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Meaningful Transitions: How education shapes young working class individuals' perceptions of work in austerity Scotland

a dissertation presented by

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to the School of Education, College of Social Sciences, University of Glasgow in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the subject of Education

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*“A crisis arises when capitalists face a fall in their realised profit which can arise for all manner of reasons, but the precipitating cause of any particular crisis is inconsequential. Although all three aspects of disproportionality, underconsumptionist and the tendency for the rate of profit to fall play a role in determining the vulnerability of capitalism to crisis, the underlying cause of all crises remains the fundamental contradiction on which the capitalist mode of production is based, the contradiction between the production of things and the production of value, and the subordination of the former to the latter.”*

Simon Clarke (1994), *Marx’s Theory of Crisis*

*“Who needs me?” is a question of character which suffers a radical challenge in modern capitalism. The system radiates indifference. It does so in terms of the outcomes of human striving, as in winner-take-all markets, where there is little connection between risk and reward. It radiates indifference in the organization of absence of trust, where there is no reason to be needed. And it does so through reengineering of institutions in which people are treated as disposable. Such practices obviously and brutally diminish the sense of mattering as a person, of being necessary to others.”*

Richard Sennett (1999), *The Corrosion of Character: The Personal Consequences of Work in the New Capitalism*

This work is dedicated to the young workers of Britain who have never been handed anything but misfortune. The future is theirs.

Seán Duffy

## **(i) Abstract**

The study detailed in the thesis *Meaningful Transitions: How education shapes young working class individuals' perceptions of work in austerity Scotland* critically explores education to work transitions among young working class individuals in the city of Glasgow during the period of relative economic decline that followed the 2008 financial crisis. It seeks to understand how those ending their education and entering the labour market at 16/17 years old experience work and how far those experiences may have implications for formal education and the way we shape youth transitions. By focusing on the group most likely to experience sustained unemployment it is hoped a broad understanding of how education constructs expectations of work can be identified.

The following sociological study analyses whether the contemporary definition of work passed on to young people via education serves to reinforce their social position, thereby contributing to their relative failure to combat austerity and unwillingness to consider alternative work forms. By situating the research in the city of Glasgow a proposal for identifying broader trends across the UK and beyond within similar post-industrial working class environments is presented. The thesis specifically considers perceptions of work among final year secondary school pupils in an attempt to highlight not only how the reality of austerity is affecting school leavers' aspirations but how it alters the way in which they perceive what work is.

The ongoing economic difficulties encountered in Scotland as a result of austerity has seen the country suffer a marked decline in youth employment during and after the financial crisis of 2008 with 26.4% of 16-19 year olds experiencing unemployment in 2010/11, an increase from 17.9% in 2007/8 (Anderson & Dowling, 2012). The reality that arises from the significant fiscal cuts associated with austerity is not only an economic consideration but a fundamental question of identity. The important role employment plays in shaping our identity within a community cannot be understated, or as Hughes (1975:209) puts it 'there is something irrevocable about a choice of occupation'. Included within the social and economic capital we derive from our occupations are a number of other forms of capital which stem from culture to education (Stevenson, 2003). It is the hypothetical contention of the study that young people in Glasgow since the onset of the 2008 financial crisis are considerably deprived of many essential forms of capital and as such will be further disadvantaged going into an adulthood which is equally insecure.

In seeking to understand what constitutes work for those rapidly approaching the reality of having to find their first full time job arguments will be made to reconsider the theoretical foundations upon which we view youth transitions and reform careers advice post adolescence to further reflect the needs of those least likely to benefit from continued education. On a theoretical level, the research attempts to reconceptualise the ideas of André Gorz (1999) in relation to the new economic climate born out of the global financial crisis and seeks to understand them in terms of youth and young adulthood within Scotland

and the wider UK. More generally, the research endeavours to inform policy debates on class, education and social mobility, specifically as a critique of the social consequences of fiscal austerity in communities already suffering from a sustained lack of investment. The analysis of young people's transitional narratives after one year in the labour market presented herein will in turn inform a comprehensive understanding of how education prepares such individuals for the world of work.

Drawing on 230 detailed survey questionnaires and 30 in depth interviews with working class participants the following sociological study constitutes a unique research project based on a mixed-method design complemented by secondary sources leading to the following conclusions. There was little to suggest in either of the data collection stages that the young people who took part in this study have been exposed to or are cognisant of alternative work forms beyond the classic liberal model of employment and social security. Further, it would seem that young people opting for transitions directly from school to work actively embrace the precarious nature of this process, finding some element of pride in having opted for an ostensibly more difficult path. Many participants were largely hostile to narratives of welfare or social security and when radical alternatives such as Universal Basic Income were discussed there was a common tendency expressed to be dismissive of it. Further, there was a generally high prevalence of socially conservative attitudes regarding place, community, and identity evidenced throughout. Participants who had left education to pursue work immediately after school had by and large struggled in their year in the labour market with most reporting transitions fraught with difficulty and precarity framed by individualisation and alienation. Allied to this was a strong perception that this was a generation that had received a difficult hand in the economy, with accounts of resentment clear presenting evidence that the period of economic austerity from 2008 onwards has had a marked effect on how young people think about work.

**(ii) Keywords:** Young people, unemployment, long-term unemployment, worklessness, wage labour economic inactivity, inequality, education, class; educational transitions; social mobility; precariousness

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### ***(v) List of Abbreviations***

ALMP – Active Labour Market Policies

CfE – Curriculum for Excellence

ESRC – Economic and Social Research Council

FA – Foundational Apprenticeship

GLA - Graduate Level Apprenticeship

JRF – Joseph Rowntree Foundation

IFS – Institute for Fiscal Studies

LFS – Labour Force Survey

MA – Modern Apprenticeship  
NEET – Not in Education, Employment, or Training  
NHS – National Health Service (UK)  
NS-SEC - National Statistics Socio-economic Classification  
ONS – Office for National Statistics  
PfG – Programme for Government (Scotland)  
PFI – Private Finance Initiative  
SCQF – Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework  
SHS – Scottish Household Survey  
SIMD - Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation  
SMC – Social Mobility Commission  
STEM – Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics  
TUC – Trade Union Congress (UK)  
UBI – Universal Basic Income  
UK – United Kingdom  
US – United States  
WEA – Workers Educational Association

***(vi) Declaration of Originality***

No portion of the work included in the thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university, institute of learning or professional body. I declare that the thesis embodies the results of my own work, except as indicated by specific acknowledgments shown in the text.

### ***(vii) Acknowledgements***

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### ***(viii) Research Questions***

This investigation rests on the following key questions of concern derived from the literature review detailed in *Chapter 2*, referred to from here forward as the research questions:

*1) How do young people, in particular the working class, imagine and negotiate modern employment contexts and how is this informed by educational experience?*

*2) To what extent can it be said that there is an appetite for alternative work forms within the 16-18 age group, in particular the working class, and how is this shaped by educational experience?*

## **Chapter 1 - Introduction**

In this brief introduction to the research thesis the content of the study will be summarised with reference to the academic, economic, and social background it takes place in. Referring to relevant literature and policy, it will be demonstrated that the focus of this study contributes effectively to debates concerning the understanding of work, social mobility, class, and education within the context of economic austerity. In doing so, the literature review detailed in *Chapters 2 and 3* is summarised in order to highlight the basis for the core research questions and theoretical framework and where they derive from in the academic field. A summary of the methodology detailed in *Chapter 4* is also included to better understand the basis on which the research takes place (*Section 1.1*). To complement the above summary *Section 1.2* details the academic conversations of the past and present the research contributes to.

Further, key terms used throughout the research are defined to ease comprehension (*Section 1.3*). Where applicable attention has been paid to explain common nomenclature to ease understanding so as broad an audience as possible can take account of the ideas within.

### ***1.1 Thesis Summary***

*Meaningful Transitions: How education shapes young working class individuals' perceptions of work in austerity Scotland* is a research project that takes place amongst the backdrop of a very turbulent economic and social period in the history of Scotland and the wider UK. The UK, like many other ostensibly developed countries, has suffered a marked decline in living standards and economic growth since the global financial crisis of 2008, a period that was (and continues to be) defined and delineated by its effect on the young (Sironi, 2018). As a result, research taking place within that context which focuses on the young is of great importance to the long term development of sociology, economics, and education studies, especially when it is taken into account that another economic crisis is widely expected by many writers who view the collapse of our current economic system as inevitable (Streeck, 2016; Srnicek & Williams, 2015) and those who are presenting programmes of reform on that basis (Thurow, 1996; Rifkin, 1997a).

In this thesis a research project is detailed that sheds light on the specific context described above through a detailed and comprehensive review of the existing literature (*Chapters 2 and 3*), a two stage mixed methods longitudinal field based research project (*Chapters 4, 5, 6, and 7*), and critical analysis of the research findings throughout leading to a conclusion based around the theoretical framework developed within (*Chapter 8*). In order to do so a set of research questions (*Section 2.6*) had to be constructed to guide the investigation and reveal new understandings of the transitions faced by young people leaving school and entering the labour market for the first time.

*Chapter 2* tackles the policy literature concerning the contemporary subject of youth transitions, seeking to highlight research of importance in the field and critically assessing its contribution in the process. Primarily the chapter is concerned with the foundations of work in Scotland and the UK, and how in turn that reality comes to create the kind of work young people deem to be of value and in what aspects of work they place meaning (Furlong & Cartmel, 1997; Korpi, 1997; Blyth, 2013; Hardgrove et al, 2015). The literature discussed here is then used as a basis from which to formulate the core research questions.

*Chapter 3* entails the theoretical literature on youth transitions with a particular focus on the work of André Gorz (1987; 1989; 1999), Ivan Illich (1979; 1981; 2001), Daniel Bell (1999), Richard Sennett (1999; 2009; 2013), Guy Standing (1997; 2013; 2014; 2015) and Ulrich Beck (1992; 1999; 2008). Utilising these various strands in the context of the research a theoretical framework is developed providing a lens through which to view the subsequent data. Primarily based on Gorz's concept of the dual society (*Section 3.2.1*) a critical overview of the age of automation is presented giving rise to a number of key alternative forms of engagement. Complementing this approach an analysis of social mobility is articulated in relation to Illich's theory of 'tools for conviviality', and through this the concept of a meaningful transitions is developed.

*Chapter 4* stipulates the methodological foundation for the field research, presenting a mixed methods approach utilising a two stage quantitative and qualitative design with a longitudinal element. Detailing the advantages of this approach, it is argued this research has benefited from the more prevalent support available for mixed methods research that has developed in recent decades and the particular longitudinal benefits of a survey/interview design justify the pursuance of this approach (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). On a theoretical basis a critical realist perspective is argued for and its complementary arguments employed to maximise the strongest aspects of this research and avoid some of the limitations they possess on their own (Denscombe, 2008). This provides a more holistic set of results which have led to a foundation upon which more research can take place.

*Chapter 5* offers the data and analysis from the 230 Stage 1 survey questionnaire intended as an important part of a mixed methods approach, with the added utility of bringing in participants for the Stage 2 interviews. Significant statistical tests and cross tabulations are recorded to contribute to the overall analysis.

