatory value, research must do more than assist in understanding the human condition; it must also offer some vision of an alternative to the present arrangements. (2010: 15)

So, how could research undertaken enable an alternative vision? Bourdieu cautions that researchers should not view the social world as puzzles to be solved, but rather a 'a mesh of practical tasks to be accomplished in real time and space – which is what it is for social agents' (Wacquant, 2008:273). Having conducted this study, I now contend that it is essential that teacher educators ensure that students work towards more socially just practices. To do so, I make three recommendations and explain how these may be realised below:

1. Students should be encouraged and supported in engagement with structured critical reflection;
2. Students should be supported in analysing and discussing critical incidents; and
3. Students might usefully be encouraged to take placements in disadvantaged schools.

I realise that beginning teachers cannot be charged with enacting major change in the education system. Rather, as Darling-Hammond and Bransford (2005) acknowledge, it takes time for teachers to develop professional knowledge and identity. They suggest that ITE establishes ‘core ideas and broad understanding of teaching and learning that give them traction on their later development’ (Darling-Hammond and Bransford, 2005:3), and it is such ideas and understanding that I hope to develop. These aspirations are in keeping with the GTCNI’s intention that teachers should develop across their professional career as reflective, activist practitioners as Chapter 2 explained, and I suggest that ITE is well placed to support such early professional development. To briefly recap, GTCNI (2007) identified four key components to role. Firstly, teachers should act as experts in teaching and learning, engaging in professional dialogue to share their knowledge and understanding. Secondly, teachers should act as problem solvers, critically reflecting on their pupils’ progress and their own professional practice. Next, teachers should seek a deeper understanding of their practice through action research that will inform their thinking and decision-making and potentially lead to change. Finally, the GTCNI hopes that through the process of reflective practice, teachers will develop ‘new understandings of learning, teaching and educational change’ (GTCNI, 2007:9). With time and experience, it is intended that reflective activist teachers may indeed become ‘shapers of policy and well-informed critics of proposals and reforms’ (GTCNI, 2007:9). I propose that this process might usefully begin by encouraging student teachers to attend to issues of equality in classrooms and start to become problem framers through providing space for discussions supported by ITE and school-mentors<sup>27</sup> as the following recommendations outline. By developing such awareness, teacher educators may begin to equip students with the facility to pose questions leading to imaginative inquiry about our education system and, ultimately, such activity might support the emergence of transformative rather than reproductive habitus.

### Structured critical reflection

Students are already asked to reflect on their experiences in classrooms and I have begun making incremental changes to how this is framed within the ITE programme. Recent practice had students focussing on what tended to be practical/technical activities of planning, teaching and managing classrooms. I recognised that this often failed to engage

<sup>27</sup> A mentor is a significant role that involves ‘providing support, challenge and extension of the learning of one person through the guidance of another who is more skilled, knowledgeable and experienced, particularly in relation to the context in which learning is taking place’ Pollard *et al.*, 2008:32). This role aligns with the GTCNI (2007:9) concept of the reflective activist who is ‘committed to professional dialogue’, in this case with student teachers.

students beyond superficial levels, a problem also recognised by Edward-Groves and Gray (2008). Parallel with this research I have developed a more demanding approach requiring students to consider social/political and moral/ethical issues as LaBoskey advocates (1993). This research has identified that it is essential to encourage students to think critically about the existing system and to reflect on ethical issues related to their practice.

A scaffolded process of reflection, building on discussions with mentors and peers, may enable a developmental hierarchy of change as proposed by Mills and Ballantyne (2010). They advise that student teachers must first be encouraged have an awareness of their own beliefs and attitudes (self-awareness/self-reflection); while this may be unsettling, collaborative discussions can reassure students that this is about sensitivity rather than censure. This, Mills and Ballantyne suggest may lead to openness, ‘receptiveness to others’ ideas’ (2010:451) as well as being open to diversity. The third dispositional factor they aspire to is a commitment to social justice; these factors are well aligned with the knowledge, skills and values required of reflective, activist professionals (GTCNI, 2007) and in keeping with a transformative habitus. However, they recognise that students’ previous experiences and willingness to engage are vital and so ‘some students may never reach the required or pre-requisite levels of self-awareness in order to commit to social justice in their classrooms’ (2010:453-4). While several participants, such as Beth and Aoife, demonstrated commitment to social justice, others including Derbhla, exhibited limited self-awareness. It is therefore essential to provide opportunities to encourage engagement.

Students are already encouraged to think beyond the immediate context of classroom practicalities and asked to begin to problematise educational inequities. They find this challenging, and one solution may be to engage teacher educators as mentors<sup>28</sup>. Edward-Groves and Gray (2008:92) suggest that ‘reflection needs to be learned and practised’ and engaging groups of students in open dialogue with mentors, deconstructing incidents –as discussed below – and reviewing situations that may arise, may persuade students to think differently. This recommendation is in keeping with the GTCNI’s proposal that activist teachers share their professional knowledge. These scaffolded reflections led by a mentor who would be an expert in teaching, requires both open-mindedness and wholehearted

<sup>28</sup> In NI the role of the teacher educators in school-based work is different to other parts of the UK as they are responsible for assessing students on placement and act as mentors engaging students in reflective dialogue to enhance their formation as teachers. Reflective dialogues go beyond improving a student’s practice drawing attention to how reflection contributes to developing ‘knowledge, attitudes and skill of teaching and [students’] capacity to act in morally-defensible ways’ (Edwards-Grove and Gray, 2008:95).

engagement on the part of students. I found such professional dialogue welcomed by participants, as Cara explained: '*It's given me perspectives that I hadn't thought of before, even what we assess means some kids always fail*'. Over the course of this research I have come to realise that, as Russell and Grootenboer (2008:112) suggest, I am not just a teacher 'of skills and knowledge', but also have a 'significant role in shaping students' beliefs, values, attitudes and feelings'. The same can be said of students in schools – they can set the 'potential cruising radius' (Walther, 2014:9) both for themselves as well as for their pupils. While the curriculum is crowded, such work is too important to neglect. Mills (2012) emphasises the role of ITE/school mentors in posing questions and sharing good practice as a means of consciousness-raising; in this role they are exemplifying GTCNI's first criterion of the activist professional. This is also in keeping with the GTCNI's aspiration that teachers work collaboratively to build communities of practice that enable 'collective capacity' (Fullan, cited in Barber *et al.*, 2010) as explained in Chapter 2. Such mentor-led seminar discussions may allow opportunities for students, as teachers of the future, to recognise that their decisions and practices, accomplished within real time and space are likely to be instrumental in creating socially just classrooms for the children they teach.

The second recommendation is that students use critical incidents to reflect on their positioning.

### Critical incidents

Bourdieu and Passeron assert that the educational system 'confers on the privileged the supreme privilege of not seeing themselves as privileged' (1990:210). This study demonstrates that students need to begin by recognising their privileged position; academically capable and often possessing various capitals that their pupils will not have access to. Choules (2007:474) argues that it is only when taken-for-granted understandings are questioned or 'viewed from the perspective of those who are disadvantaged by a set of practices' that students may begin to recognise their role in continuing inequities – and indeed that they benefit from this. Findings indicated that some participants 'normalised' their position which they then used to measure others against 'advantage is seen to reflect merit and effort rather than systemic inequality' (Choules, 2007:477). Through discussions during this study participants began to realise that they were beneficiaries of an unfair system, their thinking was disrupted and they began to reconsider assumptions.

One way of encouraging students to examine their positioning might be through the use of critical incident analysis (Tripp, 2011). While Smith (2002:130) suggests that ‘we are not well-equipped to penetrate our own subterfuges and rationalisations’, asking students to interrogate incidents drawn from classroom/school practice within tutorial situations may enable them to do so. Focused, substantive dialogue with mentors to analyse incidents may deepen their awareness and understanding of others’ perspectives, and may begin to unveil subterfuges. I hope such analysis will call into question implicitly held beliefs. As noted, the GTCNI (2007:9) recommend that teachers should be ‘reflective and critical problem solvers’ monitoring evaluating both pupil progress and their own practice. Scaffolded discussions with mentors may give students confidence to begin to question inequitable practices. Groundwater-Smith and Sachs (2002:352) assert that the prime concern of the activist professional is ‘to reduce or eliminate exploitation, inequality and oppression’. Talking through incidents may allow participants to excavate various layers of meaning and significance for the different actors within the context; this may also entail further inquiry and research. Discussion around such incidents, Tripp (2011:112) maintains, are a useful means of ‘illuminating, articulating, understanding, and gaining control over our current professional practice and habits’. Seeking a deeper understanding of their practice correlates with the GTCNI’s intention that teachers should become researchers and change agents, the third characteristic of the reflective, activist professional. In this study, Jenna commented that it only through having to articulate her thinking, and with prompting from me, that she clarified it, even to herself and this enabled her to think through the complexity of the situation and recognise difficulties faced by pupils. My contention, at the end of this study, is that dialogue and debate may help to challenge deficit thinking, leading to a deeper understanding of the barriers facing disadvantaged children/schools on a daily basis. The final recommendation considers the placements students choose and how these might encourage questioning of inequality.

### Challenging placements

I propose that students in the penultimate year of their programme should be encouraged to undertake placements in disadvantaged schools. I agree with Lupton and Hempel-Jorgensen (2012) who argue that students’ consciousness of how economic and social class affect pupils’ experiences of learning should be raised, and they should become aware of the impact their teaching can have on (re)producing inequality. This is particularly apt for many students in NI who, as this study has shown, despite espousing broadly inclusive educational principles, have implicit beliefs and preferences for traditional, academically-

selective educational structures. This corroborates Bourdieu and Passeron's claim that while appearing neutral, education can 'reproduce the legitimate culture as it stands and produce agents capable of manipulating it legitimately' (1990:59–60). This study has shown me that it is vitally important to raise students' consciousness of such doxa to avoid (re)producing inequality.

Care will be required in designing these placements and the associated teaching and student support requirements as Garmon (2004) warns that singular experiences may reinforce deficit perspectives. Mills (2012:276) proposes that when students experience difference or rupture through unfamiliar contexts 'effort is required to make sense of themselves anew'. Rather than reproducing the 'legitimate culture' students need to become learners of their pupils' realities. Through taking the time to build respectful relationships with disadvantaged learners, getting to know them as individuals may allow students to become aware of their own prejudices and ignorance. Developing a better understanding of these pupils as children may be the first step in changing how students engage these pupils and how they might effect change for the better. It should also enable these student teachers to 'motivate and inspire pupils with a view to helping each realise their potential' (GTCNI, 2007:45). Placements such as these provide opportunities for students to 'experiment with the unfamiliar and learn from their experiences' as recommended by GTCNI (2007:9). Some students may find such placements challenging or distressing, however, I find that those who do choose to work in such contexts tend to be those who are already exhibiting traits of activist professionals such as open-mindedness and a willingness to take responsibility for their ongoing professional development and demonstrating a transformative habitus. Such students develop 'new understandings of learning, teaching and educational change' (GTCNI, 2007:9), and become much more aware of and readily question some of the unjust practices that allow some children to be (dis)advantaged over others.

## Contribution to the Literature

Although I acknowledge that the data presented is limited in that it is drawn from a small-scale study, I suggest that this research contributes to the existing literature in several distinct ways. First of all it highlights the significance of critical reflection for student teachers, particularly in the challenging social and educational context of NI which continues to try and find ways to overcome political divisions following years of conflict.

Secondly, the study has addressed a gap in research in NI of student teachers' perceptions of the impact of class in education using Bourdieu's conceptual tools of habitus, field and capital to explore their everyday practice. Thirdly, it has attended to a similar lack of current research on student teachers' perceptions relating to cultures of academic selection. Fourthly, this research uses the GTCNI's concept of the reflective activist teacher and considers how it might be developed with prospective teachers. Finally the study has revealed the willingness students displayed in engaging in discussion around inequalities and their readiness to contribute to research.

The major contribution this study makes to the existing literature on student teachers' developing practices is that unless and until students begin to think critically about the existing system, they risk simply perpetuating inequalities inherent within it. This is particularly relevant in NI with its education system segregated along various fault lines including religion and academic selection (Gardner, 2016). Engaging in critical reflection may encourage them to become aware of 'the hidden power of ideas they have absorbed unwittingly from their social contexts' (Fook, 2006:4). I argue that the social and educational contexts here require those who will become teachers to reflect deeply on the 'entrenched beliefs and practices underlying the invariant positions and intransigence' (Gardner, 2016:347) of various actors in the political and educational fields and consider if these beliefs and practices are in the best interests of the children they will teach. This may well lead to some discomfort among students who until now have accepted, and indeed benefitted from, the educational system without question, but also, ideally, it will lead to an 'awakening of consciousness' (Bourdieu, 1990c:116). Encouraging critical thinking may begin to cement core ideas about socially just practices that may come to fruition in time. It should also encourage future teachers to consider philosophical and ethical dimensions related to practice.

As I began this research, I was surprised by the limited research available on the perceptions held by student teachers in the UK concerning class and how this may disadvantage pupils' learning and self-esteem. While Thompson *et al.* (2016) and Ellis *et al.* (2016) have begun to address this gap in England and Scotland, I am unaware of any research in this area in NI. This is a significant gap as while students preparing to become teachers may have come from disadvantaged backgrounds, some will attribute their achievement to personal effort and interest. Using Bourdieu's conceptual tools of habitus, field and capital to investigate everyday practices, this research has demonstrated how

some students, and indeed the teachers with whom they work, may misrecognise educational underachievement as a lack of interest or engagement leading to the ‘fixing of failure’ (Reay, 2006:299) in working-class pupils and lowering the expectations and motivations of teachers and pupils alike. Reay (2006:301) suggests that ITE has ‘lost its way in relation to ‘social class’ (see also Ellis *et al.*, 2016; Ingram, 2018) and this research endorses this assertion. The recommendations above may go some way to beginning to address this gap. While this research has focussed on class, I suggest that with the significant influx of new-comer children in recent years the school-age population of NI has become more diverse (DENI, 2018). I argue that my findings demonstrate that teacher educators must find more effective ways to prepare white, mainly middle-class, students to become effective teachers of diverse pupils.

Similarly, there is a gap in the research on students’ perceptions of academic selection in NI. This is an area that has been widely contested over the last 20 years and Grammar schools have effectively privatised entrance exams in the last decade. The sample and context for gathering data in this area were different to previous older studies, including Gallagher and Smyth (2000) who collected information from teachers, parents and pupils. My participants were well placed, having sat the eleven-plus and recently come through the post-primary system, to share their views and opinions having experienced it first-hand. Their perceptions of ability-grouping and streaming in schools builds on a larger body of existing literature (Wilkinson and Penney, 2014; Francis *et al.*, 2017; McGillicuddy and Devine, 2018) which investigates educational practices but not students’ understanding of those. This is an area worthy of further investigation and one which will be addressed in my professional practice as cultures of academic selection must be contested to avoid symbolic violence within the education system,

A further significant contribution to the literature is in investigating how the GTCNI’s teacher education policy ‘Teaching the Reflective Profession’ (2007) might be implemented with student teachers. Framed as a continuum it addresses professional development from ITE on throughout a teachers’ career. As explained in Chapter 2, the GTCNI’s approach seeks to weave competences, values and a sense of purpose into the professional identity of the teacher (GTCNI, 2007:5) and emphasises that teachers should develop a ‘sense of moral purpose and responsibility’. To date, there has been no research on how this policy is used in ITE. My study has indicated a pressing need to encourage student teachers to be critically reflective if they are to develop a sense of purpose and

responsibility. Donaldson (2010) recognises that ITE does not produce the ready-made professional, rather, it should be perceived as the first step on a life-long process. I suggest that this study and the recommendations outlined in the previous section contribute to the professional knowledge on how students might be encouraged to begin that process.

Finally, no previous literature prepared me for the relish with which students engaged in discussion and debate. They were clearly motivated and even challenging issues were openly and honestly considered. This willingness for students to participate is to be nurtured as with encouragement and support they are potential agents of change.

### Final Thoughts for the Moment

I began this research rather naively focussing on habitus, with little clear sense of how to explore it. Despite Reay's warning, I was using habitus like 'intellectual hair spray' (Hey, 2003, cited in Reay, 2004b:432). It is only latterly, while wrestling with analysis of the data and framing discussions, that I really came to understand the importance of Bourdieu's formula for practice in allowing me to understand the workings of habitus and field. By analysing students' practices – their attitudes, beliefs and actions – and how these relate to the field of education with the various demands it imposes, I have been able to start uncovering their dispositional principles and so see the effects of habitus. If I were beginning again, I would take a more structured approach to interviews, investigating their practice more directly, questioning them on how they would organise their classroom and asking them more explicitly to consider their personal classed-background as well as their philosophy of education. A number of the final interviews came around to this and Aoife, a feisty, insightful working-class participant explained, '*you need to see potential in everybody – they deserve that*'. Evident in discussion, Aoife clearly demonstrates self-awareness, openness and a commitment to social justice.

I end by reflecting on a quote from Bourdieu which calls on researchers to:

... fight in himself [sic] and in others the opportunist indifference or conformist ennui which allows the social milieu to impose the slippery slope of resigned compliance and submissive complicity. (Bourdieu, 1998:4-5)

As both my experience and this study have found, student teachers are highly motivated to do 'right' by the children they are responsible for. It is essential that students are encouraged to remove their '*rose-tinted glasses*' (Grace - participant) and begin thinking critically about the existing system rather than, through indifference or compliance, simply

accepting the status quo. It is through developing a better understanding of how they construct their practice as educators that they start to recognise how the social context impacts not only on their personal choices and decisions, but on the lives of the children they will teach. I am heartened by the findings here and in particular by students' readiness to reflect when prompted. I think that before this they simply have not had to question their privilege. I hope through raising awareness to encourage students to begin to challenge doxa and to ensure that they are not 'complicit' in perpetuating inequality.

# **Appendices**

Appendix A: Ethics Approval

Appendix B: Data collection instruments

Participant Information Sheet

Questionnaire

Themes for Focus Group

Vignettes

Themes for Interviews

Appendix C: Rules for formatting transcripts

Appendix D: Sample interview transcript

Appendix E: Participant profiles



## College of Social Sciences

### Appendix A: Ethics Approval

#### College Research Ethics Review Feedback

#### Application Approved

#### Ethics Committee for Non-Clinical Research Involving Human Subjects

---

#### Application Details

Staff Research Ethics Application

Postgraduate Student Research Ethics

Application

Application Number: 400160037

Applicant's Name: Mary Claire Connolly

Project Title: Enabling teachers to recognise how social class and academic selection may create inequalities within education in Northern Ireland

Application Status:

**APPROVED**

Start Date of Approval:

24<sup>rd</sup> Nov 2016

End Date of Approval of Research Project:

31<sup>st</sup> Dec 2018

---

Please retain this notification for future reference. If you have any enquiries please email [socsci-ethics@glasgow.ac.uk](mailto:socsci-ethics@glasgow.ac.uk).



## College of Social Sciences

### Appendix B: Research Instruments

#### ***Participant Information Sheet***

Study title:

Enabling student teachers to recognise how 'social class' and academic selection may create inequalities within education in Northern Ireland.

Name of Researcher:

Claire Connolly ([c.connolly@smucb.ac.uk](mailto:c.connolly@smucb.ac.uk) or [m.connolly.2@research.gla.ac.uk](mailto:m.connolly.2@research.gla.ac.uk))

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

Thank you for reading this.

#### Why have I been chosen?

As a third year student who has experience of the education system in Northern Ireland, you may have views and opinions about academic selection - both positive and negative. I want to find out more about student teachers' experiences of, and attitudes towards, academic selection (in the broadest sense) in schools and I think you are in a good position to talk about this. I am also interested in asking you if (and how) you think a pupil's socio-economic background might impact on their achievement in school.

#### Do I have to take part?

Taking part in this research is completely voluntary. It is up to you to decide whether or not to participate. If you do decide to participate you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. If you change your mind, please let me know and I will not use any information you have given me in this research. Please be aware that declining to take part or withdrawing from this research will not affect your grades or jeopardise your relationship with me in any way.

