University of Glasgow

Coles, Christopher Williams (2020) *Contrasting experiences of working class and middle class students at a Scottish selective university: looking to Bourdieu for perspective.* Ed.D thesis.

CONTRASTING EXPERIENCES OF WORKING CLASS AND MIDDLE CLASS STUDENTS AT A SCOTTISH SELECTIVE UNIVERSITY; LOOKING TO BOURDIEU FOR PERSPECTIVE.

CHRISTOPHER WILLIAM COLES
BSc., M.Ed.

SUBMITTED IN FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DOCTOR OF EDUCATION DEGREE.

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW

NOVEMBER 2019

ABSTRACT

Despite the massive expansion of UK higher education provision from the 1960's onwards, concern remains about the under-representation of working class students at the selective universities. Debate continues about the causes of this under-representation and what ought to be done to remedy it. A wide variety of initiatives have been tried but the phenomenon persists; is it because selective universities unwittingly discriminate against working class students?

In the context of a Scottish selective university, this study took the views of both working class and middle class students reading for a professionally accredited degree and compared their experiences with those identified in previous published literature. Students interviewed for this study came from a specific degree programme that is traditionally more popular with middle class entrants.

Compared to previous studies, a generally improving picture of working class experience was found, and fewer obvious gaps between working class and middle class experience on application and attendance were identified. There seemed to be a coalescence of experience and a greater sense of camaraderie within the student cohort.

However, it is concluded that the initiatives designed to widen access remain isolated, poorly co-ordinated, generally unscrutinised, and underfunded. Unless more drastic approaches to socioeconomic under-representation in selective universities can be identified and implemented, progress towards equalities of opportunity, experience, and outcome is likely to remain slow and piecemeal.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to record my sincere appreciation to the following people.

First and foremost, to Professor Barbara Kehm whose patience and helpfulness, and whose exacting and painstaking approach were essential to the completion of this study.

I must also thank academic staff in the University Of Glasgow School Of Education for opening my eyes to such a wide variety of exciting enquiry, and to the administrative staff in the School for their helpfulness in answering enquiries.

The students themselves – for co-operating with this study.

I also thank teaching staff for their forbearance in my trespassing on their class time.

My thanks also go university widening participation officers. I found meetings with them to be very valuable in providing insight into what seems like a perpetual struggle.

Finally, mention must be made of the assistance which I received from the late Professor Andy Furlong of the School of Education at the University of Glasgow. Andy's enthusiastic delivery of the EdD taught programme was instrumental in my decision to investigate this topic. I greatly enjoyed my meetings with Andy and I was sorry to learn of his untimely passing.

AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

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

Signature_____

Printed name <u>CHRISTOPHER COLES</u>

"It seems as though working class people are the one group in society that you can say practically anything about" (Jones, 2011, p2).

1. INTRODUCTION

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This study contrasts aspects of the higher education experiences of a group of working class students with those of their middle class peers. Evidence is taken from students reading for the same professionally accredited undergraduate degree programme at a selective Scottish university. Aspects of the work of Pierre Bourdieu are used to explain the differences observed. It is recognised that the terms "middle class" and "working class" are both problematic – a lot of people will have different interpretations of what the terms mean. Consequently, one cannot visualise either group as occupying a homogenised block of exactly identical looking and behaving people.

In this part of the study, the researcher will identify the problem of working class participation at selective universities, and will set out definitions of what it means to be working class (as opposed to middle class), the justifications from various points of view for widening access to include working class people, the promotion of social mobility via widening access, and the personal/private benefits of widening access.

1.1 THE RESEARCH QUESTION AND ITS RELEVANCE TO PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

The main enquiry underlying this study is; what are the contrasts between working class and middle class student experience in the contexts of a specific degree programme at a selective Scottish university. The researcher wondered whether the aim, structure and content of the degree had any effect on the differences between middle class and working class experience, and whether the disruption of *habitus,* commonly felt by working class students in entering such

an overtly middle class institution, has ameliorated since similar, previous studies were published.

It is hoped that this study's findings will help promote professional practice by giving greater insight into one of the many groups which form the student population. A knowledge and understanding of the previous experiences of these students, and of their attitudes and aspirations should lead to improvements in their experience, sometimes at the cost of little more than a straightforward process of forward planning. Some suggestions for improvement are made in Chapter 5.

People of working class origin are one of several groups which are under-represented in higher education. Other under-represented groups include people classified by their membership of ethnic groups (Whitty 2001, Sirin *et al*. 2004, Tett 2009), people facing physical and mental challenges (Goode 2006), and people with responsibilities of caring for others (Alsop, Gonzalez-Arnal and Kilkey 2008). However, the focus for much of the work on inequality of access, experience, and outcome in higher education focuses on the experiences of working class students, particularly those working class students in the selective universities.

In this study, "middle class" is a term that denotes a socioeconomic group which is both more prosperous and more closely involved with higher education, compared to the less affluent "working class", who are more likely to come from backgrounds with less familiarity to university. Other rather more euphemistic terms for "working class" from the literature, include "non-traditional entrants" and "lower socioeconomic groups". Such terms are here regarded as synonymous with "working class". "Selective university" refers to a university which typically requires a higher than average entry tariff, perhaps set deliberately or unnecessarily high to cut down on the number of applications and to give an air of exclusivity and eliteness.

The minority status of working class students in selective universities persists in Scotland (Riddell and Weedon 2018) despite Scotland having a lengthier and relatively more egalitarian tradition of access to higher education, compared to

the rest of the United Kingdom. The "lad o' pairts" (Fox 2010) – the child of humble origins who advances their position in life via education – is a well-known figure in Scottish educational history. Yet according to Universities Scotland (2014) the pool of potential applicants from the poorest 20% of households is between one-quarter and one-third of the pool of potential applicants of the wealthiest 20% of households. Two further examples illustrate the class divide; Budd (2017) points out that private (fee-paying) school pupils are 22 times more likely to enter a selective university than state school pupils. In addition, Boliver *et al.* (2018), report that young people residing in the more affluent neighbourhoods are three and a half times more likely to enter university than their less affluent peers. When it comes to admission to a selective university, the more affluent are five times more likely to attend than the less affluent.

The following table illustrates the growth in higher education provision by identifying the number of students graduating with a first degree (typically an undergraduate degree) at the start of each decade for the period 1950-2000. Data is also given for 2005, then for each year 2010-2017 inclusive.

Table 1

Numbers of UK university students graduating with a first degree 1950-2017

Year	Number of students graduating with a first degree
1950	17,337
1960	22,426
1970	51,189
1980	68,150
1990	77,163
2000	243,246
2005	278,380
2010	330,720
2011	369,010
2012	390,985
2013	403,770
2014	421,850
2015	395,580
2016	399,820
2017	414,340

Sources; Bolton (2012), and HESA (2018).

One can see that the whilst the increase in the 1960's was proportionally very large (more than doubled), in absolute numbers it was much smaller than the more than three-fold increase in the 1990's, which was the decade in which polytechnics and Scottish central institutions attained university status. One might think that the increases in higher education participation in the 1960's and again in the 1990's would have resulted in proportionally increased participants from all socioeconomic groups (Thomas 2000, Jones and Thomas 2005, Christie 2009), but this has not happened as quickly as expected; indeed, Chowdry *et al.* (2010) note a deterioration in equality of degree achievement in UK socioeconomic classes in the 1980's, and early 1990's. This is borne out by research identified in Crawford *et al.* (2016, p13) who state that in the period 1980-2000, gaps in admission rates between different socioeconomic groups did

not reduce. In terms of the more selective universities, the gap in participation between working class and middle class students, has at some points in the 2010's become wider in Scotland than in England (Sutton Trust 2016).

One well-known contrast between Scotland and the rest of the UK is that resident Scottish students are not generally liable to undergraduate tuition fees. Yet this bonus seems to have little attraction for would-be Scottish working class entrants to selective universities. Riddell and Weedon (2018) note that Scotland had the proportionally lowest higher education participation rate of disadvantaged young people in all the four home countries of the UK, and that much of the expansion of higher education in Scotland is accounted for by the growth of sub-degree programmes in colleges. Because selective universities do not generally offer advanced entry (articulation) to college leavers, a former college student at a selective university may spend six years studying for a degree compared to their middle class peer, who might take four years following Highers. The potential increase in payback period and the often, larger amount of borrowing to meet maintenance costs is a clear disincentive to the working class student. Notably, the imposition of undergraduate fees has not deterred overall applications from working class students to the less selective English universities (Jump 2016).

Working class students in higher education risk becoming "othered"; a term that confirms their rarity. They come from a section of society that has been vilified in some quarters for its fecklessness; by, for example, claiming social security benefits in preference to finding paid employment (Collins 2004 p7, Jones 2012 p6, Reay 2013). They are chided for their fears of embracing a changed lifestyle, and criticised for having low expectations for the future, when they could "turn their lives around" by participating in higher education and get a degree (Jones and Thomas 2005). By remaining working class, an individual has made a tacit admission of failure (Boliver 2017). Yet in attempting to change their lives through participation in higher education, they face an unsympathetic institution in the selective university, perhaps because of their perceived lack of foundational skills such as self-confidence and linguistic competence (Gorard 2006, Reay 2013). The process of "othering" problematic groups, due to a perception that their demands exceed their usefulness, places the working class

student alongside other non-traditional groups who have encountered similar treatment (Amsler and Bolsmann 2012). Such groups are rarely encountered in the selective universities, and the lack of reception for such groups contrasts with the open, diverse, democratic, inclusive, and socially just profile which all universities like to portray. The reality is an institution which comes across in its actions as authoritative, hierarchical, and resistant to change to meet the needs of anybody who does not fit the mould of the "classic" entrant – typically young (18/19/20 at entry), articulate, white, able-bodied, and middle class in origin (Tett 2009, Wilkins and Burke 2015, Evans *et al.* 2018).

Historically, universities were not designed for universal access. For many years, a university education was a privilege afforded principally to wealthy young men, with very few (if any) participants from the "lower orders". No matter how clever and talented a working class person might be, they would have had a very remote chance of receiving a university education in most parts of the UK, even as recently as the early 1960's. The university was the preserve of the elite, with its own set of cultural mores reflecting its origins. This exclusive culture is popularly displayed in several well-known works of English literature, notably Hardy's *Jude The Obscure* (1895), in which a self-educated stonemason is compelled to give up his dream of university scholarship, contrasting with the high jinks of the elite in Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited* (partially set in Oxford in 1923), and, in a "red brick university" context, Amis' *Lucky Jim* (1954).

The expansion of higher education provision in the UK in successive phases since the 1963 Robbins Report (Robbins 1963) has been well documented (see, for example, Altbach 2004). Later, the 1992 Conservative government encouraged the conversion of polytechnics and Scottish central institutions into universities, but at that time, there was no specific national widening participation policy. Indeed, as Brown (2007) points out, widening participation as a distinct policy objective only came onto the political agenda after the election of the 1997 Labour government. The 1997 Labour government was well known for its 50% target of school leavers participating in higher education; an initiative which came from the top of the then government (Archer 2007). Statistics confirm this objective was mostly met within fifteen years of the 1997 election - the

Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (2012) recorded a participation level of 47% among target age groups in the academic year 2011/12. Specific details reveal a 35% increase in Scottish university applicants between 2008 and 2017.

1.2. SOCIAL JUSTICE AND ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION

Equality of opportunity is a well-known moral reason (Nussbaum 2011, p154) for increased provision and widening participation to all socioeconomic classes. If a just society is an equal society, and if two people have equal capabilities notwithstanding their socioeconomic position, then it seems logical for social justice to be served if they have equal opportunity to identical provision of an important public good such as higher education. To deny equality of opportunity would be a transgression of social justice. Nussbaum *(ibid.)* argues that equality of opportunity should be extended to all those who have the capability to benefit from being allowed the opportunity.

Some writers have advocated that equality of opportunity is insufficient to meet the needs of social justice. According to these authors, (e.g. Young 2001, Philips 2004, Minty 2016, Riddell 2016), equality of opportunity is only the starting point. This is emphasised by Francis *et al*. (2017), who point out that equality of opportunity is simply not radical enough as a societal aim. Phillips (2004) refers to equality of opportunity as merely a "chimera" if it is not also accompanied by an equality of outcome; she argues that inequality's root causes often lie in the policies, practices and decisions of social institutions. This is because the protocols of institutions tend to privilege people such as high-ranking public officials and business leaders (Young 2001). Opportunity may be equalised, but process and outcome are different matters. Equality of outcome should be interpreted and measured on the basis of group outcome; if this is the case, the evidence indicates that inequality is rife in the selective universities because of the proportionally smaller number of enrolments from the less affluent groups in society (Riddell 2016).

1.2.1 SOCIETAL AND ECONOMIC JUSTIFICATIONS FOR WIDENING ACCESS

For a number of years, utilitarian arguments have eclipsed the social justice arguments in official pronouncements on the benefits of widening participation across socioeconomic groups (Jones and Thomas 2005, Mavelli 2014). As an example of a utilitarian justification, human capital theory (Tomlinson 2008) treats expenditure on education as an investment in economic terms. The return on this investment comes in the form of both public and private benefits (Raaper 2018) – accordingly, increased provision of university education is desirable and should be made available to all groups for the sake of the greater good. Jones and Thomas (2005) argue that many utilitarian arguments are "double deficit" reasons which blame both the system for not being in tune with economic needs, and also blame the potential working class entrants for their low aspirations. The balance between the economic arguments and the social justice arguments for increasing participation remains, and Archer (2007), notes that the utilitarian, and especially socio-economic arguments (for example, exploiting talent for the economy, and improved social mobility for the graduate), have long been privileged in official circles in comparison to the social justice arguments.

From a public benefit point of view, increasing the national inventory of highly skilled people is very worthwhile. The university degree gives a credential which is both identifiable and desirable. However, whilst those who attend the less prestigious universities are given some limited credential, they are denied the best opportunities for joining the elite.

1.2.2 INCREASED SOCIAL MOBILITY AS A BY-PRODUCT OF WIDENING ACCESS

Improvements in social mobility are often given as justification in increasing working class participation (Cabinet Office 2012), and it is not surprising that social mobility is favoured, for many reasons. Archer (2007) argues that widening participation has become a tool for a civilising mission – an attempt to mould society more in the shape of the existing elite. Higher status people tend to be wealthier and pay more in taxes; wealthier and more educated people are

likely to commit fewer crimes and generally pay more attention to their personal health (Christie *et al*. 2017). They make fewer demands on other public services (Archer and Hutchings 2000). Whilst universities are expensive, the tax revenues expended on higher education will keep participants out of the social security system for three or four years at least (Christie 2009). University gives young people some focus for their lives by not having to compete for scarce jobs, and this self-imposed absence from the job market relieves the unemployment figures. The latter point is important as a tolerably low level of unemployment is a key political objective. University education is also cheaper, and less controversial, than certain alternative modes of young adult socialisation, such as military service. Additionally, as manufacturing industry reduces in importance in many Western nations, the value once added by manufacturing can be replaced by the value added by higher education, especially if UK degrees can be read by overseas students. This process looks very promising to policy makers and is therefore promoted to aspiring students (Gale and Hodge, 2014). Universities benefit too from opening up their places to wider sections of society. For example, they can increase their income via meeting government-directed widening participation targets (Archer 2007).

However, social mobility in the UK remains low compared to other industrial nations, and shows little or no sign of improvement; the Social Mobility Commission's "State of the Nation Report" (2016) confirmed the UK's poor record on social mobility and included several points and proposals about higher education and social mobility, including the need for a targeted campaign to widen participation and an acknowledgment that university provision is geographically uneven, with poorer regions faring particularly badly. Ball (2010) and Stahl (2016) also refer to social mobility in the UK, and whilst it improved in the early 2000's, it remains low. Although variations in schools explain some of the variability in outcome, the figures put forward by Ball (*ibid.*) indicate a relatively low amount of variability (15%) explained by school type; Ball (*ibid.*) points out that family background is a more accurate predictor of success, especially where the family enjoys activities such as days out for cultural or commemorative reasons (trips to castles, gardens, etc.), private tutoring (for example, piano lessons, sports coaching) and purchase of educational materials for use in the household. Accordingly, the acquisition of such familial *cultural*

capital could be an important factor for participation at a selective university. Middle class children are more likely to enjoy a regime of "constant stimulation" in their household and are less likely to be left to fend for themselves at more passive activities.

A knowledge economy demands a highly skilled and extensively talented workforce (Brown, Hesketh and Williams 2004, p1). The growth of higher education provision might have been expected to remove barriers to social mobility, yet the barriers persist and in the views of some researchers (Boliver (2011), Shiner and Nodin (2015)) these barriers have been reinforced in recent years. Higher education is advocated as a route to improved social mobility (Cabinet Office 2011, Croxford and Raffe 2013, Bathmaker, Ingram and Waller 2013, Sutton Trust 2016) yet the position of working class students in selective universities remains relatively precarious (Byrom and Lightfoot 2013). Reay (2010) argues that with the expansion of higher education, working class students are being consumed by higher education rather than being consumers of it. Reay (2013), also argues that social mobility is devoid of meaning unless it is accompanied by social justice, which she considers will not be achieved by the mere shifting of a few individuals between social class; in her opinion, it would be more important to create a dignified, cultured and civilised society. Social justice (social cohesion) also appears as a justification for social mobility in Milburn's (2009) report (p47), along with equality of opportunity, but both these reasons come after economic considerations and the nurturing of latent talent, which were given as the principal reasons, thus reinforcing Archer's (2007) contention that widening access is justified far more frequently by utilitarian arguments than it is by social justice considerations. Indeed, policy documents paint a rather jumbled perspective (Brooks 2018). A student is nowadays both a powerful, well informed consumer (Tomlinson 2017) but is also child-like, needing careful nurturing, with heavily prescriptive documents written in specified styles becoming widespread in universities, an example being the time expended in drafting learning outcomes. Although universities may give students the veneer of empowerment (Nelson 2018) they are quick to shift blame onto students for their failures.

The concepts of "scholarship" for its own sake, or "personal development", as ideals are notable by their absence from pronouncements on the benefits of widening participation. So too is any altruistic motivation for certain types of degree study (nursing, dentistry, medicine, theology etc.), yet altruistic motives exist in student decisions to take such degrees; desires might include vocations to help other people, or an expectation of attendance from family, friends and teachers (Balloo, Pauli and Worrell 2017).

1.2.3 PERSONAL BENEFITS OF WIDENING ACCESS

The personal or private benefits of expansion of higher education tend to overlap the public benefits to some extent. The individual who has been through higher education will often have greater life chances, and improved opportunity of increased earnings (Wolf 2018). Widening participation assists people in coping with a changing world in which a career for life is becoming an obsolete concept (Tomlinson 2008). Crawford *et al*. (2016, p8) use an economic analogy when stating that there is a "strong rate of return to a university degree". Such returns are greater where the degree is taken at a selective university (*ibid*. p9).

Some researchers, such as Brown and Hesketh (2004), Boliver (2017) and Budd (2017) argue that higher education expansion has not markedly improved prospects at exit for working class students, because many "top" employers are tending to stick with the universities which they know about and whose graduates they can feel confident with - reinforcing the power of certain universities over others. A pecking order of universities has built up – and entrants to the "better" universities might expect to receive favour when applying for the more desirable graduate jobs (Crawford *et al*. 2016, p9). The self-imposed absence of the working classes from the selective universities may therefore be excluding them from top graduate opportunities (Christie *et al* 2017).

1.3 WIDENING ACCESS AND THE UNFAMILIARITY OF THE ACCOUNTANCY AND FINANCE PROFESSION

Some might argue that the accountancy and finance profession faces a tough task if it is to appeal to a wider range of applicants (McPhail, Paisey and Paisey 2010). The profession is lampooned in popular television and films, and the stuffy image of the white, studious, spineless, middle class former public-school boy or former grammar-school boy prevails - an image which to some extent matches the profile of the traditional male university entrant (Smith and Briggs 1999). Although steps are being taken to consign this negative view to history, accountancy and finance lacks the glamour of other professions. For example, films and television serials might lionise veterinary, medical and legal professionals, and other professions (such as education and architecture) are often used as the settings for plays and films. The teaching profession (and several other professions such as veterinary science, medicine, dentistry, and law) will be familiar to the aspirational working class student as a client or as a patient (Redmond 2006), but the accountancy and finance profession is relatively unfamiliar to working class people. It will have required some additional research on the part of the intending student to arrive at accountancy and finance as a career decision.

1.4 STRUCTURE OF THIS STUDY

The study proceeds as follows-

In the literature review, details are given of the theoretical lens taken in this study, which originates in some of the work published by the eminent French sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu. Earlier studies are discussed, and reference is made to the stratification of UK universities and widening access in practice.

In the research methodology section, a justification for the research method is given, and a commentary is made on the theoretical framework adopted.

In the next chapter, attention shifts to examination of the evidence presented in the form of results of semi-structured interviews, based on students'

experiences of moving into unfamiliar territory, their coping strategies, and their hopes and fears for the future. The experiences of working class students are contrasted with those of middle class students reading for the same named degree, and comparison is also made between the narratives of the working class students in this study, and the narratives of working class students in previous published studies.

In the discussion chapter, explanations are suggested for the differing experiences of working class students and middle class students and comparison is made with earlier studies of socioeconomic difference and university experience. Recommendations for action and for further study are made, leading to the concluding chapter.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION TO THIS CHAPTER

The literature review has several purposes;

a) It provides background information and affirms familiarity with associated research in this field of study (Newell and Burnard 2006, p30).

b) It frames the purpose of the research study in the context of earlier studies and relates research outcomes to the outcomes of earlier research (Silverman 2011, p47).

c) It identifies gaps in the literature which the current study is attempting to rectify, via the evaluation of associated writings, and their summarisation and synthesis (Merriam 1979, p79). In doing so, the justification for the research is reinforced.

To frame the research question, books, policy documents, pressure group articles, and academic journal articles (generally located from peer reviewed articles from both the education and the accountancy specialisms) were consulted for relevant articles. The literature tended to deal with several broad categories, mainly the lack of working class students at selective universities, and the experiences of those students, together with the nature and the success (or otherwise) of widening participation initiatives to both selective universities and to the professions.

The under-participation of working class students at selective universities is a large and complex topic. It is also a dynamic topic which never seems to go away – almost weekly, one may see articles about the topic in the educational news. Accordingly, a very wide set of issues are raised and discussed in this chapter. The chapter begins with a justification for the research and is followed by some detail on the nature of literature consulted. Attention then moves to considering how working class and middle class students may be defined. The theoretical lens (the work of Pierre Bourdieu) is identified and details of

university stratification, working class experience at university, and reports into why under-participation exists and how it may be remedied, are given.

2.1.1 JUSTIFICATION FOR THIS RESEARCH

There are several reasons why it is opportune to conduct this study. Firstly, few studies were found where middle class students were interviewed as well as working class students; exceptions include Crozier *et al.* (2009) and Brown *et al.* (2016). Secondly, Scottish themed studies of socioeconomic class and higher education participation are less common than studies based in English universities. Thirdly, studies into working class participation have traditionally concentrated on a range of degree programme areas, rather than on one programme topic. This was important to the researcher, who has spent many years in accountancy and finance education and has witnessed the capacity the subject has for transformation of individual experience. The researcher wondered whether difference in experience persisted, and how working class students negotiated their way through the protocols and practices of a selective university.   Finally, as identified above, a significant proportion of the published material on widening access and working class participation was 15-20 years old at the time of writing, such papers included articles by Benn (1995), Tett (2004), Walker *et al.* (2004), Reay, David and Ball (2005) and Reay (2006).

2.1.2 THE LITERATURE CONSULTED FOR THIS STUDY

The literature consulted for this study can be classified into a number of distinct groupings. Firstly, much academic literature deals with access to selective universities. Such literature generally uses quantitative data from official statistics as well as news reports and press releases from bodies such as the Sutton Trust, the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS), reports, and other materials from the Scottish Government, the former Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (now, Department for Business), and the Office for Fair Access (OFFA). Examples of quantitative studies on access to selective

universities include Boliver (2011), Boliver (2013), Boliver (2015a), Raffe and Croxford (2015), and Shiner and Noden (2015).

The experiences of students and staff at both the selective and non-selective universities are found in books and peer-reviewed journals, principally in the Education and Sociology topic areas. Source materials for such studies tend to be qualitative in nature. Examples include Reay, David and Ball (2005), Christie (2009), Reay, Crozier and Clayton (2009), Bathmaker, Ingram and Waller (2013), Byrom and Lightfoot (2013), Wilkins and Burke (2015) and Stahl (2016). Generally, these studies contain substantial amounts of reported, verbatim narrative from interviewees. Many of the qualitative studies rely on theoretical constructs popularised by Bourdieu, and some detail on the meaning of the terms used in Bourdieu's work is given later in this chapter. Having identified the nature of literature used, attention now proceeds to the problems of identification of what the terms "working class" and "middle class" mean for this study.

2.2 IDENTIFICATION OF MIDDLE CLASS AND WORKING CLASS STUDENTS

Gorard *et al*. (2017) assessed a range of criteria used to classify social status. Those authors noted that the blend of criteria which comprise social class are very complex. They conclude that some of the measures are rather unsatisfactory – for example "state educated" versus "privately educated"; this distinction ignores the great many middle class students who are state educated. Yet the state-educated versus private-educated contrast is used by bodies such as the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), perhaps because of its ubiquity and simplicity. Regrettably, this classification gives some rather anomalous results, especially in connection with regional data for Northern Ireland, where all schools, both public and private, receive an element of government funding. It is notable that between 2015/16, and 2016/17 participation in higher education by former state school pupils in England increased by 0.2 percentage points to 90%, whilst in Scotland, in the corresponding period, the figure actually reduced by 0.5 percentage points from 87% to 86.5%.

For many years, the occupation of head of the household was used to classify the socioeconomic background of university applicants in the UK. Applicants were asked to state this detail on a standard form sent to the central body for student application to public universities. Although this was a simple means to extract data, it became unsatisfactory as a measure of socioeconomic distinction in higher education participation, not only because of problems of classification of employment, but also because there was no compulsion for applicants to answer the question. Confusion arises with certain responses - an applicant answering employment details with the word "engineer", might be referring to people occupying an extremely wide range of occupational statuses, from very highly educated (perhaps doctoral and post-doctoral), and highly paid engineering directors of multinational industrial corporations, to semi-skilled service engineers. Similarly, the term "civil servant" covers a vast range of responsibilities, qualifications, and incomes. Greenbank (2009) gives a clear example of the problem of class categorization; one of his interviewees had a degree educated college lecturer (mother) married to a successful, self-employed but rather less educated carpet fitter (father). Total household income was high, and the father's income was higher than the mother's income, but in terms of "head of the household" employment status the student was spuriously (according to Greenbank (*ibid.*)), regarded as "working class".

A popular proxy measure of deprivation, often used to delineate class, is the proportion of pupils in a specific school, who receive free school meals. Free school meals are an identifiable measure, easy to obtain, and well known as a measure of deprivation and low income, but uptake of the meals is not universal amongst those eligible because some families will decline the meals out of shame of being poor. The proportion of children receiving free meals may characterise a school but not an individual. In large school catchment areas, and in catchment areas for faith-based schools, one might find there will be many richer pupils, as well as many poorer pupils in receipt of free school meals. Crawford *et al.* (2016, p99) refer to a significant negative correlation observed between the prevalence of such meals in a school catchment and academic performance, however these authors agree that free school meals are not a foolproof method of measuring class status. Indeed, many researchers regard free school meals as no more than a crude indication of deprivation (for

example, Chowdry *et al.* 2010); nevertheless, they feature in several publications, such as the Russell Group's report on widening participation (2015).

More recently, location data has become a norm by which socioeconomic data are gathered. In England, this is via the postcode-based POLAR (participation of local areas) system. In this system various metrics, including historic data on student recruitment, are used to map areas to rates of application to higher education.

Bathmaker, Ingram and Waller (2013) classified their participants as members of one of four classes, namely
1) Distinct working class,
2) Distinct middle class,
3) Peripheral working class, or
4) Peripheral middle class.

These authors took a weighted range of indicators, incorporating school/college background, parental experience of university, parental occupation, and students' own conception of class. Whilst their framework looks attractive, and is certainly more elaborate, such indices can always be criticised for the weighting given to individual elements.

A more detailed scheme is used to identify deprivation in Scotland; the scheme does not necessarily denote class but it is adopted here as an up-to-date set of metrics which are used by a variety of agencies throughout Scotland. This set of metrics is known as the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation and is dealt with in the next section.

2.2.1 THE SCOTTISH INDEX OF MULTIPLE DEPRIVATION

The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) (Scottish Government 2016) is based on 38 indicators of deprivation which are then grouped into a basket of

seven indices. Each of these seven indices is associated with deprivation. The markers used in SIMD are

1) Income levels.

2) Employment levels.

3) Health.

4) Levels of education, skills and training.

5) Housing quality.

6) Ease of access to public services, and

7) Prevalence of crime.

(Source; Scottish Government 2016)

Data are assembled for each postcode area in Scotland, and SIMD indices are prepared. These indices are publicly available in "Excel" format for each of 6,976 data zones in Scotland. This list is updated frequently. The Scottish Government points out that poverty (or lack of it), and a high (or low) element of deprivation, are not identical.

To be consistent with the government data, in this study the researcher decided to adopt the SIMD 40 measure as an indicator of a person from a traditionally lower university participation area. The term "SIMD 40" means that an address is within the top 40% of deprived areas as measured in the index of SIMD. The home address postcode will identify the person within the appropriate category in SIMD. Given that the ranking of "1" is most deprived in the SIMD index, and that "6,976" is the least deprived, and that interest focusses principally on the "MD40" students, then reference was made to students whose home address was given in the range of rankings between 1 and 2,971 inclusive. Private discussion with a university widening participation officer indicated that investigation of SIMD of 20 or less would have produced only a tiny sample, therefore SIMD 40 would likely prove a better choice for identifying students who would be more likely to occupy to come from a working class household.

Whilst SIMD is a more sophisticated measure of local deprivation or lack of deprivation (neither affluence nor poverty), it is not foolproof. Outliers will exist and in some sparsely populated parts of Scotland, such as Shetland

(Universities Scotland 2014), there are no high deprivation postcodes. Accordingly, inhabitants of Shetland miss out on certain Government sponsored initiatives designed to alleviate deprivation. Universities Scotland (2014) also points out that SIMD does not reflect aspirations of differing communities; it is not unknown for two communities to show equivalent levels of deprivation but have significantly different levels of participation in higher education, perhaps because of the presence of a dynamic and facilitating teacher in one area. Results may also be skewed by the presence of high earners in deprived areas, especially where such areas cover large extents of land, which is often the case in rural and highland Scotland (Lasselle 2016). It might not be unusual to find a middle class person (for example, a church minister, or a doctor) residing in a zone of relatively higher deprivation; similarly, people who might meet a definition of being "working class" (for example a routine manual worker in the oil industry, or a skilled trades person who had received no further formal education after the age of 16, and was now running a successful business) may enjoy an affluent lifestyle and might reside in areas of relatively low deprivation. Accuracy might further be reduced if residence in a poor area or a wealthy area was only temporary (Gorard *et al*.2017).

Having set out the definition to be used in this study, attention now shifts to the pattern seen in the field – are working class students participating in higher education in the proportions which would be expected given the composition of society?