*Chapter 6* presents the major component of the field research, namely the responses to the semi-structured interviews with 30 selected participants from Stage 1. In line with the methodology a thematic analysis of the data was carried out and further NVivo analysis of lexical frequencies in order to outline commonalities and points of interest in regards the research questions. Through the lens of the theoretical framework, in particular Sennett's craftsman theory (2009), an argument is made to develop the concept of

meaningful transitions.

*Chapter 7* brings together the results of Stages 1 and 2 detailed in *Chapters 5* and *6* and applies the mixed methods approach explained in the methodology. Detailing consistencies and disparities between the two data stages it is understood that across the longitudinal one year time difference a particular transitional experience has been recorded.

*Chapter 8*, the final chapter and conclusion of the thesis details the key findings utilising the theoretical framework in relation to the research questions, offering further avenues for investigation, and drawing together the various analyses presented throughout the thesis. Finally, the significance of the research is detailed and a concluding section on the limitations experienced during the research reflects on any difficulties encountered.

## ***1.2 Situating the Research***

The research in this thesis takes place within contested debates regarding the sociological phenomenon known as the school-to-work transition (Walther, 2006; West et al, 2010). As such this research joins academic conversations regarding transformational studies of work and education, framed in the concerns of a particular period in economic and social history, in this case the period of austerity in Scotland and the wider UK from 2008 onwards. A breadth of research in recent years has pointed to a marked overemphasis on elements of youth culture that focus primarily on the spectacular and newsworthy, in particular those deemed to be at-risk (Woodman, 2013; Cohen, 2003; Roberts, 2011). In response social theorists and researchers have offered a variety of contrasting accounts that speak to the conflict between the reality of youth and the seemingly imbalanced environment in which they are forced to prosper (Willis, 2000; Furlong & Cartmel, 2004; Hardgrove et al, 2015).

Recent research, particularly in the global west, has indicated a widening gap between established models of transitions and the attitudes, choices, and experience of young people themselves (Dwyer & Wyn, 2001). The vast economic changes in western society since the 1970s that have seen a heavily industrialised economy move towards a service led economy have reproduced uncertainty and precarious working conditions throughout the workforce (Partington, 2019). In doing so the world of work in which this generation's parents grew up is markedly different to their own, creating a disparity of understanding that has exacerbated a defined generational difference (McDonald et al, 2011). Given these factors, there is a need to investigate the ordinary lives of young people today taking into account the particular social and economic circumstances that they find themselves in, without inappropriate reference to a period of work and education that no longer exists. This research as a result joins a number of prominent investigations

over the last five years that have sought to contemplate questions related to this subject (Standing, 2015; McKnight, 2015; MacLeod et al 2018), and seeks to fill a gap that has neglected the study of young people who have decided to eschew education in favour of going out immediately into the world of work.

Over time relative literature in this field has worked on the assumption that wage labour in and of itself has inherent value external to its varied economic benefits for the individual, and the question of whether this assumption is reinforced by the education system is rarely asked (Ransome, 1996; McCabe, 2007). In particular the concept of skill and meaning have been devalued in the transitional experience, in favour of the dominance of certification and career progression, particularly for those from traditionally working class backgrounds (Yates & Payne, 2006; Maguire, 2018). The educational structures we have built to serve this need cannot however be separated from the aforementioned assumptions. It has been critically raised by many that our schools are now more geared towards producing saleable skills than ever before (McCafferty, 2010). Research of the kind presented here offers an opportunity to assess what the subjects of those assumptions think about this process.

It is in particular the group defined as NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) who bear the harshest brunt of economic austerity. Scottish Government (2018) labour market statistics suggest that in 2012 almost 23% of 16-24 year olds who were not in education were unemployed, by 2018 this had decreased to 10.5%, yet stayed above 15% from 2009 until 2017. To put this into perspective there were 36,000 young people (aged 16-19) who were NEET in Scotland in 2010, at the height of the crisis. That is 36,000 young people without a tangible future or any semblance of autonomous security (Finlay, 2010). The policy proposals to tackle this problem have achieved varying levels of success and as such it is important to consider the on the ground effects of the situation, one keenly viewed from the perspective of those seeking their first full time job, and some of whom who are NEET.

Identification of the particular set of individuals featured in this research is by its nature difficult, as many young people are not fully aware of their own employment/education plans at age 15-16 and many of their ultimate destinations are wholly a matter of circumstance and opportunity as Croll (2008) identifies. Class plays no small part in this dynamic, with the children of advantaged families possessing aspirations often above their abilities, and children of disadvantaged families settling for aspirations well below their own (ibid). Contemplating this phenomenon is a considerable contributing factor in the contentious idea of aspiration itself, a concept that has been warped by political intrusion over time. In this research the contention that class is dead as a definition, proffered by Pakulski & Waters (1996) is critically challenged and assessed through the lens of the debate concerning social mobility (Grusky & Weeden, 2001).

Finally, the research presented in the thesis seeks to tackle questions of the future of work and the viability

of alternative work forms. Debates concerning this encompass both alternatives to neoliberal capitalism and resistance to the gradual automation of the economy, but also ostensibly reformist alternatives centred around the gig economy and limited working hours as examples (White & Williams, 2016). Included in that distinct debate is the notion of the much discussed precariat (Standing, 2014), allowing for a necessary critique of the concept and bringing together research which seeks to more closely represent the reality of precarious transitions.

Investigations of the kind presented within fall under the auspices of youth studies and as a result are inherently social and economic. The dynamics by which such a social context is understood contemplate a number of parallel disciplines and areas of study including and not limited to employment, work, psychology, education, leisure, and of course human relationships (Reay et al., 2001; Roberts, 2009). By focusing on direct school leavers a much under researched group, those seeking immediate entry into the labour market, has been reached. Doing so has enabled the researcher to acquire valuable insights into the experiences these young people encounter during the transitional stage of their lives.

### ***1.3 Critically Defining Key Terms***

In order to correctly navigate the meaning and context of the key terms used in this thesis the following critical definitions of the most contested terms will be employed, with relevant discussion regarding the varied views as to what form that definition should take included:

*Alternative Forms of Work* – A central focus of this research is that of attitudes towards alternative forms of work. This relates to a reformulation of the traditional wage labour model, to varying degrees, with a particular emphasis on alternatives which are not solely driven by the profit motive and have a purpose for the common good (Shorthose, 2000; Harvey, 2011). This can variously qualify as voluntary community based work or attempts to pursue apprenticeships with more communal outcomes in mind. Equally this can include the restructuring of the working day or limiting of the working week (Sverke et al, 2002), as has been popularised through the call for a four day week in the UK (Stronge, 2019). Further, alternative forms of work encapsulates the responses to growing automation of employment and the assumed decline of the need for human labour (Adler, 1992; Celentano, 2018; Marengo, 2019), a debate that is central to the future of work itself. In the context of this research alternative forms of work also stretch to our understanding of welfare and benefits, a commonly discussed example of which is the Universal Basic Income (*Section 2.5*) (Lee, 2018; Roosma & Van Oorschot, 2019). Alternatives of this kind allow individuals to be freed from purely transactional forms of labour and pursue more creative and fulfilling forms of work.

*Austerity* – In the context of this research refers in particular to the fiscal spending cuts that predominated

following the election of the 2010 coalition government across the UK which according to many writers has directly influenced the welfare of the young working class in particular (McDowell, 2012). Beyond this austerity is viewed by many commentators as an extension of neoliberal thinking, entailing the individualisation of risk and poverty (Blyth, 2013) and a political decision made in an effort to engineer a new economy of frugality and privatisation (Anstead, 2018). Conversely, advocates of spending cuts view austerity as a necessary reform in order to protect the future of the public sector and streamline profligate spending which could potentially engender a further fiscal shock (Clarke & Newman, 2012; O'Hara, 2015).

*Class/Working Class* – The measure by which people are divided into loosely defined categories based on perceived social and economic status. The current debate concerning class has its roots in the industrial revolution of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century and the competing debates regarding control of production and land that developed into the Hegelian and Marxist critiques of capital (MacGregor, 2016). In the context of the UK this is largely perceived through the lens of an ostensible class conflict which dependent on the source is believed to have diminished heavily in terms of wider social traction (Savage, 2007) or is still very much a central part of our society (Arnold, 2016). A certain rigidity about what is deemed culturally and economically working class has maintained since the beginnings of the post-industrial era in the UK following the late 70s, early 80s. This definition includes: not having control over the means of production, not having sufficient say over your own work, and broadly occupying positions with no management responsibility, utilising Wright's (1996; 1998) understanding. Further, it is also suggested by some writers that the concept of working classness has a cultural element and this is related to historical traditions related to industrial toil and labouring/service positions (Willis, 2000; Le Roux et al, 2008). The existence of this debate suggests a general acceptance that class identity does have prominence to varying extents and within its effects important insights are to be found. In this research the working class are considered within this economic and cultural framework, with particular emphasis given over to the specificities of Glasgow itself, detailed in *Section 2.3*.

*Economic Inequality* – The imbalance between those at a lower and higher points on the income, wealth, and opportunity scale. Debates concerning inequality have become central to the academic discourse on reform of work, in particular concerns regarding wage inequality, a concern which affects the young very deliberately via the ability for employers to pay those aged 21 to 24, 18 to 20 and under 18 who receive varying minimum wage levels (Machin, 1996; Bell & Van Reenen, 2010; Dolton et al, 2010). In order to understand the purposes of this research we need to look not only at wages and earned income but also at income from capital, particularly at the top of the distribution, which has a considerable effect on the long term transitions young people from working class backgrounds are able to make (Alvaredo et al, 2016).

*Lifelong Learning* – Is a term used to define the voluntary pursuit of education after formal schooling for the purpose of personal betterment or often professional development (Field, 2000). In some cases lifelong learning is viewed as a response to the way in which education, even state supported education, has become a commodity to be sold on the learning market rather than a state provision for the good of its population (Jarvis, 2004). For others, the concept has been removed from its original liberal tendencies and moved towards a more clearly practical concern as job security has become an effective myth for most of those who can actually get work and long-term unemployment seems to have become structural and permanent (Matheson & Matheson, 1996; Regmi, 2015). In the context of youth transitions lifelong learning is understood as a continuous investment in human capital during early working careers (Wolbers, 2003).

*Poverty* – The state of lacking a basic level of income and sustenance in order to adequately live in a relative society or community. Poverty is characterised as relative or absolute for the purposes of definition (Foster, 1998), meaning that there are those who are materially poor by any measure and those who are poor relative to the standard expectation of prosperity in any given population. For the purposes of this research we will largely be concerned with relative poverty in the post-industrial context. Other sociological explanations have tended to explain poverty by referring to people's moral failings, fecklessness or dependency cultures (Poppo & Redmond, 2000), while others have argued that it can be better understood as a result of how resources and opportunities are unequally distributed across society. It is therefore by its definition often a classification which carries stigma and with it alienation, leaving a distinct mark on an individual's life (Shildrick & Rucell, 2015).