#### What will happen to me if I take part?

If you decide to take part I will ask you to participate in a focus group with five to nine others. You do not have to answer any questions that you don't want to answer. This will take around an hour to an hour and a half at most.

After a general discussion around your experiences of academic selection when you were at school, I will ask you to read a short excerpt and there will be a group discussion around the content of this. I will then ask the group to share their experiences of academic streaming in their recent school placements. The focus group will go on to consider the ideal traits of 'good' and 'bad' pupils.

I am also interested in teachers' expectations of pupils and whether this is affected by the pupil's socio-economic background, so I would like to talk to you about your own experiences and those of pupils you may have observed in schools.

I hope to have completed focus groups by February, 2017.

I will also ask some of those who have participated in the focus group to take part in a one-to-one interview to follow up on ideas discussed. These interviews will last no longer than an hour. These interviews will be held in April-June 2017.

Should, for any reason, any participant becomes distressed, they will have access to the college counsellor (email: [j.foster@smucb.ac.uk](mailto:j.foster@smucb.ac.uk)).

I will audio-record the focus group and interviews so that I can transcribe an accurate record of the discussion.

I hope to have finished gathering information by mid-June 2017 at the latest.

**Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?**

All information which is collected about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential.

The results of the research will be reported in a manner that ensures that none of the participants can be identified. For example, pseudonyms, rather than real names, will be used.

While every effort will be made to ensure confidentiality, there may be limitations to this promise (such as a Freedom of Information request). Furthermore, as there will be group discussions, I will ask for discretion among members, but cannot guarantee that all information will remain confidential.

**Please note that assurances on confidentiality will be strictly adhered to unless evidence of wrongdoing or potential harm is uncovered. In such cases the University may be obliged to contact relevant statutory bodies/agencies.**

**What will happen to the results of the research study?**

This research will inform a dissertation that I am undertaking as part of a Doctorate in Education programme. This will be assessed and so will be read and marked by tutors and examiners at the University of Glasgow. Should you be interested in reading the findings, a copy of these can be shared electronically if requested. I will destroy all of my notes and recordings when the dissertation is finished (along with any personal data held) ideally by the end of December 2018. Anonymised research data will be kept for up to ten years and could potentially be used in future projects.

**Who has reviewed the study?**

This study has been reviewed and agreed by the School of Education, College of Social Sciences Ethics Committee, University of Glasgow as well as by the Ethics Committee of St. Mary's University College.

**Contact for Further Information**

If you have any questions about this study, you can ask me, Claire Connolly ([c.connolly@smucb.ac.uk](mailto:c.connolly@smucb.ac.uk)) or my supervisor, Professor Nicki Hedge ([Nicki.Hedge@glasgow.ac.uk](mailto:Nicki.Hedge@glasgow.ac.uk))

**If you have any concerns regarding the conduct of this research project, you can contact the College of Social Sciences Ethics Officer Dr. Muir Houston email: [Muir.Houston@glasgow.ac.uk](mailto:Muir.Houston@glasgow.ac.uk)**

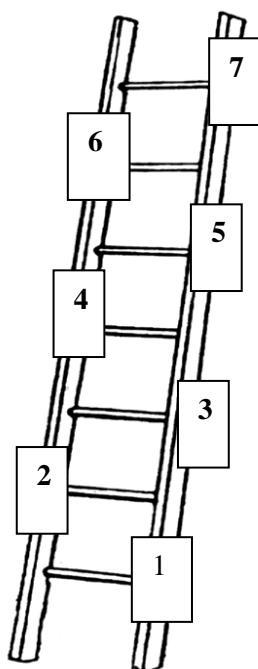
## Questionnaire

Please read the attached Participant Information Sheet carefully. Your consent to complete the questionnaire is assumed if you choose to complete it.

I am interested in researching if 'social class' and academic selection (at all levels) create inequalities within the Northern Ireland education system. The purpose of this study is to examine student teachers' perceptions of academic selection in the education system in Northern Ireland and to ask if you think children from different socio-economic backgrounds are treated equally in schools. This questionnaire asks you about your personal experiences and your perception of how teachers in schools deal with children from different socio-economic backgrounds. It should take you approximately 15 minutes to complete.

Please do NOT write your name on this questionnaire. Your responses will be confidential and will not be linked to you personally. Your participation is entirely voluntary. If there are items you do not feel comfortable answering, please skip them. Thank you for your co-operation.

Claire Connolly



Think of this ladder as representing where people stand in our society. At the top of the ladder are the people who are the best off, those who have the most money, most education, and best jobs. At the bottom are the people who are the worst off, those who have the least money, least education, and worst jobs or no job.

Please place an X on the rung that best represents where you think you stand on the ladder.

Can you briefly explain why you placed yourself in this position on the ladder?


PLEASE NOTE ALL QUESTIONS CONTAINED IN THIS QUESTIONNAIRE ARE OPTIONAL AND WILL BE KEPT STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL.				
1. About you	Are you	<input type="checkbox"/> Female	<input type="checkbox"/> Male	
	What age are you?			
	What county are you from?			
	What course are you studying here?	B.Ed. Primary <input type="checkbox"/>	B. Ed Post-Primary <input type="checkbox"/>	

2. Education and qualifications	What type of post-primary school did you go to?	<input type="checkbox"/> Grammar	<input type="checkbox"/> Non-selective	<input type="checkbox"/> Comprehensive	<input type="checkbox"/> Other	
		<input type="checkbox"/> Controlled	<input type="checkbox"/> Voluntary			
	Did you like post-primary school?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No			
	Do you feel like you belonged from the very beginning?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No			
	Do you think your school valued all pupils equally?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No			
	How many GCSEs do you have?	<input type="checkbox"/> 0-5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6-9	<input type="checkbox"/> more than 9		
	Do you have alternative qualifications? (if so please note) (for example BTec)					
	Please note the A-levels or alternative qualifications you studied					

3. Social background	How would you classify yourself? <input type="checkbox"/> Working class <input type="checkbox"/> Middle class <input type="checkbox"/> Upper class	
Which of the following best describes the occupation of the main income earner (most likely one of your parents) in your household?	<b>Higher managerial, administrative or professional</b> (for example Senior Manager, Finance Director, Personnel Manager, Doctor, Accountant, Senior Local Government Officer)	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<b>Intermediate managerial, administrative or professional</b> (for example School teacher, University Lecturer, Systems Analyst, Middle management, work that requires degree level qualification)	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<b>Supervisor, clerical or administrative</b> (for example Clerical, Sales or Services, Foreman or Supervisor or Other Workers)	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<b>Skilled manual worker with training or apprenticeship</b> (for example Plumber, Electrician, Fitter, Chef, Hairdresser etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<b>Semi-skilled manual worker</b> (for example Machine Operator, Postman, Assembler, Waiter/Waitress, Cleaners, Driver, Bar-worker, Labourer, Call Centre Worker)	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<b>Unemployed</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>4. Eleven-plus</b>	Did you do the eleven-plus exam?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Not an option in my area
	Did you pass the eleven-plus?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Not relevant
	Where you tutored for these tests?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Not relevant

<b>5. Why did you choose to become a teacher?</b>	Can you number the following statements which might reflect some reasons why you chose to become a teacher (1= most important – 6 =least important for you)
	I wanted to make a positive difference to children's lives
	I am passionate about my subject and teaching is a good way to share that passion
	My parents/friends suggested I would make a good teacher
	Good education helps shape people's lives and I believe that I can contribute to that
	I get on well with young people
	Teaching is a useful initial degree to have with many good career prospects and options
Any other reasons not stated:	

<b>6. Barriers to learning</b>  I am interested in why some children succeed and others do not. Can you suggest how important you think these statements are?	<b>Can you rank the impact that the following may have on pupils' learning:</b>					
		No impact	A little impact	Quite an impact	Important impact	I do not think this is important
	Level of interest in school					
	Level of behaviour in class					
	Level of encouragement from teachers					
	The pupil's level of aspiration					
	Level of engagement in class					
	Level of support from home					
	Natural level of ability					
	Education is valued at home					
	Parents expect children to do well					
	The school expects much of pupils					
The pupil expects to do well						

<b>7. Selection</b>			
<b>What do you think about academic selection?</b>			
	I think it is a good idea and gives bright pupils a chance to do well	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Disagree
	Bright students will excel at grammar school and should be allowed this opportunity	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Disagree
	The eleven-plus is socially divisive and should be phased out	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Disagree
	I benefitted from going to grammar school	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Disagree
	I think our non-selective schools are excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Disagree
	Children who do not pass the eleven-plus are probably not academically capable for grammar school	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Disagree
	Grammar schools promote social mobility	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Disagree
	I think that children are disadvantaged if they don't get to grammar school	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Disagree

<b>8. Other issues</b>			
	I think that children learn best when working with children who have a similar ability to them	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Disagree
	Teachers are generally good at assessing children's ability	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Disagree
	Schools should focus on core areas as these are what pupils will need for work	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Disagree
	I think it is important to sort children into ability groups so that they can work at the right level	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Disagree
	Children learn better when their parents are interested in their education	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Disagree
	Teachers sometimes use children's home background to indicate what they are capable of	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Disagree
	I think that children learn best when working with children who are as clever as they are	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Disagree
	Teachers know which children's parents are interested in their education	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Disagree
When you complete your BEd degree and graduate as a teacher, would you see yourself as belonging to a professional class?		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No

Thank you for completing this questionnaire.



College of Social  
Sciences

**Consent Form**

Title of Project: Enabling student teachers to recognise how 'social class' and academic selection may create inequalities within education in Northern Ireland.

Name of Researcher: Claire Connolly (Supervisor: Professor Nicki Hedge)

I confirm that I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.

I consent/do not consent (delete as applicable) to participate in a focus group that will last approximately 60-90 minutes and understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.

Following the focus group I consent/do not consent (delete as applicable) to being interviewed (the interview should last around one hour) and understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.

I consent/do not consent (delete as applicable) to focus groups and interviews being audio-recorded.

I understand that participants will be referred to by pseudonym and will not be named in any report or publication.

I understand that there will be no effect on my grades arising from my participation or non-participation in this research.

I understand that if, for any reason, I become distressed, I will have access to the college counsellor (email: [j.foster@smucb.ac.uk](mailto:j.foster@smucb.ac.uk)).

I understand that: the material will be treated as confidential and kept in secure storage at all times; personal data will be destroyed once the project is complete; anonymised research data may be used in future projects or publications, both print and online; and I agree to waive my copyright to any data collected as part of this project. While discretion and confidentiality will be requested for all group discussions, total confidentiality cannot be guaranteed due to the nature of these sessions.

I agree to take part in this research study

I do not agree to take part in this research study

Signature Section

Name of Participant ..... Signature .....

Name of Researcher Claire Connolly Signature .....

Date .....

***Themes for focus groups***

Introductory discussion: Students' experiences of and attitudes towards the eleven-plus (selection test for grammar school)

Themes to be explored:

- The eleven-plus (this test was administered as the norm in primary schools in Northern Ireland as standard practice until 2009)
  - Advantages
  - Disadvantages
  - Tutoring by way of preparation
  - Labelling of children

Discussion around whether students view the eleven-plus as socially divisive or an engine for social mobility

Transition:

Vignettes: One vignette will be used with each focus group and should encourage student teachers to talk 'around' the particular scenario and provide insight into their views and attitudes (see attached).

In-depth discussion:

- Student teachers' experiences of and attitudes towards selection in the broader sense (streaming and setting as well as testing pre-secondary school).
  - Teacher expectations of pupils in different school contexts – 'leafy suburbs' vs 'socially deprived areas'
  - Encourage students to discuss their experience of children from different social backgrounds in schools – what is the ideal pupil? Get students in groups to come up with a 'profile'.
  - Discuss barriers to learning children may face. Again encourage students to work with others to consider factors that may lead certain children to underachieve

Themes to be explored:

- What experience students have had of teaching children from different social backgrounds?
- How teachers determine if children are underachieving – what criteria do they use?
- Strategies to encourage children to engage and do their best.

Conclusion

How aware are the participants of pupils' social class and do they consider this as an advantage/disadvantage to their learning.

Ask them to be aware of good practices in school or to note occasions where children are underachieving and to think carefully about the causes.

### **Vignette 1: 'Mainly Roughs and Toughs'**

Louise Gazeley developed a variety of material for Multiverse on diversity and achievement in education between 2005-2009. She is now working in the University of Sussex and when contacted, she readily agreed to me using Multiverse material asking only that I referenced it fully. This material draws on the work of Professor Diane Reay <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20101021152907/http://www.multiverse.ac.uk/ViewArticle2.aspx?anchorId=17844&selectedId=356&ContentId=10922>

Focus group participants will be asked to read the following excerpt. This should encourage student teachers to talk 'around' the issues raised by this scenario so providing insight into their views and attitudes. This would lead to a discussion of what students might consider to the attributes of an 'ideal' pupil.

#### Educational Experiences of Working Class Pupils – Case Studies

'Mainly Roughs and Toughs' Adapted from Reay, D. (2004) 'Mostly Roughs and Toughs': Social class, race and representation in inner city schooling. *Sociology*, Vol.35(5), pp. 1005-1023.

##### 1. Take 10 minutes to read the following excerpt

Shaun and Lindsey had attended the same primary school. Lindsey got to choose the secondary school she goes to. For Shaun, Sutton Boys is his "last, last choice after Nelson Mandela, Chiltern and Welland Boys because everyone says it's full of tramps".

Processes of negative labelling are generated through representations in which the few come to stand for the many (poor examples come to represent large numbers). The prevailing representation of the schools these children move on to is that they are overwhelmed with bullying, gang warfare and ill-disciplined, disruptive pupils. Yet, as the children's texts illustrate, their actual experience of attending such schools is far more multi-faceted, stressing difference rather than sameness.

Shaun in particular demonstrates both an overwhelming desire to be good and the difficulty of 'keeping good'. He said "you get so tired by it, you get knackered by it, being good". Maintaining respectability, clinging to the rock of decent poverty when all around him pupils were 'sinking' in the mire of disreputable disruption, exacted heavy costs:

I still really enjoy school but I don't like the way the class is. I would like some of the people I've got in my class now not to be in my class cos they muck around. Even Jay, he's my friend, but I don't want him in my class.

But even though it is difficult to triumph over 'the rough and the tough', Shaun is able to assert:

It's been easier than I thought because I have my friends and my mum and my teachers helping me through. Everyone said the teachers here were rubbish but it's not true. We've got lots of good teachers, they just can't get enough of them.

Shaun has his own analysis of why other pupils 'muck about':

They can't do the work, that's mostly why they muck around. We need more teachers to help them. Also with Jay he reckons he's going to be big if he shows off but you're not big at all you are just small. There's a lot of kids like that - little trying to be big.

Shaun also thinks the teachers make too many allowances for badly behaved pupils:

Sometimes they try to be too fair. When the kids shout they should just yell and tell them to shut up.

However, for him the worst thing about the school is not the other pupils but the supply teachers:

We've had lots of different teachers in science and French. French is worst. We've had five teachers in one term and when a new one comes whatever you've learnt before they teach us again. And sometimes they will go too far and we ain't even on the first step so it's very confusing.

Unsurprisingly, by the third interview Shaun is protesting how much he hates French. Yet, despite his criticisms he feels he is doing 'twice as much work as he did in primary school', and asserts passionately in my last interview with him:

Sutton Boys is a good school. I didn't know it when I came here but I do now. The teachers really care and they try and teach you loads of stuff.

However, while Shaun has had to cope with the disruption caused by a stream of supply teachers, Lindsey in Phoenix has had to deal with three Head teachers in her first year. At the end of the summer term she commented wryly:

This new principal says the school's gonna evolve from what it is now. You know everything is gonna get better, change for the better. He's the third principal who's said that. It's been kind of difficult them changing because when I first came it was like the new school with him as principal. He was our new principal, kind of special and then we got a new principal, but now we've got a different principal and it's hard to change the picture because he's not the one you're expecting.

In contrast to the dominant representations of these inner city schools which reduce the student body down into 'a common mass of rubbish' (Douglas 1966). Lindsey's focus, like Jordan's, is on difference. She tells me her class is 'a wide range of mixed people, like loud, shy, confident, unconfident, quiet but mostly loud'. It is her emphasis on difference that allows her a strategy of following her own, rather than others' leads:

Everyone's different so I just stick to my own behaviour because I don't like to copy other people's behaviour if they are too loud or a bit too quiet. Best to be just me.

When I asked Lindsey to describe the average child at Phoenix she not only resisted my attempts to impose uniformity but also began to criticise the category of 'rough':

Diane: So how would you describe the average child in your school?

Lindsey: A mixture of a lot of things, a bit loud but sometimes a bit quiet and successful, maybe, I hope.

Diane: Do you remember Jordan saying it had lots of rough kids?

Lindsey: Yes, but I don't think that's right because I'm not from a very good background because around my area there's always police up there and there's lots of violence and drugs but we've got a nice flat. We live in a block of flats that's very unhygienic and scruffy but inside we've got a nice flat so you can't say rough just from the outside.

What Lindsey demonstrates is that to judge a school by superficial appearances is to overlook the complex diversity that characterises schools in areas with a multiplicity of ethnicities and myriad gradations of poverty and affluence jostling side by side. As Lindsey, but also Jordan, makes clear the result are complex differences and differentiations not 'shit heaps' and 'rubbish dumps'.

Both children are attempting to challenge dominant views of working class inner city schooling. At the same time there is no getting away from the consequences, both psychic and material of being positioned at the bottom of the secondary schools market. While we can see in their narratives a

making good of what is often depicted as uniformly bad, these children are still the losers in the educational game.

Activity: Supply the following table and use this to promote a discussion around what student teachers might consider as an 'ideal' pupil.

Please use the terms outlined in the following boxes to begin a discussion of the attributes of an 'ideal' pupil.

Sensible	Listens	Polite
Follower	Attentive	Shy
Rude	Concentrates	Lively
Aggressive	Active	Confident
Anxious	Well-behaved	Fits in
Industrious	Assertive	Unassertive
Enquiring	Plodding	Unquestioning
Calm	Follower	Quiet
Passive	Imaginative	Rebel
Talented	Unruly	Conformist
Uninterested	Time wasting	Leader
Clever	Lacks ability	Boisterous
Seeks attention	Dependent	Humourous
Independent	Works quickly	Innovative

**Vignette 2: 'Addressing working class underachievement'**

This material was developed by Louise Gazeley for Multiverse in 2007. She is now working in the University of Sussex and when contacted, she readily agreed to me using this material asking only that I referenced it fully.

Gazeley, L. (2006) *An introduction to social class and educational (dis)advantage*,  
<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20101021152907/http://www.multiverse.ac.uk/view/article2.aspx?contentId=13616> (accessed 19 September, 2016).

*The following extracts are taken from pupil interviews and student teacher projects written after carrying out interviews with pupils and teachers for the Multiverse project: 'Addressing working class underachievement'*

**Activity One:**

Students in pairs will be assigned three of the six extracts reproduced below to read and will be asked to highlight all the barriers to learning identified (in their extracts) which a teacher could address in his/her practice.