2.3 RATES AND PATTERNS OF ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION IN SCOTLAND

The improvement of access to higher education for all socioeconomic groups is a political aim shared by all the major parties. Any deterioration in access for one group would be a very unpopular development. Concern about socioeconomic under-representation at selective universities is well documented (HESA 2015). It has attracted comment and calls for action from a wide range of society and a well-known pressure group (the Sutton Trust), attaches importance to rectifying the problem of the low attendance of able, working class students from selective universities. Pressure to widen access has encouraged governments to

act, including the establishment of an Office for Fair Access (OFFA), in England, and in Scotland, a new Commissioner for Fair Access, Sir Peter Scott, was appointed in December 2016 (Universities Scotland 2016).

The following table (Table 2) details the proportion of SIMD20 (postcodes in the 20% most deprived communities in Scotland) students out of overall full-time undergraduate enrolments at Scottish universities for each year in the period 2013/14 to 2017/18 inclusive. Note that MD40 data is not available.

Table 2; MD20 students as a proportion of total Scottish undergraduate university enrolments, for the period 2013/14 to 2017/18 inclusive

	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Total enrolments; full-time undergraduates	96,135	97,375	98,855	99,695	101,310
Numbers of MD20 included above	10,575	11,470	11,960	12,175	13,150
Proportion of MD20 students to total enrolments	11%	12%	12%	12%	13%

Source; adapted from HESA, 2019.

Whilst the absolute numbers of MD20 students reveal an upward trend throughout the period, the proportion of MD20 enrolments remains relatively low, and has only risen by two percentage points over the course of five years' increased concern and action aimed at improving access.

The next table (Table 3) contrasts the proportions of SIMD20 students out of the total young (age less than 21 on entry) undergraduate entrants at both the four ancient universities (all selective) and five of the newer Scottish universities.

Table 3; Proportions of MD20 young undergraduate entrants at the four ancient universities, and at five selected post-1992 universities in Scotland, for the period 2010/11 to 2015/16 inclusive.

University	Proportions of MD20 young undergraduate entrants					
Ancient universities	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Aberdeen	2.2%	4.0%	4.0%	4.0%	3.5%	3.0%
Edinburgh	3.3%	4.7%	4.6%	5.9%	6.1%	5.3%
Glasgow	7.9%	8.7%	9.8%	11.3%	11.5%	10.2%
St Andrews	4.7%	2.6%	3.1%	4.8%	4.3%	4.3%
Post-1992 universities						
Abertay	12.3%	10.8%	11.9%	11.9%	22.4%	20.9%
Edinburgh Napier	8.7%	7.9%	8.0%	8.0%	7.9%	9.2%
Glasgow Caledonian	14.7%	15.1%	17.0%	17.1%	15.9%	17.0%
Robert Gordon	3.9%	4.8%	4.8%	5.1%	5.8%	6.3%
West of Scotland	20.6%	20.2%	19.9%	11.9%	9.7%	11.7%

Source; adapted from Scottish Funding Council, 2018

As expected, most of the newer universities show a significantly larger proportion of MD20 entrants, with quite significant proportions observable at Abertay, Glasgow Caledonian and West of Scotland universities (Donnelly 2015). Most of the selective universities show increases in the proportion of MD20 students recruited, indicative of some success in recruiting more widening access participants. The ancient University of St Andrews draws very few MD20 students, which might be due in part to its relative isolation from large urban centres, shortage of accommodation, and public transport difficulties (expensive car parking and no railway station). The relatively low numbers of MD20 students recruited by the University of Aberdeen and Robert Gordon University can be accounted for by the relative affluence of the geographical area served by those institutions, which comprise both a wealthy, oil-industry dominated city with one of the lowest rates of unemployment in the United Kingdom, and a large and prosperous rural hinterland.

Having set out the criteria for what should be regarded as "working class" and "middle class", attention will now shift to a discussion of the theoretical lens to be used in this study – aspects of the work of Pierre Bourdieu.

2.4 PIERRE BOURDIEU AND THE THEORETICAL BASIS OF THE STUDY

This study uses some of the work of Pierre Bourdieu as a theoretical lens through which the evidence is examined. Gale and Lindgard (2015) identify Bourdieu as probably the most notable late 20th century sociologist. His work remains immensely influential, and many of the works consulted for this study used Bourdieu's concepts extensively to explain underlying and persistent inequalities of educational provision and experience. Bourdieu set up a very wide-ranging theory of society. He attempted to identify and unravel the mechanisms by which social systems create, maintain, and reproduce their advantage throughout society. Many well-recognised concepts are integral to Bourdieu's writings, and their usage is widespread in the literature on university admission and attendance by non-traditional, principally working class groups.

Certain terms are frequently found in any discussion of Bourdieu's concepts of socioeconomic class. These terms are (principally) *field* and *habitus,* and the supporting ideas of the varying forms of *capital*, plus *symbolism, reproduction and transformation*, and *misrecognition*. It is necessary to introduce these topics separately but in Bourdieu's view, they cannot be separated (Bathmaker 2015). Bourdieu was a very prolific writer and in a long career he refined his ideas continually and made frequent use of analogies and metaphors; two well-known examples being "fish out of water" and "rules of the game". Only a small proportion of Bourdieu's work has been utilised by researchers in widening participation, and space considerations rule out many references to his work. Some of the studies which have incorporated the ideas of Bourdieu include works by Macdonald and Stratta (2001), Reay, David and Ball (2001), Archer (2007), Mills (2008), Greenbank (2009) and Rowlands (2018). According to Harker (1990, p86) Bourdieu's theories are;

> "…one of the few coherent accounts of the roles of
> education to change and reproduce inequalities
> from one generation to the next".

A note of caution must be sounded; in utilising the ideas of Bourdieu, researchers are attempting to superimpose ideas gathered via the investigation of the post-1945 French school and university systems, onto less centralised and less bureaucratised UK systems. Similar socioeconomic differences exist in France but may be judged on different criteria from those in the UK. There are also strong similarities between the systems of higher education in both nations. Brennan and Osborn (2008) note that in both France and the UK, the elite institutions have similarly stringent entrance requirements, which serve to reproduce the advantage of the elite.

2.4.1 THE FIELD

The field is a key component of Bourdieu's theories, and it is a term where a word with an everyday meaning is extended to cover an often complex and continually changing set of circumstances. Fields are chaotic, always in a state of flux, and characterised by struggle and strife between social agents (Bathmaker 2015). Useful (but not altogether sufficient analogies) would be a battlefield, a theatre, or a sports arena, but activities within the field might be more subtle than open confrontation. Bourdieu's fields have far more flexible and overlapping boundaries than in the normal meaning of the word. According to Thompson (2014), a field is populated by *positions* – these positions may include people or institutions (such as schools and universities).

Fields may be intangible - they may encompass virtual social settings such as online games and markets. They need not be permanent, but they are the scene of never-ending games between participants/players. These players will often bear asymmetric power (Crozier *et al*. 2008). Not only do these players need resources of *capital* to play these games, they also need to be convinced that the game is worth playing. Analogy of a game is helpful in framing relations between agents in terms of conflict and when a social actor enters the game, they must accept the rules (Harker, Mahar and Wilkes 1990, p7). There will also be victors. The people with the most power can maintain their advantage by changing the rules of the game to suit their own agenda (Bathmaker, Ingram and

Waller, 2013), and the winning hand is almost always held by those with the greater power.

2.4.2 HABITUS

Familiarity derived from acting within the field produces specific and identifiable dispositions. These dispositions are moulded and reformulated throughout one's lifetime (Harker, Mahar and Wilkes 1990, p10). Such principles and attitudes become ingrained as assimilated properties, forming the habitus (Harker, Mahar and Wilkes 1990, p10). Mills (2008) points out that the set of ingrained ideas and preconceptions can be changed, but despite its capacity for change and reproduction, internal conflict can result when habitus changes between school and university (Redmond 2008), especially for those who are unused to playing a new game in a new field in which they suddenly seem powerless. This is because a student's ideas of university are derived from their perceptions of their own identity and their own habitus (Reay 2008). Reay, Crozier and Clayton (2009) note the discomfort where knowledge of an existing habitus, which had served the holder well in the past, confronts a new and unfamiliar world – this is borne out in the accounts of their "strangers in paradise" (working class students in a selective university) in their work. One's habitus will not necessarily predicate social actions, but habitus does, according to Reay (2004), allow for the implementation of a "wide repertoire" of social actions; usage of these social actions will necessarily be judged for appropriateness by the other (often dominant) players in the field. One can easily see that middle class people will be the dominant players in the field due to their familiarity with the habitus.

When the social actor occupies a world, which is a product of their own making, the effect is analogous to a "fish in water" (Reay 2009), freely swimming and supporting its own weight, and acting according to its nature. Where the habitus is disrupted, the effect can be more like a fish being out of water; a frightened creature, thrashing about aimlessly without strategy and direction. A working class student who is worried about eventual academic achievement but who feels they cannot go back to their formerly familiar world, has experienced

a disruption of habitus (Byrom and Lightfoot 2009). The disruption is not necessarily fatal to the progress of the working class student, the upshot is that these students need to cope with the instability which their change of habitus has created. This may provoke a change of behaviour, but it will not be a negative experience in every case as some people will thrive on the challenges provided by the habitus disruption (Bourdieu 1990, p116).

2.4.3 CAPITAL

One's place in the field, one's stores of the various types of capital, and one's habitus are aggregated and are translated into positions in varying social groups, as fields are meaningless without capital (Harker, Mahar and Wilkes 1990, pp10 and 13) and each field within society will often value different types of capital or combinations of different capitals (Thompson 2014).

Society might make a distinction between working class people and middle class people in terms of their possession of various types of capital. Whilst the concept of economic capital is well-known, Bourdieu draws attention to inventories of social and cultural capital. Distinctions begin early in one's life – for Bourdieu, achievement at school depends on possession and control of cultural capital, which overshadows individual talent (Reay, David and Ball, 2005, p19). According to Brennan and Osborn (2008), the people who can make the best choices in higher education are those with the richest stores of all types of capital. Reay (2018) suggests that those with the biggest inventories of capital will find it easiest to play the game, whilst Tett *et al.* (2017), note the relative lack of preparedness (manifested in lack of capital) on the part of former further education students. These students have to be able to locate and process the "complex range of assumptions, behaviours and practices" (culture) which characterise the university, thus erecting a further barrier to success. The university, according to Bourdieu, has a role which reinforces social inequality (Rowlands 2018).

2.4.3.1 ECONOMIC CAPITAL

If economic capital is analogous to a holding of personal wealth, then the ability to gain and retain wealth is one of the hallmarks of class identity. Middle class people are going to occupy a different stratum from working class people, who typically do not possess such wealth.

Wealth might come from inheritance, or from accumulated income, or from serendipity, for example, a gambling win. Inventories of economic capital will deplete if inadequate income is acquired to replenish such capital; this contrasts with the other types of capital (social and cultural), where usage of the capital tends to replenish it. However, economic capital can be used to purchase and create social capital and cultural capital.

2.4.3.2   SOCIAL CAPITAL AND CULTURAL CAPITAL

In contrast to economic capital which is easily measurable via the medium of monetary valuation, social and cultural capital can be evaluated only by the importance ascribed to them by players in relevant fields. Social capital is not an invention of Bourdieu's, and it refers here to the resources which can be commanded from an individual's prestige and reputation in each social world (field), such as the useful networks one may build up in the workplace or in the community. Cultural capital can be viewed as the inventory of experience and appreciation which one has for what is popularly regarded as culture. Culture is generally evaluated by people with commanding resources of all forms of capital in their field. The middle class child may be exposed to dominant aspects of cultural capital which are both helpful and congruent to aspects of the school experience, such as music lessons, other forms of private tuition, membership of sports clubs, and trips to historic houses and castles (Ball 2010). These facilities might not be so readily experienced by the working class child, whose cultural capital may not be valued as highly by gatekeepers of university entrance. Some types of capital interchange with others; an example might be economic capital being spent to acquire the social capital of, say, a golf club membership, which

in turn provides extra economic capital as one builds up a client list from new contacts who one socialises with.

Social capital may act to accelerate other types of capital to form a very powerful symbolic form of capital (Harkins, Mahar and Wilkes 1990, p13). These authors state that holders of symbolic capital will create the official version of the social world which they occupy through the enactment of rules, regulation and laws, from the micro scale of clubs and societies (Bourdieu gave the example of the protocols observed in an amateur photography club) through to national and supra-national political regimes. A symbolic violence rather than an actual violence occurs when people break the protocols and laws established by such governing bodies (James 2015

More importantly, for this study, symbolic capital and the exercise of symbolic violence as a legitimising device, is at the heart of the assessment and credential giving powers of schools and the admissions policies of universities (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990, p11). Thompson (2014) notes that the power of symbolic capital supports the production and reproduction of ruling regimes and dictates the rules of the game. Harker (1990, p86) notes that the power vested in the dominant group will then decide on resources to be allocated to education in all its forms. Tett (2000) uses the analogy of university as a trading post in a buyers' market – the successful traders (applicants) are the ones who bring goods (all forms of capital) that are valued by the buyers (university admissions staff). Reay (2018) notes that deprivation of cultural capital can be seen at its strongest where a student decides to self-exclude from study at a selective university; an almost supreme act of symbolic violence.

Harker (1990, p88) observes that social classifications transform into academic classifications. Anybody who cannot bring adequate capital to the field of education will be condemned to silence and even ridicule (symbolic violence). The implication of this for the working class student in a selective university is apparent. The informal and sometimes haphazard learning experience of the working class student is not valued by the selective university (Tett 1999) and the working class student might feel pressurised into taking a low profile and avoiding the jolly japes of their peers. The experience which the middle class

student takes to university is likely to be regarded as a being of a much higher quality.

An example of learning and playing by the rules of the game, and the effect of a change in habitus is given by Redmond (2006). Several of the education students in her class told her that teacher attitudes towards their (mature) students' own children had changed for the better. Initially, qualified teachers had paid little attention or even patronised Redmond's students' children, but as the student teachers progressed through their course of study, qualified teacher attitudes changed, and they became more affable to the student teachers. Perhaps the already qualified teachers in Redmond's example felt that the mature student teachers were now more equal to them, having decided to enter the field and play by the rules of the game. The student teachers may have presented with the wrong form of cultural capital when their children enrolled at school, but as the students proceeded through their degree, their "defective" capital was replaced by a "correct" capital (Bowl 2001) which was more valued by the already qualified school teachers, who set the agenda and rules of the game in their own field. A similar change of behaviour was also identified by Tett *et al*. (2017) who noted three significant processes leading to change

a) A change due to the loss of belonging from the "old" and replacing it with belonging to the university.
b) A change brought about by the student learning to fit in with a different culture.
c) A change in approaches to study and learning, towards forms which were more appropriate for university.

Such changes are necessary if the student is to avoid the worse effects of habitus disruption in coming from school and/or home, to university.

2.4.4 REPRODUCTION

Gale and Lindgard (2015) suggest that Bourdieu's discussion of reproduction corresponds with the contemporary educational experience in the UK. Principles are instilled into individuals via repeated practices and they tend to reproduce each other whilst continuously adapting and transforming to the outside

environment (Harkins, Mahar and Wilkes 1990, p12). Mills (2008) also points out that teachers unwittingly reproduce the social order system, which favours those members of society who have a longer educational pedigree, and schools tend to reinforce and consecrate initial inequalities (Harker 1990, p90). This point is extended into practice in later life by Boliver (2017) who notes that graduate employers reproduce inequality by recruiting in their "own image".

According to Bourdieu, the changes made by working class students to fit in would be viewed as an adaptation, which becomes an acceptance of their inferior position (Read, Archer and Leathwood, 2003, Redmond 2006) and an acknowledgment of the power of symbolic violence to exclude anyone who does not fit into their image to self-exclude themselves: an easy to implement expression of such symbolic violence. Middle class students do better throughout the educational system because the system is fixed up in their favour; the system reproduces the middle class advantage (Thomas 2002, Archer 2007.)

2.4.5 MISRECOGNITION

Misrecognition (James 2015) can be seen in schools and universities; an arbitrary curriculum becomes naturalised, and social classifications transform into academic classifications too. An illustration of misrecognition in the form of a store customer loyalty points scheme is identified in both James (2015) and Gale and Lindgard (2015). The loyal customer thinks that they are getting a good deal by getting rewards when they buy more goods from the store, but the store knows that not only does the scheme create loyalty and therefore generate extra sales, it is using its asymmetrical position of power (it knows more about the customer than the customer realises) to harvest data about buying patterns which the store will then use to develop its marketing strategy.

The misrecognition of the educational system gives educational credentials, (Wolf 2018) which may be founded on arbitrary criteria, a fundamental role in maintenance of the social order. Schools teach topics which are less familiar to working class people, almost setting the working class student up for failure

before they have started. The academy creates something which is deemed to be worthwhile, at the same time it gives itself legitimation of its position in teaching and assessing material for the credential and attracting students to come and study. Misrecognition might also be said to justify the more impoverished position of the "bronze" standard universities by shrouding their mission in terms of phrases and words such as "smaller" (thereby friendlier and less likely to cause habitus disruption), "local provision", "dynamic", and "flexible". In the context of this study, the working class student may be subject to misrecognition by perceiving that they do not belong in a selective university – it is not for the "likes of us".

2.4.6 CHANGE OF BEHAVIOUR WHILST AT UNIVERSITY

It is not unknown for some students to change aspects of their behaviour to attempt to fit into an unfamiliar new habitat and become rather less like Bourdieu's metaphorical "fish out of water" (Reay, Crozier and Clayton 2009, Coogan 2016, Boliver 2017). This is not surprising, as a lot of initiatives start out from the working class student having "deficits". The working class student is "pathologised" with problems which they bring to the academic field according to Tett (2000) and Leathwood and O'Connell (2003). Such students are treated as a "special case", to be pitied or to be accorded special intervention in certain accounts (Read, Archer and Leathwood, 2003). Bourdieu (1979, p372) refers to this behavioural change as an *acquiescence* in the face of the dominant culture; not a neutral position by any means, but an acknowledgement of the *symbolic violence* that has been visited upon them. The working class student must internalise the view that the established norms of the newly experienced institution are superior to those with which the individual has grown up (Reay, Crozier and Clayton 2009). Wilcox, Wynn and Fyvle-Gauld (2003) refer to the urgency of assimilation, which students must face to combat feelings of loneliness and isolation, especially if a student is in accommodation where they are surrounded by people from different backgrounds (*ibid*). In a selective university, where few if any other students belong to a similar group as a working class student, it may be difficult to remain resilient under pressure from peers. The fear of changing identity is important in cultures where familiarity

with higher education is limited (for example Stahl and Dale 2013, Stahl 2016) and acts as an additional handicap on working class participation at selective universities. Indeed, Stahl (2016), in a study of working class boys, notes that their aspirations included qualities such as being true to oneself and one's surroundings as a basis for other desirable qualities to the group, such as honour and loyalty to the group. The boys regarded these qualities as superior to long-term middle class career and financial comfort aspirations.

Having identified some of the key issues in the work of Bourdieu and their applicability to this study, discussion moves on to universities themselves; how and when did they expand, how and why are they stratified, and what provisions do they make for working class students.

2.5 EXPANSION OF HIGHER EDUCATION PROVISION IN THE UK

From an historical perspective, up until the end of the 19th Century fewer than twenty universities served the whole of the United Kingdom, and attendance at university was almost exclusively the preserve of a very highly privileged few (Reay, David and Ball 2005, p1). Even as late as 1963, only a small proportion of the usual age-range of the UK population participated in full-time university education (4%). Of those participants, the figures for people of working class origin show an even more stark lack of participation; 3% of the total entrants were working class boys, and 1% were working class girls (Robbins 1963, Table 5). However, moves were taking place to increase provision during the late 1950's and early 1960's, even prior to the publication of the well-known Robbins Report of 1963.

A long list of ingredients was available to justify university expansion throughout the period from 1960 to 1995. Low and uneven participation of larger socioeconomic groups led to concern that the UK was falling significantly behind similar industrialised nations, in having a smaller proportion of university entrants compared to its peers (Willets 2013, pp1-4). This utilitarian concern was voiced simultaneously with a concern of social justice; that increasing numbers of eligible students were being denied a place at university due to

nothing more than the mismatch of supply and demand. Social justice concerns demanded that it was surely right to provide more places so that bright students, whatever their background, and whatever their intentions, would not be disadvantaged. Demographics and legislation added fuel to this increased demand for higher education. The first of the post-war generation would have been 18 years old in 1963 (Layard 2013, p13), and the impact of the healthier and better educated population in the post-war welfare state would have amplified the number of eligible entrants. It is notable that of the articles cited in this study, few interviewees (see for example Archer and Hutchings 2000) referred to the wider, national benefits as a justification for their higher education participation, despite the strongly utilitarian flavour of ministerial pronouncements on university expansion.

Despite the sizeable expansion of university provision throughout the 1960's, the system was unable to completely satisfy demand. Two-tier provision had grown up, with universities (including the open-access Open University, founded in 1969) supplying their own degrees, and other institutions (generally polytechnics, central institutions and other colleges) supplying centrally directed Council for National Academic Awards degrees, mostly in vocational subjects such as engineering. This situation changed following the introduction of the Further and Higher Education Act, by the Conservative government in 1992 (Boliver 2015a), which encouraged the conversion of polytechnics and Scottish central institutions into universities. A rapid series of changes followed the disappearance of the binary divide between universities and polytechnics - an "uprating", of status for the former polytechnics according to Boliver (2013). An academic drift appeared simultaneously, (Edwards and Miller 2008) by which vocational subjects, with their own scheme of qualifications became degree level academic disciplines in the wake of this expansion, leading to an increased number of students in occupationally required degrees. Teacher-training colleges became universities, and more universities developed Schools of Nursing. The necessity to obtain a degree to practise in an area which was formerly non-degree entry, such as nursing, will reproduce class inequality according to Reay David and Ball (2005, p4). It makes access to such professions more difficult for working class entrants who formerly would have been able to pursue their chosen career without the time and cost of obtaining a degree

(Reay 2018). The rules of the game are therefore strengthened in favour of the more powerful – if one is not prepared to read for a degree, then one will be denied access to one's intended career path.

In the late 1990's and early 2000's further steps were taken to expand provision; according to Leathwood and O'Connell (2010), utilitarian arguments (especially the need to up-skill the population) dominated the agenda to the virtual exclusion of social justice arguments. At the heart of the expansion was the political objective of 50% of all those in the 18-30 age range having participated in higher education. Whilst absolute numbers of participants rose, relative participation rates for working class students remained uneven and generally lower in proportion compared to students from other socioeconomic groups. Despite recommendations of the Dearing Report (National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education 1997, p101) that demand for university places could be filled by previously under-represented groups, the higher placed socioeconomic groups maintained their domination of the selective universities (Blanden and Machin 2004, Boliver 2011), and inequitable rates of participation persist between middle class and working class students. Throughout the 1990's, for the UK as a whole, the proportion of eligible participants from middle class backgrounds increased from 55% to 72%, whilst for children from backgrounds where the head of the household was unskilled, participation rates doubled, but only from the very low level of 6%, to around 13% (Boliver 2011). This point is amplified by researchers such as Croxford and Raffe (2013), who note that in the periods of expansion, middle class student participation grows at a faster rate than working class student participation. As Morgan (2017) points out, the impact of widening participation did not immediately widen opportunity, and the selective universities became even more selective with university expansion. The middle classes appear expert at maintaining their place of power and influence to retain their favourable position, (Reay 2013), leaving the other socioeconomic groups to the newer, more local institutions (Reay, Crozier and Clayton 2009).

2.5.1 STRATIFICATION OF UK UNIVERSITIES

The significant age differentials between UK universities unsurprisingly results in the older universities regarding themselves as an elite above the remainder. According to Jones (2018) the expansion of selective universities has allowed them to gather a greater number of students than ever before. Early career staff at the older universities will have inevitably been looked to when considering the provision of staff at the newer establishments, and connections with the older establishments would be encouraged in tasks such as searches of previous research, appointment of external examiners and other external moderation, thus attempting to gain cultural capital. University league tables, which reinforce stratification, appeared shortly after the conversion of the former polytechnics and central institutions in the early 1990's, and the establishment of the Russell Group of 24 research-intensive universities followed in 1994 (Russell Group 2016). Not all selective universities are part of the Russell Group, but all Russell Group members are selective.

Boliver (2015a) points to gradations of eliteness which are found in the UK university system, with Oxbridge, then the remainder of the Russell Group, then various sub-groups of other universities occupying successive rungs of an academic ladder. She concludes that approximately one quarter of newer universities (post-1992) occupy a distinctive lowest tier. The differentials between universities result in attendance at a selective university becoming a worthwhile badge of achievement for aspirational students, as they hope employers will interpret their success at a selective university as being worth more than similar achievement at a less selective institution. Attendance at a less selective university can be viewed as a consolation prize, marking out a student as having an award, but a less worthwhile award before she or he has even started their degree.

Archer (2007) refers to a functional justification for stratification – a rationalisation of how this stratification had come about, and a positive-sounding pronouncement from the then Secretary of State for Education, Charles Clarke, who in 2002, referred to an idealised three-tier system of

a) The more prestigious research-intensive universities.

b) The well-known ("outstanding") teaching-intensive universities, and finally,

c) The local universities described as "dynamic and dramatic" by the then Secretary of State.

Whilst specific details of which universities would go into which category were absent from Clarke's pronouncement, it would not be difficult to guess where most of the UK's universities would lie in this scheme. The tripartite classification was abbreviated into three standards – "gold", "silver" and "bronze" – a clear analogy of Olympic-like competition between universities, and a gradation replicated in the Teaching Excellence Framework results of 2017. Outside Scotland, the removal of maximum numbers has increased the numbers attracted to the selective universities (Adams 2018). In 2018, nearly a third of entrants had opted for a selective university, thanks to a growth of overseas students. The "bronze" standard universities experienced a decline in enrolments between 2017 and 2018, the fall being attributed *inter alia* to demographic reasons. Concern had previously been expressed by politically influential scholars such as Giddens (Bryant and Jary 2001) that more resources were needed in higher education, not to assist more working class students into higher education, but to improve the UK's best universities ("a concentration of excellence") so they could maintain their status in a globalised education market where they are competing against the well-funded private American universities. Bathmaker, Ingram and Waller (2013) argue that the analogy with competitive sports does little more than exacerbate inequality between the richer and the poorer universities. The use of such competitive language is a manifestation of the increased marketisation and hence competition between universities, and university stratification proceeds apace with societal stratification (Brown 2018). Archer (2007) also points to a clear expectation of the role for bronze standard universities; their remit was to be in meeting training needs for non-standard entrants with a clear purpose in serving their local community, whilst Reay (2001) argues that the acknowledgment of lower status universities could predicate the existence of failing or "sink" universities, as in the school sector. The gold and silver standard universities will become more geared to national and international purposes and recognition and they will also have a clear research agenda. This level of esteem would not be expected

of the bronze standard universities. It is also notable that the bronze standard universities are the only ones where a definition of place ("local") is given, perhaps redressing a little of the historic imbalance between university provision and population concentration. Unsurprisingly, Leathwood and O'Connell (2003) confirm that working class participants constituted a disproportionally larger number of entrants to the lowest tier, the "bronze" standard universities.

Boliver *et al*. (2018) point out that Scotland has a greater proportion of selective universities (four out of eighteen) than the other constituent nations of the United Kingdom. The global identity of the selective university gives it a positional advantage; globally recognised universities gain extra kudos which translates into extra funding. Competitive admission for places becomes a proxy for higher quality, reinforcing the claim to "gold" status. Raffe and Croxford (2015) apply the gold/silver/bronze distinction to Scotland and envisage three tiers consisting (1) of the four ancient universities (2) the older, pre-1992 universities (often former colleges of advanced technology or former extension colleges of ancient universities) and (3) the post-1992 newer universities. This classification has been adopted by the Scottish Government, and in the period of the Raffe and Croxford *(ibid.)* study (the three years 2006, 2008, and 2010 respectively), it was noted that status differences between the three categories widened. They advance two possible explanations for the continuation and accentuation of inequality between institutions – a rational action theory and a cultural theory.

According to the rational action theory, the prestigious (selective) universities are in a virtuous circle. They have an established reputation, and students want to study there. Their research success generates extra funds to spend on research, which in turn pays for improved facilities and attracts the better professors – an example of RK Merton's "Matthew effect" (Soares 2011), the mechanism by which the rich get richer and the poor get poorer. This point is picked up by Boliver *et al*. (2018), who notes that a system of competitive entry becomes an indicator of success, which feeds into greater global reputation and accordingly higher entry tariffs, thus further disadvantaging the working class aspirant. To retain their pre-eminence, selective universities will not seek ties with what they perceive to be lower-status institutions; rather, they will

associate with other more prestigious universities and benchmark their achievements accordingly (Wolf 2018).

Cultural theory helps explain the growth and existence of an established culture of matching between university and social class. Middle class people want to go to the selective universities because they know that there will be other people like them at such institutions. The top researchers aim for a post at the selective universities, because conditions are usually better; an international study by a researcher based in the United States of America noted that academic staff in less prestigious institutions suffer worse wellbeing overall than staff at more prestigious universities (Bothwell 2017). The cultural theme of the elite university becomes one which valorises middle class attitudes and practices.

2.6 WORKING CLASS STUDENTS AND UNIVERSITY CHOICE

Researchers have found many reasons to account for the relative lack of working class students at selective universities (Byrom 2009). In a study which incorporated both quantitative and qualitative elements, Ball *et al.* (2002) drew attention to the "pragmatic" nature of choice. What might seem like an almost random, perhaps even perverse choice may be entirely rational to the student at the time. This may be based on a poor or a positive, (often isolated) experience at an open day, or because of a friend's recommendation or condemnation, or on the experience of another party, perhaps a teacher or a relative. Reay (2006) argues that choice is very complex to understand, because of the existence of different influences, including family (an influence common to all classes and ethnic groups), schools, provision of the desired programme, the current consumer culture (for example, league tables), and peer group.

Celebrating "choice" was a factor in the 1997 Labour government's push for widening participation (Archer 2007). However, according to some researchers, the word "choice" may carry an element of misrecognition; Wilkins and Burke (2015) argue that whilst the word sounds attractive, it is of little meaning unless it is associated with clear and comprehensive information about the nature of the choices to be made. This point is also taken up by Whitty (2001), who notes

that "choice" (along with other rhetorical terms like "diversity" and "difference") is used to strengthen and reinforce existing patterns of class and race difference and is not used to challenge existing norms. Archer (2007) agrees that the reification of diversity is not helpful in promoting widening participation, and that diversity has become misrecognised as synonymous with equality. Ball *et al*. (2002) argue that free agency to choose rarely exists, and that choice of university is a complex decision which must be framed through the interplay of a host of factors.

Very high grades are needed to enter the most prestigious universities, and similarly high grades in specific subjects are required if one wishes to participate in programmes with very high demand but very low supply of places. Such programmes are almost exclusively found in the ancient universities and in other, long-established selective universities, so the aspiring working class participant not only has to strive for the highest grades in their school studies, they also face a very different culture and the pressure of an interview in competition with others in a strange and unfamiliar environment.

2.6.1 UNIVERSITY EXPERIENCES OF WORKING CLASS PARTICIPANTS

A review of the literature finds that different authors emphasise different aspects of working class students' interaction with university life. Few authors encountered entirely negative views of student experience; many, such as those in Leathwood and O'Connell's (2003) study acknowledge the difficulties of participation but were generally very positive in outlook. Perhaps a small number of wholly negative narratives is to be expected, as students who consider themselves to have made poor choices might have been less likely to present themselves for interview (Wilcox, Wynn and Fyvie-Gauld 2005).