*Social Mobility* – Is the movement between or advancement into new social positions, economic classes, and perceived individual progression (Lipset, 2018). Social immobility therefore is the lack of any movement, which in the context of this research can be understood as being especially prevalent between generations (*Section 2.4*). The current economic system places great emphasis on promoting upward social mobility, and policy solutions are hailed or denounced depending on their ability to realise it. Generally however this takes on a reformist perspective and is concerned with improving the lot of the worst off without damaging the interests of the more advantaged, particularly those with inherited wealth (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2009).

*Work* – Is a term that by its very nature engenders numerous definitions. Despite this the most consistent will be that of paid employment within the thesis, and where different it will be clearly stated. For the purpose of this research the following distinctions are also made: (*a*) *Economic Work*: This is work carried out with the intention of receiving remuneration. Such work is summed up well in the common notion of earning a living, the pleasure derived from which is often cited by writers as a secondary consideration

(Cook-Gumperz, 2001) (b) *Domestic Work*: This is work performed for the benefit of the self or an individual's dependents, a form of work which is less prevalent in the lives of young people proactively but not insignificant given the gradual increase in those under the age of 25 with direct caring responsibilities (Rose & Cohen, 2010). (c) *Autonomous Activity*: This is a key distinction as it delineates the difference between work and activities performed outside of necessity. There is a school of thought that sees such activities (hobbies, recreation etc.) as a form of life work. This includes activities that are performed in search of fulfilment, artistic expression, charity, and mutual aid (Kropotkin, 2012). As such the action of voluntary work falls under its auspices (Borkman, 1999). These activities constitute the substance of life as opposed to the economy and are fundamental to ascribing meaning to activities.

## **Chapter 2 – Critical Review of Literature on Youth Education and Employment**

**Methodological Note\*** Where mentioned, interview participants' names (which have been changed to protect anonymity) are emboldened for recognition.

The following chapter critically reviews relevant literature on the past and contemporary context of youth employment and education, and introduces the policy background via which this project came to fruition. In doing so a framework is provided to better understand the reality facing young people today in a city like Glasgow.

*Section 2.1 – Introduction* - contains a brief overview of the policy background to the current political and economic situation that frames this research, with particular reference to the onset of austerity post 2008 and how it formed the inspiration for this work.

*Section 2.2 - Meaningful Transitions* - considers literature and policy reforms surrounding the concept of youth transitions, highlighting in particular the crucial importance of this stage in the development of class consciousness and perceptions of work itself, and the policy focuses that have led to the importance of that concept as a means to transform society.

*Section 2.3 - The Case of Glasgow* - the current economic and social situation prevalent in the City of Glasgow is proffered as an appropriate test case of the effects of austerity felt in many post-industrial cities across the UK and indeed the world. The specific effects this situation has on young people is critically assessed from the viewpoint of contemporary and historical research, with a particular focus on the deliberate social engineering through policy that is enacted on such communities.

*Section 2.4 - Social Mobility* - The concept of social mobility, and the contested viewpoints surrounding it, are central to the academic literature concerning youth transitions. This concept has taken on particular importance in the age of austerity, giving rise to serious reassessment of assumptions made during times of economic prosperity regarding what is and what is not a meaningful destination for young school leavers. Literature concerning the flawed belief that immobility is an individualised phenomenon, followed by a misunderstanding that upwards mobility can be achieved without addressing structural advantage, is also addressed.

*Section 2.5 - Universal Basic Income* - Universal Basic Income (UBI) has received significant interest post 2008 as a model to counteract the failings of prescriptive welfare systems that remain prominent in the UK and abroad. In regards finding a solution to the problem of work, social mobility, and inequality many have

come to the belief that UBI is a solution of significant merit. Yet what does the policy evidence and academic literature suggest following the trial and failure of a number of prominent pilot studies, and where can UBI go from here in relation to the big questions presented by the age of austerity?

*Section 2.6 – Chapter Conclusion – Developing the Research Questions* - Utilising a particular focus on the employment and educational debates that influence destinations after school it is concluded that this transitional period of development represents the key site of contention in understanding how it is the young working class come to settle on their ideas of what work is and what work can be, but for any reforms to be effective they must tackle the structural inequalities inherent in our current system. The research questions are decided upon and explained as a result.

## **2.1 Introduction**

Financial austerity and decreased growth are but two symptoms of the global financial crisis that have sent more young people into unemployment in the UK than at any other time since 1984 (ONS, 2012). This is a trend that has continued well into the onset of the so-called economic recovery, which began somewhere between 2012-15, or not at all, dependent on which sources we give weight to, thereby raising the much debated question of a recovery for whom?, and in this research that question meets a variety of conflicting reports. To better frame those reports however a critical assessment of relevant literature is required to give shape to the context in which this research takes place whilst also highlighting key research in the field of relevance to this debate. As such this review will focus on key areas of debate that concern the particular period of transition for young people in the contemporary setting, and in doing so seek to formulate research questions which will guide the intentions of this study.

Between education and employment there is a critical stage in which many, particularly working class, young people are left behind, understanding the importance of that critical stage in developing individual ideas about work is a question that requires greater investigation. The gap in educational attainment felt by children from the most deprived backgrounds inevitably equals lower earnings over the life course (DoE, 2011). Where once full employment was one of the ultimate goals of UK social and economic policy it appears now that even work does not provide a guaranteed exit strategy given two-thirds of children growing up in poverty live in a family where at least one family member works (DWP, 2013). Transitions taking place in this context are understood to be non-linear and often chaotic, but for the subject group in this research that understanding is even more relevant, as they represent a group most likely to struggle once they leave school and seek work (Mayer et al, 2019). In order to come to a position on what constitutes a meaningful transition this situation must be investigated (*Section 2.2*).

Evidence suggests that the trend towards disproportionate unemployment and underemployment for the young is set to continue for some time as job inflexibility and increasingly stringent benefits policy serves to limit the chances for young individuals to find new work, particularly within already disadvantaged areas like Glasgow (Ross & Leathwood, 2013; Hollywood et al, 2012). As such it is imperative to better understand that particular urban environment and consider research which has gone before. In this review key research that has been conducted in Glasgow and similarly relevant post-industrial cities is assessed to illuminate our understanding of the specific situation these young people find themselves in (*Section 2.3*). Developing clear research questions without taking into account the history and contemporary reality of this very specific location would not be sufficient or effective.

Further, a great deal has been written about the stalling of social mobility and whether this measure itself is a key factor in the prevalence of poor transitions and general prosperity (McKendrick et al, 2003; Mendola et al, 2009; Bell & Blanchflower, 2011a; Major & Machin, 2018.) The importance of this topic in the debate around transitions is crucial to understanding why working class young people end up in on the life trajectories that they do and as a result has become a primary focus of policy in recent years with the Scottish Government introducing a legal requirement for public bodies to reduce socio-economic disadvantage (SMC, 2019). In the *Section 2.4* relevant literature concerning this policy environment will be assessed alongside discussions concerning aspiration, the particular dynamic present in Scotland, and the diverse destinations young people encounter. Doing so will reveal important insights into the kind of material concerns young people face regarding their school to work transitions, thereby helping to formulate research questions which take this into account.

In recent years the UK's coalition government (2010-15), subsequent Conservative majority government (2015-17) and minority government (2017-19) have sought to redefine welfare, taking cues from the United States in particular. One such reform has been the attempted introduction of Workfare whereby those claiming unemployment benefits must work in order to receive their regular payments. This idea of unpaid work as a means to garner experience has therefore diverged from the traditional community service focus it had in mutual aid conceptions of society in the past (Owen, 1965; Finlayson, 1994) acting as a model for the sort of individualised policies that were to follow. The following literature review will investigate one prominent proposal to resolve this issue that is widely regarded as a progressive alternative, that of Universal Basic Income (UBI) (*Section 2.5*). UBI has been posited as a radical step forward that incorporates an understanding of the decreasing reliance on human labour, and the vast numbers of people falling into poverty due to unemployment or underemployment. In taking on this debate it is hoped that an informed position from which to develop a clear research focus can be found.

Finally the review will culminate in an assessment of the aforementioned debates and conclude a set of research questions that will guide the theoretical review to follow and the final shape of the research itself (Section 2.6).

## **2.2 Meaningful Transitions**

The following section introduces the vast array of literature surrounding the concept of youth transitions, highlighting the crucial importance of this stage in the development of class consciousness and perceptions of work itself, and the policy focuses that have led to the predominance of that concept, with a particular focus on the key empirical work that has enlightened our understanding of this issue.

By doing so the chapter places the intended study within broader sociological debates regarding individualisation, marginalisation, and the prevalence of social mobility as a cure all within our society. Utilising a particular focus on the educational debates that influence destinations after school it is concluded that this period of development represents the key site of contention in understanding how it is young working class individuals come to settle on their ideas of what work is and what work can be. Hollands (1990) believes that working class identities are reshaped in and against the new regimes which have been set in place to produce the kind of youth labour required by post-industrial capitalism, and it is in this context that the review proceeds.

Literature concerning the nature of youth and young adulthood in the context of austerity is also considered as a vital element of the dual forces that concoct the labour characteristics of young people in Scotland and the wider UK. By doing so this chapter sets the foundations for the context of the study in question and the core research questions that are drawn from its conclusions.

### **2.2.1 Youth, Risk, and Resistance**

*“In our view then, the risk society is not a classless society, but a society in which the old social cleavages associated with class and gender remain intact: on an objective level, changes in the distribution of risk have been minimal. However, subjective feelings of risk have become a much more significant feature of young people’s lives and this has implications for their experiences and lifestyles. With traditional social divisions having become obscure, subjective risks stem from the perceived lack of collective tradition and security”*

Andy Furlong and Fred Cartmel (1997:7), *Young People and Social Change: Individualisation and Risk in Late Modernity*

The research detailed in the following section is concerned with the youth phase and the education to work transitions which are so fundamental to our understanding of becoming an economically active adult, given that is, as some suggest, the key focus of our educational system (Miller, 1973). That youth phase is however entirely dependent on the social, economic, and cultural circles within which young people grow up and the networks they have available to them to mitigate the risks of an economy that struggles to provide for their needs.

It is important to firstly express why this period is of critical importance to sociology as a site of analysis, and why the transition between education and employment has come to define what might be deemed a successful youth stage (Roberts & McDonald, 2013). The investigation will in turn accentuate what kind of class definitions are brought about as a result of that process, and why this is of relevance to the question of how young people experience transitions under the conditions of austerity, and to detail research that sheds light on that question.

The concept of the youth stage has its roots in psychological and cultural understandings about development and maturity. In a literal sense the idea of a societal group defined as young, is broadly taken to mean between the ages of 16-25, however in this research all participants are between the ages of 16-18. In regards work, it has come to be defined by unstable employment and an expected period of constructing skills in order to get on. Arnett's (2015) concept of emerging adulthood has taken on prominence as a new descriptor for this period, suggesting a duration that rather than being an early stage of adulthood is in reality an extension of the youth stage itself. This definition has met criticism as reinforcing normative understandings of adulthood and ingraining the idea that there should be differentiated expectations of the kind of successful transitions young people can expect to encounter (Furlong and Cartmel, 2007; Furlong, 2009, Woodman & Wyn, 2014).