1. More consideration should be given to the family circumstances in which children must cope and also the things that make it easier for them to learn more effectively. This could be achieved by researching pupil data and pastoral information on a more regular basis and asking pupils to comment on teaching methods and learning strategies more regularly, to develop an environment that is as closely suited to their needs as practicably as we can. (*Student teacher 1*)

2. I like PE lessons, sports facilities, friends, PE and DTRM, I am good at the Higher Level. A couple of friends help to calm me down a bit. My parents both help - tell me to calm down and help explain homework. Homework is a bit too hard and too much. I like doing stuff like practicals in Science or acting stuff out helps - anything that's not writing because I just don't get it in to my head. Being aware of levels helps, because I want to get them higher and I want to reach them. When teachers have a go at me and make me all upset - I can't be bothered to do anything after that. And other pupils in the class messing about. At the end of Year 11, I'll go back to college for another year for more building construction, then get an apprenticeship. By 21 I'll be a builder earning a living instead of sitting in 'Tesco's'. (*Pupil 6. Working-class*)

3. However, one very clear message from all the pupils interviewed is that they are somewhat alienated by traditional academic teaching styles involving board work, textbooks etc (ie they find it 'boring' or not 'fun'). It would then seem likely that, depending on the 'attitude' factor this boredom will result at least in reduced attention and achievement, and possibly in deteriorating and more challenging behaviour. It is worth noting that the modern textbooks used by this class attempt to address this with attractive layouts, and supposedly realistic problems demonstrated in a very laborious step by step approach. However, the long and wordy explanations involved in minimising the mathematical difficulties do not seem to have made the books popular ... It would seem to mean developing strategies and resources that are visual, aural and kinaesthetic. Furthermore, variety of teaching methods is clearly crucial to attract and sustain the pupils' interest. Tasks such as working in pairs to create posters in bright colours that display the mathematical information they need to understand and remember, and the use of these posters for decorating the class room, might prove more successful than trying to get them to work through exercise 12.2 questions 1 - 8. It is also clear that many have very low self esteem with regard to their academic abilities, so the frequent use of praise whenever it can be justified, will have a positive effect on their motivation. (*Student teacher 2*)

4. I enjoy break and Art because I don't have to do anything. Homework is stupid. You do work at school. I don't see why you have to do more. Maths is a barrier. I try to learn but she shouts at me a lot when I don't understand. (*Pupil 7. Working-class*)

5. Whilst there are obvious limitations to a research project of this scale, operating within such stringent time parameters, it would certainly seem that evidence gathered for this study does seem to support the view that working-class children do under-achieve by the end of Key Stage 3, but that there are numerous reasons why this should be the case. Firstly, there seems to be a distinct lack of support in their home lives which, in turn, impacts on their attitude to both schoolwork and homework. Secondly, the teacher's expectations of the pupil may determine how they behave, like a self-fulfilling prophecy. Thirdly, these expectations are indicative that the teacher assumes a different set of cultural values which do not reflect the values or abilities of the pupil. Fourthly, that setting, or streaming, of pupils may be counter-productive due to its divisive nature and negative effect on self-esteem. Finally, we must endeavour to establish strong inter-departmental strategies for addressing the needs of these pupils as soon as they come into secondary school, so that they can be reinforced at every level in all subject areas.

(*Student teacher 3*)

6. I used to be in a youth club nearby but it was shut down. Homework sucks. We spend enough time at school. I'm not good at anything except tech. I do better designs than other people. I'm in bottom groups in most subjects. If you don't get on with the teachers then you don't want to do the work, and you get blamed for stuff you didn't do. When they do shout at you, you like go on strike because they have annoyed you and you don't want to do any work. The ideal teacher won't threaten you with detentions because it doesn't work. If you don't have an education then we wouldn't be able to do anything. But you don't need most of the subjects like RE and History. Maths and Science should be compulsory and so should PE so you don't get fat. When there are smaller classes we don't play up so much. It's usually one person who spoils the class.

(*Pupil 8. Working-class*)

**Activity two:** This will be done as a group activity allowing discussion and debate about the above extracts

Look at the barriers to learning which you have identified above and list five which you feel it is particularly important to address:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

***Themes for discussion in interviews.***

Exploring the issues raised in the focus group in greater depth:

1 Student's personal experiences and attitudes towards academic selection in their own education

- Family expectations
- Preparation for tests
- How did you feel about doing the tests? (nervous, pressured, excited, worried, well-prepared)

Discussion around post-primary education

- Was it a 'good fit' for student?
- Consider ability – challenging academic environment or not
- Choice of extra-curricular activities available
- Friendship groups – people 'like me'
- Type of curriculum/subjects on offer

The current Northern Ireland assembly have reintroduced preparation for testing into the primary school curriculum – seek student teacher's views

2. Student teacher's experience of selection (setting or streaming) during school experiences

- Probe student teachers' views on streaming
- Consider impact of pupils' home background on place within stream or group
- Consider factors that may impact on teacher judgement

Get student teacher to consider their conception on an 'ideal' pupil

3. Student perceptions of factors that lead to pupil underachievement.

- Perceived barriers to learning in school.
- Perception of connections between (dis)advantage and educational achievement
- Have experiences in schools changed student teacher's views on the reasons why pupils may underachieve?

**Appendix C: Rules for Formatting Transcriptions**

- Each focus groups or interview will be transcribed verbatim to a separate text document.
- the filename on the audio-recording will be used for the word document.
- 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 drive.
- hard copies of transcripts will be held in lockable boxfile.
- all references to the participant's name will be replaced in the transcript by a pseudonym and all possible means of identification of towns, schools, teachers or other persons will be removed if considered sensitive or breach confidentiality.
- silences, pauses, non-verbal sounds, emotions, facial expressions will be indicated using brackets, for example (laughs).
- overlapping speech and unfinished sentences will be indicated using ellipses i.e....
- any interventions where the researcher speaks will be bracketed thus: [ ] in order that it be differentiated from the participant's speech.
- all data, audio-recording, word documents and hard copies will be destroyed when this project is finished.

## Appendix D: Sample Transcript

C: Thank you for coming in – I suppose what I am trying to do is get more details on your perceptions and while we focused on the eleven-plus last time, I’m trying to get a broader sense of the theme of selection (at all levels) and social class across the board. What class group were you with this year on School Experience in your placement school?

A: P4

C: P4 and I am wondering if even at that level you could see processes of selection – ‘that child’s bright, let’s push them forward’ ...

A: Yeah, mmhmm

C: We see it in the obvious things like exams but do you think that it’s happening across the board?

A: Yes...

C: I suppose to get us into this conversation can you tell me about your own personal experiences and attitudes towards academic selection in your education

A: Like mine, what I did?

C: Yes, so what’s your academic history?

A: My personal experience? Mmm, I failed my eleven-plus like, I got a D, and I didn’t even know what eleven-plus was, my family wasn’t like, ‘If you get this you’ll be smart and if you don’t get this... there’s no hope’. They were just like ‘She’ll do the exam’ and then ... because I was one of the top, like, in my primary school class ...

C: I was going to ask you- were you considered ‘bright’ at primary school?

A: Yes I was considered bright – so I did it ... And then I went to St. Peter’s, so I loved that wee school and it did wonders for me ... and then I got all As in my GCSEs and A\*s and the same in my A levels - and they were like ‘Whoaaw!’ [smiling] And I think it was the school seeing the potential in me and they were sitting, pushing me harder – do you know what I mean?

C: Do you think in primary school, did you feel bright in primary school? As a child...

A: I don’t know actually, it’s not something I would focus on because I was always into my sport you see, so I was just like you have to be good at sport – never like I have to be good at school. But like that came along...

C: And did you find that school – it was just something you did naturally you just got on with it?

A: Yes – I just got on with it...

C: And do you remember preparing for the selection tests?

A: No, everybody else was doing past paper questions and all at home and stuff but like, I think like, my mummy and daddy were just like ‘Sure, if you get it you get it...’ and I remember the first one, there were two parts weren’t there? And the first part was on my birthday – I just remember that – it’s my birthday today [excited voice], I didn’t really care about the test- I didn’t even know what it was – like what’s going on... but, I don’t know....

C: I remember as a child the fuss of all the posters in your classroom being covered and things like that, and we had a teacher who made you rote learn everything off- there wasn't much preparation done at home, but I'm from a different generation...

A: There were 4 wee girls in my class did it, me, Suzanne, Eimear and Carla did it and then we all got Ds if you get me, so wasn't like...

C: And how many boys did it?

A: I only remember Matthew doing it – his dad was a teacher so ... he got a B1 I think it was and he went to Bellshill... or somewhere like that

C: So what you're actually telling me is that it didn't feature that much in your school ... or on your radar.

A: Yes

C: What sport were you into?

A: Everything, Gaelic, soccer – I did Sport Science before I came here – and then dropped out [laughs]

C: As you went on and you went to St. Peter's and you did your GCSEs and got all As, did you ... did it matter to you that you were smart or was it just something that you did – were you a studier, were you focussed?

A: I don't think that it really mattered to me growing up....[thinks] I studied for my GCSEs and stuff really hard, but I didn't expect to get all As – I remember the night before thinking if I get a few Bs and a couple of Cs that'd be grand – and when I opened it I was like [shocked face] – my principal obviously looked at it before I'd seen it and then I opened it, and she was sitting watching me, and I was wondering what's she watching me for? D'you know what I mean? And I'd come down late and everything – I was just like [shrugs as if with resignation] everybody was there at 9 in the morning and I was just like I'll just go whenever...

C: In post-primary school – in St. Peter's – was there a sense of 'You're good Aoife, come on do a bit more work', or were you just going with the flow?

A: No, just going with the flow, I think... yes. Our classes were streamed at the same time so – it spelt St. Peter's – and like, S was the top class and everybody knew that R was the bottom class, it was so sad like, and then they were a lot of badly behaved people in the two lower classes – do you know what I mean? And they were in the unit – they were badly behaved...

C: But I take it that you were always in the S/T classes? Always a wee saint?

A: Yes I was always a wee saint [ giggles]

C: Do you think in school – one of the things in my head to explore with you are family expectations – so you're family were with you – just do what you can do and that's absolutely fine?

A: Yes

C: Great... and you've very much said to me when doing tests (nervous, pressured, excited, worried) that you just worked hard for them and went in and did them?

A: Yes, there was no stress or nothing – like a lot of people stressed – even this year a lot of people stress. I remember sitting in Shane's workshop and I'm sitting listening to music and Shane was like, 'Aoife, look around you and they're all sitting there studying' and I was 'Yea, I don't know what to do yet'.

C: And it's incredible the amount of pressure they put themselves under – I think that's something that you're brought up with – being pushed or not being pushed... and even if you remember back to the focus group, and I sat and listened over the last couple of nights and I was thinking that it became clear that certain people worried and it would be better if they just went and did the best they can – and I don't think we appreciate how much that gets into their psyche. You then went on having done really well at your GCSEs, and ...what did you do for A-levels?

A: I did Art, PE and Health and Social Care and then I ... and that's why I dropped out of sport too - someone got it into their head that 'Aoife, you should do medicine', so I went back and did Biology and Chemistry- that's what I was going to do and then go into medicine and then I was 'this doesn't suit my personality' – I'd just kind of be taking on board what other people were saying was good for me, and I was like...[shaking her head indicating not for her]

C: That's really interesting, was a teacher or someone else who said about the medicine?

A: I think it was my art teacher – yes it was...

C: So the school clearly saw – here's somebody with a lot of potential? I suppose so... Did you go back and do your A-levels in St. Peter's?

A: I applied for Bellshill, because I was going to the Chemistry and Biology and that way, and then they were oversubscribed – and I was like, no sweat! And then I just stayed in St. Peter's

C: And did you go down the Chemistry/Biology line for a while?

A: Yes, I was in Belfast Tech and then I didn't – I went up until Christmas, and it actually stressed me out a wee bit because I didn't..... that's not what I wanted to do – and that's the only time in my life I remember being stressed and I remember being like 'I can't do this, I don't want to do this'....

C: That's fascinating – what you're telling me is that you'd got onto a path that suited you and then when you tried to come off it...

A: (interrupting) Yes! I know! That's what other people were saying, you've good grades you should be doing this and I was like OK

C: And then you went back to the subjects that....

A: Yes, the ones I liked

C: So after your A-levels you went and did Sports Science?

A: Yes I did it for a whole year and then I mmm – I wasn't taken seriously because I was a girl, if you get me, I didn't like that

C: Where were you doing it?

A: Jordanstown, so it was more the boys were taken seriously and I realised that this wasn't what I want a job in if I'm not going to be taken seriously, do you know what I mean -and I was going to do a PGCE at the end of it, if you get me, and be a PE teacher, but I couldn't go through 3 years of not being taken seriously – that can have an impact on you.

C: So it was on the back of that you used your Art and applied here?

A: Yes, and it was the night before and I didn't even know what I wanted to do and I realised that it was the deadline tomorrow, because I did my work experience in the Art department – that was the only reason I knew about here – and I forgot all about it when I was doing UCAS and all because

our school just focused on UCAS not on other options and it was the night before and I applied and just wrote then and there.

C: Did you ever think about applying across the water or to different places?

A: No, I did apply to go to Liverpool to do Sport ....

C: Do you think there was good careers advice available within the school?

A: Ach, yea, we had a ... it was Ms X, we had a meeting every so often and someone else from outside the school came in and asked about your background and stuff and what you're interested in so they weren't just seeing you in school, because a teacher they know who you are and they are kind of have a perception of who you should be, I think that's why they did that

C: I'm interested particularly in St. Peter's; did they encourage you to think beyond Northern Ireland? And that's me being concerned – there are certain schools will push pupils to go and really stretch themselves and others that if you get to university that's great

A: Yes they did –

C: I'm delighted, that even though it didn't suit you someone said to you – Aoife, you can do anything that you want ...

A: Yes – all my friends in my year group all went to Liverpool, Manchester you know those sorts of places

C: A lot of focus on sport then?

A: Yes, well all my friends would have been doing sport

C: So St Peter's was a good 'fit' for you?

A: Yes I loved it

C: Was it a challenging academic environment? I was thinking about this question for pupils going to grammar schools , but you were talking there about the kids that were in the behaviour unit, was it important in school – and you fitted in and you loved it – did others take it seriously or was it just a case of putting your time in until you can escape?

A: No, anyone that went to my school loved it, do you know what I mean? We all loved school – there was more focus on subjects like drama and Art and PE – the non academic subjects – but we all loved it and all got good grades at the end of it and we're all doing something we enjoy – a lot of them went to Magee to do Drama .... They did push you but pushed you into things you were interested in and because the school didn't have many subjects to select from they did that collaboration thing with mmm Dunmurry and Millside – that's where I did my Art – I was the only one who picked Art in my whole year group and I went over there- I wouldn't have been able to do that ...

C: Was it strange to move to a different school? Did you walk in the door and feel welcome or was it a different culture?

A: Mmm we were welcomed, but I didn't really like that school – we went every Tuesday and Thursday and I felt like it was a big ...it drained you, the teachers weren't the same as our teachers – I thought they weren't as welcoming and they were very strict – they told me you need one of these pages done a week – and that's not how I work – do you know what I mean? So I went from this environment with the teachers knowing that I could do the work to these un's telling me, we need one a week – but Art's different, you need to like have like inspiration at the same time, and

they were just – there were two of them and they were just.... they were nice people but they weren't my type of people.. There's a different culture...

C: Yes, and maybe they were saying, to get through this you need to be completing one a week ... Changing the subject, what about friendship groups in school – you were very involved with ones that were doing sport and that, I take it they were from your local area?

A: Yea, cause everyone from that school was from the common area – in my year, I don't think anyone was from anywhere else

C: And was Art the only one you had to go to a different school?

A: Yes, I went to St Peter's for the others

C: And did anyone come into your school for PE or anything like that?

A: Yes there were 2 came into our PE class from Millside, and there was a whole load – 4 I think – that came into our Health and Social Care class, and I think there was a few on other classes.

C: And did that work?

A: Yes it did, I'm still good friends with the ones that came over – on Facebook and stuff and talk away to them

C: And can I ask you, I'm interested in how people relate to others from different - really to do with diversity ... one of the things I want to do with student teachers at this stage is to encourage them to challenge their preconceived notions – and if you're talking about Dunmurry, Millside, we are talking about different cultures and backgrounds... Those links haven't been tenuous – you've still kept them up all be it through social media [Aoife affirms and nods in agreement] because the same could probably be said about those who you were v friendly with in school because you lose contact as you get older...

A: Yes, that's true

C: On the back of that – that was your educational background – what is your own educational philosophy? Have you given it any thought? What are your beliefs and values about children in schools?

A: See I want to work in a... I'm doing the module next year on Social Disadvantage – I want to work in a school like that, I just want... I don't know – if each kid learns something and feels like they have a wee bit of potential in themselves and they see that I see that potential in them – and they know that they are valued and happy – I think that's important... and you're not stressing them out with like – 'Oh no, you got three wrong...' they see the three wrong and not the seven right...

C: Do you think you are 'normal' – is that the sort of standard view that many students would have? I know that's a blunt question...

A: Mmmm

C: As in do you think many students in this college would believe that?

A: (Affirmative nod) I don't know – I think that at the moment lots of students just focus on the file and their grades and it needs this that and the other and they forget to look at the kids in the class

C: So what you're saying is that you are about the children and-putting them first?

A: Yes

C: OK, the NI assembly have reintroduced preparation for testing within the primary school curriculum - it's ok to prepare them for the eleven-plus - so in many ways we've walked away from it but we're still saying we are going to select children at 11 – do you have any views on that?

A: Yes, I don't think – see ability grouping as well, I don't know if I believe in it

C: Go on explain that to me

A: 'Cos like, so, initially when children come into school, schools like a middle-class value system and norms, so like the children that show these norms and values, attitudes and behaviour and oral language, they're seen as the ones that have more ability. Whereas the ones that haven't had the same opportunities at home, they're put in the lower groups and the teacher differentiates based on this like, initial opinion – and this makes this 'gap' get bigger and bigger between the two classes. And I just don't think...I don't know – I don't know that I believe in that and by the time that they do get to 11 years old, these ones believe they can do it and the ones that were kind of like left behind – they're just ...well they haven't been selected to do the eleven-plus – like 'I'm not smart'. Even my wee niece, she's only P4 at the moment she is aware of the groups in her class and anytime I'm doing her homework with her she is 'I'm in the Triangles – we're the middle group' and I tell her Eva, you can move up into the Squares – and she doesn't know that, I don't think the teacher's has said you can move up and down groups – she just thinks she is stuck in this group because that is the way it has been ...

C: Do you think that label sticks with a child? She think that as she's in the middle – it's nearly capping her vision of herself?

A: [nodding her head] Yes, she is all like, 'This is all I'll be', and I'm asking her 'Why is your handwriting not the best?' and she'll say 'But I'm only a Triangle!'

C: So she has automatically limited herself because that's the way that her teacher perceives her? Well that's the impression that you're getting?

A: Yes, initially in P1 that happened and then it follows through and through until it actually is like a self-fulfilling prophecy- and the label sticks and they start to react

C: Have you seen that working out in schools at all?

A: From the whole time that we've been teaching?

C: In your different experiences - Hill St., Blessed Trinity, St. Aidan's...

A: St. Aidan's was like two groups – everybody was – there was only 19 in my class so everybody was at the same level apart from two EAL students – so they needed a bit more help... everybody in that class seemed to be the same level so the teacher, I don't think he put them in ability groups, he gave everybody the same work but told me 'This one will finish this', it got harder as it went on, so everybody saw they had the same work but some didn't really finish it – but even at that, if you don't finish our work you probably don't feel like you've achieved anything but ...

C: But at the same time, at least you had the opportunity if you decide that you will try your best to do it?

A: Yes and there was a wee boy, he was EAL, and his English was good and I remember that I was encouraging him and at the start he wasn't completing his worksheets and by the end of placement – I was only there for 4 weeks – he was starting to write more – even though some of it didn't make sense, he was trying – do you know what I mean?

C: Were you partly responsible for that or was that a child who just wanted to do well?

A: I don't know

C: I'm wondering with you being in the classroom and that extra attention that children can get – did he just take a shine to you and there was another person to help?

A: Could have been something like that- maybe it was because there was a male teacher in the class and women teacher can be more ... warmer? Maybe he wanted to impress me or something ...

C: Sometimes kids just want somebody to believe in them and all we have to do is smile at them and they all of a sudden want to please you... In Blessed Trinity this year how many did you have n the class?

A: 28 – 17 boys and 11 girls

C: Any EAL?

A: Yes there was one wee lad and he didn't speak any English at all – it was so funny, it used to be like a wee mime – I loved him – he could only say toilet and water and stuff – I felt so sorry for him, but at the start it was like the teacher didn't know how to differentiate with him and I tried to and found I was setting things to hard... So it was getting the iPad out and working on key words trying to teach him English – keywords and images and so on

C: You were talking about wee ones when they go to school, the very fact that their language skills aren't developed means that we are automatically streaming them somehow or other and it's difficult to manage that

A: Yes and he was really good at Maths

C: And was he relieved because he was so good at Maths?

A: Yes cause he could achieve – he used to just say off his timetables – I'd say brilliant – everybody, come on hear Antoni say his timetables – he used to love that

C: Yes, it's the affirmation that he can't get anywhere else

A: Yes, like this is what I'm good at...