Leathwood and O'Connell (2003) wrote about the working class student experience in a non-selective post-1992 university. They broke the problems of university attendance for working class students into three broad areas – financial pressures, institutional issues (summarised as a lack of help in managing the transition to independent learning), and a lack of self-confidence.

Institutional issues also featured in Read, Archer and Leathwood's study (2003), where students at a post-1992 institution highlighted the relatively low contact hours on their degree programmes, the lack of guidance on assignments which lecturers expected them to know (for example, essay writing), and the lack of pastoral care.

Bathmaker, Ingram and Waller (2013) investigated student experience at two separate universities in the same city. One university was a traditional Russell Group institution, whilst the other was a less prestigious former polytechnic, which was on its way towards becoming selective, perhaps because it was located in a prosperous city and was near to the well-known highly selective Russell Group university. They examined the experiences of working class students and middle class students at both universities. In terms of both admissions, and progress following enrolment, they identified a "smarter" approach by the families of the middle class students. These families were much more capable at using and gaining experiences and connections to their advantage in achieving successful outcomes at graduation and after graduation. These authors refer to extra-curricular activities and employment experiences, such as internships, as playing the game - implying a competition for scarce resources. The middle class students which Bathmaker *et al*. interviewed expressed the importance of "standing out" from the crowd as an aspect of the game; this was important in an era of great competition for graduate entry jobs. They also noted that an increased supply of graduates, at a time when no additional graduate jobs were available, results in graduates taking on work for which they are over-qualified, (Capsada-Munesch 2017) which can be a very demotivating experience especially where student fees have been paid. Accordingly, if a student wants a better chance of employment, a good degree might not be enough, especially if it is not from a selective university. A shrewd student might increase their attractiveness to an employer by behaviour which makes them distinctive, and this might come via attendance and success at a selective university, and via participation and achievement in extra -curricular activities. Redmond (2006) also found that widening participation students (mature students, in that study) paid less attention to augmenting their softer skills via extra-curricular activities, therefore creating an additional disadvantage for themselves compared to students holding prestigious posts in

debating societies, sports clubs, student political societies and similar bodies. The pressure to multi-task and fill several roles simultaneously, plus feelings of awkwardness at taking part in unfamiliar activities in unfamiliar surroundings with unfamiliar people, acted as brakes on what might have been worthwhile opportunities to enhance future careers; such reasons were also cited by Bathmaker, Ingram and Waller *(ibid.)*.

Wilcox, Wynn and Fyvie-Gauld (2005) investigated the factors which interacted on students' decisions to leave university prior to graduation. The students selected in their study had attended a selective 1960's university, and most cited academic and institutional factors as responsible for their decision to leave. However, student accounts of leaving drew attention to social factors in several cases, such as distance from home, the withdrawal of friends from the university, and failure to engage with a key individual of university staff (for example, a personal tutor). Their study also drew attention to an embarrassment, even fear, held by working class students when opportunities came to join in unfamiliar social circles and events – a reluctance to "play the game".

Reay, Crozier and Clayton (2009) interviewed several working class students at a selective university. Such students were aware of their "otherness", and had learned to avoid potentially conflicting situations, even where they might have benefitted from the experience. This may include forgoing attendance at parties and turning down invitations to play sports for university teams. These students prioritised their own education first and tended to seek out people from similar backgrounds to their own, thus avoiding too big a social leap into unknown territory. Benefits may well have accrued from taking part in social activities, but pressure to work and to avoid becoming a drain on household budgets was strong, thus participation in paid part-time work was commonplace. The students all commented positively on their educational experience, but no detail of any special intervention to assist them (if it existed) was given in that publication.

Crozier *et al.* (2009) also point to more basic fears as a brake to working class enjoyment of after-hours activity. This is the danger of ridicule and bullying

visited on the poorer student by a mob of perhaps grammar-school or public-school educated students. An example of this type of behaviour ("Your dad works for my dad" (Times Higher Education Supplement 2016)) might occur in residences, or at inter-university sports fixtures. This degradation may be more difficult to endure if the victim had an expectation of acceptance and equality in a new peer group, and if they were trying to navigate a safe passage through unfamiliar territory. Such experiences would run counter to any university's published commitment to diversity.

Many working class students undergo a transformative process (Reay 2010) – which means that they will gain a new identity as a result of their studies, whereas the experience for the middle class student is likely to be more of a reproductive process – they are reproducing their already higher status as a result of achieving their degree, that trails through to their employment, as identified by "Lucy", in Brown *et al*. (2016), who noted similarity between her Oxford college and the law firm where she worked, in terms of the "same people" being there. Crozier *et al*. (2009) note that middle class students at one traditional university in the study felt a sense of entitlement from the start. Better school facilities, even to the extent of advice in filling in an UCAS application form, outweighed the conditions which might have proved unwelcoming for students who attended a poor state school.

Reay, Crozier and Clayton (2009) point to the heterogeneity of the working class student experience. It is not correct to ascribe all the various handicaps of study to one socioeconomic group; middle class students might equally have carer responsibilities, suffer from homesickness, and choose to work whilst studying, perhaps to establish their independence or to pay their own way through university. University is by no means an entirely negative experience, because a great many working class students will enter selective universities and will derive enormous benefit from the experience. "Colin" in Brown *et al*. (2016) is an example of a working class student from a "sink" state school who attends an Oxford college and is aware of his unusual status in doing so. He decries the antics of some of his more affluent peers as he believes attendance at Oxford to be so valuable that there ought to be no time for any horseplay. Although "luck" is mentioned in one of the accounts in the above study, the

students interviewed (at an elite university) regarded their own hard work in high school as the main determinant of the locus of their current studies, which confounds the suggestion of a fatalism trait seen in several accounts of personal characteristics and working class attendance (Tett 2004, Greenbank 2009). In common with the students interviewed in Reay, Crozier and Clayton (2009), they spoke highly of their university, their lecturers, and their degree programme.

Discussion now progresses further on the lack of working class participation in selective universities, and to reasons for that phenomenon.

2.7 REASONS FOR WORKING CLASS UNDER PARTICIPATION AT SELECTIVE UNIVERSITIES

A number of publications have been issued which attempt to identify reasons for working class under-participation at selective universities and these publications include remedies for how this should be addressed.

2.7.1 RUSSELL GROUP – "OPENING DOORS"

Perhaps because of concern about working class under-representation, in 2015 the Russell Group presented its publication, "Opening Doors", which concentrated on reasons for under-representation in the first part. Many reasons for under-representation were given; some reasons place the burden on the shoulders of the under-represented students themselves (see Tett 2004 for similar examples), their families, and their schools. The blame for their lack of participation is alleged to be a complex cocktail of factors including poor subject choice following poor teacher advice, the lack of well qualified teachers in the worst schools, comparatively worse performance in applications and interview compared to middle class pupils, and a preference shown by working class people for decisions involving less risk. Despite the unanalysed value-judgments in the Russell Group report, the blame for the under-representation is shifted firmly onto those who are most adversely affected by the situation. It seems that changes must come from the under-represented groups themselves,

and not from the Russell Group. It is notable that a number of researchers (e.g. Gorard *et al*. 2017, Riddell and Weedon 2018) reject the idea that lack of aspiration is a key cause of working class under participation. Any reference to a bias against working class students by Russell Group members, even a retraction statement, is missing. The Russell Group emphasises that its widening participation initiatives are varied and include steps to aid working class students via school liaison, fee waivers (unnecessary in Scotland), bursaries, and scholarships. The Russell Group uses the proxy measure of families in receipt of free school meals to track the increases in poorer applicants measured from 1997, to a point where 20% of recruitment from lower socioeconomic backgrounds had been attained by the mid-2010's. Several times throughout the publication, the Group identifies the amount spent on various widening participation initiatives as £234 million in England alone in 2015/16. Detailed expenditure by individual universities is missing from the publication, but to put the £234 million figure of expense into context, one of the Russell Group members (the University of Manchester) recorded an income of over £1 billion in 2014/15 (University of Manchester Financial Statements 2014/15).

In a critique of "Opening Doors", Boliver (2015b) questioned the Russell Group's usage of 1997 as a base point, arguing that it was a year with unusually low applications from poorer socioeconomic groups, and any comparison between 1997 and later years would inevitably reveal a significant improvement in participation. Secondly, the figures quoted are for applicants and not entrants, and the Russell Group's 20% figure (from an unusually low base) compares far less favourably with a figure of 33% participation of young people from poorer socioeconomic backgrounds in other universities. Boliver (*ibid.*) echoes points made by Whitty (2001), that at the application stage, the process of selection for the scarce resource of the selective university reinforces advantage in favour of the middle class applicant. The success of a few working class students in attending selective universities (a tokenism, according to Tett 1999) helps to legitimise the *status quo* and reproduces favour for the middle class entrant.

The Russell Group (2015) is dismissive of suggested benefits of quotas for working class students, referring to a single isolated initiative of quotas at a Texas university in order to highlight their opposition to any form of "affirmative

action" for increased participation from students from non-traditional backgrounds. However, Blackman (2017) notes that mixed-ability classes (the comprehensive university) have succeeded in increasing attainment and meeting quota targets in several other cases in the USA. One senses that increased participation of non-traditional students in the Russell Group will happen on terms set by the Russell Group themselves, acting as a very powerful agent in its own field. Any centrally directed change, such as socioeconomic class quotas for entry, and a mandatory "comprehensive" system of entrance criteria, will not be welcome to the Russell Group institutions.

2.7.2 COMMISSION FOR WIDENING ACCESS

Similarly, the Final Report of the Commission for Widening Access (2015) identified five major hurdles in widening participation;

1. The attainment gap between the most and least advantaged communities (which has been suggested as the biggest hurdle). School subject choice could justifiably come within this heading.

2. The culture of the university, seen as off-putting to many students (i.e. the university is not for the "likes of us").

3. Unawareness of the paths to higher education.

4. Poor availability of the latest information about access to higher education, and

5. Poor availability of provision in areas local to where students live.

More detail on each of these factors is given below.

2.7.2.1 THE ATTAINMENT GAP, AND SCHOOL SUBJECT CHOICE

It can be difficult for an intending student to enrol at a selective university if they have studied non-traditional (sometimes denigrated as "softer" subjects) at school and were unable to meet the Russell Group's guidelines and advice on what subjects to study at Higher level (Russell Group 2011, Russell Group 2015). Shiner and Noden (2015) found that students who took what are popularly regarded as the "tougher" advanced subjects were almost ten times as likely to

apply to selective universities. It is possible that some of the difference is accounted for by the relative shortage of science, technology, engineering, mathematics and medicine degrees at the lower status universities.

Forms of what has become known as "affirmative action" or contextualised admission have been introduced in some subject areas in selective universities, generally for very high demand programmes such as veterinary science and dentistry, but not normally for accountancy and finance. Accountancy is relatively cheap to provide at university level, compared to other professionally accredited degrees. The degree programme is typically shorter than several other professional degree programmes, and contact hours are less. Similarly, the costs and other sacrifices (e.g. time, payment for materials etc.) to the household of a non-working family member studying accountancy may be somewhat lower compared to a student taking a scientific or medical degree (Ianelli *et al*. 2016). Accordingly, the attainment gap between working class and middle class students (Crawford *et al*. 2016) may not be the major hurdle faced by aspiring working class accountancy and finance students. It is also relatively straightforward for working class students to see the relevance of their studies to eventual employment. However, in general the gap between middle class and working class school attainment remains a key reason for working class under-attainment, together with choice of SQA Higher in Scotland (Riddell and Weedon 2018). The university in this study makes fewer specific demands of its accountancy entrants than for other professionally accredited degrees; it requires mathematics and English at Standard (now National 5 Grade) C or better, plus at least one literate Higher. However, a very high overall standard at Higher is the quoted entrance criterion, similar to most other universities offering this programme, and an actual entrance tariff of six A grades at Higher is not unusual.

2.7.2.2 THE CULTURE OF THE UNIVERSITY (NOT FOR "THE LIKES OF US")

In a number of previous studies, working class students have spoken of their fears that higher education is not for "the likes of us"; examples of such studies where these attitudes are displayed include Murphy and Fleming (2003), Reay,

David and Ball (2005, p92), Archer (2007), Clegg (2011), Reay (2013) and Gale and Hodges (2014). This cultural attitude is a further brake on working class participation at the more selective institutions. Some researchers (for example Ballon *et al*. 2006) have spoken to non-traditional students who might be well qualified in terms of entry qualifications, but who were advised against applying to top universities, because they were told they would be likely to feel ill-at-ease in such surroundings (Reay 2013). Other authors have noted that in some schools, application information for the more selective universities was missing (Reay 1998). The lack of tradition in university attendance in working class households was given as a reason for non-application in several accounts by students in papers by Archer and Hutchings (2000), and Byrom and Lightfoot (2009); in the latter example, students were concerned that there may not be anybody to turn to if something went wrong. Clearly, support and counselling from one's family would be much more readily available when the student is attending a local university. Boliver (2013) confirms several of these points by providing quantitative confirmation of the relative lack of participation of working class students in terms of both applications to and admissions to selective universities. In terms of the total population, such students have a lower application and admission rate than what might be anticipated based on their proportion to the general population. This was confirmed in Shiner and Noden's (2015) study, which used data from applications and admissions in 2008. The authors identified a significant difference between behaviour patterns of different classes of students. Students from higher social classes applied to elite universities at twice the rate at which they applied to the lowest tier of universities, whilst students from lower social strata applied to lower ranking universities at twice the rate at which they applied to elite institutions.

Several authors have drawn attention to the importance of parental experience in shaping the ambitions of young people (for example, Lottrell-Rowland 2016). Accounts are given in several publications of parents who were probably well equipped to attend university but did not do so; their ambitions thwarted because of incidents such as teenage pregnancy, family care responsibility, teacher opposition and worry about fitting in. It seems that some parents and perhaps remoter ancestors are focussing on their descendants as proxies, wanting them to achieve what they did not have (Reay 2013).

Talented non-traditional students face a dilemma (Clegg 2011); should they attend a selective university, where their friends will not be, and where they may feel that they are an interloper, or should they play safe and attend a less selective university, where they may feel much more "at home", despite the risk of damaged career prospects? Some students (for example, in Tett, 2000) report a sense of unease at untying what might be cohesive and longstanding ties with family and friends by suddenly becoming "posh" (Coogan 2016). By attending a non-selective university, they sacrifice future opportunities and useful personal networks which might grant them additional social and cultural capital, but they risk becoming "stigmatised students from stigmatised universities" (Tett 2004). Traditional entrants, even to non-traditional institutions, may not face such challenges, as they might be following an oft-travelled path for their family (Harrison and Waller 2010) and be able to utilise familial connections upon graduation to secure employment.

Tett (2004) cites a lower feeling of entitlement exhibited by working class students compared to middle class students, whilst Greenbank (2009) identifies a lower propensity amongst working class students to make use of university facilities such as careers advisory departments. He suggests this may be due to poorer self-esteem, or it may simply be due to their lack of time. In an earlier study by the same author, Greenbank (1999) refers to a greater propensity for working class students to rely on informal information (for example from peers and parents) compared to middle class students, plus a tendency amongst working class students to consider the present rather than the future. The middle class students in Greenbank's study tended to rely more on what they were advised by school staff, and they had a better idea of future aspirations. The researcher found no evidence to back up either Tett's or Greenbank's assertions about working class students and sources of advice, nor was it easy to pinpoint any greater sense of entitlement expressed by middle class students. It may be argued that the word "entitlement" describes a rather abstract and subjective idea for which measurable evidence may be difficult to identify.

2.7.2.3 UNAWARENESS OF THE PATHS TO HIGHER EDUCATION, AND POOR AVAILABILTY OF INFORMATION ABOUT ACCESS

Several researchers (for example Tett 1999, Donnelly 2015, Shiner and Noden 2015) note a lack of literature in schools on selective universities. There may be several reasons for this – maybe nothing more than simple unavailability through to lack of time to update and stock such details, or downright negativity and even opposition to students applying to selective universities (Reay, David and Ball 2001, Sutton Trust 2008, Oliver and Kettley 2010, Sutton Trust 2011, Reay 2013). As an example, in Greenbank (2009), the working class students claimed to have listened to what seemed to be well advised and well-meaning school teachers, who dissuaded them from applying to the more high-status universities.

In a later study, Reay (2013) identified working class students, who were by now noticeably more ambitious and knowledgeable about university status and reputation. Perhaps the combined impacts of much greater and more objective information now being available online, together with the impact of several years' widening participation programmes, and attitudinal changes on the part of teachers, means that future generations of working class pupils may not have to bear some of the negative comments from teachers which were more commonplace in literature surveyed from the 1990's and the early 2000's. Accordingly, one wonders whether these twin points will continue to occupy such an important place as potential brakes on working class participation.

2.7.2.4 POOR PROVISION IN AREAS LOCAL TO WHERE STUDENTS LIVE

Distance from the university to the place of residence also featured in a qualitative study by Reay, Crozier and Clayton (2009) who identified that a key marker of student identity was home residence. Working class students tended to live at home or nearer home, which not only is cheaper but also less of a break from what they are used to. However, a tendency to remain at home is not an option for many such students, as selective universities are not evenly spread throughout the UK (Social Mobility Commission 2016). The geographic distribution of Russell Group and other selective institutions tends to follow

historic practice (e.g. important ecclesiastical centres, such as Durham and St Andrews), and major centres of population. Some extensive areas of the UK are relatively remote from Russell Group institutions, thus providing a further handicap to aspirational working class students. In a relatively small-scale study by Reay (2006), she noted that location was an issue for working class students in her sample, but not for other socioeconomic groups. Shiner and Nodin (2015) also suggest that distance from the institution was a factor in deterring working class application to selective universities; the working class students tended to apply more to local universities - the "dynamic" new universities occupying the "bronze" position in the hierarchy, a point also identified by Tett (1999). Three of Scotland's more selective universities are within large population centres, so the issue of travel might not seem so apparent in a Scottish context.

2.7.2.5 COST OF PARTICIPATION

Finances in working class households may be comparatively tighter in comparison to middle class households, so the loss of some years' income potential to be given up for university is a bold gamble for the working class student (Archer and Hutchings 2000). The fear of working class academic failure is clear from the accounts in their study, as is the unfamiliarity with a process which reproduces class dominance. Several of the interviewees in their study also talked about the social risk of severing established connections with family and friends; all are factors which might discourage participation in a selective university, especially if it is a long way from home. A decision to enter higher education will be financially risky (Reay, David and Ball, 2005) even if tuition fees are generally not payable for first undergraduate degrees. Archer and Hutchings (2000), Tett (2004) and Davies *et al*. (2009) note the occurrence among working class students of those who possess adequate entry qualifications, but are unsure whether to participate or not, because of the twin risks of spending considerable sums of money for studying, and the opportunity cost of exclusion from the workforce for three or four years. However, several of these studies were written in the wake of the introduction and increase in undergraduate student fees in England, and whilst the results are informative, it may be inadvisable to fully apply lessons for Scotland from their studies. Fees were a

relatively new phenomenon in the early 2000's but as time progresses, students and their families may become inured to the increasingly high fee levels.

The wealthier middle class families may be able to avoid or absorb some of the financial risks of university attendance, but for the working class family the path to and through university is much riskier (Tett 2004). Weighing up the benefits versus the costs of participation is important for the working class entrant. In some studies, working class students have shown strategic thinking, especially where students perceived important incentives (Tett 2000), for example, to improve the life chances of their children. This is shown through choice of degree programme, not necessarily reflecting the highest earnings potential, but instead choosing a career with a steady earnings trajectory and virtually nil chance of redundancy, such as nursing or teaching. However, where things do not go according to aspirations, then significant difficulties arise for the working class student. For example, Byrom and Lightfoot (2013) refer to a student narrative where there is "no choice but to go forward"; a student was experiencing academic difficulties whilst simultaneously assuming that she had lost her previous identity and developed a new class background or classlessness. The new classlessness had separated her from her original background and set her on a new trajectory which she felt unsure or unable to alter, despite her feelings of uncertainty about the future. Financial pressures also mean that working class students are less likely to avail themselves of international study opportunities thereby missing out on a key benefit which is often attractive to employers.

It would be wrong to conclude with a binary judgement that selective universities are always going to be some fabled "land of milk and honey", whilst attendance at non-selectives indicates failure. Many students have a positive opinion of their time at a non-selective university. In her study, Reay (2010) notes the views of several students at newer universities who claim to feel more "safe", "comfortable" and "at home" with a smaller, local institution – this was an institution which was previously mostly concerned with the training of teachers, but which had recently achieved university status. Due to its small size (and hence relatively low teaching income, and no research grant income) it would be unlikely to ever achieve "selective" status. It is notable that one of

the students in Reay's (*ibid.*) study had been advised by a school teacher not to apply to this smaller institution (where she felt happier in her studies, and more confident as a student) but to a bigger, more prestigious institution which had a better reputation. The cosiness of the working class home was also identified in a study by Read, Archer and Leathwood (2003), in which students at a post-1992 university told the researchers that they felt more "at home" compared to their perceptions of life at a traditional university, where it was feared they would not be welcome to interact with more traditional students. However, cosiness is a difficult concept to measure, and most parents in middle class households – which may enjoy identical levels of cosiness – will no doubt have similar misgivings in parting with their children (Hayward and Scullion 2017).

2.8 SUMMARY

In summary, the literature points to a persistent, underlying lack of equity surrounding attendance of working class participants at the more selective universities.

Table 4 (below) identifies some of the principal literature used in this study that refers to barriers to working class entry to selective universities. Publications are grouped into broad categories reflecting the principal issues discussed in the publication, but it must be emphasised that multiple issues are common to several of these publications.

Table 4

Some literature on barriers to working class entry at selective universities

Issue	*Literature*
Household and student finances under greater pressure than in comparable middle class households (this includes the opportunity cost of participation).	Archer and Hutchings (2000). Reay, David and Ball (2005). Davies *et al*. (2007).
Fear of losing an established identity as a family/peer group member (this includes fear of losing cohesive family bonds).	Archer and Hutchings (2000). Byrom and Lightfoot (2009). Tett (2000). Stahl (2016).
Distance from university.	Tett (1999). Reay (2006 – an issue for working class students but not for other groups). Reay, Crozier and Clayton (2009).
Lack of information about selective universities in school/ignorance of degree programmes on offer.	Tett (1999). Reay (2008). Greenbank (2009). Donnelly (2015). Shiner and Nodin (2015).
Type of school attended (grammar/public/state).	Shiner and Nodin (2015).
Type of school subjects studied to post elementary level.	Russell Group (2011). Shiner and Nodin (2015).
Fear of not fitting in at a selective university; students thinking that it would not be "for the likes of us".	Murphy and Fleming (2003). Reay, David and Ball (2005). Ballon (2006). Archer (2007). Reay, Crozier and Clayton (2009). Clegg (2011). O'Donoghue (2013). Reay (2013).

Fear of failure in a selective university.	Archer and Hutchings (2000).
Carer responsibilities restricting university choice.	Alsop, Gonzalez-Amal and Kilkey (2008).
Advice from teachers not to get above oneself.	Sutton Trust (2000). Reay, David and Ball (2005). Oliver and Kettley (2010). Sutton Trust (2011). Reay (2013).
Difficulty in balancing study with paid employment.	Reay, Crozier and Clayton (2009).
Lack of engagement between school and selective universities.	Reay, David and Ball (2005).
Negative image of the "ideal" student as portrayed in promotional literature.	Read, Archer and Leathwood (2003).

The reasons identified above correspond for the most part to the Scottish Government's Commission for Widening Access (2015)

The following table (Table 5) identifies some of the principal literature which refers to university experiences of working class students. Publications are grouped into broad categories reflecting the principal point at issue.

Table 5

Issues of working class student performance at selective universities

Issue	*Literature*
Working class students adopting coping strategies to aid their passage through selective universities.	Tett (2000). Reed, Archer and Leathwood (2003). Leathwood and O'Connell (2003). Reay, Crozier and Clayton (2009).
Working class students feeling an urgent need to assimilate with middle class peers.	Wilcox, Wynn and Fyvie-Gauld (2003).
Ignorance of/difficulty in dealing with university characteristics, culture, etiquette, and procedures (Bourdieu's "rules of the game").	Leathwood and O'Connell (2003). Wilcox, Wynn and Fyvie-Gauld (2005).
Financial pressures affecting study.	Leathwood and O'Connell (2003).
Lack of self-confidence hindering progress.	Leathwood and O'Connell (2003).
Self-imposed low participation rate in extra-curricular activity.	Redmond (2005). Reay, Crozier and Clayton (2009). Crozier (2009). Bathmaker, Ingram and Waller (2013).

To conclude, it seems that despite a series of governmental, and other institutional and philanthropic initiatives, access to selective universities, and to the professions (especially to the accountancy and finance profession) remains comparatively more difficult for the working class participant. There seems to be a widespread consensus that matters cannot go on like this, and that steps must be taken to change the *status quo*. In the next chapter, the methodology utilised to address the research question is justified and explained and the theoretical framework identified and discussed.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION TO THE CHAPTER

This chapter addresses issues regarding the research approach. The chapter incorporates the rationale for the research, and contains detail on the research questions, the research paradigms, and the research methods used in this study. It also includes details on research procedures and ethical considerations and finishes with an exploration of the theoretical framework utilised throughout.

3.1.1 THE RESEARCH PROBLEM IN THIS STUDY

Merriam (2009) identifies the importance of the overarching research question in framing the research approach taken. This point is also taken up by Crotty (1998), who refers to the research question as beginning with problems, issues, and questions, which can be summed up as – matters of importance, which need to be addressed.

A number of separate issues are comprised in the research question;
1) The relatively low participation rate of working class students, in general, at selective universities. As a result, these students do not see as many of their peers from similar backgrounds compared to the middle class entrants. This has been identified by the Sutton Trust (2014), whose report notes that "children in less affluent areas account for 50% of the school population and only 13% of entry to top universities" (p2).

2) Why accountancy and finance? In common with other professions, membership of the accountancy profession is traditionally white, able bodied, and middle class, and entrants tend to be young (McPhail, Paisey and Paisey, 2010). Steps have been taken to widen access to accountancy via the establishment of "Access Accountancy", an initiative promoted by the Sutton Trust, in the wake of a Government report (Milburn 2009) which identified accountancy as having borne the biggest drop in social mobility compared to the other major professions. Accordingly, not only is there a problem of low participation of working class students at both selective universities and in the

professions in general, it seems that the problem is rather more acute in accountancy and finance and might be getting worse.

The consideration of the principal question led to identifying further questions -

1. Are the experiences of working class students in 2016 different from the experiences detailed in earlier works in the published literature?
2. Did the working class students perceive any barriers deterring them from applying to a selective university?
3. At university, did the working class students find themselves resorting to coping strategies to enable them to continue participating on their degree programmes? Was there any pressure to assimilate?
4. Can anything be done to improve participation rates for working class students at selective universities? The issue of under-representation persists, despite a vast academic literature having grown up for over twenty years, and a host of official and non-official interventions designed to reduce inequality.

3.1.2 COMMENCEMENT OF THE RESEARCH

Merriam (2009) notes
"…getting started on a research project begins with your own orientation to basic tenets about the nature of reality, the purpose of doing research, and the type of knowledge to be produced through your efforts" (p4).

In this study, the researcher did not know what to expect prior to the results becoming available. However, the researcher was clear about the intention, which was to identify and explain the meanings through which interviewees interpreted their situation and thereby constructed their own reality. The aim is congruent with Merriam's (2009) view of interpretive research and its remit to "describe, understand and interpret" (p9). The researcher held no preordained theory about the phenomena but wished to make sense of how the interviewees ordered and arranged their lives to cope with the interruption and the set of unfamiliar circumstances brought on by entry to higher education at a selective

university (Merriam 2009). This intention to explore meaning informed the research design and the choice of research method.

Crotty (1998) identifies difficulties in commencing the research process, by referring to the potentially bewildering "…array of methodologies and methods". (p1). In addition, the researcher might encounter a relatively poor ordering and organisation of these methods, ("…they may appear more as a maze than as pathways" (p1)). Finally, there is a problem in the lack of a commonly accepted terminology and the existence of a rich lexicon of terms – one finds "...the same term (might) be used in several different, sometimes even contradictory ways" (p1). These issues, and others, were important considerations in designing the research process for this study. The researcher has chosen, and justified, a well-known research method and has also used a framework from the literature to provide a structure around which epistemology, theoretical framework, and methodology have been chosen. Finally, although care has been taken to avoid anomalous and potentially confusing terminology, this is not easy where multiple sources are used, especially in an area as open and flexible as qualitative research.

3.1.3 MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY

Glesne (1999) identifies motivating factors for research as follows;

 "…passion for your chosen topic will be a motivating factor throughout the various research aspects…" (p18).

The chosen topic was personal to the researcher, as it "intersected" with episodes of a personal "life history" (Glesne 1999). Merriam (2009) echoes this point; she notes that with topic selection for a piece of research, the "first place to look is your daily life" (p55). The research questions were personal to the researcher, and they arose from work experiences, at both an ancient Russell Group university, and, previously, at a former central institution which only achieved university status after 1992.

In moving employment from a post-1992 university to an ancient university, there were expectations that little would be identical. The researcher anticipated differences in matters such as personal status, personal working environment, and available teaching resources, yet despite broadly similar entrance tariffs, an almost identical curriculum, and little discernible difference in student success, (where outcomes were measured in degree class awarded), the researcher perceived many differences between the two student populations. These differences arose despite students at both institutions having similar high school achievements, broadly identical career intentions, and very similar if not identical (in many cases) career destinations. The researcher was surprised at the contrast in attitude, sense of self-entitlement, aspirations, expectations, and backgrounds of the students between these two universities. In the researcher's opinion, graduates from both universities produced work of an equivalent quality and seemed to be equally talented. In a later move from an ancient university to a "traditional" 1960's university, the researcher finds class differences not to be so apparent, but there are proportionally more working class students and more students with unfamiliar entry patterns compared to the ancient university.

A matter of social injustice (Phillips 2004, Charmaz 2005, Nussbaum 2011) occurred to the researcher. It seemed unfair that students at the post-1992 university, who had proved themselves capable of producing high quality work, had de-selected themselves from attendance at a more eminent university which offered better facilities and potentially better opportunity to earn cultural capital. Such inequality needed to be seen in its cultural context (Charmaz 2005). Detailed, first-person accounts would be desirable in identifying the context of the inequality as a stage in its removal. No doubt there were working class students at the selective university but in a lengthy career at that university, not many were identifiable, perhaps indicating that the working class students present had assimilated into the broader student body and become used to their new field (Tett 2000, 2004, Reed, Archer and Leathwood 2003, Wilcox, Wynn and Fyvie-Gauld 2003).

In pursuing this topic, the researcher became familiar with much of the extensive work on student background and the lack of participation by certain

socioeconomic groups, especially in selective universities, (for example Bowl 2001, Reay, David and Ball 2005, Archer 2007, Christie 2009, Reay, Crozier and Clayton 2009). These authors had noted many of the differences in experiences between such groups and the explanations for these differences. It also seemed unfair that educational outcomes, for poorer students were in general less favourable between the UK and nations such as Finland (Reay 2013).