These complex discussions highlight the processes young people must surpass in order to reach a point in their life cycle where they can be said to have had a successful transition. Primarily involving the process of finding a long term sustainable job, which remains a significant hurdle for those with low educational attainment. Those who lack qualifications and skills are increasingly at risk of being left behind in a competitive labour market that has very little concern for individual failure (Furlong et al, 2003). This is as considerable a problem in the UK, where youth unemployment hit 22.3 per cent in 2011 and averages 15.9 per cent annually (ONS, 2011) as it is the case across the entirety of Europe, where youth unemployment consistently averages over 20 per cent (Caliendo & Schmidl, 2016). As many researchers have highlighted however the foundations of these problems have a much more personal impact than the national focuses of the financial crisis (Bell & Blanchflower, 2011a; O'Higgins, 2012) and cannot be simply understood in terms of employment rates, as evidenced by Pimlott-Wilson (2015:293) in her study of young people in the

North West of England seeking to navigate the job market when she noted that the local problems faced by the participants are 'affected by global economic restructuring, employer decisions, as well as government policy, yet the consequences are felt, negotiated and lived through by individuals rooted in place'.

In 1971, a period of historically high employment in the UK's post-war period, unemployment sat at 6.6% for men and 5.1% for women under the age of 25 (Layard, 1982). During the immediate years following this Willis (2000) conducted an ethnographic study of 12 boys growing up in a working class town in the West Midlands of England discovering that their natural resistance to the regimented nature of education played a strongly determining factor in their future job prospects, thereby reproducing their class position, and leading them into jobs often with low pay and limited opportunities for progression. Willis (ibid:1) described these destinations during the 1970s as joining the industrial army, a transition that conforms to wider societal expectations about what it was to be working class and where that definition took you in life. Willis' ethnography presented a strong and defiant cultural cross section of young men that were proud of their heritage, depicting actors who were aware of the low societal expectations that surrounded them, yet humorous in their attitude towards it (Arnot, 2004). The processes these individuals encountered that limited their progress are understood as being enacted externally on young working class individuals and indeed internalised by them to ensure they 'learn their place' (Rogaly & Taylor, 2009a:41). In an educational system that seeks to funnel workers into an economy with far too few avenues for children from lower social classes to do well these limitations can be the frame through which people experience the entire rest of their life suggesting a greater need for research on this dynamic.

Willis' research and similar analyses (Anyon, 1980; Archer & Yamashita, 2003) have been critiqued for romanticising the level of resistance young working class individuals enact and indeed how many of them actually subscribe to this resistance (Walker, 1986; Playford & Gayle, 2016). In response Brown's *Schooling Ordinary Kids* (1987) sought to represent those working class individuals who do conform to the expectations of schooling, during a historical period in which unemployment was very much a key policy concern in the UK, the 1980s. In Brown's study the majority of participants, rather than railing against the authority of school, are simply trying to get on and are distinctly aware of the rising job uncertainty in society. Roberts (2012) believes this ordinary group are overlooked in many studies of youth transitions leading to perceptions of class and risk that are focused on extremes rather than the common experience of most pupils.

Following the 1980s the period referred to as late modernity (Giddens, 1991) or liquid modernity (Bauman, 2000), was typified by individualisation, an overt focus on supply side prescriptions, and the predominance of the private sphere in the way we treat young people engaging in school to work transitions. As Roberts et al (1994:44) state "In the past transitions were shorter and simpler, by the... 1980s there were no longer

any clear, normal career patterns from which most individuals could deviate. In this sense, individualisation had become the norm". The aforementioned phenomenon does not however negate the importance of class in defining the transitions young people face as has been evidenced clearly in contemporary research and analysis focusing on the reality of growing up in economically deprived areas of Britain (Russell, 2016; Bessant et al 2017; Grover, 2018).

Following the 1970s, neoliberal reforms in the economy demanded that countries increased the flexibility of their labour force which directly led to labour markets becoming 'polarised and for some highly precarious' (Dean 2012:356). In turn the nature of what it was to be working class or indeed middle class started to change and with it how young people perceived themselves. This was keenly exemplified by Rogaly & Taylor's (2009b) research on class and community in council estates in Norwich, England where they recorded a diminishing class identity except in the sense that individuals often distanced themselves from being considered as belonging to another class, in general this was reported as an antipathy by traditionally working class communities to be seen as middle class or posh. This class identification in contrast to another more advantaged class is also evidenced in the longitudinal interviews carried out by McLeod & Yates (2006) and focus groups by Donovan (2017) in Australia, with many participants relaying the view that those from wealthy families already had a distinct advantage and this in turn lowered their own chances of a successful transition.

As Hardgrove et al (2015) discovered in their study of young men in Swindon and Luton, England who had experienced little or no work at all, a further factor in how a young person experiences this transition is the prevalence of stability and support, largely stemming from family ties. Among the 75 interview participants they spoke to, the 27 still living at home and a further 31 with lasting familial ties were those least likely to speak in terms of risk and impending difficulty when discussing their likelihood of transitioning into permanent employment. The remaining 18 participants, who were experiencing significant difficulties with family and housing arrangements were the most likely to describe their experience in terms of serious risk to their welfare. This support system further ingrains already existing privilege with better off young people able to afford the insecurity of unemployment and thus they are more able to wait for better positions to come along (Toguchi Swartz & Bengtson O'Brien, 2016).

The Teesside Studies, which focused on young working class individuals around the city of Middlesbrough, England have published significant longitudinal data on youth transitions and class in a key area of post-industrial Britain. The studies clearly document that many young working class people were able to find work when transitioning from school but it was generally of an insecure nature and poorly paid, thus entering a low pay, no pay cycle that often became the lasting definition of their working life (MacDonald & Shildrick, 2018). In many cases employment was found through informal avenues and existing social

relationships, however this amenity diminished as traditional labouring jobs became depleted in the area (Shildrick, 2012). Key to their research was the prevailing feeling among participants that having a job was directly related to success in society with a strong antipathy towards even temporary dependency on welfare also prevalent (MacDonald et al, 2014). These studies in particular managed to contact respondents who are traditionally deemed to be hard to reach thereby providing a rich vein of data that highlights the distinct reality of late modernity's economic realities.

In MacDonald (2005:877) a further factor was identified as prevalent, that of 'local nomadism', i.e. the fact that many individuals in disadvantaged communities not only stay within their own urban area but tend to move only within a very localised geography within it. This factor reinforces the importance of family and friend groups in offering a sense of security that is not provided by the educational system or job market. The knowledge of decline in these areas is well known to those who live there yet this is not in and of itself a reason to move away, as the success of their transition was often dependent on 'who they knew, not what they knew' (ibid: 883).

Research focused on youth transitions has not yet however been able to fully assess the deleterious effects of the post financial crisis era on the group of young people seeking to leave school and find work, nor has it sought to investigate the new kinds of work developing as a result. Early research suggests that the marginalisation inherent in the economic downturn, referred to by some as the Great Recession (Coulter, 2016), has only further intensified, not least in the observable rise in relative and actual poverty (O'Connell & Brannen, 2019). This in turn reinstates the feeling that individuals are not only materially doing badly but are viewed as such by their peers within society. Verick (2009) investigated the last 5 large scale international crises of unemployment in developed economies (Spain 1977, Norway 1987, Finland 1991, and Japan 1992), finding that when comparing these crises to the most recent global shock in 2008, young people are hit by far the hardest and the impacts of that crisis stay with them for a much greater period of time. As was noted by Shildrick & MacDonald (2013) the labelling of being seen to be poor was a source of considerable shame for the participants in one of the Teesside studies and has been further highlighted by recent studies such as Pemberton et al's (2016a:27) analysis of 62 interviews with young people in England and Scotland who largely framed their experience of difficult transitions as a result of 'a series of life events that lay beyond their control', offering an alternative viewpoint regarding the level of agency they had in their own situation.

A perceived weaponisation of hardship has led to a generation of young working class individuals who may not have reached the aspirational heights of some of their peers seeing themselves as flawed and useless (West et al, 2010; Cieslik & Pollock, 2017). This in turn has led to the prevailing media narrative that the situation some individuals find themselves in is as a result of a hereditary failing, a result of so called

generations of troubled families. This narrative of troubled families was further expanded by Shildrick et al (2016) in a study that spanned 20 families across Middlesbrough and Glasgow totalling 47 people who had experienced multiple and severe troubles within their community. Initially intended to focus on cultures of worklessness, the research found that far from encouraging further problematic behaviours among the children in these families the experience of seeing their elders' difficulties in fact encouraged them to be 'normal' and 'ordinary' (ibid:830).

The observations regarding work and society detailed above, are fundamentally products of sustained periods of economic decline have come to ingrain neoliberalism and in turn foster the individualising of risk into the process of transitioning from education to work (Beck, 1992), thereby creating a generation prone to blaming themselves or their peers for economic shocks. The youth phase allows for a privileged vantage point from which to observe the broader processes which cause this, giving us the opportunity to answer questions not just of importance to education and employment but of wider relevance for sociology as well (MacDonald, 2001). The role austerity has played in this dynamic is absolutely vital to a contemporary understanding of this process, in particular when we consider the cataclysmic effect cuts focused fiscal reforms have had on young people across Europe (Verick, 2009; Irwin & Nilsen, 2018).

### ***2.2.2 The Educational Dimension***

In 2010 a new coalition government arrived in Westminster calling for the creation of the Big Society. Under the auspices of what has variously been referred to as civil society, the third sector, and more commonly charity, this is 'a transfer of responsibility for meeting needs away from the public sector, to social enterprises, community groups, the private sector and individuals and families' (North, 2011:2). This focus on community responsibility quickly returned to the agenda in 2011 in the wake of the riots across England which were invariably characterised as a problem of uncontrolled or 'feral' youth (Phillips et al, 2012:1), and rampant consumerism (Bauman, 2011). This categorisation of young people as having become disenchanted or in fact more anti-social is according to some a direct result of prevailing socio-economic factors rather than any inherent traits of youthfulness, and is as much a global problem as a national one (Gidley, 2004), the problem of austerity. Due to the age demographic this problem affected it was equally considered to be a problem of an education system that was unable to meet the demands of the time (Slater, 2016). In that observation we can observe a tendency to make sweeping assumptions about young people who do not conform to societal expectations. The transitions young people face, even within working class communities are varied and take on different paths well beyond the expected avenues of continued education, taking on work, or deviant paths leading to anti-social behaviour and criminality (Gunter & Watt, 2009). In Spain Salvà-Mut et al (2016) utilised interviews with 9 individuals who had left school with no qualifications identifying them from questionnaires with over 500 participants just prior to

the onset of the financial crisis and found that previously relatively secure school to work transitions pathways are decreasing and being replaced with chronic unemployment and inconsistent jobs, as well as concentrated deviance in particular groups.