C: But the other thing is that you gave him an opportunity to be good at it [Ah yeah!] So within that class, you talked about your niece and the Triangles and the Squares, within the P4 class this year were they grouped academically?

A: Yes and there was red, amber, green – red was the lower group, green was the top group and amber the middle group – it was just worked out like that

C: Do you think that potentially stopped some children trying harder?

A: There was a wee girl Isla, and she was in the red group and she was one of the lower ones in that group so she always had different work and the classroom assistant was always helping her and sometimes I heard the others saying to her 'Your work's so easy, you're so stupid!', and sometimes I would have to stop them – I think that had an impact on her – she was like, 'This is hard for me and you're saying its easy, so I obviously am stupid ...' so I think at the same time she wanted to learn but if she is seeing that this is really hard for her and someone else thinks it's easy that she's like, not even going to try – she thinks she's never going to get it ...

C: Did you have any idea of the parental support that was coming to the school? Were parents encouraging their children – did you get a sense that they valued education – or was it a mixed bag?

A:Mmm, it would have been very mixed, there was some children in the class, you could tell their parents were always up at the school collecting them and stuff and then there was one wee boy got picked up by his carer – an after-schools club carer – and he was the one who was on report for his behaviour... And I think there was a lack of communication between – even though they had the report card – the parents would sign it, but well he just left it in school. Yes, there would have been some of the kids, I know that the wee lad who didn't speak any English the teacher was telling me that she has told the mummy – she has fluent English – can she speak English with him at home? But anytime she picked him up from school she was speaking Romanian with him – you don't really know if she understands this education system. I think the teacher said this was his first year in education in general and I don't think the parents knew that it was important – probably coming from a different culture.

C: What about the teachers (and I know this may be a provocative question) that you worked with, were they generally positive about the children or at times did you find there was an element of parents don't care – why bother?

A: Mmmm, my first year placement teacher was brilliant – P1 and it was in a socially disadvantaged area and she was always encouraging the parents – constantly saying I'll need to say to the parents about this – one of the wee lads, his mummy just had a baby so she was saying that's probably why he's acting like this that and the other and then she would be checking with him 'How's it at home?' - very aware and she would have spoken to the parents. Or if she noticed something wrong with one of the kids – she was really passionate – I really loved her- it was just a good first placement

C: And she really valued those children?

A: Yes she really did and really cared about them as well – there were some days she wanted to cry ... she was lovely

C: Did you have the same experiences in second and third year?

A: Three completely different placements – all different types of teachers, last year being the male teacher, he was more 'You have to be more authoritative' he made me be strict – I didn't really ... there's like a line, you can be strict, and mmm, I thought he was quite intimidating, but he was a good teacher – that's just the way he was... And this year the teacher was different – she didn't really encourage me as much – I thought I was doing really ('crap') badly until Mary came out to see me and Mary was like, 'No you're doing really well!' and I was 'Thank God' because I wasn't getting much from the teacher – I was asking her for feedback but she was 'No, it's grand' – nothing on what was grand or anything – I kept asking her – all my other placement teachers didn't sit in the classroom- she sat there and sometimes interrupted my lessons – and I was like, does she not see me as a good teacher or something? Do you know what I mean – you start to think about things like that, but when Mary came out I was like 'Thank God' – I'd just kept asking for her opinion anyway and she'd be 'No, just keep going' .

C: But there was no sense of that's good or that's bad or you could do this differently? Which is strange as it's like a neutral wall and you don't know where you are at. With the children, did you have a sense that she was invested in them, did she have favourites?

A: Don't know if there were favourites... She always picked certain people to do certain roles, I remember when I was getting a visit she said 'These are your four group leaders' picking out the four brightest – 'they've got good leadership skills', and I thought that'll do, because that's easy for me and it will look good because they're all being led but the I was thinking when I did my Education presentation about the self-fulfilling prophecy- I'd picked the four children who had good leadership skills...they were other children in that class that needed to grow and they should have had that opportunity to grow

C: The next question I had was linking with BEd3 inequality lectures... On reflection now after your placement ... tell me a little about what you did about self-fulfilling prophecy?

A: We did the achievement gap between middle class and working class and how it is just about the norms and values that are accepted by the education system and just because somebody has a high... fluent oral language doesn't mean that they have more potential than these children who haven't had the same opportunities, cause they can still think the same they're just expressing it in different ways

C: And that is what I am trying to get at – are those children given the same opportunities and on reflection on what you did in school – do you think that there is that sense of children from different social backgrounds, classes, are treated differently?

A: Yes, But I don't think it's on purpose – I think it depends on the teacher and you do it without realising sometimes

C: And that is my concern... unless we start to say you're going to do this without realising – it's this idea of masking – we're not even aware of it ourselves. I think I said in the focus group that I thought the Northern Ireland education system was fair and then the more I thought about it... and you're the exception in many ways because the majority of students here have come through grammar schools. They're going out, they're teaching – they choose to teach in schools that are 'easier' – you know those in the same year as you coming to pick their school choices, how do they work it out? How do they decide what school they want to go to?

A: Yes, I'll go to this one rather than that one... I picked schools because they're in my area and they're close to me, I wouldn't have chosen to go to St. Celsus' [an affluent school] - it wouldn't challenge me ...

C: My concern is that so many student teachers don't want to be challenged – they don't want to move out of their comfort zones is a better way of putting it – and you've said it – St. Celsus would be too straight forward, many of them are saying, going to a school in Limestone [highly disadvantaged area]- oh I don't know – it's a fear of the unknown... Back to your experiences in schools – the schools you've been to are in challenging areas, there have been different perceptions from the teachers – you've said about your P1 teacher being passionate and really wanting the children to do well and feel comfortable in school, you talked about the authoritarian nature of the KS2 teacher – good role model and a disciplinarian, and then this other teacher who selected the children who were going to do well so that you are shown in a good light – doing it for the best interests – but do you think that you have a good understanding of unseen barriers to children's learning in school?

A: Well all the kids are different, like EAL the barrier is communication they don't understand what you're saying they're obviously not going to be able to do the work that'll make them progress – it could be like our education system as well – it's a memory test – everything's about memory... That's what I want to do my capstone on... It's called the persistence of memory – Dali... how clocks don't have any authority in the painting cos they're melting away, it's about how Art has no authority in schools cause it's non-academic and it's just a memory game- if you can memorise something ...

C: What do you mean Art has no authority in schools?

A: Mmmm, it's a non-academic, that's how it is seen

C: Is that a good thing or a bad thing?

A: Well like the stigma, in our education system it's not a good thing because it's all about academia and your grades and can you memorise that? Even when I was doing Art in school, everyone was 'That's not a real subject' – even Music as well, people look at it and that, not a real subject – like Science – there's more emphasis on certain subjects and if you're good at those you're smarter but if you're good at the other ones you're 'talented' ...so it's like a memory game

C: Why are you saying it's like a memory game? And I think that I know what you mean but I want to be sure ...

A: Well, they give you things and you don't really have to understand them you just have to write it down and remember it – like some schools I've heard were given.. my friends went to a grammar school and they were given an essay and it was memorise that, write it down in your exam and you'll get a good grade - I was never given anything like that – I had to go and get it all myself

C: So much of this is exam focused?

A: Yes it's more about the grades at the end of the day, even in primary school when you get a certain level it's – they'll be doing the transfer/they won't – do you know what I mean? And what are you going to do, give them more time? It's like the Pygmalion effect – they picked random kids and said these ones had more potential and when they retested them and they actually did better – so it's the teacher seeing certain things in certain children ...[laughs]

C: I agree – one of the things that has been shown here is that there is a Grammar school effect – same kids/same social background two schools – those in grammar do better because there's a perception of grammar school are better ... Art and Music are not important in curriculum – was that your experience in school?

A: Yes I had all these creative ideas for school but the teacher wouldn't let me teach them – her focus was on literacy and numeracy

C: For you as a developing teacher, what did you think?

A: It was so boring – I was bored! And the kids were bored as well – I think I was bored because the kids were bored – do you know the way you bounce off each other? If they're having fun you have fun as well. I do youth work up in Glenview [deprived area] and last night we played games with 14-18 year olds, and when they're having fun you do too and they're motivated to come back again... When you're in school...Ahhh... have to do this it's numeracy again, you need to integrate it in, make it more active... and teachers write it into their planners that they did them when they didn't

C: Another thing that worries me is that we're saying that Literacy and Numeracy are so important and nothing else matters – in many ways that was what you were saying about St. Peter's that they saw value in the other subjects – art and music and drama – and children love doing those other things. And what were actually saying is we don't have time for those- and if we don't have time for them in primary schools we are really in trouble. You've recognised the link between disadvantage and education achievement – that's been this whole conversation – have your experiences in schools changed your views on reasons why pupils may underachieve?

A: Even those who are good at subjects it can become very repetitive- lost interest – need to work on thinking skills

C: How do we make a difference, how do we make people aware?

A: Unless we start to say that what we currently do is not good enough and those children who come in who haven't had the opportunities for the music lessons and the dance lessons – cause that's where a lot of mc children are getting it – outside of school – I am passionate about us having a broad curriculum and I think that if there was real breadth in the curriculum they would achieve better across the board.

C: Your lectures in inequality in education and your recent experiences in schools – will they influence of change your practices when you get into school

A: I was talking to Deirdre and when she started teaching this year she was all that she was going to do Art all the time and do everything her way, and she said that you just don't have time because

of what is expected of you from the top and you've to tick all these boxes .... You just have to do what the higher order tells you that you need to do.

C: Do you mean school management?

A: Yes, management needs you to do certain things or you don't tick the boxes. I thought like her I would go in and teach Art this way and the other way and then no, there's just so much focus on these different things that you have to

C: And what are the different things?

A: Numeracy and Literacy and stuff – she was telling me she hasn't taught Art in ages and that was her main subject – and she was passionate about it she was going to be teaching this ...

C: Does that demoralise you?

A: Sometimes when I'm doing an Art assignment here, I wonder if there's even a point in it because when we go out to schools no one is even going to ... We were talking to the Arts coordinator and it's all three Art/Music and PE and they may know about one and not the other two – so you wonder if there is a point in it ... If I go out to school and they don't ask me to do any of this because they all – I know Mary talks about in schools how people see Art as drawing a picture at the end of the lesson – proper Art is dying away ...

C: So you remember as well your experiences in Primary school when you did Art?

A: I do actually – drawing a picture and painting. But when we got to P6, Mr Jordan, he wasn't good at Art himself, but he was always researching things we could do and we did papier-mâché. I did 6 months in St. Anthony's before coming here and the teacher told me he wasn't good at Art but he saw potential in people and he let me try it – I felt it was good as long as they're trying.

C: It's a bit like music I tell people to integrate it – that works to a certain extent and I know that classrooms are really busy but even if it's only every other Tuesday for the last hour – that's when children start to see those wee moments of light and realise they want to do that – and you just have to make the time and really try. Do you feel you have a deeper understanding of children – the way they think or what perceptions they are bringing – thinking about your EAL learners – if we start to recognise what they can do – it's that idea of teachers seeing potential in students/pupils – is that important?

A: Yes it is, but I think you need to see potential in everybody – they deserve that .In our education system even though you see potential in everybody sometimes you see potential in someone who does Art and then you see it in someone who does Science – as long as you're bringing out those potentials –like this person who does the non-academic subject is disadvantaged because the education system puts more emphasis on memory and stuff like that – so it's important yes, but ...

C: You're fairly keen to talk about this then with your capstone next year? And how will you research that?

A: I was thinking about interviewing teachers and include ones from an Art background and see what their perceptions are and what they do in their classrooms – what they think Art is- and then are Literacy and Numeracy the big thing...

C: Did you enjoy 3<sup>rd</sup> year lectures- did it make you think differently about education?

A: Yes, but it was very hard especially as I dislike reading – but it's fascinating

C: I love it that students start to really think about education. Back to you philosophy of education?

A: You shouldn't be putting anybody down even if that wee girl had something really easy and someone puts her down – even in terms of mental health – GTCNI says we should create a safe secure environment.. Those kids will feel they don't want to go to school – thinking the work I get is too easy and this person's going to say this and it'll be really embarrassing. That can lead on to anxiety and stuff – is there a higher rate of mental health at the moment?

A: I am intrigued at your approach – you're relaxed and secure in yourself- that is the way you come across, and there are so many people here worrying about getting this right and that right and it's all about grades and the bottom line is that grades are not that important – you'll end up with a 2:1 or 2:2 and you have a good chance of getting a job and you'll do well – we need to start taking the focus of that and start thinking about providing a real rounded education for children ...

A: There is more to life than being stressed out about work.

## Appendix E: Participant Profiles

### **Grace**

From a single-parent, working-class family Grace is, conscientious and committed as evidenced through her thorough application to her studies. She accepts the neoliberal discourse of ‘individualisation’ as she believes that it is her hard work that has enabled her to achieve and succeed. She attended a Grammar school and was proud of the fact that it was difficult to get into, with many more applicants than places. She was very much at home there, and appreciated being recognised by school staff, distinguished by her musical achievements and excellent academic record. She spoke of her boyfriend who had ‘only’ gone to Secondary school because he ‘*didn’t show the same ability at primary school*’. Her discussion about her boyfriend is telling. She recognises that at Grammar he probably would have been ‘*lost*’ and doing well at Secondary allowed him ‘*to work his way up*’ to Grammar where he went to study A-levels. Here we see Grace is imbued with a reproductive habitus, she is convinced by the doxa that you have to be bright and capable to go to Grammar and her language betrays her view of the two-tier system and her belief that hard work will result in success.

In discussion she explained how, in her mixed-background Nursery placement, some children were nurtured at home in language-rich environments ‘*whereas others wouldn’t have a clue*’. She explained that at this stage it was not ‘*a terribly big deal because it ... would be dealt with more in P1*’. She seems somewhat blinkered in failing to recognise the importance of early advantage for children’s readiness for learning and, despite specialising in Early Years, she does not see how this achievement gap might likely steadily grow. However, through discussions at focus group and interview and by probing her views, Grace began to recognise that perhaps the system was not always as fair as it seemed. She admitted that she had begun to think more carefully about educational issues which previously she ‘*probably would have just went along with*’ (maintaining the status quo). The education system here has worked to Grace’s advantage, and she has worked hard to achieve. She does begin to see that while ‘*it worked for me*’ it may not work equally well for others and that placing the responsibility on the individual child and her family may be more complicated than she previously believed.

I suggest that Grace has a reproductive habitus with the potential to become transformative.

### **Jenna**

Jenna went to the only ‘all-ability’ school in NI; this school has a large intake with a Grammar stream. While Jenna did not pass the eleven-plus, she was selected for some Grammar stream classes on entry to the school. In her interview, Jenna constantly compared herself to other pupils within this school, and her language was hierarchical with much talk of pupils ‘*being moved up and down between classes*’. She explained that, in her school, teachers had much higher expectations of the Grammar classes. She also told of how pupils regarded vocational subjects as ‘*easier options*’ and the pupils ‘*in the Grammar end, they sort of laughed at them*’. There appeared to be a ready acceptance in the school that ‘*if you were in the lower classes you just didn’t look to go back in sixth year*’. Many Secondary schools promote A-levels and B-Tecs with their pupils but this did not appear to be the case with this school.

While she had experienced both Secondary and Grammar placements, Jenna believes that '*there should be a choice ... I definitely do think that all systems work really well*'. It became clear in our discussion that Jenna is uncritical of the current doxa. She had been placed in a Secondary school located adjacent to a Grammar and was very aware that Secondary pupils felt inferior to their Grammar peers. These pupils asked her:

*'Miss, are you going there [Grammar] next year? You're saving the best to last?' To them the Grammar ones were posh and snooty.*

Jenna clearly has a passion to help all pupils to achieve and indeed comments that:

*... maybe just because of where they lived, or maybe their family background they weren't able to go to the Grammar school ... but they actually, if they'd been placed in there they could probably have done just as well ...*

She recognises that these pupils are as capable as those at Grammars, but does not appear to understand that they may have been disadvantaged by lack of capital – economic, social and cultural. She admits that in an ideal world there would be a better balance between family support and school, and indeed suggested that if these pupils had been tutored they probably would have got into Grammar. When I questioned the lack of resources these pupils may have had access to, Jenna responded that there were options referring to some programmes that are available on limited occasions to provide support for disadvantaged pupils. She fails to see that a disadvantaged home-background may lead to structural inequalities. Instead she seems to misrecognise this as a lack of agency on the part of the pupils to help themselves. Jenna does not appear to have considered the paradox that streaming, through academic selection, has advantaged the dominant while effectively labelling and lowering the expectations of these pupils. She does however recognise the consequences '*the fact that they thought they were second best – they stopped themselves from even trying to do well*'.

I suggest that Jenna currently accepts the doxa that stabilise the field of post-primary education in NI and that she tends towards a reproductive habitus.

### ***Finola***

Finola is a warm, lively student teacher who sees herself as having done well through education. From a working-class background, her parents prioritised education '*from day dot*', spending time with her in the evenings ensuring that homework was done well and that she had practised reading, tables and spellings. She recalls how, despite her protests, her parents got her to do practice tests during the summer holidays '*just to keep me right*'. She was very keen to do well and while she scored below expectations in the eleven-plus she was accepted into the local Grammar school saying, '*It was such a big deal to get in*'. She explained that she was one of seven in her class of 24 to get to Grammar and that she had '*really, really wanted to go*'. It became clear in discussions that she prized her Grammar experience and believed that Grammars were '*better*' than Secondary schools. In Grammar, she related that there was a strong work ethos and that her friends '*egged each other on*' to do well. This was supplemented by praise and encouragement from teachers – pupils were expected to '*Maintain highest standards*'. As a result she excelled at school and was delighted to gain a place in ITE.

Finola had a challenging but transformative experience in her second year placement in a school in one of the most deprived areas in Belfast. She explained how this made her realise that some children struggled.

*It opened my eyes ... I hadn't realised I was in my own wee bubble. I went to primary school and did well, I went to Grammar school and I did well there – how could someone not do well? I was in this bubble ... Going into that school and looking at it from a teacher's perspective has opened my eyes to underachievement – it does exist and it does need to be addressed.*

She told of children coming to school hungry, without warm coats or other basic resources, of others who were shunted between different family members but managed to get themselves into school each morning. She explained that these children were '*happy to be in school*' as teachers recognised and valued their efforts. While '*it's not the type of school I was used to*' Finola admitted she learnt so much from the teacher who had grown up in this area and was determined that the children in his class would do the best they could:

*he knew what way to talk to them and what way to motivate them and what way to get them to work, and get them to learn.*

Such experiences have clearly had an impact on Finola's outlook. She has begun to understand the challenges many children face and is beginning to recognise that these need to be addressed. When asked what her educational philosophy was, she stated that children deserved to have broad and rich curricular experiences, that teachers should have high expectations, and that '*all children need a chance to excel in their own way*'.

I suggest that as Finola has had an 'awakening of consciousness' (Bourdieu, 1990c:116), she is further along the transformative continuum than Jenna or Grace.

### ***Emma***

Emma is a privileged student who struggled at primary school and then with various subjects at Grammar. She related how her middle-class primary school, in a very affluent area, was very competitive and she believes that the '*parental pressures went through to the children*'. She has an empathy with pupils who struggle as she too had been negatively 'labelled' at school. In the bottom reading group the whole way through primary school, Emma '*knew it wasn't a good thing to be in that group...*' and her mum worked persistently with her at home to raise achievement levels. She improved considerably at Maths in school although she '*actually wasn't good at maths – it was just the teacher encouraging me to try to improve*' and it became clear during our discussions that Emma has come to appreciate that children benefit from someone believing in and encouraging them.