One might question why another piece of enquiry on socioeconomic under-participation is needed, when so many other works have been published. However, many of the socioeconomic studies on non-participation or low participation have dealt with students on a variety of undergraduate degrees, with no specific degree programme being identified. In addition, most of the other studies were conducted in England, with very few exercises conducted in Scotland. Finally, many of these studies were conducted at times when tuition fees for undergraduate study were either zero in both Scotland and the rest of the UK or were zero in Scotland but at much lower levels in the UK, compared to periods post-2016. Despite the non-existence of tuition fees, Scottish undergraduate student finances are under great pressure (Carrell 2015) because of the necessity for students to fund their maintenance whilst studying. Accordingly, the researcher wondered whether the prospect of future financial pressures had affected student intention to participate. Many of the previous studies dated from the 1990's or early 2000's, and this encouraged enquiry to check whether experiences and conditions had changed in an era of increased concern and action about low socioeconomic diversity in selective universities. Accordingly, the research is justified because it attempts to fill several gaps in the literature.

3.2 PHILOSOPHICAL UNDERPINNINGS

Crotty (1998, p2) draws attention to four elements of the research proposal, which lead to the theoretical framework, the methodologies, the methods of research, and to their justification. These four elements can be summarised into four questions which the researcher must address at the outset of any research exercise, namely;

"What *methods* we propose to use?

  What *methodology* governs our choice of methods?

  What *theoretical perspective* lies behind the methodology in question?

  What *epistemology* informs this theoretical perspective?"

  (Crotty 1998, p2)

Accordingly, the researcher isolates suitable epistemology in the research exercise to provide the basis of a theoretical perspective; this, in turn, informs the appropriate methodology (research design) decision, which will finally govern the choice of research method. This sequence of events ought not to be treated as formulaic – Crotty (1998) draws attention to the uniqueness of each piece of research, and the desirability of this uniqueness (p3). Researchers must develop their own methodology and cannot expect to obtain a pre-packaged methodology ready and waiting to be utilised.

3.2.1 EPISTEMOLOGY

Cresswell (2013) provides a definition of epistemology as the study of the nature of knowledge and of how reality can become known (p19). Several epistemological viewpoints are identified in the literature, such as objectivism, constructionism and subjectivism, but as Crotty (1998) points out, these categories are "not watertight" (p9). It is notable that Merriam (2009) also adds "critical theory" to this list, but Crotty (1998, p120) regards this topic as part of constructionism. However, Crotty *(ibid.* p150*)* does not understate the importance of critical theory and allocates two chapters to it. This study is informed by critical theory because of its close connection with social justice and call for change. As Crotty (1998, p157) states, "critical forms of research call current ideology into question and initiate action".

In this study, there was no assumption of any "objective truth" in the nature of the knowledge (ontology), nor in how any such truth could be known. The researcher was interested in how the participants constructed their personal understanding of their situation. An objectivist epistemology (Crotty 1998,

Merriam 2009) was not adopted because it was assumed that no universal objective truth existed. In objectivism, items have meaningful existences in themselves, independent of causation, and objectivist researchers will attempt to discover universal truths through application of scientific method. In addition, in this study the researcher made no assumption that the meaning, which participants ascribed to their situation, was resident outside of their own consciousness.

The researcher identified a constructionist epistemology (Crotty 1998, Merriam 2009) as more appropriate in this instance for reasons identified below. Taking a constructionist approach (Crotty 1998) contends that "all meaningful reality is socially constructed" (p55); the existence of a single, supreme, universal truth is denied, and instead attention is paid to the views of the social actors engaging with the phenomena which they encounter, hence the origin of the term. It seemed highly appropriate, as the participants have constructed their own truth via their personal social interaction and experience of their circumstances.

By contrast, in a world without any consciousness, there could be no possibility of any interpretation of the meanings which specific phenomena presented (Crotty 1998). This leads Crotty (1998) to conclude that "different people construct meaning in different ways" (p9). There is no unique or verifiable conclusion (Crotty 1998), which is perhaps responsible for the ubiquity of constructionism; as social animals and thinking beings, a constructionist approach is probably an attractive idea to human beings. Crotty (1998) points out that constructionism is

"…found, or at least claimed, in most perspectives other than those representing positivist and post-positivist paradigms" (p4).

Before proceeding further, it might be helpful to define "constructivism" and distinguish it from "constructionism". Whilst several researchers use the terms synonymously and even interchangeably, Crotty (1998) notes a contrast between these terms (p79);

"Constructivism describes the individual human subject engaging with objects in the world and making sense of them. Constructionism, to the contrary, denies that this is what happens, at least in the first instance. Instead, each of us is introduced directly to a whole world of meaning."

Accordingly, in constructionism, experience with objects precedes the making of meanings out of them. In many cases, as one meets new phenomena, meanings are simply not sought, and the subject accepts the object at face value. However, where a phenomenon (the object) challenges long-held personal and cultural views, or where the phenomenon suddenly becomes a major element of the subject's life, then the subject will obtain meaning to develop an opinion and for a reaction to follow.

A third epistemological standpoint, subjectivism, is also identified by Crotty (1998). This standpoint is fundamental to approaches inspired by post-modernism and post-structuralism. One might regard subjectivism as occupying a rather more, extreme, anti-objectivist position, than constructionism; subjectivism set opposite against objectivism, with constructionism occupying the middle ground between the two extremes. In subjectivism, the meaning;

"…does not come out of an interplay between subject and object but is imposed on the object by the subject. Here the object as such makes no contribution to the generation of meaning."
(Crotty 1998, p9).

In this study, subjectivism was not adopted *per se*, because of the importance of the interplay between subject and object. The aim of this study was to investigate the meanings that individuals made of an unfamiliar situation, not to examine how something was created out of nothing. As Crotty (1998) points out, human beings do not create meaning out of nothing; materials must exist to enable humans to construct as opposed to create meaning. The engagement between subject and object rules out the adoption of both objectivism and subjectivism (Crotty, 1998). However, aspects of postmodern thought were informative to this study, such as the points mentioned by Merriam (2009) on the celebration of "diversity" (p10) in the student body. One also finds it useful to

point out that many postmodernists view "no-one element" as more "privileged or powerful than another". *(Ibid*. p10).

3.2.2 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

A theoretical perspective is the "philosophical stance that lies behind our chosen methodology" (Crotty 1998, p7). It refers to the way in which the participant views the world. It is possible for phenomena to exist without any consciousness or meaning, but the world

"...becomes a world of meaning only when meaning-making beings make sense of it".
(Crotty 1998, p10).

Merriam (2009) in writing about how meaning is constructed, identifies the necessity of understanding and interpreting how people make sense of what goes on around them. Crotty (1998) uses the term "symbolic interactionism" (p72) to describe the approach taken by researchers who view phenomena and the meanings which actors make of these phenomena through the eyes and the consciousness of the actors themselves. The term has emerged from the interaction involved in the taking of roles, where humans are directed by important symbols. These symbols have a social basis and include issues such as language, tastes and culture. Many of these symbols are important markers of socioeconomic status, and inventories of these symbols arise in Bourdieu's (see below) description of cultural capital (Mills 2008).

In developing symbolic interactionism, Blumer (1969, p2, as quoted in Crotty, 1998) identifies three basic underlying assumptions;
1) "That human beings act towards things based on the meanings that these things have for them.
2) That the meaning of such things is derived from, and arises out of, the social interaction that one has with one's fellows.
3) That these meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretive process used by the person in dealing with the things he encounters."

These points are echoed by other researchers, for example, Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000). It seemed appropriate to adopt symbolic interactionism as a theoretical perspective for this study because;

1) The meaning, which students were making of their situation, would guide their actions.

2) These students' experiences had been shaped in a social world incorporating experience gained principally from family, neighbourhood, and school, and possibly work, depending on the background and culture. Their socioeconomic status would drive the characteristics of their background. Cresswell (2013) emphasises this importance of historical and cultural norms in shaping these constructions.

3) Other researchers working with socioeconomic under-representation (for example Reay Crozier and Clayton, 2009) had identified the rationalisations, which non-traditional students had adopted through their interpretation of their situation.

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000, p26) refer to action being taken by such participants in social settings as the "management" of a "performance" designed to create an "impression". The acceptance of these meanings as being dynamic; in a constant state of change, was the basis of one of the research questions – was there a change in meaning, after four years of study? This supposed change was not apparent in previous literature on social class and participation at selective universities. The state of flux that the social agents are in, leads to a process of continual negotiation (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000, p26) by which meanings are always being constructed and reconstructed.

3.2.3 METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH METHOD

A broad contrast can be identified between research approaches. Some approaches use methods that are quantitative in nature. Such methods make great use of the power of long-established statistical tests. Numerical data is gathered from experiments, and from questionnaires, or possibly harvested from field notes, or observational logs, or pre-existing datasets. To take one

example, where interview data has been gathered and recorded, techniques such as narrative analysis might be appropriate to track an interviewee's usage of certain key words (Patton 2002, Merriam 2009).

The other main sets of research approaches are non-quantitative in nature, and these are more widely known as qualitative approaches (Patton 2002, Strauss and Corbin 1990). This is "the great divide" in research approaches according to Crotty (1998, p15).

In quantitative research, the researcher might formulate hypotheses based on theory and then rely on the strength of sufficient numerical data to conduct the testing of those hypotheses for rejection. This approach can be termed a *deductive* one, as the researcher is starting from a point already known and is attempting to gather sufficient data to enable a decision on whether the data confound the researcher's view on reality (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2000 p29). This approach underlies scientific positivism, which generally corresponds to an objectivist epistemology (Crotty 1998, p18 *et seq.*).

In qualitative research (which, incidentally, Merriam (2009) terms as "interpretive or naturalistic research" (p9)), the researcher might rely on significantly fewer observations compared to the quantitative researcher. There will also be less emphasis on statistical techniques such as correlation and regression. However, the researcher will engage in a no-less rigorous process of data analysis. The data generated in a qualitative study is examined in great depth and the researcher will attempt to interpret the findings to formulate meaning (Cresswell 2013). In epistemological terms, qualitative research is broadly *inductive* in nature (Newell and Burnard 2006) as the researcher will be

"Starting with specific instances and deriving a general conclusion from them"
(p23)

Taking the analogy of a triangle, in deductive methods one moves from the "apex to the base", whilst in inductive influenced research, one moves from the "base to the apex" – a point amplified by Cresswell (2013) who describes the inductive approach as coming "from the ground up" (p22), in contrast to the

theory-led deductive approach. However, Cresswell (2013) extends this point by noting that in some aspects of qualitative research, both inductive and deductive processes are used. For example, a researcher may start out inductively with an exploratory study and bring in deductive reasoning in building themes and patterns, a sequence of events seen in exercises such as developing grounded theory.

In qualitative research, the research journey is likely to be more flexible, even emergent, when compared to quantitative research. For example, research questions may have to change part way through the study. The researcher will bring their own experience to the study but will also gain skill and experience as the data is subject to continual analysis. The data will be descriptive, but it will be a descriptiveness that would contain rich detail on the meanings, which participants ascribe to their environment (Cresswell 2013). Qualitative research is commonplace in studies of under-participation in higher education (Deem and Brehon 1994).

In quantitative research, research instruments (measurement tools designed to harvest data) may include materials such as questionnaires, observational logs and datasets, often developed specifically for observation of the phenomenon. Laboratory studies (especially for natural and physical sciences) are far more commonplace. By contrast, in qualitative research, significantly more activity takes place in the field and humans are rarely brought into the laboratory (Cresswell 2013). In addition, in qualitative research the researcher is the

   "Primary instrument for data collection and analysis" (Merriam 2009, p15).

The same point is amplified by both Cresswell (2013) and Wolcott (1994). According to Merriam (2009), the close, personal relationship between researcher, and the data produced, and the subsequent interpretation of the data, presents both significant benefits and handicaps to qualitative research. Its benefits include the rapid adjustments that human beings can make to unexpected and unfamiliar responses provided by respondents. It also allows a speedy evaluation of the quality of a respondent's answer, which in turn allows a skilled researcher to be quicker to seek verification where necessary. A fellow

human being might also monitor an interviewee's non-verbal communication more closely and holistically. However, some might contend that a major disadvantage to qualitative research is that the researcher will bring with them their own ideas and biases. Accordingly, research findings may not be as generally applicable when compared to a quantitative research exercise. Pretence to objectivity is absent in much qualitative research, but this lack of objectivity could be an advantage by tainting the research with a personal flavour representing the researcher's own individual qualities.

As Strauss and Corbin (1990, p19) note;

> "Some areas of study naturally lend themselves more to qualitative types of research, for instance, research that attempts to uncover the nature of a person's experiences with a phenomenon".

Taking all the above into account, it is clear to the researcher that this study is an example of qualitative research. Indicators of qualitative research in this study are;

1. There are relatively few subjects being interviewed. This contrasts with the large numbers of subjects whose views might be canvassed via a questionnaire, which could then be subjected to quantitative investigation.
2. The sample (self-selecting) was chosen purposefully, and not at random.
3. There is a search for meaning and not a search for an objectively derived, testable, and thus falsifiable truth. Hypotheses were not identified.
4. Inconsistency was accepted in the aim of getting richer data. For example, additional research questions emerged as greater numbers of students were interviewed, reflecting the flexible, exploratory and emergent nature of this and other qualitative research.

Crotty (1998, p5) identifies some of the principal methodologies which shape the research method. Reviewing this list of available methodologies, phenomenology (Crotty 1998, Merriam 2003, Cresswell 2013) initially seemed to be a logical choice, as;

1) The phenomenon of class-based under-representation at a selective university is central to this study.

2) Attention was paid to "lived experiences" (Cresswell 2013, p76) of the interviewees relating to their interaction with the phenomenon of higher education.

3) There was an assumption of a conscious intention of the interviewees (*ibid.* p77) to participate, the decision had been made on grounds, which were rational to them at the time.

4) The topic was of great interest and concern to the researcher (*ibid.* p79).

5) Finally, a philosophical underpinning of the basic ideas could be derived from viewing the research through the lenses of writers such as Nussbaum (2011), and Bourdieu (1977).

An attractive approach was offered by grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Authors such as Charmaz (2005) extol the use of grounded theory because of the freedom and flexibility, which it offers. In grounded theory, one starts from an inductive viewpoint, working from the "base to the apex" (Cresswell, 2013).

As previously noted, the researcher did not know what to expect when setting out on this study, so an approach which emphasised the importance of construction of realities (Charmaz 2005, p511) would be of assistance in what is an interpretive and exploratory study. Charmaz (2005, p512) is supportive of grounded theory in social justice matters, arguing that because justice and injustice are only "abstract concepts", they are given validity through the grounded theory method.

In common with phenomenology, in grounded theory it is necessary to identify participants who have shared experiences, but the mechanism of the study proceeds beyond description to the generation of theory. The theory arises not from pre-existing study but is grounded in data gathered for the exercise (Cresswell 2003, p83). Indeed, Patton (2002) states that in grounded theory, one is creating rather than testing theory. A further shared characteristic of grounded theory and phenomenology is data collection via interview. In grounded theory, the process of "memoing" (Cresswell 2013, p85) is a

component of the theory development, leading to a comparison of ideas obtained from successive interviews. A "classical" view on grounded theory might proceed to a structured analysis, with a "hub" being identified as a central focus, and additional "categories" (Cresswell 2013, p85) (axial coding) helping to shape a model.

Charmaz (2005, 2006) proposes a "constructivist" grounded theory, in opposition to the somewhat objectivist path which the more classical grounded theorists have taken (Cresswell 2013). In Charmaz's view, constructivist (or interpretive) grounded theory can assist enquiry into issues of social justice. By taking a constructivist viewpoint, researchers deny objective assumptions and acknowledge that they bring their own interests, attitudes and interpretations to the study. As Charmaz (2005, p510) puts it, in a social justice inspired piece of constructivist grounded theory, one is,

> "...exploring tensions between complicity and consciousness, inclusion and exclusion, poverty and privilege, and barriers and opportunities. It also means taking a critical stance towards actions, organisations and social institutions."

Key benefits of combining social justice to constructivist grounded theory include the prompts made for deeper enquiry, thus encouraging richer data, and the availability of a social justice inspired frame on which to identify and elaborate the research. It also allows the researcher to check for changes in viewpoint where successive interviews take place. In addition, the use of interviews gives a voice to groups of people who may normally feel undervalued and marginalised (Charmaz 2005, p525).

Issues of consciousness, inclusion and exclusion, poverty and privilege, and barriers and opportunities, are central to this study. Accordingly, as Charmaz (*ibid.*) states, "shoulds and oughts are brought into the discourse of enquiry." A pure, unbiased, objective conclusion is not possible in such research. However, Patton (2002) is somewhat critical of Charmaz's approach, and states that little difference is discernible between this approach to grounded theory, and

phenomenology; however, it must be emphasised that a theory is the product of a grounded theory exercise.

Some guidance on the mechanism of grounded theory can be drawn from Glaser's publications, plus writings such as Charmaz (2005), and Piko (2014), and Punch (2014) who refers to grounded theory having two principal dimensions of comparison and interrogation. The process taken by the researcher followed well- known grounded theory practice, and can be summarised thus;

a) A decision had previously been made on the subject area to be investigated.

b) The data collection process followed.

c) In this study, as is commonplace in grounded theory, data was collected via interviews. Responses were coded, as they were collected; this was a rather laborious task but doing it simultaneously with interviews made it more efficient. The coding process refers to the conceptual area in which responses are mapped (Glaser 2011). Charmaz (2005) emphasises the importance of keeping such codes concise to facilitate later analysis. She refers to coding as the "scaffolding" (p517) on which the study is constructed. An open coding (Punch 2014) is initiated with a basic "first-level" analysis of data, which is revisited and elaborated.

d) As data built up, theoretical codes (conceptual categories) should then start to emerge. Grounded theory makes use of comparative processes; Charmaz (2005) identifies the importance of data analysis through each, successive piece of data collected. She advises researchers who are interested in social justice matters to keep a look out for matters pertaining to "struggle and conflict" (p517).

e) Findings from the theoretical codes will be integrated with literature to create theories identified from the research. Accordingly, one notes confirmation of Cresswell's (2013) point of the mixture of both inductive and deductive reasoning.

f) Finally, conclusions would be drawn, and suggestions would be made both for further research and for policy.

Charmaz (2005) expresses additional detail on how a social justice inspired grounded theory enquiry should work. Not only is one obliged to work with data, and the processes of categorisation, comparison and integration, but one must also be conscious that this is being done in a social world in which the researcher is playing an active role. For example, during the interview process, the researcher had to be aware of issues of status variables – do they "construct and enact power, privilege and inequality"? The researcher occupies a position of authority in a university, and in the subject field – this might have made some responses a little guarded (Charmaz 2005, p512). The identification, comparison and evaluation of such concepts were important to this study and feature in the next Chapter.

3.2.4 SEMI STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

The interview is a useful and convenient platform for gathering large amounts of data, and has benefits compared to questionnaires in this study, because of the relative lack of constraints. Not only is one likely to obtain greater depth and breadth of data, one is also able to pick out important cues in the interview, such as intonation and inflexion, changes in emphasis, colloquialisms and hesitation to speak. In addition, interviews promote a sense of participation by interviewees, who are much more actively involved than the rather passive involvement called for in postal questionnaires. This leads to a point identified by Silverman (2011) that the interview is "collaboratively produced" (p164), thus promoting a sense of self-worth for the interviewee, and promoting uniqueness, special treatment, and smoothing the way for diversity of the sample. Silverman (2011) adds that no single interviewing style is best (p165) and that "extra-ordinary skill" is not needed. Participant voice is important in any study connected with social justice, also being aware of the meanings of cues, even silences, which for Charmaz (2005) are important indicators of powerlessness. Objections to the semi-structured or open-ended interviews may include the

lack of consistency, and the ignorance of "facts" about the world in favour of "representations". However, as stated above (Section 2 of this Chapter), there is no desire to isolate generally applicable facts, and the identification and evaluation of meanings are fundamental both to this study and to other studies based on a constructionist epistemology.

Interviews are commonplace in grounded theory (Cresswell 2013). To obtain richer data, a semi-structured interview style was utilised in this study. This style contrasts with structured interviews. In the structured interview style, the researcher will ask a series of identical questions to the interviewees – any deviation from the question script is discouraged on the grounds of reducing objectivity. In the semi-structured interview, one is referring to the process by which the researcher frames the interview via several questions, which are pre-planned. In this study, the researcher drew the attention of the interviewees to the topic of the interview questions prior to the interview. As a result, the interviewee had an idea of what to expect, and it is hoped that this process gave interviewees the opportunity to assemble their thoughts prior to the interview, which would further promote a richness of response. Interviewees were encouraged to answer questions fully and to introduce topics and issues that might not have previously been considered by the researcher, thus a free flow of ideas was facilitated (Drever 1995, p22).

Drever *(ibid.)* also identifies several problems with interviews as a method of social enquiry. The planning, preparation and execution of the interview is very time consuming, but the post-interview analysis is even more so. Fortunately, as Drever (1995, p4) adds, the process of analysing interview content "is also very interesting", especially when compared to mass-survey instruments such as closed questionnaires.

3.3 DEVELOPMENT OF THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

A schedule of interview questions is provided in the next chapter. The questions were initially devised from the researcher's experience in this topic, and day-to-day encounters with students from differing socioeconomic backgrounds, plus

review of the literature on university participation and socioeconomic background. Finally, it became apparent, from early interviews that certain important matters had not been identified in earlier interviews, and further questions were necessary. Whilst, to some observers, this may seem an inconsistent approach, it must be remembered that this is a qualitative study, and that as one proceeds with qualitative research, one typically finds that new themes emerge (Crotty 1998, Merriam 2009). Some researchers would recommend follow-up interviews to cope with this, but recognition is made of the time demands on interviewees and it was not possible to schedule such interviews.

3.4 INTERVIEWEE SELECTION

Cresswell (2013, p147) points out that a purposeful sample (i.e. a sample deliberately chosen, rather than a random sample) will be better at informing the researcher about matters pertaining to the research questions. In selecting individuals for this study, attention had to be paid to the necessity to recruit individuals who have had direct experience of the phenomenon being studied (Cresswell 2013, p147). Accordingly, only students who were taking accountancy and finance courses at a selective university were considered. A mix of what has already been identified as working class and middle class students was desired with an aim of interviewing 20 students from each background. Interviewees self-selected for this study, because they were free to decline the offer of participation. The researcher considers that self-selection does not impede the validity and reliability of the research, as a diversity of responses were expected, and those students who did respond would be likely to be students with a useful story to tell, thus promoting richer interview data. No claim to generalisability is made, so self-selection is not regarded as a weakness in this study.

3.4.1 INTERVIEWEE SAMPLING

The researcher took advice from a senior academic colleague who suggested that a direct approach to students in the classroom is likely to generate greater success in obtaining response than an anonymous request for interviewees made by mailshot or by e-mail. Visits to classes were planned and once consent from academic colleagues had been obtained, the researcher introduced the project to the class and asked for volunteers using the forms at Appendices I and II.

3.4.1.1 CHOICE OF INSTITUTION

The investigation centres on working class participation at a selective university. Scotland has four ancient universities, all of them selective. For convenience, the university which was most familiar to the researcher was used. Fortunately, the chosen university has an excellent record for the subject area.

3.4.1.2 CHOICE OF DEGREE PROGRAMME

The researcher considered familiarity with the programme structure to be important, as in so many accounts of student experience and in so many feedback exercises, programme structure and associated administrative matters are very important, perhaps even more so for working class students who may have significant amounts of responsibilities outside the university and need to work university attendance around their schedule. A knowledge of the university and of the accounting and finance division in particular, enabled the researcher to ascribe greater meaning on some student narratives.

3.5 INTERVIEW PROCESS

The researcher complied with the ethical responsibilities demanded in choosing human subjects for research. Care had to be taken to ensure that the researcher was not currently in a position of power over interviewees, as this

could result in some students feeling forced to take part, and possible feelings of resentment. The researcher was enquiring into concerns, hopes and fears of (mostly) young adults, and was conscious that some interviewees might have experienced challenging circumstances on their university and pre-university pathway but none of the responses from interviewees gave any cause for concern about their condition. The researcher completed the administrative details required by the university and prepared and submitted for approval a Plain Language Statement (Appendix I) which was required to be sent to interviewees prior to any interviews taking place. The Plain Language Statement advised students that they were free to cease their involvement at any time, however no such departure was made by any student.

With the permission of the respective academic departments and divisions, the researcher visited classrooms at a suitable, agreed part of a teaching session. The researcher addressed the students to outline the research that was being undertaken and passed round the Plain Language Statement and a selection form asking for contact details and requesting confirmation of the student's last postcode at school or immediately before commencing university. Postcode data was obtained as it is a useful marker of socioeconomic status; this point is extended in the next chapter of this study.

In choosing the location for the interview, care was taken to provide a safe space. The student's university premises were desirable because the student was then on "home" territory and the campus itself acted as a reminder of the situation. The researcher wanted to avoid the possibility of eavesdropping and background noise interfering with student answers to questions, so public accommodation such as canteens was avoided. Fortunately, suitable accommodation was easy to obtain in most cases. In some cases, difficulties in arranging suitable times and spaces resulted in interviews being arranged via the computer application, Skype. The researcher is aware that some context would be lost via Skype, however it is contended that the use of Skype was advantageous in that it allowed interviews to take place at mutually convenient times and reduced transport and travel costs. Cues from body language and speech pattern are still visible and audible when using Skype.

3.5.1 THE INTERVIEWS

Interviewees had previously been advised (via the Plain Language Statement) that interviews would be recorded. Recording of interviews (Drever 1995 p51) facilitates the research process by liberating the researcher from distractions occasioned by making copious notes; with a separate system of recording, one can make brief notes which highlight important elements and events in the interview, as well as enabling one to listen out for cues and inflexions in speech. It also allows one to revisit the interview for more data or to confirm existing data. A conflict was identified in terms of acceptable interview length; the researcher wanted to get as much data as possible but was also conscious of trespassing into the interviewees' time. No interview lasted longer than 45 minutes, but as noted in other studies (for example Alsop, Gonzalez-Arnal, and Kilkey 2008) students from non-traditional socioeconomic backgrounds often have greater calls on their time due to responsibilities such as childcare, and paid employment.

 3.5.2 PROCESSING OF INTERVIEWEE RESPONSES

Coding of responses followed the principles established in the works of grounded theorists, utilising the iterative nature of grounded theory enquiry.   In preparing the codes, the researcher was conscious of recording phenomena such as words most frequently repeated, key words and phrases (such as "fitting in"), plus speech patterns such as intonations, inflections, hesitations, and silences.

As Charmaz (2005) advises, codes were kept relatively concise. A set of codes and linkages was developed as interviews proceeded, and earlier transcripts were re-examined to provide clues for theory generation, where later transcripts revealed interesting and previously unheard detail. These codes are categorised according to key words and themes, but they were not categorised according to the rather complex frameworks used by the objectivist grounded theorists. Rather, comparison is used, and reference made to key, recurring issues when drawing up theory. Identification and explanation of the interviewee's

negotiation of their passage through higher education is central to the discussion, and comparison and contrast is made with existing works on the topic of under-participation by certain socioeconomic groups and differences are highlighted – this will inform eventual theories.

The researcher is aware that one of the problems of grounded enquiry is that it might never end. Silverman (2011) identifies a suitable place to cease grounded theory as the point where "boredom" incepts, and the researcher decides to desist. The aim is to obtain a cogent set of theoretical conclusions supported by adequate explanations.

3.5.3 INTERVIEWEE CONFIDENTIALITY

Some detail of ethical practice has already been provided above. Ethical codes are not confined to university directed rules; rather they are built into the research process from the start. The researcher considered maintenance of high ethical standards, especially anonymity, (Glesne 1998), to be vital to the success of this study. The literature on socioeconomic background and participation in higher education reveals that the people who are excluded on socioeconomic grounds often have enough daily difficulties without the risk of identification and possible humiliation for being "othered" as people who do not belong in a specific setting. Accordingly, to reduce the risk of identification, students were asked to choose a pseudonym. In addition, the institution from where the students were recruited for this study is not disclosed, to reduce the risk of identification. Finally, transcripts of the interviews were stored in locked drawers, in a locked office, and transcribed and analysed data was saved on password-encrypted disks.

Although all interviewees were adults and were asked for their consent, it is recognised that power relations could cause tensions, accordingly, reassurance is given on the Plain Language Statement that students' participation will not affect their attainment; nevertheless, the researcher felt this was a point that was sufficiently important to be reiterated in interview. It may not always be

possible to guarantee security and anonymity, and good inter-personal relationships are prone to harm where breach of confidentiality is suspected.

To summarise, the researcher controlled for confidentiality
1. By means such as obfuscation (pseudonyms, encryption etc.),
2. By not reporting the full facts of the student's identity, nor the identity of the university and,
3. By physical security measures; the dataset was password protected, and source data was destroyed.

Ethical clearance was applied for and obtained, and to identify participants, a form was devised that asked students for their home address postcode, prior to enrolment. With the permission of the relevant departmental heads and subject lecturers, the researcher visited accountancy and finance classes for the final ten minutes of teaching sessions and distributed the invitation to participate (copy of letter, and Plain Language Statement, at Appendices I and II).

Likely participants were then contacted for a mutually convenient time to conduct the semi-structured interviews. None of the students interviewed were being taught by the researcher, and students were advised that their participation was entirely voluntary, and that they were free to withdraw their participation at any point. They were also told that to preserve their confidentiality, they would be referred to by pseudonyms of their choosing in any material prepared for the study and any resulting publication. Ethnic origin was not recorded in this study, however, all the students who participated were white. It is not known whether any of the participants were disabled.

3.6 SUMMARY

In this chapter, the research problem has been reiterated and its importance contextualised in terms of both social justice and the risk of potential waste of talent for society. The researcher's rationale for the study has been identified, and whilst it is accepted that many studies have been done involving students

from under-represented groups via socioeconomic background, the researcher justifies this new study as dealing with issues which were absent from previous literature. It also brings the existing body of literature up to date into a new era of increased concern about student debt and graduate prospects – matters that are not conducive to attract non-traditional entrants to consider reading for a university degree.

The researcher has also drawn, identified and justified the choice of methodology, and research method, and has outlined the process by which data was collected and analysed as the research proceeded, towards the theory to be generated. Suitable epistemology and theoretical perspectives have been discussed.

In the next chapter, an account of the actual study takes place; this is done in the context of comparison of narratives between groups of students. Emergent themes and keys were coded and classified, and comparison is made to the literature. In addition, in preparing this study, the researcher considered whether the overall widening access policy is working, and what can be done to improve it. This was done in the context of published work on the subject, as well as via discussion with interviewees themselves and university widening participation officers.

Methodological limitations must be considered. What has been outlined above is not a foolproof method for gathering data, analysing the data, and then drawing theoretical conclusions. Limitations exist – some are all-encompassing limitations, common to all forms of qualitative enquiry, such as the potential fickleness of interviewee opinion, or the varying interpretations provided by researchers. Other limitations - time and resources - exist and these are unassailable and are common to all such research exercises. Finally, limitations exist due to the design of the study – it is argued by some researchers, for example Patton (2002) that the grounded theory approach advocated by Charmaz is not as rigorous as other approaches and that conclusions could just as easily be drawn from a less onerous phenomenological survey. In addition, interviews are time consuming, and a small sample population precludes any prospect of more rigorous testing.

The researcher acknowledges these points but argues that the importance of the work and the richness of the output outweigh such misgivings, and notes many published studies, which have used very similar research frameworks and techniques.