In cities like Glasgow the pattern of economic change that led to austerity is restructuring the capability of young people to find adequate or meaningful work post education and this is presenting a considerable problem for policy makers (MacLeod et al, 2018). The steady growth of low paid service and care sector jobs as the main source of employment for young people is both precarious and reliant on public sector investment which is steadily diminishing, whilst the ability of employees in these industries to plan a future is becoming increasingly difficult (McDowell, 2012). In their study consisting of in depth interviews with young men in the West of Scotland who had experienced sustained periods of unemployment, Furlong & Cartmel (2004) found that a chain of precarious jobs only further marginalised individuals and made it harder for them ever to get into long term work, in this sense there was such a phenomenon as jobs that were not worth it. An overreliance on short term and precarious work often began straight out of school and became a circular trap from which the participants struggled to escape.

Alternative positions on the increasing flexicurity of work (Madsen, 2004) have been taken by Brinkley (2013) who views the call to push individuals away from flexible working and zero hours contracts to be premature and unreflective of the reality of the labour market. Bessant (2018) has also posited that the perceived novelty of precarious employment, particularly for younger people, and the flexible economy is not reflective of a new class dynamic but simply a returning trend that is historical rather than necessarily structural. Beck (1992) equally argued that in a risk society, such as that described, young people would have a greater ability to make their own choices, have the opportunity be reflexive and become involved in constructing their own biographies.

Since the financial crash in 2008/9 people in their 20s in the UK have seen a 12.5% reduction in their median real-term pay (Whittaker, 2015), with the brunt of the downturn in wages following the recession borne largely by those between the ages of 22-39 (Cribb et al, 2017). This low pay economy can be said to be distinctly attached to a neoliberal educational model, one exemplified by Down et al's (2019) ethnography with 32 high school pupils in Australia in which participants reported being funnelled into vocational roles that rarely led to firm employment offers. This hidden selection of, often working class, school children for vocational jobs can be perceived as depriving them of the opportunity for more creative and potentially academically fulfilling pursuits. A significant proportion of those who fail to achieve vocational success find themselves lost in the low pay, no pay cycle described by MacDonald & Shildrick (2018). Utilising a mixed method approach of interviews, observations, and written data Atkins (2010) found that for many of the participants in her research found the idea they could do anything they want

through their education to nothing more than an illusion, and in reality they were being prepared for a lifetime of low pay, low security jobs. Lowered aspirational focuses of this kind are as such shown to begin at an educational level, in turn shaping the very framework within which young people come to understand what work is and what it has the potential to become.

The prevalence of precarious work belies a reality that the current economic climate simply cannot maintain the levels of employment that were once prevalent whilst post-industrial towns and cities suffer two fold due not only to a lack of jobs, despite unrealistic political assertions that enough jobs do exist (Theodore, 2007), but also the gradual diminishing of the social security safety net to alleviate the offset. In the decades following the late 1970s and early 1980s labour market entry became increasingly difficult for people of all backgrounds, but no more so than the young working class in urban areas (Bloodworth, 2016). This led to a differentiated skill market which engendered a radically different form of transition from the previously relatively undifferentiated labour market (Furlong & Cartmel, 1997). Reforms of this kind, whether by design or not, have spurred the move towards a society and set of policies more clearly focused on learning, with a particular focus on credentials rather than clear and transferable skills (Tomlinson, 2008). Credentialism, pursued in Scotland in particular, in an effort to boost lifelong learning, has become focused on increasing student numbers rather than emphasising work based education (Canning, 1999; Fuller 2001). The traditional education to work transition as a result has been altered by the rapid and extensive marketisation of education itself (Lauder, 1991), a factor further exacerbated by austerity, giving governments the pretext to privatise and sell off key educational assets and contracts (Carrell, 2016). A cost-benefit analysis model at the heart of education naturally leads towards a pool of individuals left behind, a fact that is simply accepted as a natural part of the economy in times of growth and prosperity, yet contested as short sighted in times of economic decline (Hummel-Rossi & Ashdown, 2002). Due to these policy measures, whilst seen as a fairly formulaic rite of passage for many, the school to work transition is instead for a significant section of society an impasse and eventually a terminal point altogether. This is particularly important when we consider how vital an advanced education is to economic success in the contemporary age (Garner, 2017).

In 1970, a substantial proportion of young people left school without any graded examination result (44 per cent), yet by 2015-16 the percentage of pupils leaving with no qualifications at SCQF level 3 or above in Scotland was around 2 per cent (Furlong & Cartmel, 1997; ONS, 2017). This small group that fall by the wayside as a result of a litany of factors that occur during the education process and their home life, can be prone to stalled transitions, a reality that has led to Scotland seeing the number of young people who fall into the NEET category increase by 5,000 between 2008-9 (Hudson et al, 2012). This gap in educational attainment inevitably equals lower earnings over the life course (DoE, 2011) due to the predominance of certification as the only model of evaluating success and aptitude. Prior to the 2008/9 financial crisis the

goal of achieving a higher education was one with significant logic in the UK, yet there is now evidence to suggest that those with degrees are less likely to be in work at the ages of 22 to 23 than those who left school to enter employment at a younger age (Hoskins et al, 2017). This is exacerbated further by the problem of overeducation highlighted by 16 per cent of those between the ages of 16 to 64 in 2017 in the UK having more education than was reasonably required for their job; with the same figure for graduates sitting around 31 per cent (Savic et al, 2019). This phenomenon has cast a wider net than is often associated with economic downturns with many traditionally middle-class graduates now also becoming caught in cycles of low-paid and insecure work. In their comparative study of school leavers at 18 and higher education graduates Hoskins et al (2017) found that at the ages of 22-23 those who left school at 18 were actually more likely to be employed. These stunted transitions are leading to the conclusion among a broader group that the traditional transitional avenues of success no longer provide the promise they once did (MacDonald, 2011). This is of particular interest in Scotland where tuition is ostensibly free for students from Scotland, as opposed to the expensive fees system prevalent in England, yet the same phenomenon occurs, and on some measures Scotland is the place where the fewest higher education students come from disadvantaged backgrounds (Hepburn, 2018).

Due to the above factors, young people are arguably facing more complex and contested transitions to adulthood and many of the pathways to work are now less linear than they were for their parents (McDonald et al, 2011). As a result the clearly defined transitions which were once a mainstay of working class life are no longer as prevalent and narratives of how this has manifested in the experience of the young are required. In this sense young people now may have a wider range of possible selves (Markus & Nurius, 1986), and yet are expected to accept this limitation as part of a broader civilizing process which expects the disenfranchised to welcome their own exploitation (Elias, 2000). This trade-off between risk and variety is at the core of the transition system we have created, one where policy is not imbued with meaning but utility (Korpi, 1997). This is perhaps most evident in the promotion of entrepreneurialism in schools as an unqualified good (Ball, 1993; McCafferty, 2010), a process that promotes a particular viewpoint regarding the interaction between education and the labour market, and how in turn those who pass through these systems should contribute to the economy.

The policies of the UK and Scottish governments over recent years have not fundamentally challenged the narrative of individualisation and entrepreneurialism, with this most clearly evidenced in the Scottish Government's Curriculum for Excellence (CfE). The aims of CfE are articulated in four capacities which hope to frame children's transitions in terms of becoming successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens, and effective contributors (Scottish Government, 2007). What these actually mean is not entirely clear to the underlying purposes of education as an activity of societal importance (Priestley & Humes, 2010). These goals are clearly defined to move focus away from skills and wellbeing in favour of creating

individuals who are economically responsible and entrepreneurial (Patrick, 2013).

This inevitably engenders risk and anxiety which individuals are expected to navigate as a consumer of education rather than as a member of a collective effort, which has led to parents engaging in bought in advantage which then inadvertently further disadvantages those who cannot afford it (Ball, 2010), thereby further unbalancing the transition process. These market forces are designed to drain the purposeful essence of education of meaning other than what contribution it can make to an economy that repeatedly fails those who are subject to it (Connell, 2013; Nicolescu & Neaga, 2014). Naturally as a result many younger people are staying in education longer and taking a greater number of years to find themselves on a clearly defined path.

Formal education has always been the pathway by which we attempt to redress economic disparity (Stuart, 2012), but there is space to reform how we see its relation to work in an effort to create a greater consciousness of equality and justice. Like any other modes of progression however there are those who reap the benefits and those who are simply stigmatised because of their failure to do so, with the media resorting to the use of so-called poverty porn to frame this failure (Shildrick, 2018a), often starring individuals who have fallen through the gaps of an education system ill designed to cater to their experience. The certification process of qualifications and degrees does more to inhibit young people than it does to foster independence. The relatively recent classification of NEETs in the UK has now branded this group and made them visible as the unwanted outsiders of youth society (Yates and Payne, 2006; Maguire, 2018). This in turn makes it increasingly difficult to find young people who have left education and training after the age of 16 due to the overwhelming sense of risk they are encumbered with if they do so. For some commentators the predominance of neoliberal educational ideas has become a global orthodoxy, implying the subjugation and marginalisation of policies and practices informed by notions of equity and collective responsibility (Grimaldi, 2012; Rudd & Goodson, 2017). The aforementioned is particularly prevalent in relation to policies that aim to close the attainment gap, such as the Scottish Attainment Challenge and the National Improvement Framework. Policies of this kind inevitably lead to a narrow focus on attainment and neglect a more holistic approach that takes into account the economic, social and relational constraints which impact people living in poverty, and indeed those who are from traditionally non-academic backgrounds (Mowat, 2018).

The Scottish Attainment Challenge was launched in response to concerns that children living in Scotland's most deprived areas (many of them in Glasgow) are around two years of schooling behind their peers at the age of 15 (McCluskey, 2017). In Garner's (2017) study of educational attainment in Glasgow for 3000 school leavers in 1979/80 she found that multiple deprivation had a significant effect on transitional outcomes in the city, with the most exposed pupils performing poorly at school and going on to have great

difficulty in future employment. This evidences the long running and prominent link between poverty and low levels of attainment which is well documented in many different locales, yet particularly concerning in the UK where overall levels of inequality are increasingly higher than in countries of comparable wealth (Jenkins, 2016). In turn this further exemplifies the specific experience of working class communities making young people within those groups of keen interest to wider questions concerning how education has influenced their reality. According to Reay (2001) high aspirations among young people from disadvantaged backgrounds are often compelled by material considerations because of their pressured background, with the option of further or higher education making much less sense in a climate where contributing to household income is all important. Attached to this concern is the compulsion of place in young people's aspirations. Many individuals experience a powerful relationship to the area in which they live altering social attitudes and indeed aspirations, these attitudes can be instrumental in the decisions young people make regarding their long term goals and entry into the labour market (Kintrea et al, 2015). A general political focus on aspiration has been called into question by research which evidences the ineffectiveness of the measure, when aspirational goals are equally high in disparate communities, the deficit lies in providing young people with the skills and opportunities to actually achieve them (St. Clair et al, 2013). MacDonald (2016) describes this reasoning as an example of voodoo sociology i.e. a belief that youth unemployment can be resolved largely by seeking to raise young working class individuals' aspirations.

### **2.2.3 Conclusion**

As Webster et al (2004:27) note, 'the twists, turns and outcomes of the transitions of young adults can rarely be explained by reference to a single event or experiences confined to one aspect of such transitions (for example, the family or education, training and employment careers). A more holistic exploration of young adults' lives in the round allows us to see how particular personal experiences are shaped by complicated, interlinked processes. In the context of this study that reality is no different, and *Section 2.2* has detailed a variety of literature to articulate that conclusion.