She appreciated that her Grammar too, was largely comprised of privileged pupils. She explains how others:

*... would say 'Oh you went to Beechlawn, you must be so smart, you must be so posh!' – there's a certain status around the school you go to and that's just another label being put on children...*

She also found the school extremely competitive and she felt that pupils were continually comparing themselves to others and being compared, and she stressed '*the pressure put on you to do well was ridiculous*'. This pressure combined with the fact that she has personally struggled – and achieved – at school, means that Emma is open to the challenges facing others. She is attuned to the fact that the counterpart of success is failure

and she is wary of condoning anyone to a second class, inferior status. This was apparent at several times during our interview. She resisted ability grouping as she suggested that '*when you put the label on them that's them in their box and maybe they can't break out of that ...*'. When asked if she thought that the eleven-plus enabled social mobility for 'bright' working-class pupils she immediately responded:

*What about the other ones, the ones that aren't going to get in? There'll be a bigger emphasis put on them not being as good – there'll be an even bigger achievement gap*

I suggest that Emma has a transformative habitus, and is alert to her privilege and to how various doxa might inhibit less advantaged pupils from achieving their potential.

### ***Derbhla***

Derbhla is a capable student self identifying as middle-class who explained her educational background concisely:

*I went to Farr primary school, I passed the eleven-plus with an A, went to Marino in Dunmore, did my A levels there and came here ...*

She enjoyed school and explained that they were well-prepared for the eleven-plus in primary, doing practice test papers every day. A small number of pupils got '*extra challenge questions*' as they finished their work while others were '*getting very frustrated they hadn't even finished*'. This meant that she was very aware of the capabilities within the class and how she compared to others. Four of the 21 pupils in her class went on to Grammar school.

Moving from a small, rural primary school to the large Grammar was '*an awful transition*' as she didn't know anyone in her class so she '*stuck to my work*'. When asked about Grammars she explains that as she went to one, she '*thought they were good*'. However, she now tutors pupils for the eleven-plus and can see that the entrance tests cause the children real anxiety. I asked what reasons parents had for having their children tutored and Derbhla responded that '*some parents more interested in education than others*' and while many quiz her on children's progress, others appear to have passed on responsibility for academic progress to her as they simply '*wait in the car*' until the children are done.

Derbhla had an experience in a school in a challenging, socially-deprived area and unlike Emma and Finola, whose experiences have made them rethink pupils' experiences, this experience appears to have reinforced her negative stereotypes of disadvantaged children. She told me that:

*the children were very uninterested and didn't want to learn, it nearly seemed that the parents were sending them there to get rid of them for six hours.*

The teacher had told her that only one parent had come in for arranged parent-teacher meetings and this clearly shocked Derbhla. While the teacher had suggested to Derbhla that these parents might have been working late, she felt '*it wasn't an excuse*'. When asked what reasons she thought there might be, she said '*parents weren't really encouraging*

*education'* without going on to consider why. Derbhla clearly believed that parents should engage in concerted cultivation and, despite acknowledging during the interview that '*other issues may impact on a child's progress,*' she does not seem able to recognise what those other issues might be. Indeed, she suggests that the reason for pupils' underachievement may lie with the teacher, saying, '*You need to look at your teaching – it maybe isn't actually working for them and try different strategies*' rather than considering external factors.

In field notes made during the interview that were added into the transcription, I have noted that 'I am not convinced when transcribing that D actually does see the unfairness of our system, she seems happy with the status quo'. I suggest that while well intentioned, Derbhla has a reproductive habitus and needs to be engaged in further discussion and reflection on the causes of disaffection and underachievement in school.

### **Ide**

Ide is a sensible, straight-talking and apparently independent thinker who understands that there are multiple factors that contribute to inequality as will be discussed below. She is a twin and explained that in primary school '*I always understood him to be brighter than me*'. She unhesitatingly attributed this to her Primary 6-7 teacher who '*wanted to pull me from the eleven-plus because I wouldn't pass it*' while the teacher maintained her brother would get an 'A'. Her mother insisted both children did the eleven-plus, her brother got an A grade and went to the local Grammar while Ide was awarded a C2<sup>29</sup> and went to the local secondary school. She also explained that coming from a small village, the eleven-plus was highly prized within the school and teachers earned kudos by '*getting the results*' so this test was '*a massive thing in the school*'.

On moving to Secondary, the first thing that happened was that all pupils were streamed, '*you knew which band you were in*'. She explained that once you were allocated to a stream it was inflexible and pupils could not move until the next year; she realised that this inhibited some of her peers from progressing and led to disaffection. Having a twin who was on a parallel course in the Grammar sector, Ide was able to compare her Secondary experiences with his and was fascinating in her perceptions of the different sectors:

*[Secondary] developed you more as a person and it was more about the holistic experience whereas Ryan would have talked about statistics and the focus was on attainment and driving towards your goals.*

She explained that she '*always had to work to get anywhere*' and this stood her in good stead in getting good GCSE grades and so outperforming her brother despite their different schools.

Ide has a strong sense of social justice and is determined to advocate on behalf of less advantaged pupils. She talked about identifying '*underlying issues*' and became frustrated when there was a '*lack of effort to figure out what the problem is*'. She was keen to build

---

<sup>29</sup> Grades awarded are A (the grade generally required to get into Grammar), B1, B2, C1, C2 and D. Grade A is awarded to the top 25% of the entire age group eligible to transfer. B1 is awarded to the next 5% of the pupils, B2 to the next 5% and so on until Grade D, which is awarded to the balance (Gardner and Cowan, 2005:149).

respectful relationships with pupils and understood that it was '*the perceptions of other people that lead [pupils] to perceive themselves*' in particular ways. She was very aware that teachers' attitudes were highly significant in developing pupils' sense of self.

I suggest that Ide has a transformative habitus illustrated in her words by her educational philosophy '*give children a voice, forget the labels and have high expectations*'.

### **Cara**

Cara went to a rural primary school and, of the eight children in her class, all but one went to Grammar. Coming from a family of teachers, '*mummy and my sister [laughs] ... everyone I know is a teacher*', it was clear that education was taken very seriously at home. Cara told of how her mum sat with her spending time and effort on homework and eleven-plus preparation while at primary school and then ensuring that study was completed properly in post-primary. The emphasis throughout her schooling was on academic achievement '*all the teaching was towards the test*' and there appears to have been constant comparison with others '*you knew how everybody else was doing and how everyone was getting on*'. In the second year of Grammar pupils were streamed for Maths and, having been awarded 84%, Cara told how '*I was so disappointed because I thought I'm not going to get into the high class*' (she actually did).

Cara is an advocate of Grammars. She had a very positive experience of Grammar herself and when asked her views on Secondary it became clear that she adheres to the doxa:

*I think there does need to be some kind of streaming so that you can differentiate for the lower ones and push the higher ones – I can't see it working if it was just everyone put into one school.*

She accepts such positioning of learners as simply the natural order of things, yet she speaks articulately about how different ability levels worked constructively together learning from each other on a recent primary school placement. In the data cited it is clear that Cara misrecognises that such streaming may lead to subjective expectations for these pupils, as what is likely becomes what they choose.

When asked about pupils in her class who might be underachieving, Cara immediately identified one group:

*All of those ones in that wee group, I think their parents, not that they – I don't know if this is relevant but broken homes – some of them, most of them single mothers ...*

She explained that these children arrived to school late with homework not done, and then went on to compare them with the children who were well supported and whose parents clearly engaged in concerted cultivation. She had learned from her host teacher the significance of providing additional support for these pupils and setting high expectations, but was still inclined to think that they would struggle and not do well. She explained that she found behaviour management challenging and had some issues managing disadvantaged pupils because '*you can't control them, if you can't manage, you can't even get to talk because they are being so noisy*'.

While becoming more aware of systemic inequalities, I suggest that Cara is still inclined towards a reproductive habitus and is not yet ready to challenge the doxa.

### **Aoife**

Aoife was the first in her extended family to go to university and comes from one of the most deprived areas in NI (in the most disadvantaged 2% according to NIDIM (2017)). She was one of four in her class of thirty to do the eleven-plus '*and we all got Ds*'. She explained that '*I didn't even know what the eleven-plus was*' and there was no pressure from and no preparation at home. She went to the local Secondary school and it was clear from our discussion that she thought the school developed the pupils holistically, building their confidence and encouraging engagement.

*They focused on subjects like drama and Art and PE – the non-academic subjects – but we all loved it and all got good grades ... it did wonders for me and I got all As and A\*s in my GCSEs*

Aoife had been very successful and she attributes her academic success to '*the school seeing the potential in me*'. Following her excellent GCSE results she was encouraged by two teachers to take A-levels that would allow her to apply for medicine but said that she quickly changed realising that '*I'd just kind of be taking on board what other people were saying was good for me*'. She did initially study Sports Science in one of NI's universities, '*but I wasn't taken seriously because I was a girl*'. Through discussion I came to understand that Aoife knows her own mind and will not accept other people treating her as second rate whether that is due to her gender, appearance, spoken language or social background. She is a feisty, engaging and witty student who wants to be taken seriously and treats others respectfully. One striking feature that came to my attention when transcribing the interview was that she constantly checked or sought affirmation for her responses from me '*Do you know what I mean?*'

When asked about her experiences in schools as a student teacher, it became clear that she had opted for disadvantaged school placements rather than affluent schools as they '*wouldn't challenge me*'. She was very aware of how social background could be misrecognised as intelligence and indeed her words were used in the Introduction to this Dissertation:

*When children come into school, schools like a middle-class value system and norms, so the children that show these norms and values, attitude and behaviour and oral language, they're seen as the ones that've more ability...whereas the ones that haven't had the same opportunities at home, they're put in the lower group*

She understands that labelling may lead children to underachieve. She spoke of her niece who was placed in the middle-ability group and her awareness that her placement might limit expectations, and how this indeed this applies to others: '*it's like a self-fulfilling prophecy – the label sticks and they start to react that way*' meaning that they believe that the level they are assigned to is appropriate level for them. Possibly because she came from a disadvantaged background and had to struggle to be recognised, she is quite insightful into how (lack of) facility with linguistic capital can be perceived:

*just because somebody has a high, fluent oral language doesn't mean that they have more potential than these children who haven't had the same opportunity, cause they can still think the same they're just expressing it in different ways.*

She can also see the 'flaws' in the system and spoke passionately about peers who were tutored with an emphasis placed on memorising answers: '*you don't really have to understand it you just have to write it down and remember it*'. She is clearly frustrated that education is increasingly valuing results: '*it's all about ...your grades*', and she is passionate about curricular breadth. She also understands the importance of potential being recognised and nurtured:

*if each kid learns something and feels like they have a wee bit of potential in themselves and they see that I see that potential in them- and they know that they are valued and happy – I think that's important*

I suggest that Aoife has a transformative habitus and is keen to move others beyond what they might consider limiting factors so that each person can reach their full potential.

### **Helen**

Helen, a mother of four sons, had previously worked in the private and public sectors before coming to teaching in her mid-40s. She lived in an affluent suburb and three of her four children went to Grammar while the youngest had gone to Secondary. She was the only one in her own family of five children not to have gone to university straight after school having applied to the civil service and going to work there for some years. She provided a further dimension to this research as she brought her varying experiences as a parent whose children had gone through academic selection quite recently.

At the beginning of the interview, we talked about Helen's own family background and it became clear from the outset that education mattered and that it was important to her that standards were maintained. Talking about the five children in her home all doing the eleven-plus she explained '*I'm in the middle so I do remember the pressure*'. Her primary school, too, valued these tests and most pupils did go on to Grammar. While apparently unaware that she was doing so, Helen constantly compared herself to others in her family and to her peers. When asked about her impressions of her all-girls' Grammar, she told me, '*there were so many very, very bright girls there and I remember just feeling a little bit sort of average*'. She really enjoyed school and did well. In her working life she explained that she was always going on to do short training courses:

*like learning sign language, business in the community, programmes where you went out to schools – I opted for all those things as I was really drawn to teaching ...*

When she did apply for teaching in her late twenties she did not do well at interview and was very embarrassed and thought, '*Why did I think I was good enough?*'. After taking access courses she was successful but initially '*hated it with a passion... I just felt so out of my depth*' but she persevered and, after some months, really began to enjoy the ITE course. In her initial experience, Helen was a fish out of water, there was a sense of disjunction, and her habitus had to adjust and modify until she finally did begin to feel accepted and valued and I suggest that these experiences will stand her in good stead as she deals with pupils who may accept limits placed on them.

Dealing with her youngest son's disappointment and sense of being labelled has also been a challenging experience for Helen. She told of how her third son had asked for a tutor as '*he was the only one in the whole class not at a tutor*'. She explained that there was '*huge, huge pressure*' at the eleven-plus stage from peers, parents and the school to succeed and when her son got a C1(which would not get him into Grammar) '*he was really, really annoyed – that morning he just took to bed*'. Having the economic, social and cultural capital to challenge the decision, as documented in Chapter 7, the family went through the appeals process but to no avail. As a result Matt went to Orchardville where he encountered pupils from different socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds to his own and, much to Helen's surprise, '*he really did like it*'.

I believe that these experiences have really opened Helen up to alternative possibilities and would argue that these will lead her to be a teacher who will challenge the dominant thinking and practice.

### **Beth**

I found Beth to be like a breath of fresh air: honest, thoughtful and passionate about education. She is insightful and has learned through difficult experiences how to negotiate widely different fields in home and at school and it is clear that she has developed habitus that can negotiate, resist and recognise possibilities for change. Beth came, she said, from '*quite an impoverished area*'. While from a working-class family, her mother had gone back to education and was working in a Further Education institution by the time Beth went to Grammar. She was one of the two in her class of 30 who sat and passed the eleven-plus and admitted during our interview that '*looking back half the class were living in severe poverty*'. There was no pressure put on her at all from home, indeed she explained that her father '*doesn't really value education*' and perhaps it was this gulf between the way education was valued at home and school which lead to Beth questioning the practices in the field of Grammar education.

From the outset she felt like an outsider, '*going in on the first day and I thought everyone was so serious*' and she talked about the hyper-competitive ethos in the school in which you constantly worked '*to keep up... [pupils] were in competition with each other all the time*'. Discussions with Beth illustrated how the habitus is embodied, manifest in our physical presence and she constantly referred to how she '*literally just felt so under pressure – I never could relax*', and later:

*I remember walking to school and my chest felt so tight ... I still feel anxious speaking about it now- the amount of work I had to do just so I could get the grades.*

This is indicative of the competition created by the neoliberal emphasis on the individual being responsible and the concept that hard work equals success. Beth came to see this as '*you are a statistic*'. However, she resisted many of the choices that the school would have liked her to make and applied to Art colleges which was not met with approval. As a result, she perceives that she was left to fend for herself, with no one reviewing her application form or personal statement. Other middle-class pupils who were conforming to expectations were being pulled from class to '*tweak personal statements*'.

In retrospect Beth is frustrated by this. She told me:

*all the stuff I had been told in school was wrong [Me: Wrong?] Not wrong, but I didn't realise, I didn't know anything about holistic development.*

Her experiences have clearly made her rethink what education should be about and she is now passionate about ensuring that pupils have a breadth of experiences as well as being treated equally. She believes that her experiences in school have led to her being '*an anxious and nervous person*' and that school's focus on academic development has led to others having poor social skills. This means that:

*I would rather my own child would have empathy and be caring and help someone with special needs than be amazing at Maths in their life ... I would rather they have those experiences in school rather than being streamed.*

Her school placements had all been in disadvantaged schools and her engagement with these pupils has made her very aware of the challenges facing them. '*I feel like I have had my eyes opened to so many different reasons why people can underachieve*' and she talked of a range of issues from dyslexia to hunger that she had encountered in schools. She is ardent about developing the whole child and concerned that the current system has got the priorities wrong. She talked fervently about the importance of breadth in the curriculum, particularly the arts as she believes these will develop:

*the problem solving skills, the lateral thinking skills – that's higher intelligence, not that you remember where a comma goes and things – those are the people who will be, that will really make changes that will have an impact, they have the ability to think in those ways and are resilient and determined, not that they can solve an equation.*

I suggest that Beth displays a transformative habitus and will, I think, work untiringly to challenge the current system and encourage her learners to 'think big' and seek opportunities they may not yet have dreamed of.

## References

- Advisory Council on Education for Northern Ireland (ACENI) (1971) *The Existing Selection Procedure for Secondary Education in Northern Ireland* (Cmd 551), Belfast: Her Majesty's Stationery Office.
- ACENI (1973) *Reorganisation of Secondary Education in Northern Ireland* (Cmd 574), Belfast: Her Majesty's Stationery Office.
- Allard, A. C. and Santoro, N. (2006) 'Troubling identities: teacher education students' constructions of class and ethnicity', *Cambridge Journal of Education*, Vol. 36(1), pp. 115-129.
- Ainscow, M., Dyson, A., Goldrick, S. and West, M. (2012) *Developing Equitable Education Systems*, London: Routledge.
- Angus, L. (2012) 'Teaching within and against the circle of privilege: reforming teachers, reforming schools', *Journal of Education Policy*, Vol. 27(2), pp.231-251.
- Araújo, M. (2007) "“Modernising the comprehensive principle”: selection setting and the institutionalisation of educational failure", *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, Vol. 28(2), pp. 241-257.
- Archer, M. S. (2007) *Making Our Way through the World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Archer, L. (2008) 'The impossibility of minority ethnic educational 'success'? An examination of the discourses of teachers and pupils in British secondary schools', *European Educational Research Journal*, Vol. 7(1), pp. 89-107.
- Archer, L. (2011) 'Social justice in schools: engaging with equality' in J. Dillon and M. Maguire (eds.) *Issues in Secondary Education*, pp. 128-141, Maidenhead: Open University Press.
- Archer, L. and Francis B. (2006) 'Challenging classes? Exploring the role of social class within the identities and achievement of British Chinese pupils', *Sociology*, Vol. 40(1), pp. 9-49.
- Archer, L., Francis, B., Miller, S., Taylor, B., Tereshchenko, A., Mazenod, A., Pepper, D. and Travers, M.C. (2018) 'The symbolic violence of setting: A Bourdieusian analysis of mixed methods data on secondary students' views about setting', *British Educational Research Journal*, Vol. 44(1), pp. 119-140.
- Archer, L., Moote, J., Francis,B., DeWitt, J. and Yeomans, L. (2017) 'Stratifying science: a Bourdieusian analysis of student views and experiences of school selective practices in relation to 'Triple Science' at KS4 in England', *Research Papers in Education*, Vol. 32(3), pp. 296-315.
- Åsvoll, H. (2014) 'Abduction, deduction and induction: can these concepts be used for an understanding of methodological processes in interpretative case studies?', *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, Vol. 27(3), pp.289-307.
- Atkinson, W. (2012) 'Reproduction revisited: comprehending complex educational

- trajectories', *The Sociological Review*, 60, pp. 735-753.
- Atkinson, W. (2015) *Class*, Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Atkinson, W. (2017) *Class in the New Millennium: The Structure, Homologies and Experience of the British Social Space*, London: Taylor and Francis Group.
- Avis, J. (2006) 'Improvement through research: policy science or policy scholarship', *Research in Post-Compulsory Education*, Vol. 11(1), pp. 107-114.
- Ball, S. J. (2010) 'New class inequalities in education', *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*, Vol. 30 (3/4), pp. 155-166.
- Ball, S. J. (2013) *The Education Debate*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Bristol: The Policy Press.
- Ball, S.J. (2015) 'Accounting for a sociological life: influences and experiences on the road from welfarism to neoliberalism', *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, Vol. 36(6), pp 817-831.
- Ball, S.J. (2018) 'The tragedy of state education in England: Reluctance, compromise and muddle – a system in disarray', *Journal of the British Academy*, Vol. 6, pp. 207-238.
- Barber, M. (1996) *The Learning Game. Arguments for an Education Revolution*, London: Gollancz.
- Barber, M., Chijioke, C. and Mourshed, M. (2010), *How the world's best-performing school systems come out on top*, London: McKinsey and Company.  
<http://mckinseyonsociety.com/how-the-worlds-most-improved-school-systems-keep-getting-better/> (accessed 29 March, 2019).
- Barter, C. and Renold, E. (1999) 'The use of vignettes in qualitative research', *Social Research Update* (Issue 25), <http://sru.soc.surrey.ac.uk/SRU25.html> (accessed 16 November, 2015).
- Bauman, Z. (2005) *Work, Consumerism and the New Poor*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Buckingham: Open University Press.
- BBC (2014) *Transfer test: Grammars urged to stop 'dubious testing'*,  
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-25923955> (accessed 10 June, 2015).
- Beck, U. (2002) *Risk Society*, London:Sage.
- Beeghly, E. (2015) 'What is a stereotype? What is stereotyping?', *Hypatia*, Vol. 30(4), pp. 675-691.
- Bernstein, B. (1970) 'Education cannot compensate for society', *New Society*, Vol. 15(387), pp. 344-47.
- Bhopal, K. and Rhamie, J. (2014) 'Initial teacher training: understanding 'race,' diversity and inclusion', *Race, Ethnicity and Education*, Vol. 17(3), pp. 304-325.
- Biesta, G. J. J. (2007) 'Towards the knowledge democracy? Knowledge production and the civic role of the university', *Studies in Philosophy of Education*, Vol. 26(5), pp. 467-

479.