4. THE SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

4.1 INTRODUCTION TO THE CHAPTER

This chapter contains detail on the selection of interviewees, together with their background detail, their commentary on university choice and their subsequent experiences. Issues of interviewee selection procedures, and classification of socioeconomic class are initially discussed. The narrative then moves to characteristics of the interviewees themselves. Accounts are given of interviewee reaction to matters of selection, experience, and relations with both peers and university teaching staff. The accounts given by the interviewees are framed in the context of similar points made in the literature.

4.2 THE INTERVIEWEES CHOSEN FOR THIS STUDY

This section of the chapter contains details of the institution and the selection procedures of the interviewees. For reasons of confidentiality, the institution is not named, and the interviewees have been referred to by a pseudonym.

4.2.1 SELECTION PROCEDURES

This study is concerned with contrasting experiences of participation in higher education based on socioeconomic class. Many researchers in this field have used student narratives from single institutions, for example Reay, Crozier and Clayton (2009), and Alsop, Gonzalez-Arnal and Kilkey (2008), whilst other researchers used accounts from students at more than one university, for example Bathmaker, Ingram and Waller (2013). The literature consulted confirms that researchers have not used data from one single degree programme. Selection procedures in previous studies often came from instruments such as postal and teaching class questionnaires; for example, Ball *et al*. (2002), Alsop, Gonzalez-Arnal and Kilkey (2008), and Byrom and Lightfoot (2013).

4.2.2 ADDITIONAL DETAILS OF THE INTERVIEWEES

The following tables give some detail about the interviewees in this study. Although 40 student interviews were arranged, eight interviews were postponed and then cancelled by students. In two cases, telephone interviews were held, when students were absent from the university, but it proved difficult to record such interviews and the interview data were discarded as unusable by the researcher. In four cases, Skype interviews were held, which proved successful for students who resided some distance from their home university. Students were asked to confirm their age range, and stage of academic progression. None of the students identified themselves as care leavers (all of the younger students identified the presence of a parent), nor did any mention attending a school which had been subject to the Schools for Higher Education Programme (SHEP); an initiative designed to improve participation of students from schools with a poorer record of progression to university (Howieson and Minty 2017).

Table 6

The working class students in this study

Name	Gender	Age range	Year of study	MD quintile
Sian	Female	18-22	3rd	20-40
Gillian	Female	18-22	3rd	20-40
Richard	Male	18-22	3rd	20-40
Chloe	Female	18-22	4th	20-40
Dave	Male	23-30	2nd	20-40
Mike	Male	31-40	3rd	20-40
Abigail	Female	23-30	2nd	20-40
Morag	Female	18-22	4th	20-40
Boab	Male	18-22	4th	20-40
Harry	Male	18-22	4th	20-40
Dawn	Female	31-40	4th	20-40

Table 7

The middle class students in this study

Name	Gender	Age range	Year of study	MD quintile
Huw	Male	18-22	2nd	60-80
Trinny	Female	18-22	2nd	60-80
Elizabeth	Female	18-22	2nd	60-80
Izzy	Female	18-22	2nd	60-80
Nicky	Male	18-22	2nd	60-80
Archie	Male	18-22	3rd	60-80
Jim	Male	18-22	3rd	60-80
Sam	Female	18-22	4th	60-80
Lorna	Female	18-22	2nd	60-80
Chris	Male	18-22	3rd	60-80
Katie	Female	18-22	2nd	60-80
Ken	Male	23-30	3rd	60-80
Alyson	Female	18-22	2nd	60-80
John	Male	18-22	2nd	60-80
Craig	Male	18-22	2nd	60-80
Garry	Male	18-22	3rd	60-80
Ceri	Female	23-30	2nd	60-80
Rona	Female	18-22	3rd	60-80
Donnie	Male	18-22	3rd	60-80

Interviews were of the semi-structured format, and the researcher advised the participants of the broad question topics that were to be asked at the outset. Although ideas for improvement were not specifically asked for, several participants gave their opinions at how paths through higher education may be smoothed; perhaps this reflects the greater importance attached to student feedback in the present-day academy, as student suggestions are absent from much of the previous published literature on unequal participation. Student suggestions are notable by their absence in other relevant literature on working class participation.

Students were initially asked questions about

a) Why they had chosen their university, and whether anyone else such as parents or teachers had any misgivings about their choice of institution? This led to additional discussion about degree programme choice.

b) Whether they now have any doubts about their university choice?

c) How they felt about fitting in with their peers from different backgrounds, on both the course and in the university in general, including their relations with university teaching and administrative staff?

The interview topics expanded, to encompass matters such as paid work whilst studying, membership of clubs and societies and key impediments to their progress.

The vocal accounts of the interviewees were essential to this study, so the researcher did not stick rigidly to any time schedule and allowed participants the chance to veer between questions and go back and correct any previous comments made. Interviews generally lasted between 30 and 40 minutes. Interviews were recorded and transcribed and students were given copies of the transcripts so that they could check, and if desired either delete or amend their statements. Only Year 2 and above students were interviewed, because the researcher wanted to talk to students who were committed to their programme of study – in the programmes selected, students had the opportunity to change degree programme choice in the first year but were committed by Year 2. All the students were registered on professionally accredited and named accountancy degrees, whether single honours or combined honours. The working class students would not have benefitted from any contextualised admission policy, despite the views of Crawford *et al*. (2016, p105) who stated that "the key to successfully widening participation…is improvement of school achievement". Neither would these students have benefitted from any articulation policy to give advanced standing between further education and higher education; at the time of the interviews, the university recognised qualifications such as higher National Diplomas (HND) as an alternative to the Scottish Higher, but nothing more, and insisted on enrolment at the start of Year 1 irrespective of background and prior qualifications, adding yet another barrier to participation for relatively time-poor students who wanted to graduate more quickly. It is noted that in Scotland at least two 1960's (and all post 1992

universities) grant advanced standing to ex HND in accounting students. Riddell and Weedon (2018) point out that articulation with further education and with college based HND qualifications is rarely met in the admission literature of the selective universities.

4.3 ACTION TAKEN POST-INTERVIEW

Having completed transcription, attention moved on to analysis of results (Drever 1995, pp60-74, and Holton 2010). The transcripts had been prepared using Microsoft Word, which is a compatible input for a well-known computer program used extensively in qualitative research for identifying themes apparent from interviewee narratives. Several themes emerged and some descriptions of results in connection with the key questions are given below. Where helpful, reference is made to relevant literature, including the work of Bourdieu (*op. cit.*).

4.4 THEMES IDENTIFIED

Following transcription, the program "NVivo" was used to identify key themes apparent from student accounts. The main themes were used as leading questions but additional themes soon became apparent.

Table 8. Main coding themes from interview transcripts

Main theme	Subsidiary theme
Why did you attend this university?	
	School influence
	Family influence
Why did you choose accountancy?	
Extent of home contact	
	Usage of social media
Good points about the university	
Good points about the degree programme	
Negative points about the university	
Negative points about the degree programme	
Fitting in with other people on your programme	
	Any element of conflict?
Membership of clubs and societies	
Work whilst attending university	
Suggestions to make the experience better	

4.5 INTERVIEWEE ACCOUNTS OF UNIVERSITY CHOICE

Several researchers, for example Reay *et al*. (2009), and Byrom and Lightfoot (2013), argue that non-traditional students show great resilience in making the transition out of an environment in which higher education may not have been valued, or had even been despised. Whist no evidence of such derogatory attitudes to higher education was detected, resilience was found in the answers of some of the students, (all working class), but the researcher argues that many middle class students will show great resilience as well when the occasion demands.

However, for the working class student it may be different in that they have single-mindedly persevered with their studies in the face of hurdles. These hurdles can include being shunned (sometimes by former close friends), being deprived of social activities such as parties and games by former school mates, name-calling, and even physical and emotional bullying by former school mates. One might detect change in habitus in such accounts – people who occupy a field

which they think to be inferior are unsure how to react to somebody who is disrupting their own set of values and principles. In the case of students with carer responsibilities, one is aware of the guilt felt by students in arranging care substitution, sometimes at short notice, often by relying on goodwill of friends and family (Bowl 2000, Alsop *et al*. 2008).

In this study, the accounts given by the students highlighted that parents were very supportive of the decision to attend university (Greenbank 2009). However, unlike the students in Greenbank's study, this study dealt with an externally-validated vocational subject area which generally enjoys high rates of employment, so maybe it is unsurprising that parents approved of their children's' decisions. According to the students from lower participation backgrounds, parents were without exception content with their child's decision both to attend the university and with the degree programme chosen. It is striking how many of the interviewees started their account with an influential family member, but the detailed accounts of why students chose their respective universities differed, with one of the middle class entrants (Huw; middle class student) referring to family tradition.

> "My mother, really. I wasn't all that keen on this city but it grew on me. She didn't read the accountancy degree but she convinced me that this was the place for me by telling me all about the facilities here. And the people. The library had only recently been built when she was a student here and she told me that there were plenty of chances to get out into the countryside. I did my own research and saw that some of the lecturers even wrote the books we would use.
>
> *Researcher; Why would that be an advantage?*
>
> If you're being taught by a person who had written his (sic) own book, it tells me that he's likely to test you on matters which he's written about. It's all there, down in print. And this is someone with a lot of influence. I looked on their *(the university's)* web site and saw biographies and could see that a lot of their lecturers either had major experience

in "Big 4" (the major accounting firms) or they were eminent
sounding academics".

For Huw there are several key influences. Familial influence – his mother's
positive experience at the same university – plus the attractions of being taught
by people who were either former staff at major accounting practices or had
enjoyed an eminent research career. A kinship linkage was also evident in
Garry's (middle class student) account; in his case, the encouragement came
from an uncle who had enjoyed success at the same university.

Trinny (middle class student) also identified family influences as strong. She
attended a state school in a "leafy" suburb of a medium sized town and thought
her teachers placed her in what was for her the right direction.

> "Why am I here? I'd said to my head of year (*high school*)
> that I wanted a career in business. Both my parents are _____
> but I don't have a scientific bearing, preferring instead
> social studies and modern studies. They suggested I do
> accountancy, and I did suffer a few adverse but well-
> meaning comments, especially from those in my family who
> run businesses. Choice of university? Well, neither of my
> parents, nor my brother came here (*to study*), but we went
> up for the open day and I really liked it. I was attracted by
> all the facilities and the layout of the place, but I don't get
> the time to use it all".

Meanwhile, Sian (working class student) described an aspect of growing up in an
aspirational working class family home.

> "My parents worked very hard. I'm an only child so it might
> be easier for them. Dad's a lorry driver and was away much
> of the week, leaving me and my mum. When I said I wanted
> to study accountancy they were pleased – they thought it
> was also about money, and one of my uncles, who's got his
> own small business, said I could save his tax. No, I never

had any criticism from my family, and as for coming to ____
they thought I should go for it. They were watching Nicola
Sturgeon on the television the other night, I was there, and
mum said "She comes from a council house just like you and
……. look at her now".

No parental or familial opposition to university choice for the working class
students was detected – the accounts gave the impression that families were
pleased at their attempts to improve themselves. The working class students
took the view that this was for both their own sake and would reflect favourably
on the wider family. Notably, many of the working class participants in this
study came from what might be termed functioning, aspirational and supportive
backgrounds, like many of those identified in certain other studies, such as Tett
(2004), and Byrom and Lightfoot (2013) and might justifiably have been termed
"intermediate" or "peripheral working class" (Bathmaker, Ingram and Waller
2013) in terms of social classification. Only one working class student alluded to
a relative who had attended the university – notably, this person had become a
teacher – a profession which is visible to all social classes.

Elizabeth's (middle class student) choice was influenced by alumni, who were
family members. She did not elaborate on the point but told the researcher that
both familial influences and the reputation of the university were instrumental
in making her decision. She advised that she was glad she achieved the grades
required for entry but would have had to reconsider whether to take Highers
again or attend a different university if she had not met the entrance
requirement.

Lack of information in schools about university choice features in some of the
literature on class and participation, including the Russell group (2015) report
and reports from the Sutton trust (e.g. Sutton trust 2016). However, it was not
mentioned by the interviewees in this study. This might lead one to conclude
that the issue of information is now taken more seriously by schools, and that
students themselves are making much greater use of university publicity
materials which are widely available online. The Scottish Higher-level
qualification in accountancy was not offered at many of the schools attended by

both middle class and working class students, which is not uncommon as Highers in accounting and economics are now rare in the compulsory state school sector in Scotland (Mc Phail, Paisey and Paisey 2010), but several students, including Gillian (working class student) did the Higher in business management. She enjoyed the experience but noted that there was very little accounting in the Higher syllabus. For her, choice was also a combination of factors;

> "The school would take us out on bus trips to universities, and I was very impressed with the welcome shown to us. In some places, we were the only prospective students on the day, and in others there would be lots of pupils from all over Scotland. I went around the business school and it was, like, really impressive, clean, and new. It was looked after. The staff we met were great and were, really welcoming. I made my mind up but my business teacher wasn't so keen, and she had been to a new uni. She said I'd be unhappy. It was my guidance teacher who persuaded me to apply there.
> *Researcher – are you glad you took the guidance teacher's advice?*
> Absolutely! (*laughter*). The facilities and such here are so much better, and I think people take notice of you. It's not been plain sailing all the way, it never is. Dad said that getting here would put a feather in his cap when he told his mates!"

Initially, Richard (working class student, who comes from an inner-city housing scheme) was dismissive about the process. He said he "just fell into it". As with Gillian, he had been out on a few trips to other universities, "for the banter, ken" but then got talking to people and made his choice after speaking to his business management teacher.

> "My mum thinks I've turned posher, but it's just a bant (*humour*) with her. She wanted me to study but I think she'd have been happier had I gone to tech and got a job at the

same time. I've had fears myself but I told myself I was good enough so I'd do it"

Researcher – any regrets?

(pauses) "Nothing much, no, nothing. We've been through rougher times before (*no details disclosed*) (*looks downcast*). I know I've got a lot of work to do but I really think it'd be worthwhile at the end. I've been doing a bit of work part-time but I've kept up with me uni work aye".

No mention was made of any other parent in Richard's account and one might surmise that his mother was a single parent. In his case, he was proud to tell the researcher that he had kept up with the work – perhaps in his case he thought it best to comply with the rules of the game in order to maximise his chances of success.

Dave (working class student) agreed that he had taken a risk in going to university. This risk is more pronounced for working class students, especially when they are the first in their family to attend university. Often, such students feel they cannot allow themselves to fail, because they have opted out of the traditional career path followed by their ancestors (Reay, David and Ball, 2005, p96). Admission of failure is unthinkable because of the great sacrifice and investment made by the student. In Dave's case, he was a successful salesman in a machinery business, married (to a ledger clerk) but he "wanted something more".

"I (*expletive – meaning fooled*) about at school, couldn't take it seriously. Always wanted to get out of class and play footy with the boys (*giggles*). I left when I could, was going to do an apprentice (*ship*) with ____ but I've always been good at talking, so they put me in the sales. I got on really well with the sales boss, and met and married _____. I've always been pretty handy with numbers and when I was about, oh, 22 I think, I went along to the tech and got onto an HNC *(Higher National Certificate – the first of the two stages of the Higher National Diploma)* in accountancy. It

was ＿＿ (his wife) who persuaded me. I often wonder why she asked me to do it and not herself – there's something in that, you know! Did really well – the people at ＿＿ ＿＿ (college) they were all fine and I felt they respected me, you know?"

Researcher – what happened then, how did you get here?

"Ah, yeah, (*giggles*). Liked it – thought I was doing something for the future, you know? Don't regret it, as ＿＿ (*previous employer*) got taken over and they sacked almost all the men I worked with. Terrible, aye. Just got the one main wage coming in now but I've started so I've got to go on".

Researcher – but why this university?

"I was told they had good relations at the tech with ＿＿. I've got a part-time job, you know, at a garage in town and I come in here to do my study work. I think the future is going to look good, and for once I think I'm in control".

Dave's opinion that he now felt in control confirms a successful shift to a new field – it would be illuminating to identify what he thought shortly after entry. However, Dave has some useful commercial experience to draw upon, which would have provided him with some cultural capital to ease the transition to an unfamiliar environment.

Abigail's (working class student) background was less straightforward. She had originally intended to go to university but finished school early. She took menial jobs and became pregnant at the age of 20. Fortunately, she experienced great support of friends and family. In Abigail's case, the support from a cohesive family was essential.

"My sister went to uni, but she did business. She thought it was keeping her options open. Me, yes, but I thought accounts could lead on to a definite job at the end of it. And that's what they told me, everywhere. Just hoping it happens! No, so why did I come here? Well, my aunty went

here, years ago, and she's a teacher. She told me I should
aim high. I said what about the bairn (*baby*)? But they've
all rallied round. I don't think about it now, just want to
get it over and get a good degree than a job".
Researcher – is there support from the university?
"No, well, tell you straight, I haven't asked. I don't think
there would be any help, not seen a crèche, and anything
like, and all the nurseries round here are all private and very
expensive. But I prefer him to go to my mum's or my gran's.
He'll soon be old enough for nursery anyway".

Abigail's responses reveal a number of points that have been brought out in
previous literature on the working class experience. As a carer she has to juggle
her time between her parenting role and her student role but is fortunate to
have support. Secondly, she was reluctant to enquire about university facilities.
At the time, the university in this study did not advertise the existence of any
creche facility, but there were plenty of private facilities in the environs.
However, the university is situated in a relatively affluent and fashionable part
of the city and private facilities might have been beyond the reach of many
working class students. Her reluctance to enquire about university facilities is
not unusual in the researcher's experience, but is not an exclusive phenomenon
of any social class.

Nicky (middle class student) considered that university and degree choice were
very important. He was also interested in the sports teams that represented his
university but noted a disconnect between the university's advertising and the
reality of the situation.

"I didn't know what I wanted at first".
Researcher – did anyone offer any advice on university
choice to you?
"Well… yes but it was a decision which I would have to live
with for the rest of my life. My father's an accountant,
you know, but he isn't a graduate accountant. It was him I
wanted to follow. I settled on this place because it looked

the nicest in all the photographs. All the pictures of the
swimming pool and the rugby team and all that and – I
thought... yeah, that's for me, but there's so much work to
do. Next week and the week following there's three
pieces of coursework due. It's all very well universities
advertising all their sports provision but they don't make it
easy for you to compete".

In some of the anecdotal evidence identified in the literature, teachers'
opinions, however well meaning, were a further impediment against working
class participation at a selective university (Hutchings and Archer 2001, Reay
2013). This differs from most of the experiences recorded here. For example,
the business management teacher in Morag's school was highly influential,
especially because the school offered neither accountancy nor economics.
Morag advised the researcher that she knew nothing about the accountancy
profession except what she had learned in her business management classes
(emphasising the lack of positive role models in accountancy, as identified by
Smith and Briggs, 1999). She had some knowledge that they dealt with in money
but thought that applied mostly to banks, too. The business management
teacher also encouraged Morag (working class student) to apply to a selective
university. In Morag's case, perhaps she was lucky that in her year several of
her friends obtained places at both her university and other selective
universities, thanks to an ambitious year head. She was asked whether being
part of a large cohort from her old school helped.

"Yes, it's a big help actually, knowing that many of my
friends went to the better universities. We get together
every so often, always at Christmas, and we have a bit of
laugh about it. There's even a Facebook page which pokes
fun at some of the student habits in _____'s university *(The
Facebook page is entitled "Things _____ University
students don't say")."*

So, in Morag's case, there is positive influence from the teacher, and from
school management, compounded by similar aspirations from peers. None of

the non-traditional group of students alluded to any hostility faced from other pupils, both in terms of staying on to do Highers, or in university choice. There may be several reasons for this. Firstly, published accounts incorporating peer hostility were taken at least 15 years ago; nowadays, with a larger national cohort now entering university, a working class university entrant may not be unusual in more peer groups. Secondly it may be the case that the university attendee does not socialise with their school peers to the same extent nowadays compared to previous years. Finally, some school pupils may not have made their study intentions explicit to other pupils in order to avoid hostility.

Boab (working class student) had entered the university after a very successful school career. He thought that relations with school teachers were very important – they had the knowledge, and according to him, it was almost the case that they were the real gatekeepers. As far as going to the selective university was concerned, he was unsure whether his parents knew it was selective. He did not feel that his parent (mother) worried, so long as he was happy.

Harry (working class student) had left school at 18 with good grades but had then worked as a labourer on building sites. He enjoyed the income but was "fed up of getting home dirty". He was confident of his abilities as a "trader", buying and selling currency after hours, at home over the internet to supplement his income. He came to university with an interest more in the financial management side of the accountancy profession, and based his choice on viewing prospectuses online, looking at the physical environment, "beautiful buildings", and the programme content. He was asked if family or friends had any influence on his decision and replied that this was not the case as he preferred to rely on his own research.

Izzy's (middle class student) experience was a little different.

> "This probably sounds all arrogant, but I had no doubt I
> would come here. To some extent, I chose the university

before the course. I like the programme and wanted to be

an accountant because of my dad".

Researcher – did he come here to study?

"Yes, and as a family we go back some way with this place.

But he didn't study accountancy."

None of these participants expressed any issues about distance from home to campus (Reay, David and Ball, 2005, p86), but it must be realised that most of these students (non-traditional as well as traditional background) were living at the parental home and attending a local university, which is a more commonplace phenomenon in Scotland than in other parts of the UK. Travelling distances were quite short and/or straightforward (except for Gillian) and several kept cars (including Dave, Mike, Abigail and Garry), despite the generally good public transport system in the city. Dave, Mike, and Garry kept cars because of their part-time employment, and Abigail needed a car to get her son between her house and her parents' and grandparents' houses, and to and from the university. The similarity of reasons for participation between middle class and working class entrants corresponds with findings from some of the later research (Tett 1999).

Researchers such as Tett (2004) and Greenbank (2009) claim that working class students exhibit greater evidence of fatalism and pessimism which is absent from, or less explicit in, the accounts provided by middle class students. In this study, some fatalistic comments come from some of the participants, Richard (working class student), who displayed a "what is to be will be" attitude to one of the questions. Another working class student (Abigail) preferred to rely on help from family than seek out help from the university wither childcare situation. The researcher suggests that fatalism is a highly subjective value-judgment about another person's character and would be very difficult to measure, and that a measure of fatalism may just as easily have been found in middle class student accounts.

A number of writers have suggested that action should be taken to improve the university experience for working class students (as well as improving access for other minority group students). Some of these actions would not be difficult for

the modern university, using up-to-date management information systems. As high rates of withdrawal are not welcome to an aspiring university, suggested adjustments look attractive and might include increased affability between faculty and students, timetabled personal tutorials, and timing of assessments to avoid "bunching". In terms of assessment, Thomas (2002) also refers to group assignments as helping inculcate a sense of belonging as students are focussed on the task itself, and not on their differences. Indeed, a range of assessment types (*ibid.*) was found to be helpful in playing to the disparate strengths of a large student body. Allied to this, several students identified their peers at university as almost like a new family, and the ways in which adjustments to design of student facilities could foster a more intimate spirit.

A summary of key influences on attendance is given below;

Table 9

Influences identified as important in making university choice

	Middle class students	Working class students
Degree programme important	14 (74%)	7 (64%)
University reputation important	19 (100%)	11 (100%)
School trip to university	3 (16%)	5 (45%)
Teacher who encouraged application to ____ university	12 (63%)	9 (82%)
Teacher who encouraged study of accountancy	7 (37%)	2 (18%)

From the above table, although the numbers are small and not statistically significant, it seems that the university reputation was important to all interviewees, taking preference over the degree programme. Indeed, one middle class student suggested that in their school, choice of institution was regarded as just as important, if not more than choice of degree programme. School trips to university were not cited as quite so important (except for one

working class student), for either the working class or the middle class students. Teacher influences seemed to be extremely important in guiding application to a selective university, and more so for the working class students compared to the middle class students.

4.6 INTERVIEWEE REFLECTIONS ON UNIVERSITY CHOICE

Because of a lack of cultural capital, several researchers (for example, Christie 2009, Greenbank 2009) have suggested that working class students might suffer greater self-doubt than students whose lives have been characterised by privilege and entitlement (Smyth and Banks 2012). The decision to enter university is not taken lightly (Byrom and Lightfoot 2013), and the decision to enter a university which has no connection with one's prior life experiences requires considerable self-assurance. Several articles (for example Read, Archer and Leathwood 2007 and Bathmaker, Ingram and Waller 2013) refer to the intricate web of unwritten rules which characterises university education and distinguishes it from prior experiences. From a Bourdieusian point of view, the selective university is an unfamiliar field for the working class student who might be unaware of the rules of the game. Middle class students may have access to greater resources, in the form of peers or relatives who have attended university in the past, to help them negotiate this network, and to greater stores of social and cultural capital (Crozier *et al.* 2009) for which they have privileged access. The literature also refers to the influences of schools in middle class areas which are adept at equipping pupils for the transition between school and university. However, studies showed that because working class students are in an unfamiliar environment, they tend to do less well at this process.

The researcher asked interviewees whether they had any doubts now over their university choice and gave a pause before any further elaboration. Few admitted to any doubts about their university choice, but Gillian (working class student) claimed that she could have left in the first week had it not got any better.

> "I hated that Freshers Week they had here. So many clubs
> and societies, and I could never have joined all of them,
> not that I'd want to, mind. I saw people there, they
> seemed ordinary enough but it led me to think I didn't
> belong. I mean, beekeeping? I've always been a bit
> cautious around new people – it's a _____ *(gives her home
> locale)* thing. We're a little terse with strangers but we're
> fine when you get to know us. Well, all this splashing
> around money, drinking and that, I can't join in. I thought
> I didn't belong here. Classes had already started and I got
> all the tutorial questions right in Semester 1, so I decided
> to stay here. Some days I regret it, some days I don't, but
> on the whole, I'd say it was right for me".

This indicates that Bourdieu's rules of the game were not at first familiar to Gillian; she speaks of her displeasure in the very first week, which is often held up by universities as a joyous occasion, heralding the transition to university study. This is not an isolated observation and is seen in some recent studies such as MacAskill and Howieson (2017), and Reay (2018), wherein the time-stretched working class students found Freshers Week to be an unsatisfactory event; full of meaningless activities (at the time) and information overload.

Following this part of the interview, the researcher also asked students about their experience of social life at university, expecting traditional background students to have a much wider range of experience and greater stores of social and cultural capital. In fact, very few students claimed to have a thriving social life at university. Some of the more traditional background students had joined sports clubs and other societies, and one non-traditional student had joined a sports club and was enjoying belonging to the team. One (traditional) student remained a leader with a youth group in her church, but the paucity of detail and of answers in general, and the relatively low-level of engagement in activities which might have been the norm only about 20 years ago, was striking.

The traditional entrants were unanimous in saying that they had made the right university choice; an example comes from Izzy, who said

"Never any doubt that this was best for me"

Others (including non-traditional background students) added comments such as;

- "No, it's been fine. Really enjoying it, but it's hard work to keep up" (Dave; working class student).
- "Just hope it's worth it in the future, but it's OK at the minute" (Morag; working class student).
- "I think it was great to be given the chance to come here and I wouldn't swap it at all" (Richard; working class student).
- "I'd thought very deeply about my choice and even if I did regret it, I could not say as such" (Huw middle class student).
- "No, not for a minute. Life's never going to be completely perfect but I'm so glad I'm here" (Trinny; middle class student).
- "I think you've got to be good to yourself. I know people who started doing their degree and soon dropped out. I've made up my mind to get a good degree and I'm on track. This university helps in several ways – some of the lecturers record their lectures, for example, and others even hire actors for in-class debates" (Boab; working class student).
- "Glad I'm here but I worry if I've enough money to finish the course (programme)" (Chloe; working class student).

It is notable that many of the working class narratives indicated slightly more hesitancy about the benefits of university attendance, compared to the middle class narratives. However, one wonders how much one should draw for this. University, especially selective universities, are new ground for many working class students, and in any new experience, one might tread carefully for fear of

embarrassing oneself by making a *faux pas*. To take an example from Bourdieu, this is a process of learning the rules of a new game.

Abigail (working class student) rather forcefully remarked

> "Well look at me now. Here I am. Nothing's going to
> prevent me if I can help it. I've made up my mind I'm
> seeing this through. I haven't got time or the inclination
> for any self-doubt or self-pity; it's my bed and I gotta lie
> on it 'cos I got to keep working. I'm doing it for someone
> else not just me".

Crozier *et al*. (2008) noted a lower propensity for working class students to participate in extra-curricular activities. The working class students regarded their degree as central to their lives whilst studying; by contrast, the middle class students in Crozier *et al*. (*ibid*.) regarded their degree as more peripheral. Although slightly greater participation by middle class students in extra-curricular activities was noted, the distinction was not universal. This may be due to factors such as;

a) All interviewees were reading for the same vocational degree, in contrast to Crozier *et al*. (*ibid*.) which made no reference to individual degree programmes.

b) The interviewees in this study were from backgrounds perhaps less overtly working class and less overtly middle class than in other studies of socioeconomic difference and its impact on student experience.

c) Pressure to succeed and obtain a good class of degree might nowadays be more pronounced throughout student cohorts and across a wider range of socioeconomic groups, leading to students being less boastful about their extra-curricular activities, compared to interviewees in earlier studies.

Several middle class students mentioned attendance at accountancy and business clubs, but none of them claimed it to be a positive experience. One student mentioned attendance at a political club but did not elaborate much – perhaps this indicates a societal shift in that students may be just as politically motivated as in the past, and just as likely to join a political party (the interviews were

taken not long after a heightened time of political activity in Scotland) but were not prepared to sacrifice the time on political meetings as their forbears.

Harry (working class student) said that the university experience lived up to his expectations, but little more. He was getting by (financially) on his trading activities and told the researcher that he did not have much time for going out with other students. He did not live locally and commuted to the university on days when lectures and tutorials were held. He did not like group work as it interfered with time available on his computer, where he was developing trading algorithms. He said he hadn't thought much about it – some of it was very useful to him but he had his own plans, and aspects of university life did not fit in with these plans. When asked what those plans were, he said that he had no interest in drinking and clubbing with fellow students and did not go in much for those activities anyway. He said he was;

> Sometimes I get sick of seeing notices for parties, discos
> and the rest of it…I didn't come here to do that and I don't
> like it"
> *Researcher – is that because of the other people? Have*
> *you been made to feel unwelcome?*
> No, it's not that, it's just that I feel it's a waste of my
> time. I want to make enough money so I don't have to
> work again.
> *Researcher - Have you applied for any jobs?*
> I have, but the way I look at it is this. I worked for two
> years, getting no respect, it was a dead end. I know what
> I want, and I've found a way of getting it."

For Harry, the benefits of a degree seem to outweigh the attractions of the social life of the university. Harry's life had taken a significant change following on from his earlier employment on building sites, and he was glad to be out of his former employment.

The following table identifies the numbers and proportions of interviewees who were members of university sports and social clubs, split between the middle

class students and the working class students. Rather more middle class students opted for membership of clubs and societies, but being a member of a given club or society is not a sole marker of one's activity, which might be a reason for the relative silence on this topic from both working class students and middle class students. In any case, one might have joined a club, but that does not mean that one is a frequent and committed attender at club events. The level of commitment and involvement in clubs and societies was not pursued by the researcher, but it is offered as a suggestion for further research, and a number of students advised the researcher that they found the university's clubs and societies were relatively disappointing. If one views societies and clubs and other extra-curricular activity as means of acquiring social capital, then the (albeit limited) evidence here indicates that time spent studying and working is such that students will nowadays make up their own stores of social capital and not rely on what goes on in students' unions.