The period between education and employment has come to define the success or failure of a young person's transition into adulthood. In the context of austerity that transition has become particularly fraught with disproportionate levels of unemployment and underemployment for the young limiting their chances to find new work (Ross & Leathwood, 2013; Hollywood et al, 2012). Pressures of this kind have led to the perception that job choices are heavily limited and that any job is better than no job (Rose, 2003). If this is so, then the way education is organised requires reform in order to supplement that deficit with a number of writers articulating significant concerns regarding the failure of schools to push anything other than an individualising and entrepreneurial mindset (Harris & Ranson, 2005).

In the context of youth transitions wage labour as a means of producing and distributing resources is rarely challenged (Glucksmann, 2007), yet it continuously fails to push a certain section of society's heads above water. As a result the transitional period has further developed as a key staging point for debates surrounding what kind of work we as individuals perceive to be of value and in what aspects of work we place meaning. Transitions taking place in this context are described by many writers as non-linear and often chaotic (Mayer et al, 2019), yet that is only likely to intensify in a climate where working class young people perceive that those from better off backgrounds have an unfair advantage thereby limiting their chances of a successful transition (McLeod & Yates, 2006; Donovan, 2017). The research detailed in this section depicts a reality for young people in the Scotland that is strewn with employment difficulties, educational struggles, and stresses at home (Furlong & Cartmel, 2004; McDowell, 2012). In many cases this leads to considerable difficulties being able to find employment whatsoever once they leave school (Hoskins et al, 2017). Understanding these experiences and the struggles that young people face is key to articulating a comprehensive understanding of their transitions.

The eventual class locations we arrive at in adulthood are still strongly influenced by an individual's original class location, with strong personal narratives becoming significant in how that develops within their family stories. Despite the fact that the risks and uncertainties of restructured transitions tend to engender a greater sense of individual autonomy they are also strongly navigated by collective experiences (MacDonald et al, 2005). In particular the relationship young people have to their parents and understanding of their employment history is a key indicator in how they are likely to view the transitional experiences they encounter (Shildrick et al, 2016).

As evidenced in this section of the literature review, local pressures also play a significant role in the class locations and long terms future of young people entering the labour market (MacDonald, 2005), with a considerable number of young people finding that their educational experience does not bear a connection to their class background when going through the school to work transition (Weeks, 2011). In order to achieve this the way in which education to work transitions are shaped must find a way to deal with the individualisation, risk and anxiety that has become inherent in the current system (Beck, 1992; 1999), whilst also understanding that particular communities do not wish to follow a path reliant only on the prominence of certification (Yates and Payne, 2006; Maguire, 2018). Transitions for those depicted as being poor are particularly difficult (Shildrick & MacDonald, 2013) leading to an understanding that young people are now arguably more united in their lack of status rather than their possession of it. In this sense the quality of work young people are able to do is diminished in importance to their ability to simply get by (Garner, 2017; Mowat, 2018) leading to a situation in which the value of work in terms of experience, skill, and ability is of lesser importance for as long as it stays within the wage labour paradigm (Ransome, 1996).

The focus on individualisation experienced first in education and again in the labour market frames a process through which inequality and lack of social mobility for the young from disadvantaged backgrounds leads to an ingrained disparity they are likely to experience for the rest of their life. Sociology therefore has a role in identifying these patterns and working towards shedding light on assumptions that even in the contemporary age serve to ingrain class consciousness and stifle the opportunity for meaning in the work that young people eventually do. It is therefore important going forward to understand how education in particular shapes transitions and gives them meaning, and whether young people during the period of austerity have a unique experience from which to learn.

### **2.3 The Case of Glasgow**

In the following section the current economic and social situation prevalent in the City of Glasgow is proffered as an appropriate test case of the effects of austerity felt in many post-industrial cities across the UK and indeed the world. The specific effects this situation has on young people is critically assessed from the viewpoint of contemporary and historical research, with a particular focus on the deliberate social engineering through policy that is enacted on such communities.

Literature concerning the way in which young people navigate the particular point in history this thesis deems as having become defined by austerity in the context of their school to work transitions is also considered.

*\*Note – for the purposes of clarity Glasgow is defined as those areas falling within the auspices of City of Glasgow Council. Greater Glasgow assumes a much wider geographical and demographic spread yet the schools within which this research took place all fall within the aforementioned city council limits.*

#### **2.3.1 Changing the Value System**

*“The government has made no secret of its determination to change the value system to focus more on individual responsibility, to place major limits on government support, and to pursue a single-minded, and some have claimed simple-minded, focus on getting people into employment at all costs. Many aspects of this program are legitimate matters for political contestation, but it is the mentality that has informed many of the reforms that has brought the most misery and wrought the most harm to the fabric of British society.*

*“I met with children in Glasgow’s North East, where, according to one local councillor, 48% of people are out of work, life expectancy is six years lower than the national average, about half of families are single-parent households, and about a third of households lack an internet connection.”*

United Nations Special Rapporteur, *Phillip Alston* (2018)

The above quote is a rare example of official acknowledgment of the overarching costs of austerity to life and liberty in the UK. Not only are the economic costs of austerity felt in the everyday expenditure of people across the country, but in many towns and cities it also carries with it a cultural narrative that has been shared for generations (Bramall, 2013). Policy in this sense reproduces culture, and in few cities is that as obvious as the city of Glasgow. As such, it is key to situate the debate around meaningful transitions within the contemporary socio-political situation in Glasgow and the UK more widely, a situation which has come to be intrinsically linked with austerity and the decline of working class communities as cohesive entities (Robertson, 1998).

Glasgow is a city steeped in industrial heritage which makes it an ideal location to study the deleterious effects of the post-industrial world in a time where economic austerity still shapes the political and social narrative (Damer, 1989; Law & Mooney, 2012; Macdonald et al 2014). Scotland as a whole has long been viewed as a site of this kind of research and oral histories with contributions from Knox (1999), Carstairs & Morris (1991), and Sridharan et al (2007) among the significant examples over the past half century that have detailed the effects of deindustrialisation and neglectful local policies on the urban Scottish population. This particular deindustrialised environment has created a potent sense of identity and place, varying in its character from area to area within the city. Fraser (2013), when researching a group of young men in Glasgow prone to anti-social behaviour, referred to as the Langview boys, exemplified this when stating that territorialism has a long history in the city, rooted in persistent social divisions and economic marginalisation, which is only further intensified by the process of gentrification and globalisation that takes place in modern urban environments.

Areas like Easterhouse, Drumchapel, and Castlemilk in Glasgow experience unemployment rates well above the national average, and many of the schools in this study take their students from one or two of these areas. To put the concentration of deprivation into context, Glasgow in itself accounts for 47.5% of the top 10% of all people living in Scotland in severely deprived areas (Rae, 2012). Deprivation of this kind over time has left particular areas isolated as centres of decline with negative associations relating to deprivation eventually extending to those who have grown up within them. In Gray & Mooney's (2011) research they argue that many of the most blighted parts of the city, in particular the East End, have become subject to an ideological onslaught designed to justify low grade and flexible forms of employment, punitive workfare schemes, and upwards rent restructuring. In many cases the amenities and social hubs that once held these communities together outside of work have also begun to disappear leaving a distinct absence of cultural focal points. This process is similar to what Anderson (2005) found in his ethnographic

memoir of Jelly's Place in Chicago, an old bar/off-license that closed due to investment being concentrated in other areas yet its heavily working class patrons kept returning to the place they had always met socially. Additionally, gentrification has begun to set in within some locales closer to the city centre, creating a clear pattern of displacement of poorer families (Waight, 2018) whilst failing to provide adequate alternative forms of employment for the pre-existing and immobile population.

Other scholars have remarked that urban change such as gentrification has in fact had advantages for the city, with new community focused developments such as the New Gorbals, where the input of local people has been taken into consideration when enacting urban renewal (Clark & Wright, 2018). Glasgow was an early UK adopter of what Harvey (1989:8) referred to as 'urban entrepreneurialism' a process that focuses on fostering local development and employment growth, with a particular emphasis on bringing people into work in the growing financial sector and service economy from outwith the major conurbation, often at the expense of those already living there, in particular the young population struggling to find their first full time job. This process has in turn stimulated economic growth within the city centre and its surrounding environs, but a much less clear picture of progress can be drawn from the largely residential areas outside the city's inner circle (Gómez. 2002). Development of consumer capitalism has however according to Fraser et al (2017) seen a growth in the leisure opportunities available to young people creating a convergence between poorer communities and those better off within the city.

The transition from a heavily industrialised economy to a service sector economy, in line with similar transitions in other UK cities, has inevitably led to much of the same problems faced by post-industrial cities across the world. This change has in turn meant groups who were once relatively secure in their work formations have lost out in the push for development (Mooney & Danson, 1997). A process of economic and societal change which began in the 1980s has been described by some as creating a greater flexibility and satisfaction amongst the workforce (Wheatley, 2016; Fabian & Breunig, 2019), and others as producing a disempowered working class vulnerable to economic shocks (Rice, 2009; Davidson et al, 2010; Streeck, 2018).

### ***2.3.2 Age of Austerity***

Global commentators have argued that the sort of flexible working that now predominates in cities such as Glasgow is a result of us having entered an age of insecurity be it economic, physical or political (Judt, 2010) and in that environment the temporary security of a job is greatly valued (Flint & Powell, 2012). The period of economic decline that has become characterised by work becoming difficult to acquire, and deliberately precarious is undoubtedly inextricably connected to the undulating fortunes of the economy (Edgell, 2006). The age in which these factors have become prevalent has come to be understood by one predominant

economic and political term, austerity (Stanley, 2014). The onset of austerity and decreased growth has sent more young people into unemployment in the UK than at any other time since 1984 (ONS, 2012), by 2014 this meant there were as many as 52,000 unemployed young people in Scotland (Scottish Government, 2018a). Scotland has suffered a marked decline in youth employment with 16-19 year olds experiencing 26.4% unemployment in 2010/11, an increase from 17.9% in 2007/8, with Glasgow as the epicentre of this disparity (Anderson & Dowling, 2012). Furthermore evidence suggests that trend is set to continue for years to come with the onset of Brexit creating distinct economic uncertainty (Ellison & Van Berkel, 2014; Ellison, 2017) and increasingly stringent benefits policies are implemented that will limit the chance for young individuals to find new work within already disadvantaged areas (Pemberton et al, 2016b).

Austerity has grown directly out of the global financial crisis in 2007/8, yet data suggests that even prior to the collapse youth unemployment has been on the rise for several years (Wolf, 2011). The dissatisfaction, inflexibility, negative health effects, and precarious nature of work for young people in Glasgow therefore despite being exacerbated by the recession, were not created by it according to some researchers (Blane & Watt, 2012; McKendrick et al 2016) whereas others have questioned the extent to which it can be said this period of austerity has not started a relatively unprecedented period of decline (Hills, 2017). As a potent example of the longer term concerns specific to Glasgow, in the mid-1990s while part time youth employment was rising across the UK it remained stagnant in the Strathclyde region (MacInnes, 1995). It is of crucial importance as a result to better understand the social factors which keep young people out of work, and how these same factors shape the kind of work those young people are willing to do.