Biesta, G. J. J. (2009) 'Good education in an age of measurement: On the need to reconnect with the question of purpose in education', *Educational Assessment, Evaluation and Accountability*, Vol. 21(1), pp. 33-46.

Bines, H. (1994) 'Squaring the circle?: government reform of initial teacher training for primary education', *Journal of Education Policy*, Vol. 9 (4), pp. 369-380.

Bird, C. (2005) 'How I stopped dreading and learned to love transcription', *Qualitative Inquiry*, Vol. 11(2), pp. 226-248.

Blaxter, L., Hughes, M. And Tight, C. (2010) *How to Research*, 4<sup>th</sup> edition, Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Blum, L. (2004) 'Stereotypes and stereotyping: a moral analysis', *Philosophical Papers*, Vol. 33(3), pp. 251-289.

Boaler, J. (1997) 'Setting, social class and survival of the quickest', *British Educational Research Journal*, Vol. 23, pp. 575-595.

Boaler, J., Wiliam, D. and Brown, M. (2000) 'Students' experiences of ability grouping – disaffection, polarisation and the construction of failure', *British Educational Research Journal*, Vol. 26 (5), pp. 631-648.

Borooah, V. K. and Knox, C. (2015) 'Segregation, inequality, and educational performance in Northern Ireland: Problems and solutions' in *International Journal of Educational Development*, Vol. 40, pp.196-206.

Bottero, W. (2009) 'Class in the 21<sup>st</sup> century', in K. P. Sveinsson (ed.), *Who Cares about the White Working Class?*, pp. 7-15. London: The Runnymede Trust.

<http://www.runnymedetrust.org/uploads/publications/pdfs/WhoCaresAboutTheWhiteWorkingClass-2009.pdf> (accessed 25 April, 2017).

Bottomore, T. (1990) 'Foreword' in P. Bourdieu and J.C. Passeron, *Reproduction in education, society and culture*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, London: Sage.

Bourdieu, P. (1977) *Outline of a theory of practice*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

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

Bourdieu, P. (1986) 'The forms of capital', in J. G. Robinson (ed.), *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*', pp. 241-58, New York: Greenwood Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1987) 'What makes a social class? On the theoretical and practical existence of groups', *Berkeley Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 23(1), pp.1-17.

Bourdieu, P. (1990a) 'Academic order and social order: Preface to the 1990 edition' in P. Bourdieu and J.C. Passeron, *Reproduction in education, society and culture*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, London: Sage.

- Bourdieu, P. (1990b) *The Logic of Practice*, Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1990c) *In Other Words: Essays Towards a Reflexive Sociology*, Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1991) *Language and Symbolic Power*, Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1993) *Sociology in Question*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Bourdieu, P. (1998). *Practical Reason* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (2000) *Pascalian Meditations*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (2004) 'The forms of capital', in S. Ball (ed.), *Routledge Falmer Reader in Sociology of Education*, London: Routledge Falmer.
- Bourdieu, P. (2005) 'Habitus', in J. Hillier and E. Rooksby (eds.), *Habitus, a Sense of Place*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, pp.43-50, Aldershot, UK: Ashgate.
- Bourdieu, P. and Passeron, J.C. (1979) *The Inheritors: French Students and Their Relation to Culture*, Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. and Passeron, J.C. (1990) *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, London: Sage.
- Bourdieu, P. and Wacquant, L. (1992) *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*, London: The University of Chicago Press.
- Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2006) 'Using thematic analysis in psychology', *Qualitative Research In Psychology*, Vol. 3(2), pp. 77-101.
- Breen, R. (2000) 'Class inequality and social mobility in Northern Ireland, 1973 to 1996', *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 65(3), pp. 392-406.
- Bridges, D. (1996) 'Competence-based education and training: progress or villainy?', *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, Vol. 30(3), pp. 361-376.
- British Educational Research Association (BERA) (2018) *Ethical guidelines for educational research*, 4<sup>th</sup> edition, [https://www.bera.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/BERA-Ethical-Guidelines-for-Educational-Research\\_4thEdn\\_2018.pdf](https://www.bera.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/BERA-Ethical-Guidelines-for-Educational-Research_4thEdn_2018.pdf) (accessed 12th July, 2018).
- Broady, D. (2014) 'Capital: Cultural, Symbolic, and Social', in D. C. Phillips (ed.) *Encyclopaedia of Educational Theory and Philosophy*, pp. 100-102, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Brown, P. (2013) 'Education, opportunity and the prospects for social mobility', *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, Vol. 34(5-6), pp. 678-700.
- Brown, P. and Lauder, H. (2006) 'Globalisation, knowledge and the myth of the magnet economy', *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, Vol. 4(1), pp. 25-57.
- Brown, T. (2008) 'Comforting narratives of compliance: Psychoanalytic perspectives on

- new teacher responses to mathematics policy reform', in E. de Freitas and K. Nolan (eds.), *Opening the Research Text: Critical Insights and In(ter)ventions into Mathematics Education* (pp. 97-109). New York, NY: Springer.
- Bryman, A. (2012) *Social Research Methods*, 4<sup>th</sup> edition, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Burge B., Classick, R. and Stacey, O. (2016) *TIMSS 2015 in Northern Ireland: Mathematics and Science*, Slough: NFER.
- Burgess, T. F. (2001) 'Guide to the design of questionnaires', *A General Introduction to the Design of Questionnaires for Survey Research*, <http://www.ww.alicechristie.org/classes/593/survey.pdf> (accessed 4 January, 2016).
- Burke, C., Emmerich, N. and Ingram, N. (2013) 'Well-founded social fictions: a defence of the concepts of institutional and familial habitus', *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, Vol. 34(2), pp.165-182.
- Burn, K. and Childs, A (2016) 'Responding to poverty through education and teacher education initiatives: a critical evaluation of key trends in government policy in England 1997-2015', *Journal of Education for Teaching*, Vol. 42(4), pp. 387-403.
- Burns, G. (2001) *Education for the 21st Century: A Report by the Post Primary Review Body*, Bangor: Department of Education Northern Ireland.
- Cannadine, D. (1998) 'Beyond Class? Social structures and social perceptions in modern England' (Raleigh Lecture on History 1997) *Proceedings of the British Academy*, Vol. 97, pp. 95-118.
- Canny, A. and Hamilton, M. (2018) 'A state examination system and perpetuation of middle-class advantage: an Irish school context', *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, Vol. 39(5), pp. 638-653.
- Caul, L. and McWilliams, S. (2002) 'Accountability in partnership or partnership in accountability: initial teacher education in Northern Ireland', *European Journal of Teacher Education*, Vol. 25(2-3), pp. 187-197.
- Childs, A. (2013) 'The work of teacher educators: an English policy perspective', *Journal of Education for Teaching: International Research and Pedagogy*, Vol. 39 (3), pp. 314-328.
- Choules, K. (2007) 'The shifting sands of social justice discourse: from situating the problem with "Them," to situating it with "Us"', *Review of Education, Pedagogy, and Cultural Studies*, Vol. 29(5), pp. 461-481.
- Clarke, A., Triggs, V., Neilsen, W. (2014) 'Cooperating teacher participation in teacher education: a review of the literature', *Review of Educational Research*, Vol. 84(2), pp. 163-202.
- Clarke, L. and Magennis, G. (2016) 'Teacher education policy in Northern Ireland: impediments, initiatives and influences', in G. Beauchamp, L. Clarke, M..Hulme, M. Jephcote, A. Kennedy, G. Magennis, I. Menter, J. Murray, T. Mutton, T. O'Doherty and G. Peiser, pp. 75-90, *Teacher Education in Times of Change*, Bristol: Policy Press.

- Clarke, V. and Braun, V. (2013) 'Teaching thematic analysis: Over-coming challenges and developing strategies for effective learning', *The Psychologist*, Vol. 26(2). pp. 120-123.
- Cochran-Smith, M., Cannady, M., McEachern, K., Mitchell, K., Piazza, P., Power, C. (2012) 'Teachers' education and outcomes: Mapping the research terrain', *Teachers College Record*, Vol. 114(10), pp. 1-49.
- Codd, J. (1990) 'Making distinctions: the eye of the beholder', in R. Harker, C. Mahar and C. Wilkes (eds.), *An Introduction to the Work of Pierre Bourdieu: The Practice of Theory*, pp. 132-159, London: Macmillan.
- Colwill, I. and Gallagher, C. (2007) 'Developing a curriculum for the twenty-first century: the experiences of England and Northern Ireland', *Prospects*, Vol. 37, pp. 411-425.
- Connolly, P. and Healy, J. (2004) 'Symbolic violence, locality and social class: the educational and career aspirations of 10-11-year-old boys in Belfast', *Pedagogy, Culture and Society*, Vol. 12(1), pp. 15-33.
- Connolly, P., Purvis, D. and O'Grady, P. J. (2013) *Advancing Shared Education: Report of the Ministerial Advisory Group*. Bangor: Department of Education Northern Ireland.
- Costa, C. and Murphy, M. (2015) *Bourdieu, Habitus and Social Research: The Art of Application*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Cowen, R. (2002) 'Autonomy, citizenship, the market and education: Comparative perspectives', in Bridges, D. (ed.), *Education, Autonomy and Democratic Citizenship*, pp. 61-73, Hoboken: Taylor and Francis.
- Crenshaw, K. W. (1988) 'Race, reform and retrenchment: Transformation and legitimization in anti discrimination law', *Harvard Law Review*. Vol.101, pp.1331-1387.
- Crossley, N. (2012) 'Social class' in M. Grenfell (ed.), *Pierre Bourdieu: Key Concepts*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, pp. 85-97, Abingdon: Routledge.
- Cyr, J. (2015) 'The pitfalls and promise of focus groups as a data collection method', *Sociological Methods and Research*, Vol. 45(2), pp. 231-259.
- Czopp, A.M., Kay, A.C. and Cheryan, S. (2015) 'Positive stereotypes are pervasive and powerful', *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, Vol. 10(4), pp. 451-463.
- Dalmau, M., and Gudonjonsdottir, H. (2002) 'Framing professional discourse with teachers. Professional working theory', in J. Loughran, and T. Russell (eds.), pp.102-127, *Improving Teacher Education Practices through Self-Study*, London: Routledge Falmer.
- Darling-Hammond, L. and Bransford, J. (2005). *Preparing Teachers for a Changing World: What Teachers Should Learn and Be Able to Do*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Davies, H. (2015) 'Young people and the web: understanding their engagement with online information through the concept of habitus', in C. Costa and M. Murphy (eds.) *Bourdieu Habitus and Social Research: The Art of Application*, pp.167-182, Basingstoke,

Palgrave Macmillan.

Davidson, C. (2009) 'Transcription: imperatives for qualitative research' *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, Vol. 8(2), pp.35-52.

Day, C. (1993) 'Reflection: a necessary but not sufficient condition for professional development', *British Educational Research Journal*, Vol. 19(1), pp. 83-93.

Deer, C. (2012) 'Doxa', in M. Grenfell (ed.), *Pierre Bourdieu: Key Concepts*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, pp. 114-125, Acumen: London.

Denscombe, M. (2010) *The Good Research Guide: For small-scale social research projects*, Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Denzin, N. and Lincoln, Y. (eds.) (2000) *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Thousand Oaks, CA, SAGE.

Department for Education (DfE) (1992) *Initial Teacher Training (Secondary Phase Circular 9/92*, London: DfE.

Department for Education (DfE) (1993) *The Initial Training of Primary Teachers Circular 14/93*, London: DfE.

Department of Education Northern Ireland (DENI) (1996) *Free School Meals and Low Achievement. Statistical bulletin SB2*. Bangor: DENI.

DENI (2002) *Review of Post-Primary Education: Report on Responses to Consultation*, Bangor: DENI.

DENI (2009) *Every School A Good School: A Policy for School Improvement*, Bangor: DENI.

DENI (2011) *Count Read: Succeed A Strategy to Improve Outcomes in Literacy and Numeracy*, <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/de/count-read-succeed-a-strategy-to-improve-outcomes-in-literacy-and-numeracy.pdf> (accessed 16 July, 2017).

DENI (2013) *Student Achievement in Northern Ireland: Results in Mathematics, Science and Reading among 15-year-olds from the OECD Pisa 2012 study*, Bangor: DENI.

DENI (2017) *Statistical Bulletin Year 12 and Year 14 Examination Performance at Post-Primary Schools in Northern Ireland 2016-17*, <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/statistical-bulletin-102017-year-12-and-14-examination-performance-post-primary-schools-northern> (accessed 18 September, 2018).

DENI (2018) *Annual Enrolments at Schools and in Funded Pre-school Education in Northern Ireland, 2017/18*, <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/school-enrolments-201718-statistical-bulletins> (accessed 22 October, 2018).

Donaldson, G. (2011) *Teaching Scotland's Future*, Edinburgh: The Scottish Government, <https://www.webarchive.org.uk/wayback/archive/20170401105820/http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2011/01/13092132/0> (accessed 3 March, 2019).

- Dunne , M., Humphreys, S., Dyson, A., Sebba , J., Gallannaugh, F. and Muijs, D. (2011) ‘The teaching and learning of pupils in low-attainment sets’, *Curriculum Journal*, Vol. 22(4),pp. 485-513.
- Dunne , M., Humphreys, S., Sebba , J., Dyson, A., Gallannaugh, F. and Muijs, D. (2007) *Effective Teaching and Learning for Pupils in Low Attaining Groups*, London: DCSF.
- Dunne, M. and Gazeley, L. (2008) ‘Teachers, social class and underachievement’, *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, Vol. 29(5), pp. 451-463.
- Edgerton, J.D. and Roberts, L.W. (2013) ‘Cultural capital or habitus? Bourdieu and beyond in the explanation of enduring educational inequality’, *Theory and Research in Education*, Vol. 12(2), pp. 193-220.
- Education Act (1944)  
[http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1944/31/pdfs/ukpga\\_19440031\\_en.pdf](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1944/31/pdfs/ukpga_19440031_en.pdf) (accessed 2 April, 2018).
- Education Act (Northern Ireland) (1947) <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/apni/1947/3> (accessed 2 April, 2018).
- Education (Northern Ireland) Order (2006)  
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisi/2006/1915/resources> (accessed 19 January, 2019).
- Edward-Groves, C. and Gray, D. (2008) ‘Developing praxis and reflective practice in pre-service teacher education’, in S. Kemmis and T. Smith (eds.), *Enabling praxis: challenges for education*, pp. 85-107, Rotterdam and Taipei: Sense.
- Ellis, C. (2007) ‘Telling secrets, revealing lives: Relational ethics in research with intimate others’, *Qualitative Inquiry*, Vol. 13,pp. 3-29.
- Ellis, S., Thompson, I., McNicholl, J. and Thomson, J. (2016) ‘Student teachers’ perceptions of the effects of poverty on learners’ educational attainment and well-being: perspectives from England and Scotland’, *Journal of Education for Teaching*, Vol. 42(4), pp. 483-499.
- Fairclough, N. (2000) *New Labour, new language?*, London:Routledge.
- Farrimond, H. (2016) ‘The ethics of research’ in D. Wyse, N. Selwyn, E. Smith and L.E. Suter (eds.), pp.72-89, *The BERA/SAGE Handbook of Educational Research*, London: Sage.
- Finlay, L. (2008) ‘Reflecting on reflective practice’, *Discussion Paper prepared for the Practice-based Professional Learning Centre*, Buckingham: Open University Press.  
<http://www.open.ac.uk/pbpl.January20081Reflectingon%20%98Reflectivepractice%20%99By:LindaFinlay> (accessed 28 December, 2015).
- Fitzduff, M. and O’Hagan, L. (2009) ‘The Northern Ireland Troubles: INCORE background paper’, <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/othelem/incorepaper09.htm> (accessed 21October, 2017).
- Fook, J. (2006) ‘Beyond reflective practice: reworking the “critical” in critical reflection’, *Keynote speech for conference “Professional lifelong learning: beyond reflective*

- practice*", July 3, [http://medhealth.leeds.ac.uk/info/810/research/1573/past\\_papers/7](http://medhealth.leeds.ac.uk/info/810/research/1573/past_papers/7) (accessed 10 January, 2017).
- Forde, C., McMahon, M., McPhee, A. and Patrick, F. (2006) *Professional Development, Reflection and Enquiry*, London: Paul Chapman.
- Fox, A. and Slade, B. (2014) 'What impact can organisations expect from professional doctorates?', *Professional Development in Education*, Vol. 40(4), pp. 546-560.
- Francis, B., Archer, L., Hodgen, J., Pepper, D., Taylor, B. and Travers, M.C. (2017) 'Exploring the relative lack of impact of research on 'ability grouping' in England: a discourse analytic account', *Cambridge Journal of Education*, Vol. 47(1), pp. 1-17.
- Francis, B. and Hey, V. (2009) 'Talking back to power: snowballs in hell and the imperative of insisting on structural explanations', *Gender and Education*, Vol. 21(2), pp. 225-232.
- Fraser, N., Dahl, H.M, Stoltz, P. and Willig, R. (2004) 'Recognition, redistribution and representation in capitalist global society', *Acta Sociologica*, Vol. 47(4), pp. 374-382.
- Friedman, S., Savage, M., Hanquinet, L. and Miles, A. (2015) 'Cultural sociology and new forms of distinction', *Poetics*, Vol. 53, pp. 1-8.
- Furlong, J. (2005) 'Education and the labour government: an evaluation of two terms', *Oxford Review of Education*, Vol. 31(1), pp. 119-134.
- Furlong, J. (2013) 'Globalisation, neoliberalism, and the reform of teacher education in England', *The Educational Forum*, Vol. 77(1), pp. 28-50.
- Furlong, J. and Lawn, M. (2011) *Disciplines of Education: Their Role in the Future of Education Research*, London: Routledge.
- Gallagher, T. and Smith, A. (2000) *The Effects Of The Selective System Of Secondary Education In Northern Ireland*, Bangor: DENI.
- Gallagher, T. and Smith, A. (2003) 'Attitudes to Academic Selection in Northern Ireland', ARK Research Update, No.16, <https://www.ark.ac.uk/publications/updates/update16.PDF> (accessed 15 April, 2017).
- Galman, S. (2009) 'Doth the lady protest too much? Pre-service teachers and the experience of dissonance as a catalyst for development', *Teaching and Teacher Education*, Vol. 25(3), pp. 468-481.
- Gardner, J. (2016) 'Education in Northern Ireland since the Good Friday Agreement: Kabuki theatre meets danse macabre', *Oxford Review of Education*, Vol. 42(3), pp. 346-361.
- Garmon, M. A. (2004) 'Changing preservice teachers' attitudes/beliefs about diversity what are the critical factors?', *Journal of Teacher Education*, Vol. 55(3), pp. 201-213.
- Gardner, J. and Cowan, P. (2005) 'The fallibility of high stakes "11-plus" testing in Northern Ireland', *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy and Practice*, Vol. 12(2), pp.145-165.