Table 10

Membership of university sports/social/political/musical clubs and societies

	Middle class students	Working class students
University sports club	9 (47%)	3 (27%)
University social/musical/political club/society	14 (74%)	3 (27%)

It should be noted that the city itself, in which this university is situated, supports a strong range of clubs and societies catering for many tastes and interests, so low participation in university clubs and societies might not be noteworthy. One middle class student started attending a university club but found it to be rather insulated and parochial, so instead turned to a local club for his chosen activity (mountaineering) preferring the company of the people involved.

4.7 INTERVIEWEES' RELATIONS WITH PEERS AND FACULTY

A great deal of concern in the academic literature on widening participation centres around the challenges for the working class student in "fitting in" with a new environment (Hockings, Cook and Bowl 2007, Christie 2009, Reay, Crozier and Clayton 2009), often resulting in isolation from peers (Bowl 2000). Tett (2004) relates a student comment from one of her interviews;

> "Standing in the line to get my matriculation card and seeing all those other students with really expensive trainers I knew I shouldn't be here."

Reay, Crozier and Clayton (2009) identify several contrasts between the working class and the middle class student choice and subsequent experience. These authors present evidence that working class students enjoy little of the cultural capital earned by middle class students in terms of fewer chances to participate in university extra-curricular activities (for example, dance, drama, music lessons and the like), and that a lack of professional knowledge and hence ambition resulted in working class attendance as an almost "clueless serendipity". In this study, however, it seems that the middle class students were just as unenthusiastic as the working class students to get involved.

Sian (working class student) recalls her first few classes, where a distance between her and some of her classmates became apparent. Having been schooled in a relatively cohesive semi-rural small community, with few trappings of privilege, Sian's opinion of many of her university classmates was:

> "They're all rich and they're all clever."

Not only did she feel overwhelmed by the conspicuous consumption enjoyed by her fellow classmates, she also felt affected by what she thought was a serious economic gap between herself and the rest of her class. This contrast between working class and middle class experience has been brought out by several authors as a shock to new students when entering higher education for the first time (the "shock of the elite", according to Reay, Crozier and Clayton, 2009).

Christie (2009) also draws attention to conspicuous consumption of certain affluent students who even manage to run expensive cars whilst at university. In Sian's case, she found it "astounding" that some of her fellow students had all the latest available technological gadgets and boasted of a lifestyle in which expensive holidays were taken three or more times a year, new designer label clothes were bought frequently, and there was no necessity to get part-time work. Attitudes to people outside the university were also striking, and she commented;

> "They've (the traditional, wealthier students) got no sympathy for anyone worse off than themselves. One of these yahs *(colloquial term for a wealthy student)* said one night while we were in the bar that anyone on benefits, well he said something about them all being useless scroungers, and I felt hurt because I know good people struggling to get by on benefits. There's a lot of unemployment where I'm from."

The reference to the middle class students being "clever" might indicate a lack of confidence on the part of a working class student, and is evidenced from the literature, for example Tett (1999), who reports a student comment that universities were full of such over confident, middle class people, a point identified in a later study by Reay (2018) who noted that the working class students did not think they were as intelligent as the middle class students. The researcher did not pursue whether these wealthier students were from the same programme.

The experience of meeting people from a completely different part of society is a feature of university life (see, for example, Nelson, Dickson and Hargie, 2003), and as shown above, the experience is not necessarily a happy one. Comments such as these confirm findings by Christie (2009), Reay (2013) and Byrom and Lightfoot (2013) that the typical middle class discourse on the benefits of university has now filtered through to students from other backgrounds. However, one notes that Sian used first person plural in the above account – indicating that she had friends that she felt comfortable socialising with. From

the literature, it is noted that even students who had chosen to attend one of the newer "silver" or "bronze" (Archer 2007) universities complained of feelings of not being part of the "fabric" of the university – a feeling that they were being somehow inauthentic by not pursuing a more familiar trajectory (Reay 2001, Read, Archer and Leathwood 2007, Bathmaker, Ingram and Waller 2013).

No student admitted to feelings of loneliness, but isolation, even solitude was a feature of some experiences. Three students whose circumstances were outside the mainstream had little interaction with their peers because of their specific circumstances. Abigail and Dawn (working class students) had carer responsibilities, and Dave (working class student) is a married man but without dependents. These militated against socialisation at the University. Students did not, for the most part, live far from the university so therefore, many of them were in daily contact with families. In other accounts of working class participation, students sometimes expressed concern over not being in touch with friends and relatives, but given the huge rise in the use of social media since those accounts were published, one might assume that what was formerly a major problem to some students is no longer an issue.

In Abigail's case

> "Some people have said to me that I should be going out
> with the other students. But I don't want to, but I'm not
> unsociable or anything – I just don't want to be too much
> of a burden on my relatives whilst my child is young. I get
> on well enough with them, and we do talk to each other.
> Look, I've got a group coursework to do so I'm going to have
> to interact with them and we use Skype to keep in touch if
> we can't meet face to face."

For Abigail, it seemed that she had no need of developing close relationships with other students. She had a wide circle of friends from her school days and this network suited her. Earlier studies of working class experience were published before the widespread usage of social media, such as Facebook, What's App and Instagram, and in the days when some previous studies were

conducted, telephone services available on campus would have been less accessible and relatively more expensive. In a more modern era of cheap mobile phone calls, text messaging and social media platforms, it is probable that students, such as those in Reay's (2009) "Strangers in Paradise" would be much more easily able to keep in touch with home.

Dave remarked that he was much happier at home with his wife, just "chilling" even, rather than taking part in student life. He described student union bars as "dark and dingy places" but he made the best use of technology available to download lecture recordings and to converse via social media. The contemporary university, trying to mimic employment situations, is a proponent of group exercises. Yet such exercises cannot replicate what goes in in employment. Group work is relatively easy to arrange for the full-time campus-resident student, who will be based in or around the university at evenings and weekends and who has no employment or familial responsibilities. Whilst technology, such as Skype, can ameliorate the problem of lack of physical presence, a student who cannot attend group meetings might feel some disadvantage compared to the traditional full-time student. Harry freely admitted to being averse to socialising with his peers but when asked why he replied he had other things to do and was rarely on campus after hours; he was a 'day student" - analogous to a non-boarding "day pupil" at a private school. The phenomenon of the "commuter student" is recognisable here. Southall, Watson and Avery (2016) regard the student who travels in to university, sometimes taking a journey of more than one hour each way, as part of a growing trend. Such students might have outside commitments which militate against residence on or near the university campus, whilst others have made a conscious decision to reside at home.

Morag (working class student) commented that "I think I must be fairly good at making friends". She retained her friends from her old school and had made new ones in the university. She felt that she and her new friends were all in something together. Whilst (like Sian) she was amazed at the wealth of some of these students, she found other students on her degree to be open and friendly. She did not think the wealth differences were a big barrier to her experience.

Boab (working class student) (like Harry) did not have much to do with others on his programme. Boab mentioned that perhaps he was a very solitary person who demands high standards, which could account for his quite small circle of friends. He mentioned that he had always been like this – it was a "defence mechanism". He said the others on his degree were "OK, I suppose" but he had made rather few friends since getting to university and did not expect to make any more. By way of contrast, Richard (working class student), who enjoys playing team sports, thought that the accounting and finance department was a very cohesive place and he had made some good friends of people from his degree, irrespective of their background and socioeconomic status.

Harry (working class student) wondered whether his self-imposed isolation made him unpopular with his peers. When asked why, he said that he did not mix in very much.

> "(sighs)...I suppose I haven't gone out of my way. I've feared poverty all my life, maybe I'm shamed about where I'm from, don't want to give too much away."

The middle class students unanimously professed unawareness of any great socioeconomic differences between them and the working class students. Trinny (middle class student) was aware of a few working class students in some of her lectures, and told the researcher that she thought it made no difference because "we're all the same now aren't we"? Elizabeth acknowledged that her greater wealth could be a barrier to social interaction with certain class mates, but she did not think that was a problem. She also said she admired people who had worked their way up from more trying circumstances. In general, however, the attitude of "we're all in this together" prevailed amongst the middle class students – and a number of students praised the work of lecturers who organised coursework groups rather than allow students to select their own groups. The phrase "not a problem" appeared several times in middle class accounts of relationship between different socioeconomic groups in the cohort.

Few students considered themselves to be isolated from other students because of differing levels of wealth; only one middle class student and three working

class students. There may be several reasons for this, but these students saw a lot of each other, being in the same classes for at least two years, so barriers could have been broken down by familiarity. The degree programme is structured such that students are set on the same pathway from the first week, with transfers between programmes being relatively difficult after the first year compared to the same degree programme in other universities.

Questions about relationships with university staff were originally an adjunct to the wider question on peer relations, but the topic came up quite frequently in earlier interviews, and it was a question to which students tended to have a lot to say. It is an issue which often appears in the literature on widening participation. Some references to language in use are made in the literature - an interviewee in Read, Archer and Leathwood's (2007) work refers to lecturers as speaking in an alien tongue, Moran (2008) notes a covert bias among tutors for middle class students, and Macdonald and Stratta (2001) note a tendency for some tutors to cater specifically for some non-traditional groups, such as mature students, but not to widen that care to other non-traditional groups. Issues with the unavailability of help were also identified by Bowl (2000), and Tett (2004), and Read, Archer and Leathwood (2003) identify the typical student as, historically, young, white, middle class and male. In Bowl's *(ibid.)* study, one of her participants considered that she was very much on her own – that the onus for arranging all the sundry issues associated with enrolment and registration was very much with the student. A contrast is drawn between further education and higher education staff in Tett *et al*. (2017); university staff tended to be more reserved and not as directing. They were found helpful but the students thought it would have been better if staff had to get to know them by name.

The (widening participation) students in Howieson and Minty's study (2017) professed few concerns at their relations with lecturers, and this was repeated in this study. Perhaps this is because of several developments since Bowl's (2000) study. These developments include: -

1) More schools getting students ready for university, and a greater knowledge and experience of selective universities amongst school teachers.

2) Assistance given to entrants from non-traditional pathways by university widening participation services (a point confirmed in conversation between the researcher and a university widening participation officer in February 2016).

3) An increase in student representation on departmental committees and staff student committees, leading to better relations between faculty and students.

4) Increasing numbers of lecturing staff who have taken university courses in teaching in higher education, and who have gained some knowledge of the problems posed by a greater variety of university entrants. This has happened despite admissions staff admitting that their target group is 17/18 years olds (Evans *et al*. 2018)

In this study, students were mostly praiseworthy of their lecturers, but there were exceptions. The faculty is large and diverse and it might be the case that some of the more junior lecturers have undergone full training and might be expecting the student body to replicate their own experience. Other lecturers may be rather set in their ways and have reached a level of seniority which renders them immune from comments about feedback etc.

Pedagogical issues arise in several journal papers on widening participation. Hockings, Cook and Bowl (2007) refer to the unfamiliarity of the lecture hall (a highly efficient means of transmitting material for universities) as essentially one-way – the lecture deprives the student of their chance to input their own skills, experiences and opinions. The more self-assured traditional entrants seem to take this in their stride, but two complained of the "tedium" of listening to lectures which sometimes went over already familiar material. One student (Huw; middle class student) summed up his feelings for one of his lecturers thus;

> "How do some of these lecturers get away with it? At my school, (an English public school) the masters spent the time to ensure that everyone in the classroom was keeping up with the work in their lessons. Here, I'm not so sure they care. I admire their reputation and the fact that they've

probably written a lot of books and journal articles but there's one, in particular, who stumbles his speech, never looks directly at his audience, and often incorporates silly errors into the seminar's suggested solutions".

Huw's lecturer taught several classes which would also have been attended by at least seven other participants (both working class and middle class participants), but no mention of this lecturer was made by them.

4.8 OTHER ISSUES IDENTIFIED BY INTERVIEWEES

One student (Gillian; working class student) noticed textbook content as a problem.

> "I find that language they use is a difficulty. There's a textbook which we're supposed to be using and it's full of all sorts of big words that I haven't seen before. The lecturer, well, he's not very sympathetic – he told me I ought to be able to know all this stuff from school. And they go through the maths so fast. The examples in the textbook don't show you each and every step you got to take to get there. I mentioned it to someone else on my course and she didn't think it was a problem, but we never used textbooks in school – it was all those Leckie (*a series of subject-specific books which closely follow the Scottish Qualification Authority's Higher-level syllabi*) books and I think they're better written. I find it's difficult getting used to the textbooks".

A disconnect of teaching styles between (state) schools and universities is revealed here. Pupils in state schools were still using conventional textbooks, especially at SQA Higher level, but the use of textbooks seemed more widespread in fee-paying schools. However, at university level, textbooks are almost universal, and for some (principally narrative based) subjects a student

might have to refer to several texts in one module. This student advised that she raised the issue of textbooks at a staff student committee meeting and received helpful advice from faculty, but other faculty were surprised at the lack of textbooks in contemporary state education. Gillian also mentioned that it took some of her fellow non-traditional entrants by surprise to discover the use of so much material which had originally been produced for other educational markets, such as the USA. Something which may seem so simple as using a textbook originally intended for another nation might not faze a student from a background which was quite rich in life experiences, yet it might be a novelty for a student brought up in a more parochial atmosphere where teaching materials are produced centrally, and where the materials tend to reinforce the locality, to meet the needs of a relatively small state's education service, such as Scotland's. The point about unfamiliarity of source materials was mentioned to other participants in later interviews with this sample but it did not seem to be important to either the middle class students or the working class students. It is notable that Gillian was the only student who commented on the difficulty of understanding the language of the academy.

Harry (working class student) told the researcher that it did take him some time to get used to the independence of university study and that it had been a "bit rough now and then". The researcher asked Harry how he might have been better prepared for university level study, but he could not come up with any suggestions – recommendations from the literature about better student preparation are often advanced in a banal fashion, but specific advice on the process is generally lacking. Whilst conversational and anecdotal evidence points to an acknowledgement of the benefit for intervention, one cannot compel students to take advantage of university services.

Breadth of vocabulary is a hallmark of cultural capital; indeed, one might find oneself judged by one's student peers according to the variety and complexity of one's mastery of words. Unfamiliarity with longer words and more technical language is an aspect of cultural capital that may be problematic for the non-traditional student to master (Read, Archer and Leathwood 2003). Such students might have come from homes where such language is rarely used and would have rarely been met throughout school (Ingram 2009). This point was

picked up by Gillian but was not considered important enough by any of the other participants.

4.8.1 FINANCIAL PRESSURES AND PART-TIME WORK

Although Scottish students do not generally pay fees for a typical first four-year undergraduate degree, this does not mean that they are immune from financial worries. Whilst one member of the household is at university, the other members need to carry the financial burden on fewer shoulders. It did not surprise the researcher that working class students expressed concerns about having the funds needed to finish their degree, but it was surprising that so many middle class students also thought lack of money was a key factor in disrupting their studies. Several middle class students were engaged in part time work, both in term and during vacations. Some seemed to be undertaking it for almost altruistic reasons, e.g. to put funds back into the household. Others had a specific spending plan for which they wanted money, e.g. to pay for travel. Only one student admitted to being "bone idle" and not wanting to work.

4.9 KEY PROBLEMS FOR STUDENTS IN THIS STUDY

The final table in this chapter summarises the key problems which students perceived as facing them in their studies. Although there is a slight imbalance between working class students and middle class students in terms of "academic problems", the proportions of students expressing concern about these topics are quite similar between the working class students and the middle class students. The prospect of financial difficulties (having enough money to live on), and the worry of getting a job at the end of the programme, were the two principal concerns.

The results could reflect greater anxiety about the future for the working class student, who might be under greater pressure to find a job. They might also reflect greater stress on middle class household budgets than in previous

studies. Although the students in this study would not have faced tuition fees, they would have had to fund their day to day living costs, perhaps by a combination of loans and paid employment.

Table 11

Key problems identified by students on an accountancy programme at a Scottish selective university

Concerns	Middle class students	Working class students
Enough money to live on	16 (84%)	11 (100%)
Getting a job on graduation	17 (90%)	11 (100%)
Academic problems	13 (62%)	9 (82%)
Balancing paid employment with university	11 (58%)	7 (63%)

4.10 SUMMARY

In this chapter, the researcher has described and discussed the data gathering procedure, justified the use of measurements adopted, and selected vignettes from interviews with students to illustrate their answers. Reference was made to some of the relevant literature. Some of the evidence presented confirmed aspects of the existing literature, whilst other evidence contradicted it. It seems that changes have been made since the early and mid-2000's, and maybe the situation in Scotland for students taking a vocational degree is perhaps brighter than hitherto, but it must be emphasised that this was a relatively small-scale study and the working class participants did not rate highly on the deprivation indicator used.

The discussion chapter follows; more attention is paid to the differences between the results found here and the findings of previous studies. The possible implications of the study are discussed, suggestions for improvement of the *status* quo are given, both from the existing literature and from interviewees themselves.

5. DISCUSSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION TO THE CHAPTER

In this chapter, additional attention is given to the background issues and to the participants' accounts from the previous chapter. The answers given by students are related to the literature on working class participation in selective higher education institutions. The results are examined to see the possible lessons learned, and the implications for the academy in general, especially Scottish accountancy and finance education. A caveat is identified however; the students in this study were relatively advanced in their university career and they may be looking to the past through a benign lens, some of them perhaps having forgotten their earliest experiences at university. University learning does not take place in a vacuum and must be contextualised in the culture of the study environment (Bamber and Tett, 2000). Barriers to working class participation in higher education are complex and multi-layered (Reay 2001, Jones and Thomas 2005, Archer *et al*. 2007), and literature often gives several different reasons for the specific difficulties faced by non-traditional students (Archer and Hutchings 2000).

5.2 SUMMARY OF THE RESULTS

The results from the present study are summarised as follows.

5.2.1 PERSONAL FINANCE

The principal concern of students in this study was shortage of funds. It seems that the literature had, in the past, paid limited attention to this, but financial concerns were common to both working class and middle class students, although slightly more working class students were concerned compared to middle class students. It may be the case that attitudes have hardened against taxpayer funded handouts to students, and although undergraduate tuition fees had not been imposed in Scotland in 2018, students still needed to find sources

of income to pay for their studies. It is difficult to think of a remedy to this, other than simply throwing money at the problem, or introducing a more generous loan scheme. Both measures may be politically unpopular in an age of economic austerity. Very limited numbers of bursaries and scholarships are available in many universities, as well as from some professional bodies and professional firms, but it is highly likely that the need for additional finance far outweighs the supply. Although Scotland proudly proclaims zero tuition fees as an example of a more inclusive and egalitarian system of higher education, evidence suggests students from the wealthiest backgrounds have derived the greater benefit (Hunter Blackburn 2014) from the nil fees policy, because it has diverted funds from other purposes, and with the reduction in grants and increases in bursaries, the poorer students have been hit harder (Minty 2016).

Other potential concerns identified by students include the workload (though none described it as unmanageable), getting a job at the end of study and risk of illness or injury interfering with study. Workload concerns are known from other studies, but there seems to be a lack of investigation into student illness.

Concerns about both employment prospects and matters such as class of degree expected was a potential problem which cut across both middle class and working class participants to this study. Such concerns are understandable, given that almost all these students could see the culmination of their university career in the next two years. Perhaps a set of different concerns would have been found if students from the first year only had been interviewed.

5.2.1.1 WORKING WHILST AT UNIVERSITY

Working whilst at university is nothing new, but the almost universal evidence of working from student accounts in this study contradicts certain earlier studies. Middle class students were just as likely to work as working class students. Slight differences were found – the middle class students tended to work to meet certain spending commitments, or to pay back their parents, or to gain independence from their parents, and were, in some cases, quite emphatic about the need to work. None of the working class students exhibited any

specific spending commitment, but in a couple of cases, part time work was undertaken to supplement household budgets which might otherwise have been strained by the loss of one breadwinner. Of course, this was a very small sample, and one might easily envisage a working class student who works with an intention to buy a car, or a middle class student who works in order to maintain total household income.

This observation is also borne out in Howieson and Minty (2017), but the findings contrast with evidence presented by Moreau and Leathwood (2006), wherein most part-time working students were working class. Reasons for this change could include greater pressure on students to fund their own studies via part-time employment, greater pressure to obtain a better class of degree, and a more strategic view of the value of such activity taken by students. Accordingly, they tended to favour part-time activities likely to be of more interest to employers than activities which they might have regarded as flippant.

5.2.2 INFORMATION AND SUPPORT IN SCHOOLS

The lack of information for prospective entrants about universities, including selective universities, appears to be a much smaller problem than found, historically, in some parts of the literature. This finding appears to contradict both the Russell Group (2015) and the Scottish Funding Council (2016) reports into the barriers against widening participation. In the accounts given in this study, teachers were generally very helpful in encouraging people to apply to a selective university. It has already been suggested that one reason for this could be the greater number of teachers in post who had been educated at a selective university. It may be the case that in the studies from 15-20 years ago, school pupils had been taking advice from teachers who were not themselves graduates, or who had graduated from smaller institutions, compared to more recent cohorts of students, who may have had school teachers with experience of studying at selective universities. Perhaps the teachers in this study had changed their own behaviour on moving to new field. They now wished to encourage their own pupils to step up to a bigger game, maybe thinking that if "I could do it, then you can do it".

This newer generation of school teachers is perhaps less conscious of class boundaries and takes a more enabling attitude to their students, compared to some of those described in studies such as Sutton Trust (2000), Oliver and Kettley (2010), and Reay (2013). Student accounts of liaison between schools and universities were far more positive than seen in studies such as Reay, David and Ball (2005). A couple of narratives referred to the commonplace practice of school trips to universities – which is relatively straightforward in the compact confines of Scotland's central belt. However, there is some evidence in the literature for a persistence of negative opinions by school teachers. The Sutton Trust (2014) notes that in a survey which it conducted, that fewer than half of teachers in state secondary schools said they would encourage able pupils to apply to the best selective universities; depressingly, this was a lower proportion than in a previous study of the same topic conducted by the Sutton Trust in 2007.

One issue noticeable as a minor difference between working class and middle class students was the reputation of the selective university. The middle class students were more likely to describe the university in more "glowing" terms, using words such as "historic", "beautiful", "situation" etc. Such descriptions were noticeably absent from working class student accounts, perhaps those students regarded the high reputation as a practical or functional matter. Another difference tended to be in the knowledge of reputation – a couple of the middle class students were impressed by the status and eminence of some of the Division's professors, but such details were lacking from the working class accounts.

5.2.3 INFLUENCE OF PARENTS AND OTHER RELATIONS

Again, parents seem to be a benign influence. The researcher anticipated that middle class parents might show greater enthusiasm due to possibly better familiarity with the accounting profession, but working class parents seemed just as supportive and proud according to student explanations. There may be several reasons for this; although accountancy and finance is a less visible than

many other professions, it is likely that the working class parents in this study may have associated the profession with large and stable earnings. Secondly, there is the fear of "over-education"; parents may have been pleased that their children were following a vocational degree programme rather than a programme which did not specifically lead to an occupation. From a Bourdieusian perspective, one might detect a certain hesitancy accompanying the decision to enter this unfamiliar field, but the working class students had, in some cases, openly stated their coping mechanisms. This may have included an element of reclusion (Harry and Dave) – not wanting to socialise in order to avoid ridicule if nothing else but instead coping with the situation which they could control by concentrating on their studies - or in the case of students like Sian and Gillian, spending time with people who felt more comfortable with.

The middle class students in this study showed almost as great a tendency to rely on familial and peer contacts for information as their working class peers; an experience which seems to accord far more with Reay's (2013) findings. It has already been mentioned that the cosiness of the working class home (Read, Archer and Leathwood 2013) can be a big contrast to the more impersonal university, yet in a study of (mostly) middle class parents, Hayward and Scullion (2017) were advised that although independence was wanted for their children, they still adopted a caring and nurturing role – indicating common ground between the working class and the middle class experience.

5.2.4. KEEPING IN TOUCH WITH HOME

Distance between home and the university was not mentioned as a factor which put students off studying at this selective university. This does not repudiate findings of previous studies, because only a small number of students were interviewed, but it would not be surprising if distance from home was a lesser factor in dissuading working class participation compared to earlier studies. The long-range attender is perhaps less unusual in the 2010's than s/he might have been in the 1980's and 1990's; a student who comes from a small Highland village to study in a big city might have been more remarkable in a previous era. In addition, the researcher has already alluded to the universal adoption of

mobile technology and freely available mobile phone apps. These allow students to quickly, easily and cheaply stay in touch with home, and unsurprisingly, they were unanimously popular with this group.

Fears of "losing identity" (Archer and Hutchings 2000) and becoming untrue to one's self (Stahl 2016) were generally absent from these accounts. The working class students had armed themselves with the confidence to attend a selective university and they had parental support to back them up. None of them drew attention to any hostility or even opposition from peers or siblings. In some cases, this might have been due to their relatively greater age – they might have lost certain, possibly potentially hostile, school friends at the age of 16 when they embarked on their Highers. These students also came from relatively less overtly deprived areas. In addition, they were reading for a degree with a high rate of employment, so might have been regarded as making a more sensible choice than other university entrants.

5.3 FITTING IN AND THE SOCIOECONOMIC CONTRAST

A Bourdieusian view might be that the selective university is designed to reproduce middle class advantage and that the working class student who enters this unfamiliar field would have to get used to behavioural change by playing the game according to a new set of rules. Although the working class students may not be bringing noticeably less economic capital to this field, their stores of social and cultural capital will be deficient. Accordingly, they may be compelled to replace the less valued social and cultural capital with a new store that would be much more valued. Whilst it may be difficult to concentrate on shoring up social capital due to lack of time and lack of economic resources, the investment in study produces a more valued cultural capital which could mark the student out as a diligent person in the eyes of faculty. Whilst this was not directly communicated to the researcher, this seemed to be the pattern observed – hard working students who had progressed to the second and third years of study. As for the middle class students, no evidence of any boorish "Hooray Henry" behaviour was admitted to, but it may not have been expected. These students were in a habitus which would be more recognisable to them and

they had already started off with a store of capital which would ease their passage to succeed.

Whilst few, relatively minor, examples of class difference were related by the working class students, the middle class students did not identify any tensions or difficulties in their cohorts. It was not cited as a major cause for concern, perhaps indicating that these students were in their natural habitat, content to be rubbing shoulders with people like them. Familiarity with the range of the student body may have been established by Year 2.

To give some context, students came from a large undergraduate cohort (typical recruitment is 120-130 students per annum) and would have got used to seeing each other several times a week in lectures and tutorials. The programme is structured such that almost all modules are core in years 1-3 inclusive, with electives generally only available in year 4. Although students take certain compulsory modules delivered by other divisions (i.e. law, economics, and management) to gain professional accreditation, they have had little chance for academic interaction with students in those disciplines. In addition, it is likely that students reading for degrees on those other disciplines would have been likely to have come from very similar backgrounds. Note that professional accreditation is one of the key attractions of this programme – graduates get a double dividend of both a degree from an elite institution and are able to reduce the number of examinations to be taken to secure a professional qualification.

Students would also have been working together on group projects, and the sharing of a common curriculum may have helped foster a sense of camaraderie which transcended class boundaries. The researcher notes that in some of the group assignments, lecturers decided on group membership to mix students with people they might not otherwise have encountered.

Some of the working class student narratives (e.g. Abigail) indicated a sense of "taking" or "gaining" control, indicating habitus change; students learning to play the game according to the rules of the dominant group. This phenomenon seems to be little changed from the historic studies in which students modified their behaviour and attitudes over time at university.

In later studies, for example in a paper by Lottrell-Rowland (2016), the literature indicates an acceptance by students of quasi-neoliberal views of having to work hard for what one wants. This change contrasts with results from several other studies, such as Ball, Davies, David and Reay (2002), who interviewed prospective students from a variety of schools and colleges about their university choice. Their study drew out comparisons between middle class pupils (who exhibited much greater aspirations, better knowledge of the application process, and greater awareness of university reputation) and working class pupils, who had acquired some knowledge of university reputation, but were not guided so strongly in their university choice by the other criteria, compared to the middle class pupils. These earlier studies also confirmed points made about middle class deferred gratification compared with working class fatalism. Perhaps the academy has become friendlier and more welcoming to non-traditional students, maybe because of

1) Increased promotion of diversity,

2) Increasing competition between universities, forcing improved relations between the university and its students, in order to generate entrants and hence income,

3) Greater societal familiarity with the university, and

4) Initiatives sponsored by universities, the government, the professions and other groups, such as pressure groups.

5.4 IMPLICATIONS OF THE FINDINGS

The results bear some resemblance to those reported by Howieson and Minty (2017), in the context of three non-selective Scottish universities. Those authors reported that the three biggest concerns were

1) The amount of work which one is expected to complete independently.

2) Personal finance.

3) Unfamiliarity with areas of study, which colleagues in the same cohort had previously studied.

Most students mentioned the workload, but this was not a cause for complaint; rather, it was thought inevitable because of the availability of professional

recognition. The degree represented a good investment for the future and the pain of today would be worth the joy of tomorrow. Financial matters have already been mentioned in the context of both middle class and working class accounts, and whilst middle class students would obviously have much greater reserves of capital to draw upon, there was an attitude of "payback" visible in the middle class accounts – the students had benefitted from parental largesse and wanted to repay the compliment. It is noted that the work by Moreau and Leathwood (2006) had been published ten years before the student accounts in the present study were taken, and in 2016 there might be greater pressure on students from all backgrounds (not just working class backgrounds) to self-fund their studies. Although one might assume that part-time work prevented acquisition of cultural capital from some of the more spectacular extra-curricular activities, such as business games, the students in Moreau and Leathwood (*ibid.*) rationalised their employment as it provided useful experience of working and enabled them to pay for necessities of study such as books and field trips. Unsurprisingly, these authors found that employers were not particularly sympathetic to student requests to rearrange hours to suit short-term changes in academic events such as class tests, and the part-time workers found short notice timetable changes and assessment changes rather stressful.

As far as unfamiliarity is concerned, this is unlikely to have been mentioned by Year 2/3/4 students. The Higher in accountancy is generally pitched at or slightly below a typical Year 1 syllabus, so it will have conferred little or no advantage by the time the student gets to Year 2 and beyond. Even the HND in accounting does not guarantee success at university level, where a more theoretical than exclusively practical curriculum is followed.

Given the restricted number of interviewees, analysis of the results is bound to be idiosyncratic, and lacking in predictive capacity, yet one can still draw contrasts between the results of this study, and studies conducted in previous years, and between Scotland and other parts of the UK.

Firstly, concern is still expressed about a socially alien culture to be found in elite Scottish universities (Ianelli, Smyth and Klein 2016). However, some of the findings in Reay Crozier and Clayton (2009) about a subtle yet noticeable

disharmony between working class students and middle class students were certainly less noticeable from these accounts. One sensed a feeling of greater homogeneity of attitudes within the cohorts studying the same degree programme, compared to what one might have expected from the literature on student experience of working class students. Perhaps this is a result of shared difficulty and greater familiarity with each other, coupled with less divisive attitudes within the cohort – less of a feeling of "us and them" - and more of a feeling of shared experience and aspiration. The shared sense of aspiration is identified by Harrison and Waller (2018) who counter the solution of "aspiration raising" and call for attention to be placed on improvements in attainment and improved expectation of outcomes. These authors also claim there is scant evidence for any success in programmes which aim to improve aspiration, thus confirming the views of Riddell and Weedon (2018).