The societal scars of sustained periods of economic decline have left a long history of working class individuals struggling to navigate the transition from education to work here in Scotland in particular (Furlong & Cooney, 1990; Furlong, 1990; McDowell, 2011), where the cultural importance and perception of class, hard work, and graft is of great significance (Wight, 1993). This is exemplified in the research of Carlin (2019) in Pilton, Edinburgh where he found most of the young people who were participants in his research experienced significant structural inequalities and barriers to achieving and maintaining long-term, stable employment, with support services being regarded by young people and professionals alike as largely inadequate. As the 21<sup>st</sup> century has developed the residential and cultural spaces once inhabited by working class communities outside work have also transformed and in some cases disappeared, further exacerbating this problem (Paton & Cooper, 2016).

Transformation of urban spaces and public services as a historical dynamic is not to be ignored when considering the relative benefits of one policy approach over another, a dynamic that has been capitalised on to push through reforms that appear to favour the strength of individual endeavour and private capital

rather than collective remedy. As an example, the Private Finance Initiative (PFI), was launched in Scotland in 1995 with the construction and commercial operation of the Skye Road Bridge and the creation of greater frontline business involvement in schools, helping to normalise free market values. Poole & Mooney (2006) identify this focus on what works, best value, partnership, and consumer choice, as a smokescreen for the then New Labour UK government's managerialist and privatisation-centred agenda which sought to open up new opportunities for business in the public sector. Scotland continues to experience the same privatisation in all but name as the rest of the UK, with only minor variations since devolution in 1999, and this has not changed to any substantial extent under the current SNP government according to some commentators (Davidson et al, 2010; McCafferty, 2010).

Whereas once large manufacturers in Glasgow would employ thousands of workers on relatively secure permanent contracts they now employ only a core set of workers, and then recruit a peripheral subset on more temporary contracts (Ransome, 1996). This is born out of the philosophy now referred to as post-Fordism, and is gradually becoming the dominant mode of production where humans are concerned (Bowring, 2002), a process that can be observed even in the service sector which has replaced the once dominant industrial giants of the city. Post-Fordism as a form of production inevitably runs on surplus employment, leaving little opportunity for new younger workers to enter the fold (Crisp & Powell, 2016). As a consequence of this trend the requirement for greater levels of educational certification and legitimacy has expanded, leading to a one-to-one assumption among young education leavers under the impression that a degree will inevitably lead to better job prospects (Brooks & Everett, 2009). Pacione (1997) found that this focus on educational attainment above all else has disproportionately adversely affected young people in poorer areas of Glasgow due to the correlation between areas of deprivation and lower quality educational standards.

Jobs in Glasgow that have been relocated due to the prevalence of globalisation are for all intents and purposes unlikely to return. Rifkin (1997b:32) points out that politicians 'will have to grapple with the question of what to do with the millions of young people whose labour will be needed less, or not at all, in an even more automated global economy'. This is a trend set to continue, as the economy shifts from high frequency labour to a much smaller group of highly skilled employees with transferable skills (Livingstone, 2018). Those without will be left to seek the remnants of viable employment that remain, a future far from that promised to the young by previous generations, potentially leading to a shift in how employment is conceived. This reality is considered by some writers to be a necessary side effect of rising automation and in that sense has the potential to be a positive step for the economy and the freedom for workers to better decide their own futures (Autor, 2015; Lawrence et al, 2017).

The age of austerity has come to embody every aspect of policy and reform that might be employed to help young people, with the responsibility for amending the ills of the past falling on the state rather than the capital forces which have been at the heart of the issue. By 2021, £37bn less will be spent on working-age social security compared with 2010 across the UK, despite rising prices and living costs (Butler, 2018), as average rents in Glasgow reach £749 a month (Bennett, 2018). These structural problems are often ignored in favour of focusing on the individual failings which are suggested causes of poverty, creating a convenient cultural and media narrative to fall back on (Shildrick, 2018b)

The current level of austerity in Scotland and the UK continues what some deem to be a thirty-year process of redistribution to the rich (Varoufakis, 2017) whereas other voices deem it to represent a natural progression in the development of capitalism towards fiscal consolidation (Stanley, 2016). Levitas (2012) sees the process rather than being a necessary response to the economic crisis, as constituting a neo-liberal shock doctrine, forcing through punitive policies which undermine working class communities. As Blyth (2013:15) points out, *“when those at the bottom are expected to pay disproportionately for a problem created by those at the top, and when those at the top actively eschew any responsibility for that problem by blaming the state for their mistakes, not only will squeezing the bottom not produce enough revenue to fix things, it will produce an even more polarised and politicised society in which the conditions for a sustainable politics of dealing with more debt and less growth are undermined”*.

### **2.3.3 Dreadful Enclosures: Glasgow, Poverty and Deviance**

In investigating the nature of meaningful work from a class based perspective in Glasgow the prevalence of poverty cannot be ignored. The lengthy history of Glasgow as an industrial and maritime powerhouse has brought with it a legacy of deprivation and inequality that continues to this day. Glasgow remains the most deprived city and local authority area in Scotland (Eisenstadt, 2016). Almost half (47%) of Glasgow’s residents, 292,000 people, reside in the 20% of most deprived areas in Scotland. In contrast, only 27,000 people (4.4% of the population) live in the 10% of least deprived areas in Scotland (SIMD, 2016). More than a third of all children in the city (34%) were estimated to be living in poverty in 2017 (SHS, 2018). In 2016, 19% of children lived in workless households, 6.5% higher than the Scottish average (Eisenstadt, 2016). The reality of life for many individuals in the most deprived areas of a city which has long struggled to adapt to the fluctuations of capitalism without abandoning the people who built its legacy and history is often fraught with complex and numerous difficulties. This is clearly shown in research which evidences that Glasgow’s richer environs have, like much of the UK, grown further apart from the areas of the city with much lower average incomes to the point of almost being segregated in all but name, often with a suburbanising effect of pushing the poorest out of the city centre entirely (Bailey et al, 2016; Bailey & Minton, 2017; Kay & Trevena, 2019).

In February 2002, then Conservative Party leader Iain Duncan Smith (later to be Work and Pensions Secretary in the Cameron UK government 2010-2016) visited Easterhouse in the East End of Glasgow, one of the poorest urban districts in the entire United Kingdom. Reflecting on this visit Duncan Smith later said:

*“Standing in the middle of an estate like Easterhouse, you know it was built after the war for a purpose, only to see this wrecked and dreadful set-up today, with families locked into generational breakdown, poverty, drug addiction and so on. And that really does confront you with the thought that we did this—we built the brave new world, and look where it's gone. It was a sort of Damascene point. It's not that I wasn't thinking about these things before, but after Easterhouse I saw that we had to do something about it”* (cited in Derbyshire, 2010).

Rather than reflecting a new desire to redress the imbalances of decades of neoliberal decline Duncan Smith's Damascene conversion reflected more of a reflection on messaging and a realisation that the political right had to modernise, expressing a similar rationale to that cited by advocates of compassionate conservatism (Bednarek, 2011; Bochel & Powell, 2018). Yet in doing so he belied an understanding that is shared by many residents of the city as well, particularly in areas such as Easterhouse, that of sustained and often deliberately enacted urban decline (Andrews, 2018). These narratives of decline, blight and decay play a central role in the stigmatisation of the local population, passing on through generations a perception of diminished self-worth (Gray & Mooney, 2011). Duncan-Smith's targeted language also sought to appeal to an often ignored group of people from working class communities that evidence a clear antipathy towards social security benefits (Shildrick & MacDonald, 2013; Taylor-Gooby, 2016; Kevins et al, 2018), a dichotomy that is at the heart of the narrative of decline in such communities in Glasgow.

Glasgow is not a new site for such experimental political observation, having regularly been a stop off for politicians and commentators of all varieties, often in a sort of poverty tourism that is regularly enacted by those studying and judging from above opining on so-called welfare culture and benefit dependency across the UK (Brown, 2017; Macdonald et al, 2014, Shildrick, 2018). The city's problems have risen and fallen with fluctuations in the perceived success of British capitalism, and it has often been a city in which the worst vagaries of economic depression can be seen. In his essay *'Why Are the Many Poor?'* Townsend (1984:2) noted how this process enacts on such areas:

*'Let the least depression take place in the labour market, and the worker is pitted against his fellow. The poverty of one is underbid by the greater need of another; and the competition for work reduces the highest wage of some and the lowest wage of all occupations to a pittance just above the starvation point, at which the least failure of health or work leads to pauperism.'*

Research by MacLeod et al (2018) on foodbank use in deprived communities within Glasgow found that this sense of regressive competition had permeated in particular groups of young men and those suffering from mental health problems, they found that the individuals frequenting foodbanks were those suffering the most acute impacts of austerity. People suffering in this way have often been attacked rather than helped, as was the case with Duncan Smith's visit when he used the language of Broken Britain to describe people struggling to get by (Hayton, 2012). Targeted narratives of this kind have come to define many major inner city urban areas across the UK, a narrative particularly reinforced by the normalisation of poverty that pervades the media and increasingly even entertainment (Blackman & Rogers, 2017). The effect this has on young people who have grown up with little else is relatively unknown, but there is evidence to suggest that some of these messages are being internalised and as a consequence altering perceptions of what sort of jobs and roles working class people should play in society (Tyler, 2008; Hanley, 2017).

As Attree (2006) elucidated, the costs of poverty are not only material but profoundly social. Many poorer children experience a gradual narrowing of their horizons in both a social and economic sense. Social costs due to poverty are pervasive and are often exchanged from one generation to the next in a form of reverse aspiration. Contextual prejudice of this kind appears to particularly affect young males, whose work practices are still fetishised by elements of prominent working class culture and indeed politics, as Furlong et al (1996) found in their analysis of the Scottish Young People's Surveys. These same young males are repeatedly the focus of Broken Britain narratives in regards crime and deviance, thereby systematically impoverishing and worsening the social and economic conditions of people already mired in poverty without asking why they have ended up on that path (Kingston & Webster, 2015). As MacDonald and Shildrick (2007; 2010) found through longitudinal research on Teesside this often stems from a disaffection with school that hardens into disengagement and persistent truancy, from there developing into petty crime and anti-social behaviour, leading to negative experiences and impressions of the criminal justice system as a result.

Where once full employment was one of the ultimate goals of social policy it appears now that even work does not provide a guaranteed route out of poverty in the UK where two-thirds of children growing up in poverty live in a family where at least one family member works (DWP, 2013). This has given rise to the aforementioned claim by senior UK political figures including Tony Blair, Iain Duncan Smith and Gordon Brown of a passed on culture of worklessness, most recently by then Minister for Employment Chris Grayling in 2011 that 'there are four generations of families where no-one has ever had a job' in some parts of the country (Hern, 2012). This claim has been evidenced to be a vast exaggeration if not entirely non-existent by MacDonald et al (2014) who attempted to interview 20 families within which at least one family member across three generations had never had a job and had left education in Parkhill, Glasgow, with a

worklessness rate of 38.1% in 2010, and East Kelby, Middlesbrough, with worklessness rate of 30.6% in 2010, both well above the national averages for England and Scotland of 12.4% and 14.6% respectively. Over a lengthy period and different sampling techniques they found it impossible to identify any families that met this criteria. When loosening their criteria to more simply include families that had known long periods of worklessness over two generations they also had great difficulty as two generation workless families account for less than half of one per cent of all workless households in the UK (Gaffney, 2010). The results of the interviews they did attain clearly show that the idea of a culture of worklessness is flawed and any persistence of this problem is a result of broader structural factors that warrants further investigation in a context where austerity has become normalised. The insistence on making these claims in the public sphere is an example of what the researchers call a 'zombie argument', completely resistant to evidence and social scientific attempts to kill them off (MacDonald et al 2014:217).