- Gazeley, L. (2007) *An Introduction to Social Class and Educational (Dis)Advantage*, <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20101021152907/http://www.multiverse.ac.uk/viewarticle2.aspx?contentId=13616> (accessed 19 September, 2017).
- Gazeley, L. and Dunne, M. (2005) ‘Addressing Working Class Underachievement’, *Multiverse*, [http://www.21stcenturylearningalliance.org/21CLAv2/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/Addressing\\_Working\\_Class\\_Underachievement12.pdf](http://www.21stcenturylearningalliance.org/21CLAv2/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/Addressing_Working_Class_Underachievement12.pdf) (accessed 6 June, 2015).
- Gazeley, L. and Dunne, M. (2007) ‘Researching class in the classroom: addressing the social class attainment gap in Initial Teacher Education’, *Journal of Education for Teaching: International research and pedagogy*, Vol. 33(4), pp. 409-424.
- Geelan, D. (2003) ‘The death of theory in educational research’, *Proceedings of the 2003 Complexity Science and Educational Research Conference*, 16-18 October, pp. 169-185, Edmonton, Canada, [http://ocw.metu.edu.tr/pluginfile.php/8441/mod\\_resource/content/1/CSER\\_Geelan.pdf](http://ocw.metu.edu.tr/pluginfile.php/8441/mod_resource/content/1/CSER_Geelan.pdf) (accessed 12 September, 2015).
- General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland (GTCNI) (2007) *Teaching: The Reflective Profession*, Belfast: GTCNI.
- George, M. (2013) ‘Teaching focus group interviewing: benefits and challenges’, *Teaching Sociology*, Vol. 41(3), pp. 257-279.
- Giddens, A. (1991) *Modernity and Self-Identity*, Cambridge; Polity.
- Giddens, A. (1994) *Beyond Left and Right*, Oxford: Polity Press.
- Gillborn, D. (2010) ‘The colour of numbers: surveys, statistics and deficit-thinking about race and class’, *Journal of Education Policy*, Vol. 25(2), pp. 253-276.
- Gillies, V. (2005) ‘Raising the ‘meritocracy’: parenting and the individualization of social class’, *Sociology*, Vol. 39(5), pp. 835-853.
- Gillies, D. (2011) ‘Agile bodies: a new imperative in neoliberal governance’, *Journal of Education Policy*, Vol. 26(2), pp. 207-223.
- Giroux, H. (1983) ‘Theories of reproduction and resistance in the new sociology of education: a critical analysis’, *Harvard Educational Review*, Vol. 53(3), pp. 257-93.
- Goldthorpe, J. and Marshall, G. (1992) ‘The promising future of class analysis: a response to recent critiques’, *Sociology*, Vol. 26(3), pp. 381-400.
- Goldthorpe, J.H. (2007) ““Cultural capital”: some critical comments”, *Sociologica*, Vol. 2, pp. 1-23.
- Gorski, P. C. (2008) ‘The myth of the “culture of poverty”’, *Educational Leadership*, Vol. 65(7), pp. 32-36.
- Gorski, P. C. (2012) ‘Perceiving the problem of poverty and schooling, deconstructing the class stereotypes that mis-shape education practice and policy’, *Equity and Excellence in*

*Education*, Vol. 45(2), pp. 302-319.

Gove, M. (2012) ‘A coalition for good - how we can all work together to make opportunity more equal’ speech delivered at Brighton College, 10<sup>th</sup> May 2012, <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/education-secretary-michael-goves-speech-to-brighton-college> (accessed 6 October, 2018).

Greening, J. (2017) Foreward, in Department for Education, *Unlocking Talent, Fulfilling Potential*, London: OGL, [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/667690/Social\\_Mobility\\_Action\\_Plan - for printing.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/667690/Social_Mobility_Action_Plan - for printing.pdf) (accessed 26 May, 2018).

Grenfell, M. (2012) ‘Interest’, in M. Grenfell (ed.), *Pierre Bourdieu: Key Concepts*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, pp. 151-168, London: Acumen.

Grenfell, M. (2012) *Pierre Bourdieu: Key Concepts*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, London: Acumen.

Grenfell, M. and James, D. (1998) *Bourdieu and Education: Acts of Practical Theory*, London: Falmer.

Groundwater-Smith, S., and Sachs, J. (2002), ‘The activist professional and the reinstatement of trust’, *Cambridge Journal of Education*, Vol. 32(3), pp.341-358.

Guba, E. G. and Lincoln, Y. S. (1994) ‘Competing paradigms in qualitative research’, in N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln (eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research*, pp. 105-117. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Guest, G., Namey, E.E. and Mitchell, M. L. (2013) *Collecting Qualitative Data: A Field Manual for Applied Research*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Haberman, M. (2010) ‘The pedagogy of poverty versus good teaching’, *Phi Delta Kappan*, Vol. 92(2), pp. 81–87.

Hagan, M. (2003) Schooling in Northern Ireland: Meeting the challenges of the twenty first century, *Irish Educational Studies*, Vol. 22(1), pp. 121-137.

Hagan, M. (2013) ‘Developing teacher competence and professionalism in Northern Ireland: an analysis of “Teaching: the reflective profession” (GTCNI, 2007)’, *Tean Journal*, Vol. 5(1), pp. 60-70, <http://194.81.189.19/ojs/index.php/TEAN/article/view/142/247> (accessed 29 December, 2016).

Hall, D. and Jones, L. (2013) ‘Social class (in)visibility and the professional experiences of middle-class novice teachers’, *Journal of Education for Teaching: International Research and Pedagogy*, Vol. 39(4), pp. 416-428.

Hallam, S., Ireson, J. (2007) ‘Secondary school pupils’ satisfaction with their ability grouping placements’, *British Educational Research Journal*, Vol. 33(1), pp. 27-45.

Hallam, S. and Parsons, S. (2013) ‘The incidence and make up of ability grouped sets in the UK primary school’, *Research Papers in Education*, Vol. 28 (4), pp. 393-420.

- Hardy, C. (2012) 'Hysteresis' in M. Grenfell (ed.) *Pierre Bourdieu: Key Concepts*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, pp. 126-149, London: Acumen.
- Hargreaves, A. (2000) 'Four ages of professionalism and professional learning', *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice*, Vol. 6 (2), pp. 151-182.
- Hargreaves, A. (2003) *Teaching in the Knowledge Society* Maidenhead: Open University Press.
- Hartas, D. (2015) 'Parenting for social mobility? Home learning parental warmth, class and educational outcomes', *Journal of Education Policy*, Vol. 30(1), pp. 21-38.
- Harvey, L. (1990) *Critical Social Research*, London: Unwin Hyman.
- Hoadley, U. and Ensor, P. (2009) 'Teachers' social class, professional dispositions and pedagogic practice', *Teaching and Teacher Education*, Vol. 25, pp. 876-886.
- hooks, b. (1994) 'Confronting class in the classroom', in *Teaching to Transgress*, New York: Routledge.
- Horgan, G. (2007) *The Impact of Poverty on Young Children's Experience of School*, Joseph Rowntree Foundation report, <http://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/files/jrf/2098-poverty-children-school.pdf> (accessed 2 July, 2015).
- Hughes, J. (2011) 'Are separate schools divisive? A case study from Northern Ireland', *British Educational Research Journal*, Vol. 37(5), pp. 829-950.
- Hulme, M. and Menter, I. (2011) 'South and North – teacher education policy in England and Scotland: a comparative textual analysis', *Scottish Educational Review*, Vol. 43(2), pp. 70-90.
- Ingram, M. (2018) *Working Class Boys and Educational Success*, London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Jæger, M.M. and Møllegaard, S. (2017) 'Cultural capital, teacher bias, and educational success: New evidence from monozygotic twins', *Social Science Research*, Vol. 65, pp. 130-144.
- James, D. (2015) 'How Bourdieu bites back: recognising misrecognition in education and educational research', *Cambridge Journal of Education*, Vol. 45(1), pp. 97-112.
- Jeffries, C. and Maeder, D. W. (2011) 'Comparing vignette instruction and assessment tasks to classroom observations and reflections', *The Teacher Educator*, Vol. 46(2), pp. 161-175.
- Jenkins, R. (2002) *Pierre Bourdieu*, London: Routledge.
- Kelleher, L., Smyth, A. and McEldowney, M. (2016) 'Cultural attitudes, parental aspirations, and socioeconomic influence on post-primary school selection in Northern Ireland', *Journal of School Choice*, Vol. 10(2), pp. 200-226.
- Kemmis, S. and McTaggart, R (1988) *The Action Research Planner*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, Geelong, Victoria: Deakin University Press.

- Kitzinger, J. (1995) 'Qualitative research: introducing focus groups', *British Medical Journal*, Vol. 311, pp. 299-302.
- Knox, S. and Burkard, A.W. (2009) 'Qualitative research interviews', *Psychotherapy Research*, Vol. 19(4/5), pp. 566-575.
- Korstjens, I. and Moser, A. (2018) 'Practical guidance to qualitative research. Part 4: Trustworthiness and publishing', *European Journal of General Practice*, Vol. 24(1), pp. 120-124.
- Kriewaldt, J. and Turnidge, D. (2013) 'Conceptualising an approach to clinical reasoning in the education profession', *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, Vol. 38(6), pp. 103-115.
- LaBoskey, V. (1993) 'A conceptual framework for reflection in preservice teacher education', J. Calderhead and P. Gates (eds.), *Conceptualising Reflection in Teacher Development*, pp.23-38, London: The Falmer Press.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (2006) 'It's not the culture of poverty, it's the poverty of culture: The problem with teacher education', *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, Vol. 37(2), pp. 104-109.
- Lambe, J. and Bones, R. (2006) 'Student teachers' attitudes to inclusion: implications for Initial Teacher Education in Northern Ireland', *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, Vol. 10(6), pp. 511-527.
- Lampert, J., Burnett, B. and Lebhers, S. (2016) 'More like the kids than the other teachers': One working-class preservice teacher's experiences in a middle-class profession', *Teaching and Teacher Education*, Vol. 58, pp. 35-42.
- Lander, V. (2011) 'Race, culture and all that: an exploration of the perspectives of White secondary student teachers about race equality issues in their initial teacher education', *Race Ethnicity and Education*, Vol. 14(3), pp. 351-364.
- Lareau, A. (2011) *Unequal Childhoods: Class Race, and Family Life*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Lareau, A. and Weininger, E.B. (2003) 'Cultural Capital in Educational Research: A Critical Assessment', *Theory and Society*, Vol. 32, (5/6), pp. 567-606.
- Lawler, S. (2011) 'Symbolic Violence', in D. Southerton (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of Consumer Culture*, pp. 1423-24, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Laws, D. (2014) *Underachievement in Education by White Working Class Children*, House of Commons Education Committee Report, <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201415/cmselect/cmeduc/142/14206.htm#a22> (accessed 10 May, 2018).
- Leitch,R., Hughes, J., Burns, S., Ievers, M., McManus, C., McRoberts, R. and Shuttleworth, I. (2017) *Investigating Links in Achievement and Deprivation*, OFMDFM: Belfast, <https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/execoffice/iliad-report-sept-17.pdf> (accessed 23

October, 2017).

Levitas, R. (1998) *The Inclusive Society: Social Exclusion and New Labour*, Basingstoke: Macmillan.

Liakopoulou, M. (2011) 'Teachers' pedagogical competence as a prerequisite for entering the profession', *European Journal of Education*, Vol. 46 (4), pp. 474-487.

Loveday, V. (2015) 'Working-class participation, middle-class aspiration? Value, upward mobility and symbolic indebtedness in higher education', *The Sociological Review*, Vol. 63, pp. 570-588.

Lupton, R. and Hempel-Jorgensen, A. (2012) 'The importance of teaching: pedagogical constraints and possibilities in working-class schools', *Journal of Education Policy*, Vol. 27(5), pp. 601-620.

Mac An Ghaill, M. (1996) 'Class, culture, and difference in England deconstructing the institutional norm', *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, Vol. 9(3), pp. 297-309.

MacDonald, H. (2009) '11-plus returns in Northern Ireland', *The Guardian*, 6 February, <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/blog/2009/feb/06/northern-ireland-11-plus> (accessed 22 June, 2015).

Machin, S. and Vignoles, A. (2006) *Education policy in the UK*, London: London School of Economics, <http://cee.lse.ac.uk/ceedps/ceedp57.pdf> (accessed 21 October, 2018).

Macqueen, S.E. (2013) 'Grouping for inequity', *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, Vol. 17(3), pp. 295-309.

Maguire, M. (2014) 'Reforming teacher education in England: 'an economy of discourses of truth', *Journal of Education Policy*, Vol. 29(6), pp. 774-784.

Martin D., Hutchison, J., Slessor, G., Urquhart, J., Cunningham, S.J. and Smith, K. (2014) 'The spontaneous formation of stereotypes via cumulative cultural evolution', *Psychological Science*, Vol. 25(9), pp. 1777-1786.

Marx, K. (1867/1977) *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, Moscow: Progress Publishers.

Maton, K. (2012) 'Habitus', in M. Grenfell (ed.) *Pierre Bourdieu: Key Concepts*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, pp. 49-65, London: Acumen.

Matthews, B. and Ross, L. (2010) *Research Methods: A Practical Guide for the Social Sciences*, London: Pearson Education.

McCullly, A. and Clarke, L. (2016) 'A place for fundamental (British) values in teacher education in Northern Ireland?', *Journal of Education for Teaching*, Vol. 42(3), pp. 354-368.

McEwen, A. and Salters, M. (1995) Public policy and education in Northern Ireland, *Research Papers in Education*, Vol. 10(1), pp. 131-141.

- McGillicuddy, D. and Devine, D. (2018) ““Turned off” or “ready to fly” - Ability grouping as an act of symbolic violence in primary school’, *Teaching and Teacher Education*, Vol. 70, pp. 88-99.
- McGrath, M (1997) ‘The narrow road: Harry Midgley and Catholic Schools in Northern Ireland’, *Irish Historical Studies*, Vol. 30(119), pp. 429-451.
- McGregor, G. (2009) ‘Educating for (*whose*) success? Schooling in an age of neo-liberalism’, *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, Vol. 30(3), pp. 345-358.
- McGuinness, S. (2012) ‘Education policy in Northern Ireland: a review’ *Italian Journal of Sociology of Education*, Vol. 4(1) pp. 205-237.
- McKeown, M. (1996) ‘The impact of the 1947 education act upon roman catholic access to academic secondary education in Northern Ireland 1947–1967’, *Irish Educational Studies*, Vol. 16(1), pp. 213-222.
- McKnight, A. (2015) Downward mobility, opportunity hoarding and the ‘glass floor’, Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion (CASE), London School of Economics, [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/447575/Downward\\_mobility\\_opportunity\\_hoarding\\_and\\_the\\_glass\\_floor.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/447575/Downward_mobility_opportunity_hoarding_and_the_glass_floor.pdf) (accessed 4 October, 2015).
- McLellan, E., MacQueen, K.M. and Niedig, J. (2003) ‘Beyond the qualitative interview: Data preparation and transcription’, *Field Methods*, Vol. 15(1), pp. 63-84.
- McMahon, H. (2000) ‘Teacher Education in the North – Systems, Current Developments; Issues and Emergent Themes’, Paper presented at the *Invitational Conference for Teacher Education Professionals in Ireland – North and South*, Belfast May 18-20, 2000.
- McManus, C. (2015) ““Bound in darkness and idolatry”? Protestant working-class underachievement and unionist hegemony”, *Irish Studies Review*, Vol. 23(1), pp. 48-67.
- Menter, I. (2016) ‘UK and Irish teacher education in a time of change ‘ in G. Beauchamp, L. Clarke, M. Hulme, M. Jephcott, A. Kennedy, G. Magennis, I. Menter, J. Murray, T. Mutton, T. O’Doherty and G. Peiser (eds.), *Teacher Education in Times of Change*, pp. 19-36, Bristol: Policy Press.
- Meredith, R. (2107) *Transfer Test: P7 Pupils Find Out Results of Entrance Exams*, 28<sup>th</sup> January, 2017, BBC website, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-38771394> (accessed 12 April, 2018).
- Milburn, A. (2012) *University Challenge: How Higher Education Can Advance Social Mobility*, A progress report by the independent reviewer on social mobility and child poverty, [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/80188/Higher-Education.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/80188/Higher-Education.pdf) (accessed 5 April, 2018).
- Mills, C. (2008a) ‘Reproduction and transformation of inequalities in schooling: the transformative potential of the theoretical constructs of Bourdieu’, *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, Vol. 29(1), pp. 79-89.
- Mills, C. (2008b) ““I don’t have much of an ethnic background” exploring changes in

- dispositions towards diversity in pre-service teachers', *International Journal of Pedagogies and Learning*, Vol. 4(3), pp. 49-58.
- Mills, C. (2009) Making sense of pre-service teachers' dispositions towards social justice: can teacher education make a difference?', *Critical Studies in Education*, Vol. 50(3), pp. 277-288.
- Mills, C. (2012) 'When 'picking the right people' is not enough: A Bourdieuan analysis of social justice and dispositional change in pre-service teachers', *International Journal of Educational Research*, Vol. 53, pp. 269-277.
- Mills, C. and Ballantyne, J. (2010) 'Pre-service teachers' dispositions towards diversity: Arguing for a developmental hierarchy of change', *Teaching and Teacher Education*, Vol. 26, pp.447-454.
- Mills, C. and Gale, T. (2010) *Schooling in Disadvantaged Communities: Playing the Game from the Back of the Field*, Dordrecht: Springer.
- Mills, C. and Keddie, A. (2012) "Fixing" student deficit in contexts of diversity: Another cautionary tale for pre-service teacher education', *International Journal of Pedagogies and Learning*, Vol. 7(1), pp.9-19.
- Milner, A. (1999), *Class*. London: Sage.
- Ministry of Education (1944) *Education Act 1944*, London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office.
- Montgomery, A. and Smith, A. (2006) 'Teacher Education in Northern Ireland: policy variations since devolution', *Scottish Educational Review*, 37, pp. 46-58.
- Moore, R. (2012) 'Capital', in M. Grenfell (ed.), *Pierre Bourdieu: Key Concepts*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, pp. 98-113, London: Acumen.
- Moran, A. (1998) 'The Northern Ireland professional growth challenge: towards an integrated model of teacher education', *Teacher Development: An international journal of teachers' professional development*, Vol. 2 (3), pp. 455-465.
- Morgan, D.L. (2007) 'Paradigms lost and pragmatism regained: Methodological implications of combining qualitative and quantitative methods', *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, Vol. 1(1), pp. 48-76.
- Morrow, S. L. (2005) 'Quality and trustworthiness in qualitative research in counseling psychology', *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, Vol. 52(2), pp. 250-260.
- Muijs, D. and Dunne, M. (2010) 'Setting by ability – or is it? A quantitative study of determinants of set placement in English secondary schools', *Educational Research*, Vol. 52(4), pp. 391-407.
- Munday, J. (2006) 'Identity in focus: the use of focus groups to study the construction of collective identity', *Sociology*, Vol. 40(1), pp. 89-105.
- Murphy, M. and Costa, C. (2015) *Theory As Method in Research: On Bourdieu, Social Theory and Education*, London: Routledge.