Secondly, the working class students seemed more knowledgeable about university study than their predecessors, for example, in studies such as Greenbank 2009. However, they were just as heavily committed to their studies as the working class students in the selective English university described in Reay, Crozier and Clayton (2009).

Thirdly, whilst there was some evidence of middle class students (and a few working class students) getting involved in university activities like clubs and societies, and in some outside activities, it seemed, overall, to be a minority of students. It is possible that some middle class students experienced more life enriching events (cultural capital) prior to enrolment at university and were not adding any further cultural capital during their university career.   Less time seems to be spent on extra-curricular activity than hitherto, by both working class and middle class students (Cocozza 2017). Self-imposed reclusion as a result of habitus change was observable in a few accounts, where students talked about how alien certain university activities were to them and how they tended to shun certain events, e.g. Freshers Week, and clubs and societies whose activities were strongly associated with alcohol consumption.

Fourthly, there seems to have been an expectation among the middle class students that they would attend a selective university. This expectation was not

so obvious from the accounts of the working class students. The middle class students were perhaps more aware of the superiority of their chosen institution at an earlier stage. Upon graduation, these students will leave a stratified higher education system and join a stratified labour market, which endorses selective universities and professionally accredited degrees (Wolf 2018). It may be that the middle class students were better prepared for the habitus of the university, irrespective of their holdings of any cultural capital.

5.5 SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Widening access programmes owe their origin to concerns about under-enrolment. Their would be no need to have any widening access programme if there was not the same level of public and governmental concern. Earlier in this study, some observations were given of a publication on widening access by the Russell Group (2015), in which it was made clear that access to selective universities was really a problem for aspirants themselves and for schools.

5.5.1 FUNDING FOR WIDENING ACCESS INITIATIVES

Widening participation will not come without extra cost to the university sector. Support mechanisms will be desirable to assist the transition to university life, and the recruitment of additional students might make additional demands on university welfare services. Some support might be introduced for all students but might be more welcomed for widening participation students, e.g. the introduction of a personal tutor system, whereby an individual academic take a greater interest in the academic and pastoral issues of individual students allocated to them (Howieson and Minty 2017) but at the time of this study, the selective university concerned had not introduced such a system.

Concern at unequal participation rates between different socioeconomic groups has led to the growth of various initiatives aimed at opening university access to groups which formerly did not have any higher education experience. Universities are encouraged to pursue widening access initiatives by both

government action and by pressure groups. The pressure to widen access has not come from universities, however, universities and their benefactors offered (and still offer) a very limited number of scholarships which facilitate wider participation by meeting some of the costs of attendance for brighter but less affluent students.

5.5.2 PHILANTHROPY

The Sutton Trust is a well-known philanthropic organisation which has an aim in increasing the proportion of brighter, poorer students to attend selective universities. It encourages suitable school pupils to attend one-week long, free summer schools at selective universities, including two Scottish universities, St Andrews and Edinburgh. The decision to attend an unfamiliar environment, even if only for a week, is likely to be a brave one, because of the exposure to an unfamiliar filed – a break of habitus. However, exposure to a new habitus may prove beneficial prior to actual attendance by giving the aspirant some idea of what to expect. Naturally, it is possible that the young people who benefit from the summer school might have been likely to have attended a selective university without this intervention; nevertheless, Byrom (2009) interviewed several Sutton Trust summer school participants, and their accounts confirm the benefit of their attendance. These students spoke highly of the experience, of the facilities and of the lecturer skill in imparting advanced knowledge to them. One might regard the summer schools as a small-scale intervention, suitable for only the intermediate group between working class and middle class, and the more outward-looking and academically motivated students. Byrom *(ibid.)* herself notes that these students might have already experienced an interruption to their familiar territory; for example, accounts were given of their rejection of bad behaviour by their peers in school. However, the Trust does not have the resources available to some of the large selective universities, so its influence in encouraging young people to study at selective universities remains very limited. The summer schools provide a benefit but only to those who can both afford the time and who have the means to arrange transport to and from them (Rainford 2017).

5.5.3 GOVERNMENT INTERVENTION

Many official initiatives have been publicised and introduced with the overall aim of increasing the class base of entry to the more selective universities (Donnelly 2015). Whilst English universities are obliged to set access agreements via OFFA (McCaig 2015), no such compulsion existed for Scottish universities in 2016. For many years, Scottish universities have engaged with schools and colleges to improve participation from non-traditional entrants via familiarisation visits, local initiatives, and articulation with Higher National Diploma (HND) level programmes at further education (FE) colleges (Universities Scotland 2014), however, increased funding for more places has not become available, leading to increased entry tariffs at the more selective Scottish universities, especially for high-demand programmes which feed into professional careers (Sutton Trust 2016). Accordingly, a great deal of the problem of Scottish under-participation by working class students is due to lower educational achievement (Crawford *et al* 2016, Howieson and Minty 2017). Contextual admission (i.e. attainment in terms of the context of the school) is a device used to try and equalise entry tariff and admit students who have come from poorer backgrounds.

5.6 WIDENING ACCESS TO THE PROFESSIONS

Concern has expanded to include working class access to the professions as well as access to selective universities. Milburn's (2009) report looked at fair access to a range of professions, noting that current rates of access for working class aspirants to such professions was more difficult than in the past (*ibid*. p12). The 2009 report has a utilitarian flavour; the importance of professional employment is emphasised as part of a broader UK-based knowledge economy, and the dangers of greater exclusivity of professional employment are seen through a lens of wastage of latent talent, not through any intention to promote scholarship or improve social justice. The class-based decline in membership of professions has come at the same time as improvements in access enjoyed by

other historically excluded groups. The decline in mobility since the late 1950's is particularly acute for accountancy and allied professions *(ibid.* p14). According to the 2009 report, the more recently qualified accountants grew up in households with significantly greater incomes than in previous years. For many years, more accountancy students have come from the least deprived decile of homes, compared to any other decile (McPhail, Paisey and Paisey, 2010).

A later report (2012), also chaired by Alan Milburn, identified some progress (labelled as "slow", p24) with the opening of the professions to a more diverse range of applicants, but it still noted a great deal of inertia, or even favouritism, on the part of graduate employers. A small yet significant number of graduate employers (7%) recruited from only five universities, and job opportunities for all aspirant professionals were skewed towards London and South-East England (*ibid.* p25) – thus representing a triple disadvantage for working class graduates of non-selective universities in areas remote from London and the South East of England. This report also contained some suggestions for improving access to the professions, including easier availability of paid internships, improvements in schools' career services, and greater liaison between schools and universities, but whilst these small steps are welcome, they cannot solve the problem of lack of access to selective universities, whether self-imposed absence, or because of distance between home and university, or because the "wrong" type of school was attended.

If professional bodies want to address the problems of differential participation in the profession, it would be worthwhile to increase liaison with high schools (*ibid.* 2010). Notably, the leading accountancy institutes have attempted to ease the path of qualification to poorer students. Motives may be mixed – there could be an element of reaction to Milburn's (2012) report on the part of the professions, or it might be that the professional institutes are aware of the wastage of talent and want to ensure that the best people study for the qualification. Steps taken by the professional bodies include bursaries and paid internships, provided by both professional bodies and accountancy firms for study in a limited number of universities. However, the bursaries are very few in number; on an annual basis only five are provided by the Institute of

Chartered Accountants in Scotland (ICAS), whilst only eleven bursaries are provided by the much larger Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales (ICAEW).

5.7 WIDENING ACCESS INITIATIVES IN SCOTLAND

An internet check of the web sites of the eight pre-1992 Scottish universities verifies the presence of admissions officers with widening participation remits in each university. More detailed examination conducted in June 2017 reveals a wide variation in the accessibility of the material and in the amount of material made available. One might justifiably criticise some of these initiatives as gimmicks, e.g. the actions of one selective university to offer free places in halls of residence to students from deprived areas, which might sound attractive but would not benefit poorer students living in rural areas where overall deprivation is relatively low.

Although some universities portray widening access as among their key strategic objectives, the evidence suggests that initiatives to encourage a greater socio-economic diversity are complex and piecemeal. For example, the University of Edinburgh promotes widening access matters quite clearly on its web site. It hosts Sutton Trust Summer Schools and participates in various initiatives such as "Reach" and "Pathways to the Professions", "LEAPS" (Lothian Equal Access Project for Schools), and "ACES" (Access to Creative Arts Education in Scotland). It also has its own programme (unique to Scottish higher education) called "Lift Off", whereby pupils gain familiarity with university staff and the university estate via attendance at a summer football camp. In addition, it hosts liaison with secondary years 1 and 2 (S1/S2) pupils in a limited number of schools in areas of relatively high deprivation.

The University of Glasgow also participates in "Reach", "ACES" and "Pathways to the Professions", extending access to the professions to include education, engineering, and accountancy and finance ("Access to a Career"). It offers its own summer schools and identifies target schools and postcode areas in low participation areas for intervention. It takes part in school liaison and in the

"FOCUS" scheme for universities in the west of Scotland (equivalent to "LEAPS").

The University of St Andrews devotes fewer pages to widening access compared to both Edinburgh and Glasgow, but the University extends the "Pathways" scheme to physics and astronomy, as well as hosting Sutton Trust Summer Schools. It also participates in "LEAPS" and offers bursaries to assist poorer students. The Scottish Funding Council (SFC) (2016) praises St Andrews for its involvement with primary age pupils in subjects like astronomy and the SFC also notes that St Andrews was the only Scottish university to publicly state that it subjects its widening participation efforts to external scrutiny.

Contextual admissions policies are identified on many university websites (including Glasgow, Edinburgh and St Andrews), as a method for students from under-represented groups to access popular degree programmes which otherwise demand very high grades. In several cases, eligibility to participate in contextual admission is dependent on satisfactory summer school performance (for example, in Glasgow and Aberdeen). Other common interventions include bursaries for groups such as care leavers. Schools liaison is common throughout the Scottish university sector; this includes school visits, guest lectures by university faculty on subjects such as astronomy (St Andrews), university-hosted teacher conferences, and articulation agreements between colleges and universities. However, according to a widening participation officer (in conversation) schemes of articulation are rare between ancient universities and the further education colleges. Such agreements seem to be more commonplace with the 1960's universities and the post -1992 universities. In addition, contextualised admission policies at the university used in this study tend to be focused on the very high demand programmes such as medicine, dentistry and veterinary science. None of the students in this study had benefitted from a contextualised admissions policy. Boliver *et al.* (2018) note that such policies, although widely proclaimed, are not really very radical, and involve little more than "slipping a grade or two". According to Bannerjee (2018), references to contextualised admissions and their availability and criteria, are often not very clear on university websites. Despite the overall publicity afforded to contextualised admissions, such schemes only cover a small minority of

programmes and according to Riddell and Weedon (2016) a large expansion of them is unlikely due to the concerns universities in putting their "target markets" off applying.

5.7.1 EVALUATION OF INITIATIVES

Few universities were identified as giving solid, audited, or even auditable evidence of widening participation performance; indeed, one might be fooled by the benign picture painted from university websites of an inclusive, diverse and welcoming meritocracy. The SFC takes issue with the short-term nature of many initiatives (1-2 days per annum), the lack of accreditation for prior learning shown by the ancient universities, the lack of external scrutiny of effectiveness, and the existence of separate initiatives with very similar objectives but different names. Such points are amplified by writers such as Riddell and Weedon (2018), who note that evaluations of widening participation programmes by the universities tend to very descriptive and are lacking in analysis.

Universities Scotland (2014) points out that it takes time for the beneficial impact of interventions to become manifest. A time scale of 15-20 years is given – perhaps the time it takes for, say, student teachers to become interested in the problem of widening participation during their training and to then put their solutions into practice.

Taken as a whole, these programmes appear uncoordinated and piecemeal. The wide variety of initiatives is confusing, and whilst one may applaud a philanthropist approaching the problem and dealing with it in a way that no doubt provides students appreciate, one wonders why it takes a private individual to perform a task which universities could perform themselves. Perhaps a more co-ordinated and centralised approach would be more effective, rather than relying on a stream of small-scale initiatives.

An important policy development could be to radically reshape the assessment of widening participation performance and move away from individual universities approaching the problem on their own. A more nationally co-

ordinated and unified process could result in better synergy and less duplication. The *Times Higher Education Supplement* awards an annual prize for the university judged to make the best contribution to widening participation – perhaps this could be formalised at government level. The evidence collected to support claims to widening participation could be formalised and audited, and targets could be set at levels other than the university, even to the levels of faculties and divisions, which would encourage staff to take a more personal ownership of widening participation. Van Bueren (2016) points out that prizes, awards and other markers of esteem exist for organisations which promote racial equality, gender equality (e.g. Athena SWAN) and disability equality, yet there is no similar scheme to encourage class equality.

5.8 PARTICPANT SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Several of the interviewees identified their own suggestions to make improvements to the university experience. These suggestions are particularly valuable, as they come from the people most affected by adapting to the culture of the university. Whilst these suggestions were not made in order to specifically widen access, if adopted and successful, they could assist in making the university more attractive to future working class participants. Many of the student suggestions were mostly administrative, and in the opinion of the researcher, they could be implemented quite easily. Suggestions given included

1. Earlier publication of teaching timetables and assessment timetables. Large gaps in a specific teaching day (Southall, Watson and Avery 2016) might disadvantage commuter students and should be avoided. For example, a student with a 9am lecture and no further classes until a 5pm tutorial might be aggrieved at potentially wasted time, and it may be worthwhile to check if such gaps could be reduced or even eliminated.

2. The avoidance of lectures at times which could interfere with matters such as childcare responsibilities. This could even lead to an adjustment to the university term to be more congruent with local school term dates. Although universities might proclaim that they are independent entities and that they have successfully managed with existing term dates for many years, it may be opportune for them now to appreciate that they do

not operate in a vacuum, and they need to work in partnership with the local community. Administrative adjustments which may assist students with childcare responsibilities have been identified by some writers, e.g. Owton (2016), and include steps such as additional crèche facilities where a university embarks on a major construction project.

3. The mixing of coursework groups as an icebreaker so that a student will have a much better chance of meeting other people on their cohort than if they simply remained with existing friends made in the first year. Pedagogic suggestions were also made for increased variety of assessment methods (this could be tied in with the push for instruction in general business skills) and increased variety of teaching delivery.

5.8.1 SUGGESTIONS FROM SOME OF THE ACADEMIC LITERATURE

Earlier, in Chapter 4, it was noted that the university in this study (in common with the other selective Scottish universities) does not grant advanced standing to former HND in accounting students, no matter how capable such students might be. If widening participation is a goal for the selective universities then admissions policies might be revisited in this regard. All the Scottish post 1992 universities which offer a programme in accountancy have articulation agreements allowing ex-HND students access to Year 2. Some universities, including 1960's universities (Stirling, Heriot -Watt) offer Year 3 entry which is a big attraction for a working class student who might be working, or who has carer responsibilities (Tett *et al*. 2017), or is under pressure to get a job as soon as possible. However, the path of articulation between further education and higher education is not an entirely smooth one; Tett *et al*. (2017) draw several important contrasts between college staff, who knew all their students, and university staff, who seemed less conscious of student identity and less pro-active in their dealings with their students.

Whitty (2001) notes the complexity of the problem and calls for multiple solutions to fix multiple causes, yet the overarching solution suggested is the eradication of child poverty, which whilst welcome as a means of social justice, does nothing for the relatively affluent working class participant, such as the son

or daughter of a successful tradesperson with no family tradition of university attendance. Bowl (2001) argues that family, work, finance, community and childcare are bandied about by uncaring commentators, in a way which patronises the struggling working class student. She argues that as a first step in improving the environment for the working class entrant, such priorities should not be unfairly belittled as mere "baggage", as they are important to such people. Therefore, she calls for an end to the blame culture as a way of encouraging working class participation. Thomas (2002) argues that teaching and learning strategies should not reproduce middle class advantage, and calls for more approachability from faculty, a more diversified set of social spaces, and more collaborative learning involving groups mixed to reflect greater socioeconomic diversity – the final point is one echoed by Byrom (2009).

Tett (2004) calls for intensive tutor support to enable students to know the rules of the game; this could be introduced in lectures rather than in induction sessions in Freshers Weeks as such sessions may be poorly attended by students who have part-time work and who might be carers for children or other relatives. This point seems to have been taken up by Brunel University, where a system of professional mentoring has been introduced (Baker 2017). Hockings, Cooke and Bowl (2007) posit that despite the swelling of numbers into higher education, teaching did not adapt to a more disparate body of learners, perhaps underscoring the inertia of the academy in accommodating working class students. These authors recommend more variety in teaching approaches, following extensive surveying of a cohort of students. The academy's reluctance to change is a topic amplified by Greenbank (2007) who stated that the ethos of widening participation was not embedded in universities as late as the mid-2000's, and that some university staff may oppose it if directives to widen participation come from top-down initiatives. Reay (2018) also notes a reluctance to change on the part of the selective universities, but it seems that a lot of former generalisations and stereotypes of the working class are changing due to gradual societal change (Greenbank 2009), especially the greater accessibility of communications software. However, change associated with the building of trust between faculty and students would be a welcome development in the mind of some students (Tett *et al.* (2017).

Another possible remedy to alleviate lack of working class participation is identified by Havergal (2017). Using a technique of gentle persuasion known as "nudging", it was found that increased applications to selective universities could be encouraged by techniques as simple as sending personalised communications from existing students to talented school pupils. The results of the trial experiment showed that application rates to selective universities rose as a result of this "nudge".

A radical proposal is made by Blackman (2017). He notes that the current system of reserving high-demand programmes in high-reputation universities greatly reinforces social stratification and questions the value of money spent by selective universities on widening participation (*ibid.* p7). Instead of slowly widening participation at the highly prestigious research-intensive universities, he calls for change by insisting that all other universities introduce selection procedures based on what entrants need to succeed (*ibid.* p18), rather than the "supply = demand" model used currently, whereby entrance requirements are set and kept artificially high to reduce pressure on resources. The allocation of quotas based on social class can be linked to funding, with universities required to achieve their target quote to get a proportion of funding. Whilst the idea of Blackman's comprehensive university (teaching mixed ability groups) might be attractive, one wonders if it might be too complex for some university admissions systems. It would certainly be unpopular for most selective universities (Russell Group 2015).   The idea depends on a reliable measurement of social class, and it has already been shown that class is a complex phenomenon. Finally, there are several smaller institutions in the UK which provide degree-level education in subject areas such as education, arts, and agriculture. Because of the small size and the small range of programmes offered, and the often, similar, socioeconomic background of most entrants to such courses, it may be very difficult to apply broad social class criteria to such institutions.

It is notable to observe how suggestions for improving the lower proportion of working class participation at selective universities have changed from the early 2000's. One regrets that several authors, who have provided such a large amount of detail on the topic of differential socioeconomic participation, have

made only rather bland recommendations about how more working class students might be recruited, sometimes proposing little more than a banal "more should be done" suggestion without providing any concrete, practical solutions.

As for this study, it seems that accountancy and finance students at this university are a more homogeneous student group allocating their time between academic studies and the need for excellence to secure a better job, together with working part-time to pay their way through university. It would be wrong to be complacent about the future, as Dorling (2016) notes, the odds are still stacked against the bright working class student who wishes to attend a Scottish selective university. The situation might be an improving one, and rather less severe than the situation in England depicted about 15-20 years ago, but it remains the exception and not the rule for a Scottish school pupil from a deprived area to enrol at a selective university to study accountancy and finance.

5.9 SUMMARY

In this chapter, more detail has been presented about the narratives provided by the students and how it compares to the literature examined previously. Several notable changes between earlier studies and the current study have been identified, and reasons for shifts in opinion, attitude and outcome have been advanced. Wider implications and some limitations of this study have been identified along with ideas for improving the experience for working class students, and possible ideas for further research.

The conclusion chapter follows.

6. CONCLUSION

6.1 CONCLUDING REMARKS

This section concludes the study. Practical applications of the findings are highlighted, and limitations of the study, and recommendations for further associated research are given. This study used a qualitative approach to gather data about university experience from two groups identified as occupying different social strata, yet studying the same degree subject, at a selective university in Scotland. Differences between this study and other similar studies on the topics of working class application and acceptance, and working class experience at selective universities have been a feature of the sociology of education literature for over 20 years, yet no previous studies have dealt with one subject group at a selective Scottish university.

According to Bathmaker (2015) and Morgan (2017), university attendance and success has been rated as the top determinant of lifetime opportunities. Accordingly, it would suit arguments of both social justice and arguments of pursuing the greater good if people will freely attend the university and read for the degree programme which would best suit their needs (Forsyth and Furlong 2003). Change has been evolutionary - the academy has made adaptations, rather than wholescale, revolutionary change (Tett 2000). For the working class applicant who aspires to a selective university, the door is perhaps only partially ajar rather than already fully open (Boliver 2015b, Russell Group 2015).

It is possible that the recent developments have improved the experiences of present-day working class students, who are likely to find the university environment as less unfamiliar compared to their predecessors.

6.2 LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY

Some detail on limitations has already been given towards the end of Chapter 3 of this study. The study takes a qualitative angle, which makes no attempt at generalisation, and is concerned with the experiences of one group of students

of one cohort at one university. Difficulties arose in classifying students to social class, and no examples of extremely wealthy or extremely deprived students were found. This may have contributed to the fewer differences found here between the working class and middle class students, compared to findings from earlier studies. Perhaps if a similar study had been conducted at an even more eminent selective university, a greater level of contrast in experience might have been found, but it is noted that named undergraduate degrees in accountancy and finance are offered neither at Oxford nor at Cambridge.

Difficulties have already been alluded to in respect of the classification of people according to deprivation, using the SIMD system. In many rural communities, results may be skewed by the presence of very wealthy people living alongside far less affluent people and pushing the classification further away from what might be expected. However, the use of SIMD data is currently the least-worst solution and is certainly better than measures such as household occupation and incidence of free school meals.

The relatively positive accounts given by the working class students in this study may be welcomed as some evidence of greater ease of their fitting in at a selective university. However, a note of caution must be sounded. Howieson and Minty (2017) point out that in surveys of this nature, one generally finds that the respondents are often people who are already performing and achieving towards the top of their academic cohort. Students may be very reluctant to denigrate their own choice of institution or programme of study. By the time they have reached Years 2 and 3 they will have become more familiar with the rules of the game. Any disaffected students may well have self-excluded by that stage of their university career.

Finally, it is recognised that the students in this study self-selected. The researcher does not view this as a problem, as the semi-structured interview style adopted helped to give a richer insight into the attitudes, hopes and fears of these students.

<u>6.3 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH</u>

In terms of suggestions for further research, Lightfoot's (2009) study of the impact of widening participation on university staff gave a rare voice to the faculty. It would be interesting to gauge the views of teaching staff on widening participation. One cannot assume that all teaching staff will be imbued with a sense of social justice such that they would welcome greater socioeconomic mixing in their classes.   Some staff might be wary of welcoming in people who might be more at risk (Gale and Hodges 2014) due to the possible impact on failure rates. This is exacerbated if faculty is under pressure to improve attainment and retention. Spending time counselling students who make demands on limited resources is not going to be popular with academics who might fear that it occupies time which they would otherwise spend on income-generating and career-enhancing research (Crawford *et al.* 2016). Incentives for widening participation exist, as do penalties for insufficient diversity, but they operate at a university level and neither at a faculty level nor a divisional level. Therefore, a survey of staff attitudes to the additional duties surrounding widening participation might be very useful to see where sympathies lie in the modern university.

Secondly, it is noted that the literature on working class attendance and experience in the UK is geared almost exclusively to undergraduate study. This is unsurprising in view of the massification of undergraduate education, but little attention has been paid to postgraduate experience of the working class entrant, whether reading for taught degrees or research degrees. Coogan (2016) points out the prominence of middle and upper-class entrants to postgraduate study and refers to markers of cultural capital such as speech patterns and dress, as identifying the working class entrant as somebody different from the usual postgraduate student. One might not expect to find many working class postgraduate students in accountancy and finance; firstly because of cost (a one-year taught MSc degree might cost between £15,000-£20,000 at an elite university's business school), secondly because postgraduate study in accountancy and finance is generally unnecessary to secure a workplace training contract; current provision of postgraduate study in accountancy and finance in the UK is almost entirely geared towards the needs of overseas students.

Thirdly, it may be worthwhile to update certain studies performed 10-15 years ago, such as the enquiry into part-time employment by Moreau and Leathwood (2006). In a more modern era, one might expect that jobs previously done by students would have been done by people on schemes such as workfare and on zero-hour contracts, yet opportunities for part-time work must have persisted, as they were widely reported in this study. Maybe students represent a more useful source of labour for some employers. The necessity to work part time has been identified in a number of papers by certain authors, yet the comments are rarely backed up by hard evidence – it seems to have been accepted that working class students will have to work to pay their way, whilst middle class students are able to rely on parental resources for funds. This differs from the experience in other countries (e.g. the United States of America) where student employment on campus, even at the Ivy League universities, is commonplace.

Fourthly, a suggestion for additional research might lie in connection with university clubs and societies. Middle class students in this study were still notably more inclined to join such bodies but had little positive detail on the topic. It is suggested that a study could be done across different programmes to identify socioeconomic markers of the type of club or society preferred by different groups. In reviewing literature for this study, no additional detail on extra-curricular activity was identified – it seemed to be accepted that such activities were more for the middle classes rather than the working classes.

Finally, whilst the academy and the accountancy profession are keen to encourage acquisition of non-technical (soft) skills, there seems little agreement of what these skills are and how to teach such skills.

6.4 SUMMARY

This study has shown that whilst differences persist in the attitudes and experiences of middle class and working class students at selective universities, such differences were less wide than hitherto reported in the literature. There is no room for complacency, however, as a great deal of work remains to

overcome barriers to working class participation in the more selective universities, and current initiatives may be criticised for their piecemeal approach, resulting in a confusing array of schemes, many of which are underfunded and offer few additional opportunities. The lack of external scrutiny of the effectiveness of current initiatives should also be rectified, and a move to more serious methods of monitoring and encouraging wider participation should be instituted if policy makers are serious about improving social mobility via higher education. Widening participation was advocated to improve social mobility in the 1990's and 2000's. Yet increasing socioeconomic diversity does not necessarily increase social equity (Archer 2007), and the widening participation agenda has historically emphasised economic benefits rather than social justice considerations (Archer *ibid.*). Reay (2013) refers to the present ideal of social mobility as rather bland, with a veneer of social justice and the emphasis on "choice". She further notes that although social mobility is difficult to calibrate, one measure adopted by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) finds that 50% of UK children make no upward progress from the social class of their forbears, compared to 20% of children in Scandinavian countries. It seems that education is still very much class-based, with students being guided to a form of education based on their background, not on their ability. The point is extended by Mavelli (2014), who notes the relatively low level of references to "social justice" in official documents on widening participation. For Mavelli (*ibid.*), the replacement of social justice by utilitarianism and consumerism, and the commodification of knowledge results in what Bourdieu terms as a reproduction and reinforcement of advantage. Middle class families strive to maintain their status through their greater resources of all types of capital. They must do this to maintain their dominant position in the face of increased pressure on the scarce resource of selective university attendance.

APPENDIX I
PLAIN LANGUAGE STATEMENT

University of Glasgow

College of Social Sciences

Participant Information Sheet (or Plain Language Statement)

My name is Christopher Coles. I am a _____ at the University of _____ I am researching into the experiences of students from non-traditional backgrounds who are studying accounting and finance degrees at a selective university in Scotland. This research forms part of my University of Glasgow Doctorate in Education research study.

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.

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary and if you decide to take part in this study, an interview will be held at a mutually convenient time and location, at which I will ask you a number of questions to assess your experiences of application and your subsequent student career as an accounting and finance student. The information which I obtain from an interview will be used in an Ed.D (Doctor of Education) thesis, and I also intend to publish the results in a peer-reviewed academic journal within the next two years. You are welcome to a copy of the article on request. The interview will be audio-recorded (see below for important detail on confidentiality) and should last approximately 40 minutes. I shall send you a transcript of the interview for you to check.

You have a right to withdraw at any time and without stating a reason for your withdrawal.

 All information, which is collected about you during the course of this research, will be kept strictly confidential. Prior to completion of the thesis, the data will be stored securely on flash-drive memory sticks, each of which will be encrypted and stored in a locked cabinet in the University of Stirling. You will be recognised by an ID number and any information about you, will have your name and address and matriculation number removed so that you cannot be identified. A pseudonym will be used in the thesis and in any publication. Following completion of the thesis all interview data will be destroyed. Please note that confidentiality may not be guaranteed; due to the limited size of the participant sample.

This research project has been reviewed by the College of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee. If you would like further details, please contact;

Christopher Coles at c.w.coles@stir.ac.uk

If you have any additional concerns, or complaints regarding the conduct of the research project, you can contact the College of Social Sciences Ethics Officer, Dr Muir Houston, email: **Muir.Houston@glasgow.ac.uk**

APPENDIX II

CONSENT FORM

University of Glasgow

College of Social Sciences

Consent Form

Title of Project: <u>The experiences of students from non-traditional backgrounds who are studying accounting and finance degrees at a selective university in Scotland</u>
……………………………………………………………………….

Name of Researcher: ………………Christopher Coles…………………………………………………   (and Supervisor if relevant)

I confirm that I have read and understood the Plain Language Statement/Participant Information Sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.

> I consent / do not consent (delete as applicable) to interviews being audio-recorded.
> (I acknowledge that copies of transcripts will be returned to participants for verification.)

> I acknowledge that participants will be referred to by pseudonym.

> I acknowledge that participants will be referred to by a pseudonym in any publications arising from the research.

> I acknowledge that there will be no effect on my grades arising from my participation or non-participation in this research.

> I understand that the data collected from this research will be stored securely with my personal details removed and agree for it to be held as set out in the Plain Language Statement.
> I agree to waive my copyright to any data collected as part of this project

I agree to take part in this research study ☐

I do not agree to take part in this research study ☐

Name of Participant ……………………………………… Signature ………………………………………………..

Date …………………………………

Name of Researcher …………………………………………………… Signature ………………………………………………..

Date …………………………………

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Access Accountancy, (2016) About Access Accountancy (Available online from http://www.accessaccountancy.org/about.html) (Accessed 4 August 2016).

Adams R, (2018) Prestigious universities edge out rivals in UK's battle for students. *The Guardian* 17 August.

Alsop R, Gonzalez-Arnal S, and Kilkey M, (2008) The widening participation agenda: the marginal place of care. *Gender and Education* **20** (6), pp623-637.

Altbach PG, (2004) Globalisation and the university: Myths and realities in an unequal world. *Tertiary Education and Management* **10** (1), pp3-25.

Amsler SS, and Bolsmann C, (2012) University ranking as social exclusion. *British Journal of Sociology of Education* **33** (2), pp283-301.

Anonymous, (2016) The Week in Higher Education. *Times Higher Education Supplement* 30 March-5 April 2016, p3.

Archer L, Hollingsworth S, and Halsall A, (2007) "University's not for me — I'm a Nike Person": urban, working class young people's negotiations of `style', identity and educational engagement. *Sociology* **41** (2), pp219-237.

Archer L, (2007) Diversity, equality and higher education: a critical reflection on the ab/uses of equity discourse within widening participation. *Teaching in Higher Education* **12** (5-6), pp635-653.

Archer L, and Hutchings M, (2000) "Bettering yourself"? Discourses of risk, cost and benefit in ethnically diverse, young working class non-participants' constructions of higher education. *British Journal of Sociology of Education* **21** (4), pp555-574.

Baker S, (2017) Did TEF get a full picture of participation? *Times Higher Education Supplement* 6 July 2017, pp20-21.

Ball SJ, Davies J, David M, and Reay D, 2002 "Classification" and "Judgment": social class and the "cognitive structures" of choice in higher education. *British Journal of Sociology of Education* **23** (1), pp51-72.

Ball SJ, (2010) New class inequalities in education. *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy* **30** (3/4), pp155-166.

Balloo K, Pauli R, and Worrell P, (2017) Undergraduates' personal circumstances, expectations and reasons for attending university. *Studies in Higher Education* **42** (8), pp1373-1384.

Bamber J, and Tett L, (2000) Transforming the learning experiences of non-traditional students; a perspective from Higher Education. *Studies in Continuing Education* **22** (1), pp57-75.

Bannerjee PA, (2018) Widening participation in higher education with a view to implementing institutional change. *Perspectives: Policy and Practice in Higher Education* **22** (3), pp75-81.

Bathmaker AM, Ingram N, and Waller R, (2013) Higher education, social class and the mobilisation of capitals: recognising and playing the game. *British Journal of Sociology of Education* **34** (5-06), pp723-743.

Bathmaker AM, (2015) Thinking with Bourdieu: thinking after Bourdieu. Using field to consider in/equalities in the changing field of English higher education. *Cambridge Journal of Higher Education* **45** (1), pp61-80.

Benn R, (1995) Higher Education, non-standard students and withdrawals, *Journal of Further and Higher Education,* **19** (3) pp3-12.

Blackman T, (2017) The Comprehensive University: An Alternative to Social Stratification by Academic Selection. Higher Education Policy Unit, Occasional Paper 17.

Blanden J, and Machin S, (2004) Educational inequality and the expansion of United Kingdom Higher Education. *Scottish Journal of Political Economy* **51** (2), pp230-249.

Blumer H, (1969) Symbolic Interactionism. (Englewood Cliffs, Prentice Hall).

Boliver V, (2011) Expansion, differentiation and the persistence of social class inequalities in British higher education. *Higher Education* **61** (3), pp229-242.

Boliver V, (2013) How fair is access to more prestigious UK universities? *British Journal of Sociology of Education* **64** (2), pp344-364.

Boliver V, (2015a) Are there distinctive clusters of higher and lower status universities in the UK? *Oxford Review of Education* 41 (5), pp608-627.

Boliver V, (2015b) Lies, damned lies, and statistics on widening access to Russell Group universities. *Radical Statistics* no.113, pp29-38.

Boliver V, (2017) Misplaced optimism: how higher education reproduces rather than resolves social inequality. *British Journal of Sociology of Education* **38** (3), pp423-432.

Boliver V, Powell M, and Moreira T, (2018) Organisational ability as a barrier to widening access in Scottish universities *Social Sciences* **7** (9), pp151-168.

Bolton P, (2012) Education: Historical Statistics. *UK Parliament Office*. Available online from http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/id/eprint/22771, accessed 20 July 2017.

Bothwell E, (2017) Academics at lower-ranked universities "have poorer well-being" *Times Higher Education Supplement* 2 March 2017, p8.

Bourdieu P, (1977) Outline Theory of Practice. (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press).

Bourdieu P, (1979) Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste. (London, Routledge).

Bourdieu P, (1990) The Logic of Practice (Cambridge, Polity).

Bourdieu P, and Passeron J-C, (1990) Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture. (Sage, London).

Bowl M, (2000) Listening to the voices of non-traditional students. *Widening Participation in Higher Education* **2** (1), pp32-40.

Bowl M, (2001) Experiencing the barriers: non-traditional students entering higher education. *Research Papers in Education* **16** (2), pp141-160.

Brennan J, and Osborne M, (2008) Higher education's many diversities: of students, institutions and experiences; and outcomes? *Research Papers in Education* **23** (2), pp179-190.

Brooks R, (2018) The construction of higher education students in English policy documents. *British Journal of Sociology of Education* **39** (6), pp745-761.

Brookfield S, (1990) Using Critical Incidents to Explore Learners' Assumptions. In: Mezirow J (ed.) Fostering Critical Reflection in Adulthood. A Guide to Transformative and Emancipatory Learning (San Francisco, Jossey Bass)

Brown R, (2007) Reeking hypocrisy? New Labour and widening participation in higher education. *Perspectives: Policy and Practice in Higher Education* **11** (4), pp97-102.

Brown R, (2018) Higher Education and inequality. *Perspectives: Policy and Practice in Higher Education* **22** (2), pp37-43.

Brown P, Hesketh A, and Williams S, (2004) The Mismanagement of Talent: Employability and Jobs in the Knowledge Economy. (Oxford, Oxford Publishing).

Brown P, Power S, Tholen G, and Allouch A, (2016) Credentials, talent and a comparative study of educational elites in England and France. *British Journal of Sociology of Education* **37** (2), pp191-211.

Bryant CGA, and Jary D, (2001) The Reflexive Giddens: Christopher GA Bryant and David Jary in dialogue with Anthony Giddens, in Bryant CGA and Jary D (eds.) (2001) The Contemporary Giddens (Basingstoke, Palgrave).

Budd R, (2017) Disadvantaged by degrees? How widening participation students are not only hindered in accessing higher education, but also during – and after – university. *Perspectives: Policy and practice in Higher Education* **21** (2-3), pp111-116.

Burke PJ, (2007) Men accessing higher education: masculinities, identifications and widening participation. *British Journal of Sociology of Education* **28** (4), pp411-424.

Byrom T, (2009) "I don't want to go to a crummy little university": social class, higher education choice and the paradox of widening participation. *Improving Schools* **12** (3), pp209-224.

Byrom T, and Lightfoot N, (2013) Interrupted trajectories: the impact of academic failure on the social mobility of working class students. *British Journal of Sociology of Education* **34** (5-06), pp812-828.

Cabinet Office, (2012) Opening Doors, Breaking Barriers: A Strategy for Social Mobility. (London, Cabinet Office).

Capsada-Munesch Q, (2017) Overeducation: concept, theories and empirical evidence. *Sociology Compass* **11** (10), pp1-17.

Carrell S, (2015) "Debt burden among Scotland's poorest students at record high", *The Guardian*, 27 October 2015. Available from http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2015/oct/27/debt-burden-scotlands-poorest-university-students-record-high
Accessed 25 May 2016.

Carter C, Spence C, and Muzio D, (2015) Scoping an agenda for future research into the professions. *Accounting, Auditing and Accountability Journal* **28** (8), pp1198-1216.

Charmaz K, (2005) "Grounded Theory in the 21st Century", in K Denzin and YS Lincoln (editors) (2005), The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research (3rd edition), (Thousand Oaks, Sage).

Charmaz K, (2006) Constructing Grounded Theory (London, Sage).

Chowdry H, Crawford C, Dearden L, Goodman A, and Vignoles A, (2010) Widening Participation in Higher Education: Analysis using Linked Administrative Data. Institute of Fiscal Studies Working Paper W10/04.
Available online from https://www.ifs.org.uk/wps/wp1004.pdf
Accessed 17 September 2017.

Christie H, (2009) Emotional journeys: young people and transitions to university *British Journal of Sociology of Education,* **30** (2), pp123-136.

Christie H, Cree VE, Mullins E, and Tett L, (2017) University opened so many doors for me: the personal and professional development of graduates from non-traditional backgrounds. *Studies in Higher Education,* **43,** (11), pp1-11.

Coccoza P, (2017) The party's over; how tuition fees ruined university life. *The Guardian* 12 July.

Cohen L, Manion L, and Morrison K, (2000) Research Methods in Education. (London, Routledge).

Commission for Widening Access, (2015) Final report: Call for evidence, analysis of Responses. Available online from http://media.wix.com/ugd/785ba4_c19b9935bc64440bbb5b3abb22fd5da6.pdf (Accessed 3 November 2016).

Coogan R (2016), University isn't for you: what "experts" debate tells the working class. *Times Higher Education Supplement* 4 August 2016, p29.

Crawford C, Dearden L, Micklethwaite J, and Vignoles A, (2016) Family Background and University Success – What are the Issues? (Oxford, Oxford University Press).

Cree VE, Christie H, and Tett L, (2016) Relationships Matter: the Views of College Entrants to an Ancient Scottish University. *Scottish Educational Review* **48** (1), pp89-99.

Cresswell JW, (2013) Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches. (Los Angeles, Sage).

Croxford L, and Raffe D, (2013) Differentiation and social segregation of United Kingdom Higher Education 1996-2010. *Oxford Review of Education* **39** (2), pp192-192.

Crotty M, (1998) The Foundations of Social Research. (London, Sage).

Crozier G, Reay D, Clayton J, Colliander L, and Grinstead J, (2008) Different strokes for different folks. *Research Papers in Education* **23** (2), pp167-177.

Davies P, Mangan J, and Hughes A, (2009) Participation, financial support and the marginal student. *Higher Education* **58** (2), pp193-204.

Deem R, and Brehony KJ, (1994) "Why didn't you use a survey so you could generalize your findings?": methodological issues in a multiple site case study of school governing bodies after the 1988 Education Reform Act". In *Researching education policy: ethical and methodological issues*, Edited by: Halpin D, and Troyna B, (London, Falmer Press).

Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, (2012) Participation Rates in Higher Education: Academic Years 2006/2007 – 2010/2011 (Provisional). (London, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills.)

Donnelly M, (2015) A new approach to researching school effects on higher education participation. *British Journal of Sociology of Education* **36** (7), pp1073-1090.

Dorling D, (2016) University admissions and inequality. *Times Higher Education Supplement* 4 February 2016, p36.

Drever E, (1995) Using Semi-Structured Interviews in Small-Scale Research. (Glasgow, Scottish Council for Research in Education).

Edwards R, and Miller K, (2008) Academic drift in vocational qualifications? Explorations through the lens of literacy. *Journal of Vocational Education and Training* **60** (2), pp123-131.

Evans C, Rees G, Taylor C, and Wright C, (2018) "Widening access" to higher education: the reproduction of university hierarchies through policy enactment. *Journal of Educational Policy* **34** (1) pp101-116.

Forsyth A, and Furlong A, (2003) Losing out? Socioeconomic disadvantage and experience in further and higher education. Available online from
https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/socioeconomic-disadvantage-and-experience-higher-education
(Accessed 18 March 2017).

Fox A, (2002) Taking the high road: Can the Scottish Higher education model solve England's university funding crisis? *The Guardian* 21 November 2002.

Francis B, Mills M, and Lupton R, (2017) Towards social justice in education. *Journal of Educational Policy* **32** (4), pp414-431.

Freire P, (1985) The Politics of Education: Culture, Power and Liberation. (New York, Bergin and Garvey).

Gale T, and Hodge S, (2014) Just imaginary: delimiting social inclusion in higher education. *British Journal of Sociology of Education* **35** (5), pp688-709.

Gale T, and Lingard B, (2015) Evoking and provoking Bourdieu in educational research. *Cambridge Journal of Education* **45** (1), pp1-8.

Glaser BG, & Strauss AL, (1967) The discovery of grounded theory. (Chicago, Aldine de Gruyter).

Glaser BG, (2015) The Cry for Help, *Grounded Theory Review,* **14,** (1), June. Available from http://groundedtheoryreview.com/2015/06/19/the-cry-for-help/ (Accessed 1 November 2015).

Glesne C, (1998) Becoming Qualitative Researchers. (New York, Addison Wesley Longman).

Goode J, (2006) "Managing" disability: early experiences of university students with disabilities. *Disability and Society* **22** (1), pp35-48.

Gorard S, (2007) What works? *Adults Learning,* March 2007, pp12-13.

Gorard S, Boliver V, and Bannerjee P, (2017) Which are the most suitable contextual indicators for widening participation in higher education? *Research Papers in Education* **34** (1), pp19-26.

Greenbank P, (2007) Introducing widening participation policies in higher education: the influence of institutional culture. *Research in Post Compulsory Education* **12** (2), pp209-224.

Greenbank P, (2009) An examination of the role of values in working class students' career decision making. *Journal of Further and Higher Education* **33** (1), pp33-44.

Harker R, (1990) Bourdieu – Education and reproduction, in Harker R, Mahar C, and Wilkes C, (eds.) (1990) An Introduction to the Works of Pierre Bourdieu. (London, Macmillan).

Harrison N, and Waller R, (2010) We blame the parents! A response to 'Cultural capital as an explanation of variation in participation in higher education' by John Noble and Peter Davies (British Journal of Sociology of Education 30, no. 5). *British Journal of Sociology of Education* **31** (4), pp 471-482.

Harrison N, and Waller R, (2018) Challenging discourses of aspiration: the role of expectation and attainment in access to higher education. *British Educational Research Journal* **44** (5), pp914-938.

Hart CS, (2014) Aspirations, Education and Social Justice: Applying Sen and Bourdieu. (London, Bloomsbury Academic).

Havergal C, (2017) "Nudging" encourages students to apply to leading universities. *Times Higher Education Supplement* 6 April 2017, pp12-14.

Hayward H, and Scullion R, (2017) "It's difficult letting them go, isn't it?" UK parents' experiences of their child's higher education choice process. *Studies in Higher Education* **43** (12), pp2161-2175.

Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), (2015) UKPIs: Widening participation of under-represented groups (Available online from https://www.hesa.ac.uk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2060 (Accessed 3 August 2016).

Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), (2018) Higher Education Student Enrolments and Qualifications Obtained at Higher Education Providers in the United Kingdom 2016/17 Available online from https://www.hesa.ac.uk/sfr224https://www.hesa.ac.uk/news/11-01-2018/sfr247-higher-education-student-statistics/qualifications
 (Accessed 14 October 2018).

Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), (2019) Higher Education Student Statistics: UK, 2017/18. Statistical Bulletin SB252. Available online from https://www.hesa.ac.uk/news/17-01-2019/sb252-higher-education-student-statistics/numbers
(Accessed 19 January 2019).

HM Government, (2011) Breaking Barriers: A Strategy for Social Mobility (London, HMSO)

Hockings C, Cooke S, and Bowl M, (2007) 'Academic engagement' within a widening participation context - a 3D analysis. *Teaching in Higher Education* **12** (5-6), pp721-723.

Holton JA, (2010) The coding process and its challenges. *Grounded Theory Review* **9** (1). Available online from http://groundedtheoryreview.com/2010/04/02/the-coding-process-and-its-challenges/
(Accessed 4 November 2016).

Howieson C, and Minty S, (2017) Access and beyond: Supporting Widening Participation students in three Scottish Universities. SFC Impact for Access Initiative (Report).

Hunter Blackburn L, (2014) The fairest of them all? The support for Scottish students in full time higher education in 2014/15. CREID working paper No. 3, Edinburgh.

Ianelli C, Smyth E, and Klein M, (2016) Curriculum differentiation and social mobility in Scotland and Ireland. *British Educational Research Journal* **42** (4), pp561-581.

Ingram N, (2009) Working class boys, educational success and the misrecognition of working class culture. *British Journal of Sociology of Education* **30** (4), pp 421- 434.

Jaeger EL, (2007) Reproducing vulnerability: A Bourdieusian analysis readers who struggle in neoliberal times. *British Journal of Sociology of Education* **38** (7) pp975-990.

Jenkins R, (1992) Pierre Bourdieu (Routledge, London).

Jones O, (2012) Chavs: The Demonisation of the Working class (London, Verso Books).

Jones R, and Thomas L, (2005) The 2003 UK Government Higher Education White Paper: a critical assessment of its implications for the access and widening participation agenda. *Journal of Education Policy* **20** (5), pp615-630.

Jump P, (2016) Any more for any more? *Times Higher Educational Supplement* 8-14 December, p5.

Layard R, (2013) "What Was the World Like Then? The Context in 1963", in Barr N, (Ed.) (2013) Shaping Higher Education: 50 Years After Robbins. (London, LSE).

Lasselle L, (2016) Barriers to higher education entry – a Scottish rural perspective. *Scottish Educational Review* **48** (1), pp78-88.

Leathwood C, and O'Connell P, (2003) "It's a struggle": the construction of the "new" student in higher education. *Journal of Education Policy* **18** (6), pp597-615.

Lightfoot N, (2009) A view from the other side: interpretations of widening participation by a post-1992 university. *Improving Schools* **12** (3), pp196-200.

Lottrell-Rowland M, (2016) The recession as the site of the exceptional; young people, self-determination and social mobility. *British Journal of Sociology of Education* **37** (3), pp335-349.

Macdonald C, and Stratta E, (2001) From Access to Widening Participation: responses to the changing population in Higher Education in the UK. *Journal of Further and Higher Education* **25** (2), pp249-258.

Mavelli L, (2014) Widening participation, the instrumentalization of knowledge and the reproduction of inequality. *Teaching in Higher Education* **19** (8), pp860-869.

MacAskill K, and Howieson, C. (2017) Widening Participation Transition Support at Three Scottish Universities. Paper presented to the QAA 3rd International Enhancement in Higher Education Conference, Glasgow, 8 June 2017

McCaig, C (2015) The Impact of the Changing English Higher Education Marketplace on Widening Participation and Fair Access: Evidence from a Discourse Analysis of Access Agreements, *Widening Participation and Lifelong Learning* **17**, (1), pp5-22.

McPhail K, Paisey C, and Paisey N, (2010) Class, social deprivation, and accounting education in Scottish schools: Implications for the reproduction of the accounting profession and practice. *Critical Perspectives on Accounting,* **21,** pp31-50.

Merriam SB, (2009) Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation. (San Francisco, Jossey Bass).

Milburn A, (2009) Panel on Fair Access to the Professions, Unleashing Aspiration: the final report of the Panel on Fair Access to the Professions (London, Cabinet Office).

Milburn A, (2012) Fair Access to professional Careers: A progress report by an Independent Reviewer on Social Mobility and Child Poverty. Available from http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/60190?IR_FairAccess_acc2.pdf.
(Accessed 18 May 2015).

Mills C, (2008) Reproduction and transformation of inequalities in schooling: the transformative potential of theoretical constructs of Bourdieu. *British Journal of Sociology of Education,* **29** (1), pp79-89.

Minty S, (2016) Getting into higher education: young people's views of fairness. *Scottish Educational Review 48 (1) pp48-62.*

Morgan J, (2017) Divided we stand. *Times Higher Education Supplement* 20 July 2017, pp34-37.

Moreau MP, and Leathwood C, (2006) Balancing paid work and studies: working (class) students in higher education. *Studies in Higher Education* **31 (**1), pp23-42.

Murphy M, and Fleming T, (2003) Partners in participation: integrated approaches to widening access in higher education. *European Journal of Education* **38** (1), pp25-29.

National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education, (1997) Higher Education in the Learning Society. (London, HMSO).

Nelson R, (2018) Failing with student success: the hidden role of bad luck and false empowerment. *Higher Education Research and Development* **37** (5), pp1050-1061.

Nelson S, Dickson DA, and Hargie ODW, (2003) Learning together, living apart: the experiences of university students in Northern Ireland. *Qualitative Studies in Education* **16** (6), pp777-795.

Newell R, and Burnard P, (2006) Research for Evidence-Based Practice. (Oxford, Blackwell).

Nussbaum MC, (2011) Creating Capabilities: The Human Development Approach (Cambridge (USA), Harvard University Press).

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* **34** (2), pp190-207.

OFFA (2016), About OFFA. Available online from
https://www.offa.org.uk/about/
 (Accessed 3 August 2016).

Oliver C, and Kettley N, (2010) Gatekeepers or facilitators: the influence of teacher habitus on students' applications to elite universities. *British Journal of Sociology of Education* **31** (6) pp737-757.

Owton H, (2016) Universities must adapt to welcome student parents. *Times Higher Education Supplement*, 6 October, p31.

Patton MQ, (2002) Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods. (Thousand Oaks, Sage).

Phillips A, (2016) Defending equality of outcome. *Journal of Political Philosophy* **12** (1), pp1-19.

Piko LM, (2014) Applying the theory of optimising professional life *Grounded Theory Review* **13,** (2), December. Available from
http://groundedtheoryreview.com/2014/12/19/applying-the-theory-of-optimising-professional-life/
(Accessed 1 November 2015).

Punch KF, (2014) Introduction to Social Research: Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches. (London, Sage).

Raaper R, (2018) Students as consumers? A counter-perspective from student assessment as a disciplinary technology. *Teaching in Higher Education* **24** (1), pp1-16.

Raffe D, and Croxford L, (2015) How stable is the stratification of higher education in England and Scotland? *British Journal of Sociology of Education* **36** (2), pp313-335.

Rainford J, (2017) Targeting of widening participation measures by elite institutions: widening access or simply aiding recruitment? *Perspectives: Policy and Practice in Higher Education* **21** (2-3), pp45-50.

Read B, Archer L, and Leathwood C, (2003) Challenging cultures? Student conceptions of belonging and isolation at a post-1992 university. *Studies in Higher Education* **28** (3), pp261-277.

Reay D, (1998) 'Always knowing' and 'never being sure': familial and institutional habituses and higher education choice. *Journal of Education Policy* **13** (4), pp519-529.

Reay D, (2001) Finding or losing yourself? Working class relationships to Education. *Journal of Education Policy* **16** (4), pp333-346.

Reay D, (2004) 'It's all becoming a habitus': beyond the habitual use of habitus in educational research. *British Journal of Sociology of Education* **25** (4), pp431-444.

Reay D, (2013) Social mobility, a panacea for austere times: tales of emperors, frogs and tadpoles. *British Journal of Sociology of Education* **34** (5-06), pp660-677.

Reay D, (2018) Working class educational transitions to university: The limits of success. *European Journal of Education Research, Development and Policy* **53** (4) pp528-540.

Reay D, Crozier G, and Clayton J, (2009) Strangers in paradise? Working class students in elite universities. *Sociology* **43** (6) pp1103-1121.

Reay D, Crozier G, and Clayton J, (2010) 'Fitting in' or 'standing out': working-class students in UK higher education. *British Educational Research Journal* **36** (1) pp1-18.

Reay D, David ME, and Ball S, (2001) Making a Difference? Institutional Habituses and Higher Education Choice. *Sociological Research Online* **5** (4), Available from http://www.socresonline.org.uk.ezproxy.stir.ac.uk/5/4/reay.html (Accessed 2 August 2016).

Reay D, David ME, and Ball S, (2005) Degrees of Choice: Social Class, Race and Gender in Higher Education. (Stoke on Trent, Trentham).

Redmond P, (2006) Outcasts on the inside. *Tertiary Education and Management* **12** (2), pp119-135.

Riddell S, (2016a) Scottish higher education and social justice: tensions between data and discourse. *Scottish Educational Review* **48 (1), pp13-29.**

Riddell S, (2016b) Widening access to Scottish higher education: unsolved issues and future challenges. *Scottish Educational Research* **48** (1), pp3-12.

Riddell S, and Weedon E, (2018) Fees Regimes and Widening Access in the Four UK Nations: Are No Fees Regimes Necessarily More Inclusive? In M Shah and J McKay (eds.) Achieving Equity and Quality in Higher Education: Global Perspectives in an Era of Widening Participation (London, Palgrave Macmillan).

Robbins L, (1963) Higher Education: Report of the Committee Appointed by the Prime Minister under the Chairmanship of Lord Robbins, 1961-63, Cmnd 2154. (London, HMSO).

Rowlands J, (2018) Deepening understandings of Bourdieu's academic and intellectual capital through a study of academic voice within academic governance. *Studies in Higher Education* **53** (11), pp1823-1836.

Russell Group, (2011) Informed Choices. Available online from
http://russellgroup.ac.uk/informed-choices/
(Accessed 3 August 2016).

Russell Group, (2015) Opening Doors: Part 1 – The root causes of under-representation. Available online from
https://www.russellgroup.ac.uk/media/5034/opening-doors-understanding-and-overcoming-the-barriers-to-university-access.pdf
(Accessed 12 January 2017).

Russell Group, (2016) About the Russell Group. Available online from
http://russellgroup.ac.uk/about/
(Accessed 5 August 2016).

Soares JA, (2011) The Matthew Effect: How Advantage Begets Further Advantage. *Contemporary Sociology* **40** (4) pp477-478.

Scottish Funding Council, (2016) A digest of initiatives to widen access to university based on evidence supplied to Universities Scotland. Available online from
http://www.sfc.ac.uk/web/FILES/CMP_AccessandInclusionCommittee24May2016_24052016/University_widening_access_digest.pdf
(Accessed 19 February 2017).

Scottish Funding Council, (2018) Participation Indicator of Young Full-time Scottish Domiciled Undergraduate Entrants from the 20% and 40% Most Deprived Areas. Available online from http://www.sfc.ac.uk/publications-statistics/statistics/statistics-universities/university-performance-indicators/university-participation-indicators.aspx (Accessed 8 April 2017).

Scottish Government, (2016) Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation Available online from http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/SIMD . (Accessed 3 November 2016).

Scottish Government (2018) Participation Indicators of Young Full-Time Scottish Domiciled Undergraduate Entrants from the 20% and 40% Most Deprived Areas. Available online from http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/SIMD (Accessed 14 October 2018).

Shiner M, and Noden P, (2015) "Why are you applying there?": "race"' class and the construction of higher education "choice" in the United Kingdom. *British Journal of Sociology of Education* **36** (8), pp1173-1191.

Silverman D, (2011) Interpreting Qualitative Data (4th Edition). (London, Sage).

Sirin SR, Diemer MA, Jackson LR, Gonsalves L, and Howell A, (2004) Future aspirations of urban adolescents: a person in context model. *International Journal of Qualitative Education* **17** (3), pp437-459.

Smith M, and Briggs S, (1999) From bean-counter to action hero: changing the image of the accountant. *Management Accounting* (1999-(1)), pp28-30.

Social Mobility Commission, (2016) State of the Nation Report. Available online from https://www.gov.uk/government/news/state-of-the-nation-report-on-social-mobility-in-great-britain. (Accessed 20 July 2017).

Southall J, Watson H, and Avery B, (2016) Non-traditional commuter students and their transition to higher education – a synthesis of recent literature to enhance understanding of their needs. *Student Engagement and Experience Journal* **5** (1), pp1-15.

Stahl G, (2016) White working class make narratives of "loyalty to self" in discourses of aspiration. *British Journal of Sociology of Education* **37** (5), pp663-683.

Stahl G, and Dale P, (2013) Success on the decks: working class boys, education and turning the tables on perceptions of failure. *Gender and Education* **25** (3), pp357-372.

Strauss A, and Corbin J, (1990) Basics of Qualitative Research – Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques. (London, Sage).

Sutton Trust, (2008) State School Teachers Show Alarming Misconceptions about Oxbridge. (London, Sutton Trust).

Sutton Trust, (2010) Access to Highly Selective Universities (Press Release 31January 2010) (Available from http://www.suttontrust.com/newsarchive/access-highly-selective-universities-stalls/ (Accessed 2 January 2016).

Sutton Trust, (2011) Degrees of Success: University Chances by Individual School. (London, Sutton Trust).

Sutton Trust, (2012) Less than half of state teachers would advise their most able pupils to apply to Oxbridge. Press Release, 27 April 2012. Available from http://www.suttontrust.com/newsarchive/less-half-state-teachers-advise-able-pupils-apply-oxbridge/
(Accessed 17 January 2017).

Sutton Trust, (2014) Entry to Leading Universities. Available from
http://www.suttontrust.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/entryToLeadingUnis.pdf/
(Accessed 25 May 2016).

Sutton Trust, (2016) Programmes. Available online from
http://www.suttontrust.com/programmes/
(Accessed 4 August 2016).

Sutton Trust, (2016) Access in Scotland: Access to Higher Education for people from less advantaged backgrounds in Scotland. CREID Briefing 33 (London, Sutton Trust).

Tett L, (1999) Widening provision in higher education – some non-traditional participants' experiences. *Research Papers in Education* **14** (1) pp107-119.

Tett L, (2000) "I'm working class and proud of it" Gendered experiences of non-traditional participants in higher education. *Gender and Education* **12** (2), pp183-194.

Tett L, (2004) Mature working class students in an elite university: discourses of risk, choice and exclusion. *Studies in the Education of Adults* **36** (2), pp252-264.

Tett L, Cree VE, and Christie H, (2017) From further to higher education: transition as an ongoing process. *Higher Education* **73** (3), pp389-406.

Thomas L, (2000) "Bums on seats" or "listening to voices": evaluating widening participation initiatives using participatory action research. *Studies in Continuing Education* **22** (1), pp95-113.

Thomas L, (2002) Student retention in higher education: the role of institutional habitus. *Journal of Educational Policy* **17**(4), pp423-442.

Thompson P, (2014) 'Scaling up' educational change: some musings on misrecognition and doxic challenges. *Critical Studies in Education* **55** (12), pp87-103.

Tomlinson M, (2008) "The degree is not enough": students' perceptions of the role of higher education credentials for graduate work and employability *British Journal of Sociology of Education,* **29** (1) pp49-61.

Tomlinson M, (2018) Student perceptions of themselves as "consumers" of higher education. *British Journal of Sociology of Education* **38** (4), pp450-467.

Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS), (2018) 2017 End of Cycle Report. Available from https://www.ucas.com/data-and-analysis/ucas-undergraduate-releases/ucas-undergraduate-analysis-reports/2017-end-cycle-report
Accessed 14 September 2018.

Universities Scotland, (2014) Action on Access: Recommendations to achieve further progress on widening access to higher education in Scotland (Edinburgh, Universities Scotland).

Universities Scotland, (2016) Universities Scotland welcome Professor Peter Scott as Commissioner for Fair Access (Press Release 16 December 2016; Edinburgh, Universities Scotland).

Universities Scotland, (2019) Universities in Scotland making good progress on widening access (Press Release 17 January 2019; Edinburgh, Universities Scotland).

University of Manchester, (2016) Financial statements for the year ended 31 July 2015. Available online from
http://documents.manchester.ac.uk/display.aspx?DocID=27044
Accessed 5 March 2017.

Van Bueren G, (2016) Class half-empty: why aren't there more academics like me? *Times Higher Education Supplement* 20 October 2016, pp26-27.

Walker L, Matthew B, and Black F, (2004): Widening access and student non-completion: an inevitable link? Evaluating the effects of the Top-Up Programme on student completion. *International Journal of Lifelong Education* **23(**1), pp43-59.

Whitty G, (2001) Education, social class and social exclusion. *Journal of Education Policy* **16** (4), pp287-295.

Wilcox S, Winn P, and Fyvie-Gauld M, (2005) 'It was nothing to do with the university, it was just the people': the role of social support in the first-year experience of higher education. *Studies in Higher Education* **30** (6), pp707-722.

Wilkins A, and Burke P, (2015) Widening participation in higher education: the role of professional and social class identities and commitments. *British Journal of Sociology of Education* **36** (3), pp434-452.

Willets D, (2013) Robbins Revisited: Bigger and Better Higher Education. (London, Social Market Foundation).

Wolcott HF, (1994) Transforming Qualitative Data. (Los Angeles, Sage).

Wolf A, (2018) What's in a name? The impact of reputation and rankings on the teaching income of English universities. *Higher Education Quarterly* **72** (4), pp286-303.

Young IM, (2001) Equality of Whom? Social groups and Judgments of Injustice. *Journal of Political Philosophy* **9** (1), pp1-18.