- Murray, J. and Passy, R. (2014) 'Primary teacher education in England: 40 years on, *Journal of Education for Teaching: International Research and Pedagogy*, Vol. 40 (5), pp. 492-506.
- Neale, J. (2016) 'Iterative categorization (IC): a systematic technique for analysing qualitative data' *Addiction*, Vol. 111, pp. 1096-1106.
- Nelson, J. (2010) 'Religious segregation and teacher education in Northern Ireland', *Research Papers in Education*, Vol. 25(1), pp.1-20.
- Nice, R. (1990), 'Translator's note' in P. Bourdieu and J.C. Passeron, *Reproduction in education, society and culture*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, London: Sage.
- Nixon, M. (2017) 'A-level results day 2017 explained in four charts', The Independent, Friday 18 August, 2017, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/education/a-level-results-day-2017-new-exams-explained-grades-boys-vs-girls-popular-subjects-regional-national-a7899851.html> (accessed 24 July, 2018).
- Nolan, K. (2012) Dispositions in the field: viewing mathematics teacher education through the lens of Bourdieu's social field theory, *Educational Studies in Mathematics*, Vol. 80, pp. 201-215.
- Nolan, K. (2014a) 'Discursive productions of teaching and learning through inquiry: Novice teachers reflect on becoming a teacher and secondary mathematics teacher education', in L. Thomas (ed.), *Becoming teacher: Sites for Teacher Development in Canadian Teacher Education* (pp. 258-88), [www.sites.google.com/site/cssecate/fallworking-conference](http://www.sites.google.com/site/cssecate/fallworking-conference) (accessed 16 July, 2018).
- Nolan, P. (2014b) *The Northern Ireland Peace Monitoring Report No. 3*, Belfast: Community Relations Council, <https://www.community-relations.org.uk/sites/crc/files/media-files/Peace-Monitoring-Report-2014.pdf> (accessed 18 June, 2016).
- Northern Ireland Office (1998) *The Belfast Agreement (Good Friday Agreement)*, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-belfast-agreement> (accessed 3 April, 2017).
- Northern Ireland Office (2006) *Northern Ireland (St Andrews Agreement) Act 2006*, <https://cain.ulster.ac.uk/hmso/nistandrewsact221106.pdf> (accessed 14 April, 2017).
- Northern Ireland Teacher Education Committee (NITEC) (1998) *The Teacher Education Partnership Handbook*, Bangor: Department of Education Northern Ireland.
- Nuttall, A. and Doherty, J. (2014) 'Disaffected boys and the achievement gap: "the wallpaper effect" and what is hidden by a focus on school results' *Urban Review*, Vol. 46, pp. 800-815.
- O'Donoghue, M. (2013) 'Putting working-class mothers in their place: social stratification, the field of education, and Pierre Bourdieu's theory of practice', *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, Vol. 34 (2), pp. 190-207.
- Office of National Statistics(2010) *Socio-economic Classification: Analytic Classes*,

[https://www.ons.gov.uk/methodology/classificationsandstandards/otherclassifications/the\\_nationalstatisticssocioeconomicclassificationnssecrebasedonsoc2010#category-descriptions-and-operational-issues](https://www.ons.gov.uk/methodology/classificationsandstandards/otherclassifications/the_nationalstatisticssocioeconomicclassificationnssecrebasedonsoc2010#category-descriptions-and-operational-issues) (accessed 16 October, 2016).

Olszen, M., Codd, J. and O'Neill, A. (2004) *Education Policy, Globalisation, Citizenship and Democracy*, London: Sage.

O'Neill, O. (2002) *A Question of Trust: The Reith Lectures 2002*,  
[https://www.immagic.com/eLibrary/ARCHIVES/GENERAL/BBC\\_UK/B020000O.pdf](https://www.immagic.com/eLibrary/ARCHIVES/GENERAL/BBC_UK/B020000O.pdf) (accessed 6 October, 2018).

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2013) *Reviews of Evaluation and Assessment in Education Northern Ireland*, United Kingdom, OECD.

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2014) *Are grouping and selecting students for different schools related to students' motivation to learn? PISA in Focus 39*, Paris: OECD.

Osborne, R.D., Miller, R.L., Cormack, R.J. and Williamson, A.P. (1988) 'Trends in higher education participation in Northern Ireland', *Economic and Social Review*, Vol. 19(4), pp. 283-301.

Pakulski, J. and Waters, M. (1996) *The Death of Class*, London: Sage.

Panyan, M.V., Hillman, S.A. and Liggett, A.M. (1997) 'The role of focus groups in evaluating and revising teacher education programs', *Teacher Education and Special Education*, Vol. 20(1), pp. 37-46.

Passy, R. (2013) 'Surviving and flourishing in a neoliberal world: primary trainees talking', *British Educational Research Journal*, Vol. 39(6), pp. 1060-1075.

Phillips, T. (2002) 'Professional education and the formation of democratic relationships between 'experts' and 'ordinary' citizens', in D. Bridges, (ed.), *Education, Autonomy and Democratic Citizenship*, pp. 237-247, Hoboken: Taylor and Francis.

Picower, B. (2009) 'The unexamined Whiteness of teaching: how White teachers maintain and enact dominant racial ideologies', *Race, Ethnicity and Education*, Vol. 12(2), pp. 197-215.

Pollard, A. and Filer, A. (2007) *Education, Schooling and Learning for Life: How Meaning and Opportunity Build from Everyday Relationships*, London: Teaching and Learning Research Programme.

Pollard, A., Anderson, J., Maddock, M., Swaffield, S., Warin, J. and Warwick, P. (2008) *Reflective Teaching: Evidence Informed Professional Practice*, (3<sup>rd</sup> edition), London: Continuum.

Pring, R. (1992) 'Standards and quality in education', *British Journal of Educational Studies*, Vol. 40(1), pp. 4-22.

Punch, K.F. (2009) *Introduction to Research Methods in Education*, London: Sage.

Rawolle, S. and Lingard, B. (2013) 'Bourdieu and educational research: thinking tools,

- relational thinking, beyond epistemological innocence', in M. Murphy (ed.), *Social Theory and Education Research: Understanding Foucault, Habermas, Bourdieu and Derrida*, pp. 117-137, London: Routledge.
- Reay, D. (1995) "They Employ Cleaners to Do that": habitus in the primary classroom', *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, Vol. 16(3), pp. 353-371.
- Reay, D. (2001) 'Finding or losing yourself?: working-class relationships to education', *Journal of Education Policy*, Vol. 16(4), pp. 333-346.
- Reay, D. (2004a) 'Education and cultural capital: the implications of changing trends in education policies', *Cultural Trends*, Vol. 13(2), pp. 73-86.
- Reay, D. (2004b) "'It's all becoming a habitus": beyond the habitual use of habitus in educational research', *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, Vol. 25 (4) pp. 431-444.
- Reay, D. (2004c) "'Mostly Roughs and Toughs": Social class, race and representation in inner city schooling', *Sociology*, Vol. 35(5), pp. 1005-1023.
- Reay, D. (2005) 'Beyond consciousness? The psychic landscape of social class', *Sociology*, Vol. 39(5), pp. 911-928.
- Reay, D. (2006) 'The zombie stalking English schools: Social class and educational inequality', *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, Vol. 54(3), pp. 288-307.
- Reay, D. (2009) 'Making Sense of White Working Class Educational Underachievement', in K.P. Sveinsson (ed.), *Who Cares about the White Working Class?*, London: The Runnymede Trust,  
<http://www.runnymedetrust.org/uploads/publications/pdfs/WhoCaresAboutTheWhiteWorkingClass-2009.pdf> (accessed 25 April, 2017).
- Reay, D. (2011) Schooling for democracy: a common school and a common university?', *Democracy and Education*, Vol. 19(1), pp. 1-3.
- Reay, D. (2012) 'What would a socially just education system look like?: saving the minnows from the pike', *Journal of Education Policy*, Vol. 27(5), pp. 587-599.
- Reay, D. (2013) Social mobility, a panacea for austere times: tales of emperors, frogs, and tadpoles, *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, Vol. 34 (5-6), pp. 660-677.
- Reay, D. (2014) 'Social Class', in D.C. Phillips (ed.) *Encyclopedia of Educational Theory and Philosophy*, pp. 757-758, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Reay, D. (2017) *Miseducation: Inequality, Education and the Working Classes*, Bristol: Policy Press.
- Reay, D., Crozier, G. and Clayton, J. (2009) "'Strangers in paradise'? Working-class students in elite universities', *Sociology*, Vol. 43(6), pp. 1103-1121.
- Rennie, D. L. (2004) 'Reflexivity and person-centered counseling', *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, Vol. 44, pp. 182-203.
- Reynolds, M. (1999) 'Standards and professional practice: The TTA and Initial Teacher

- Training', *British Journal of Educational Studies*, Vol. 47(3), pp. 247-260.
- Rhodes, C. (2016) *Industries in the United Kingdom*, Commons Briefing Paper No. 06623, 15 August, <http://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/SN06623> (accessed 7 May, 2018).
- Richardson, L. (2000) 'Writing: A method of inquiry', in N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln (eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, pp. 923-948, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Riseborough, G. (1993) 'Primary headship, state policy and the challenge of the 1990s: an exceptional story that disproves total hegemonic rule', *Journal of Education Policy*, Vol. 8(2), 155-173.
- Rizvi, F. and Lingard, B. (2009) 'The OECD and global shifts in education policy', in R. Cowen and A. M. Kazamias (eds.), *International Handbook of Comparative Education*, pp. 437-453, London: Springer.
- Roulston, K. (2010) 'Considering quality in qualitative interviewing', *Qualitative Research*, Vol. 10(2), pp. 199-228.
- Russell, H. and Grootenboer, P. (2008) 'Finding praxis?', in S. Kemmis and T. Smith (eds.), *Enabling praxis: challenges for education*, pp.109-126, Rotterdam and Taipei: Sense.
- Sachs, J. (2000) 'The activist professional', *Journal of Educational Change*, Vol. 1 pp.77-95.
- Sagoe, D. (2012) 'Precincts and prospects in the use of focus groups in social and behavioral science research', *The Qualitative Report*, Vol. 17(5), pp. 1-16.
- Santoro, N. (2009) 'Teaching in culturally diverse contexts: what knowledge about 'self' and 'others' do teachers need?', *Journal of Education for Teaching: International Research and Pedagogy*, Vol. 35(1), pp. 33-45.
- Santoro, N. and Allard, A. (2005) '(Re) Examining identities: working with diversity in the pre-service teaching experience', *Teaching and Teacher Education*, Vol. 21, pp. 863-873.
- Savage, M. (2000) *Class Analysis and Social Transformation*. Buckingham: Open University.
- Savage, M., Bagnall, G. and Longhurst, B. (2001) 'Ambivalent and defensive: Class identities in the northwest of England', *Sociology*, Vol. 35(4), pp. 875-892.
- Savage, M., Devine, F., Cunningham, N., Taylor, M., Li, Y., Hjelbrekke, J., Le Roux, B., Friedman, S. and Miles, A. (2013) 'A new model of social class? Findings from the BBC's Great British Class Survey experiment', *Sociology*, Vol. 47(2) pp. 219-250.
- Savage, M., Cunningham, N., Devine, F., Friedman, S., Laurison, D., McKenzie, L., Miles, A., Snee, H. and Wakeling, P. (2015) *Social Class In the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, Milton Keynes: Pelican.

- Sayer, M. (2005) *The Moral Significance of Class*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Schon, D. (1983) *The Reflective Practitioner*, Aldershot: Arena Ashgate.
- Schubert, J.D. (2012) ‘Suffering/symbolic violence’, in M. Grenfell (ed.) *Pierre Bourdieu: Key Concepts*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, pp. 179-194, London: Acumen
- Seighart, M.A. (2012) ‘How to change the shape of the establishment in one generation’, *The Independent*, 21 May, <http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/commentators/mary-ann-sieghart/mary-ann-sieghart-how-to-change-the-shape-of-the-establishment-in-one-generation-7769595.html> (accessed 22 June, 2017).
- Sennett, R. and Cobb, J. (1972) *The Hidden Injuries of Class*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Shelton, S.A. and Barnes, M. E. (2016) ““Racism just isn’t an issue anymore”: Preservice teachers’ resistances to the intersections of sexuality and race”, *Teaching and Teacher Education*, Vol. 55, pp. 165-174.
- Shim, J.M. (2012) ‘Pierre Bourdieu and intercultural education: it is not just about lack of knowledge about others’, *Intercultural Education*, Vol. 23(3), pp. 209-220.
- Sikes, P. (2006) ‘On dodgy ground? Problematics and ethics in educational research’, *International Journal of Research and Method in Education*, Vol. 29(1), pp. 105-117.
- Simpson, K. and Daly, P. (2004) ‘Politics and education in Northern Ireland—an analytical history’, *Irish Studies Review*, Vol. 12(2), pp. 163-174.
- Sizmur J., Ager, R., Classick, R. and Lynn, L. (2017) *PIRLS 2016 in Northern Ireland: Reading Achievement*, Slough: NFER.
- Skeggs, B. (1997) ‘Classifying practices: Representations, capitals and recognitions’, in P. Mahony and C. Zmroczeck (eds.), *Class Matters*, pp. 123-139, London: Taylor and Francis.
- Skeggs, B. (1998) *Formations of Class and Gender*, London: Sage.
- Skeggs, B. (2004) *Class, Self, Culture*. London: Routledge.
- Skeggs, B. (2009) ‘Haunted by the spectre of judgement: respectability, value and affect in class relations’, in K.P. Sveinsson (ed.), *Who Cares about the White Working Class?*, pp. 7-15. London: The Runnymede Trust, <http://www.runnymedetrust.org/uploads/publications/pdfs/WhoCaresAboutTheWhiteWorkingClass-2009.pdf> (accessed 25 April, 2017).
- Slater, D. and Ritzer, G. (2001) ‘Interview with Ulrich Beck’ *Journal of Consumer Culture*, Vol. 1, pp. 261-277.
- Sleeter, C. E. (2001) ‘Preparing teachers for culturally diverse schools: research and the overwhelming presence of whiteness’, *Journal of Teacher Education*, Vol. 52(2), pp. 94-106.

- Sleeter, C. (2008) 'Equity, democracy, and neoliberal assaults on teacher education', *Teaching and Teacher Education*, Vol. 24, pp. 1947-1957.
- Smith, R. (2002) 'The education of autonomous citizens', in Bridges, D. (ed.), *Education, Autonomy and Democratic Citizenship*, pp.127-137, Hoboken: Taylor and Francis.
- Smith, T. (2008) 'Fostering a praxis stance', in S. Kemmis and T. Smith (eds.), *Enabling Praxis: Challenges for Education*, pp.65-84, Rotterdam and Taipei: Sense.
- Smyth, C. (2016) 'Getting ahead in the preschool years: an analysis of a preschool enrichment and entertainment market', *Sociology*, Vol. 50(4), pp. 731-747.
- Soni-Sanhia, U. (2015) 'Dynamics of the 'field': multiple standpoints, narrative and shifting positionality in multisited research', *Qualitative Research*, Vol. 8(4), pp. 515-537.
- St Mary's University College, Belfast (SMCUB)(2017) *St. Mary's University College Belfast, Mission Statement*, <https://www.stmarys-belfast.ac.uk/mission/default.asp> (accessed 23October, 2017).
- Sullivan, A., Parsons, S., Green, F., Wiggins, R.D. and Ploubidis, G. (2018) 'The path from social origins to top jobs: social reproduction via education', *The British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 69(3), 776-798.
- Sutherland, A. E. and Gallagher A. M. (1987) *Pupils in the Border Band*, Belfast: Northern Ireland Council for Educational Research.
- Swartz, D.L. (2007) 'Bringing Bourdieu's master concepts into organizational analysis', *Theory and Society*, Vol. 37, pp. 45-52.
- Tettegah, S.Y. (2005) 'Technology, narratives, vignettes, and the intercultural and cross-cultural teaching portal', *Urban Education*, Vol. 40(4), pp. 368-393.
- Thomson, P (2012) 'Field', in M. Grenfell (ed.), *Pierre Bourdieu: Key Concepts*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, pp. 65-80, London: Acumen.
- Thomson, P. (2014) 'Scaling up' educational change: some musings on misrecognition and doxic challenges', *Critical Studies in Education*, Vol. 55(2), pp. 87-103.
- Thompson, I., McNicholl, J. and Menter, I. (2016) 'Student teachers' perceptions of poverty and educational achievement', *Oxford Review of Education*, Vol. 42(2), pp. 214-229.
- Thompson, J.B. (1991) 'Editor's introduction', in P. Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, pp. 1-31, Cambridge: Polity.
- Tracy, S.J. (2010) 'Qualitative quality: Eight "Big-Tent" criteria for excellent qualitative research', *Qualitative Inquiry*, Vol. 16(10), pp. 837- 851.
- Tripp, D. (2011) *Critical Incidents in Teaching: Developing Professional Judgement*, London: Routledge.

- Trochim W.M.K. (2006) *The Research Methods Knowledge Base*, <http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/> (accessed 20<sup>th</sup> June, 2017).
- Van Galen, J.A. (2010) ‘Class, identity, and teacher education’, *Urban Review*, Vol. 42, pp. 253-270.
- van Zanten, A. (2005) ‘Middle-class parents and social mix in French urban schools; reproduction and transformation of class relations in education’, *International Studies in Sociology of Education*, Vol. 13(2), pp. 107-123.
- van Zanten, A. (2005) ‘Bourdieu as education policy analyst and expert: a rich but ambiguous legacy’, *Journal of Education Policy*, Vol. 20(6), pp. 671-686.
- Wacquant, L. (2008) ‘Pierre Bourdieu’ in R. Stones , 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, *Key Sociological Thinkers*, pp. 215-29, New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Wacquant, L. (2014) ‘Homines in extremis:What fighting scholars teach us about habitus’, *Body and Society*, Vol. 20(2), pp.3-17.
- Walther, M. (2014) *Repatriation to France and Germany: A Comparative Study Based on Bourdieu’s Theory of Practice*, Fachmedien Wiesbaden: Springer.
- Warr, D. J. (2005) ““It was fun . . . but we don’t usually talk about these things”: Analyzing sociable interaction in focus groups”, *Qualitative Inquiry*, Vol. 11(2), pp, 200-225.
- Waters, G. (1998) ‘Critical evaluation for school reform’, *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, Vol. 6(20), pp. 2-38.
- Watson, K. (2007) ‘Education and Opportunity’, in F. Carnevali and J.M. Strange (eds.), 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, *20th Century Britain – Economic, Cultural and Social Change*, pp. 354-372, Harlow: Pearson Education.
- Webb, J., Schirato, T. and Danaher, G. (2002) *Understanding Bourdieu*, London: Sage.
- Weininger, E.B. and Lareau, A. (2007) ‘Cultural Capital’ in G. Ritzer (ed.), *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology*, pp. 887-891, Blackwell, <http://www.social-sciences-and-humanities.com/pdf/encyclopedia-of-sociology.pdf> (accessed 11 April, 2017).
- Whitty, G. (2002) *Making Sense of Education Policy*, London: Paul Chapman.
- Whitty, G. (2006) ‘Teacher professionalism in a new era’, Paper presented at the first *General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland Annual Lecture*, Belfast, 15 March 2006.
- Whitty, G. and Willmott, E. (1991) ‘Competence-based teacher education: approaches and issues’, *Cambridge Journal of Education*, Vol. 21(3), pp. 309-319.
- Wilkin, M. (1992) *Mentoring in Schools*, London: Kogan Page.
- Wilkinson, S.D. and Penney, D. (2014) ‘The effects of setting on classroom teaching and student learning in mainstream mathematics, English and science lessons: a critical review of the literature in England’, *Educational Review*, Vol. 66(4), pp. 411-427.

- Will, V., Eadie, D. and MacAskill, S. (1996) 'Projective and enabling techniques explored', *Marketing Intelligence and Planning*, Vol. 14(6), pp. 38-43.
- Williams, E.N. and Morrow, S.L. (2009) 'Achieving trustworthiness in qualitative research: A pan-paradigmatic perspective', *Psychotherapy Research*, Vol. 19(4-5), pp. 576-582.
- Wilson, J.A. (1986) *Transfer and the Structure of Secondary Education*, Belfast: Northern Ireland Council for Educational Research.
- Wilson, R. (2016) *Northern Ireland Peace Monitoring Report No. 4*, Belfast: Community Relations Council, <https://www.community-relations.org.uk/sites/crc/files/media-files/NIPMR-Final-2016.pdf> (accessed, 30 September, 2018).
- Wolgemuth, J.R., Erdil-Moody, Z., Opsal, T., Cross, J. E., Kaanta, T., Dickmann, E.M. and Colomer, S. (2015) 'Participants' experiences of the qualitative interview: considering the importance of research paradigms', *Qualitative Research*, Vol. 15(3), pp. 351-372.
- Wooddell, G. and Henry, J. (2005) 'The advantage of a focus on advantage: A note on teaching minority groups', *Teaching Sociology*, Vol. 33(3) pp. 301-309.
- Yeskel, F. (2008) 'Coming to class looking at education through the lens of class Introduction to the class and education special issue', *Equity and Excellence in Education*, Vol. 41(1) pp. 1-11.
- Yin, R.K. (2011) *Qualitative Research from Start to Finish*, New York: The Guilford Press.
- Zeichner, K. (2006) 'Reflections of a university-based teacher educator on the future of college – and university-based teacher education', *Journal of Teacher Education*, Vol. 57(3), pp. 326-337.