Areas of Glasgow, perceived to be dangerous and to some deviant, are known for embracing their supposedly negative tags, in particular the image of the hard man, a regular trope of cultural depictions of the traditionally working class parts of the city (McKinlay, 1991; Johnston & McIvor, 2004). Areas such as this are what Damer (1974:221), borrowing from Walters (1972) refers to as 'dreadful enclosures', in his paper on the working class estate of Wine Alley (Moorepark) in Govan:

*"The deviant status of these dreadful enclosures has been recognised in the literature and indeed their very names often signify the essence of their horrendous features: Hell's Kitchen, Back o' the Yards, The Jungle, The Cage, and so on. It hardly needs repeating that the population of these neighbourhoods is also regarded as deviant in some sense or another; thus we have ghetto dwellers, slum rats, the lumpenproletariat, the 'rough' or 'lower' working class, and Matza's term the 'disreputable poor'. The remarkable persistence of these localities has been noted by urban sociologists; indeed it could be said that there has been an institutionalisation of inequities in certain localities in our cities. While the population housed in these disadvantaged localities suffers from the structural constraints of a capitalist housing market, they can also suffer from the very reputation of the outside world towards them."*

This reputational association with poverty and the harsh realities of a life spent without material riches however is not one that necessarily leads to either a sense of being downtrodden or indeed sympathy for liberationist perspective. In Jost's (2017) analysis of qualitative and quantitative research he found that often working class participants expressed views that are inherently conservative whilst defining them personally as not being such, this in turn calls into question our tendency to match convenient political labels onto the views of individuals deriving their points from lived experience. The cultural trend towards social conservatism of working class communities whilst maintaining a relatively social-democratic economic outlook in places like Glasgow is well documented (Van der Waal et al, 2007; Sumino, 2018).

Social conservatism has altered and influenced the kind of policies many working class communities support, with the traditional left-right axis becoming less important in the face of predominant social values (Swales, 2016). In such inner city urban areas the assumed predominance of liberal 'identity politics' among those under 30 is much diminished by the pressing material concerns of austerity, shaped rather in the shared cultural understanding of being outsiders to a system that has forgotten them (Cohen, 2017). According to Slater (2012) this is a result of a deliberately manufactured ignorance designed to prevent people looking at the structural causes of their condition.

Glasgow itself has a long and abundant history of outsider resistance to and being the testing ground for neoliberal economic and social policies, including the beginnings of the Poll Tax protests in 1989 (Lavalette & Mooney, 1990; Bagguley, 1995) and the gentrification of large working class areas to become the European Capital of Culture in 1990 (Mooney, 2004; Garcia, 2005) as well as hosting the 2014 Commonwealth Games (Paton et al, 2012). As a location once referred to as the second city of the Empire it is an urban environment strewn with allusions to grandeur, yet also the decline of modern Britain itself – perhaps best exemplified by the 2014 vote within the city of 53.49 per cent to leave the United Kingdom (Whigham, 2017). Among many other historical and cultural drivers, this is reflective of a kind of populist resistance to the idea that Glasgow is a city with no future abandoned by central government, an experience felt in many post-industrial cities in the UK such as Liverpool and Newport (Rodriguez-Pose, 2018). Other writers have remarked on the exaggerated nature of these assumptions, deeming Glasgow to have embraced the same wealth focused policy reforms as most major European cities and adopted new class formations that exclude traditional working class communities (MacLeod, 2002; Shaker & Rath, 2019).

Glasgow has historically been more vulnerable to socioeconomic and political upheaval than other Scottish cities, and indeed many cities across the UK (Collins and Levitt, 2016). Over time this has led to worse outcomes for young people who grow up within its confines when transitioning from school to work (McKinney et al, 2012). Particular vulnerabilities of this kind is the result of a series of historical factors and decisions, most notably policy responses to overcrowding, including the post-war desire to relocate supposedly upwardly mobile working class families outside of the city into new towns like Cumbernauld, East Kilbride, and Irvine (Allan, 1965; Walsh et al, 2017), thereby creating a left behind working class deemed suitable for what were until relatively recently classified by some as slums (Damer, 2018). A facet of life the author William McIlvanney (cited in Damer, 2018) referenced in his book *Laidlaw* (2013:32):

*“And what’s there? Hardly anything but houses, just architectural dumps where they unloaded people like slurry. Penal architecture. Glasgow folk have to be nice people. Otherwise, they would have burned the place to the ground ages ago.”*

In Ferguson & Cunnison's 1950s study of Glasgow boys serving as the key wage earners in their household a sense of desperation was writ large with participants reporting having to leave jobs early due to repeated absence from sickness caused by the conditions of their living (1951). These findings led to a slew of research which inadvertently problematised the concept of the inner city in Glasgow (Andrews, 2018) and led to policy reforms with varying degrees of success in response. Though the city has changed rapidly, and extensive redevelopment has taken place, it remains that newly clad towers and bicycle rentals have not washed away the effects of austerity on the population at large, and in turn have severely damaged the health, leisure and educational prospects of young people in Glasgow (McKendrick et al, 2016; Batchelor et al, 2017). Epidemiological problems of this kind are best understood in the presence of the much debated Glasgow effect (Reid, 2011) a controversial set of data which suggests in particular areas of the city the effect of various factors on health have led to life expectancies that are some of the lowest in Europe. Walsh (2016a) however has deemed this term inappropriate and designed to single out what is a universal problem of the link between poverty and ill health, one that is particularly potent in Glasgow due to a string of poorly thought out political, economic, and environmental decisions.

#### ***2.3.4 Meaningful Transitions in Glasgow***

Between 2001 and 2011 the number of 16-24 year olds nationally has grown by 13% yet the number in employment has declined considerably (Aldridge et al, 2011). Further, many young people often spend years in lower rung jobs whilst continuing in education with little chance of advancement or benefits simply to have a job and tide them over (Furlong & Cartmel, 2007), characterising the failure of current employment programmes to assist young people, leading increasing numbers to seek education as a constructive stop gap, thus returning a surplus of well educated workers for relatively few high skill jobs. When unfulfilled potential is coupled with low growth and a fall in the number of skilled jobs it can only lead to further disadvantage down the social strata (Schmelzer, 2011). The concept of what can be considered decent work in Scotland was assessed by Stuart et al (2016) when they conducted focus groups with low paid workers in urban areas across the country. They found that overwhelmingly these workers had relatively simple expectations for quality of work including sufficient pay, job security, paid holidays, and sick leave. Insisting on minimum standards for quality of life of this kind suggests young people's aspirations are of greater similarity to their forebears than assumed by some (Shu et al, 2008) and reinforced by further empirical research around the world (McDonald et al, 2011; Walsh et al, 2019).

Declining economic conditions naturally lead to a significant number of young people turning to apathy or even crime. These modes of activity then become intrinsic to individual identities thereby enhancing so called estate reputations (Damer, 1974; Fraser & Piacentini, 2014). Despite this it is clear that the categorisation of young people as having become disenchanted or in fact more anti-social is a direct result

of prevailing socio-economic factors rather than any inherent traits of youthfulness, and is as much a global problem as a national one (Gidley, 2004). Mounting negative factors like unemployment and trouble at school often lead to higher rates of mental illness and criminal activity among younger people (Quilgars et al, 2008; Álvaro & Garrido, 2003; Benyon, 2012), problems that are particularly prevalent in the poorest areas of Glasgow (Feng et al, 2018), leaving a legacy of social harm aggravated by economic austerity. This is a problem Glasgow can ill afford, where knife crime and anti-social behaviour are on the increase (Deuchar, 2009; Holligan et al, 2016). Detrimental factors related to social and economic harm have increased during the period after the 2008 financial crisis and as a result it is important to better understand how this in particular has affected young people.

Jobs which were once the pursuit of local school leavers are now more likely to be taken up by university graduates from the four local universities and beyond, causing detriment to working class communities in particular (Scurry & Blenkinsopp, 2011). The unskilled part-time work which once sustained young people in and outside of education has become an ever more attractive prospect for those who once would have filled skilled positions elsewhere. In Furlong et al's (2003) research a longitudinal study of a cohort of young people surveyed and interviewed at ages 15, 16, 18, 21, and 23 in the Greater Glasgow conurbation focusing on how they experience school to work transitions, they found that for the most part young people experienced chaotic transitions defined by lengthy periods of unemployment with working class participants faring particularly badly.

As recently as November 2013 the West of Scotland has seen a significant workforce decrease in its petrochemical industry and further deindustrialisation of the Clyde shipyards which for so long maintained the promise of skilled work for young people growing up in the area, especially young men (Cunningham-Sabot & Fol, 2010). Many of the participants in this study have parents/guardians who worked for these industries or in such employment as security, car selling, cleaning, retail, and the public sector. Meaningful work in such contexts is few and far between, and to a great extent is not even perceived as realistic, a fact exacerbated by a general perception among law makers and some academic commentators that this is unfortunately to be expected and even capitalised upon (Van Reenen & Petrongolo, 2010; Vogel, 2015).

Most sociological interpretations of stalled transitions imagine youth as being a key staging point that facilitates a successful entry into the world of adult work and responsibility (Kelly, 2000), yet when that success is no longer probable that understanding breaks down. Where once young people were satisfied to sacrifice an element of meaning and purpose to their work for better conditions, thereby moving out of their assumed class position, there is now a sense of disenfranchisement as this promise cannot be delivered (Furlong, 1992). Outdated normative portrayals of school to work transitions instead now frame much of the pervasive policy and academic discussion of young people as representing a youth-at-risk,

where risk is associated with the largely individualised capacities of young people to effect a secure transition into the labour market (Furlong & Kelly, 2005). When secure transitions equally become no longer probable, the requirement to make them meaningful only increases.

### **2.3.5 Conclusion**

The Glasgow of McArthur and Kingsley Long's (1935) *'No Mean City'* may no longer exist in the sense some believe it to, but it is still a city steeped in a self-image of grit, hardness, and humour. As such it is a site of great sociological interest for studies concerning both class and the changing nature of our socioeconomic situation. Yet Glasgow like so many other cities is a place where individuals and communities are simply seeking to get on, and to find meaning in their pursuit of a purposeful existence. As has been detailed in *Section 2.3* Glasgow is a city with a long and detailed industrial history, which in the wake of the post-industrial era has suffered disproportionately from the effects of austerity (Damer, 1989; Law & Mooney, 2012; Macdonald et al 2014). The majority of young people who are marginalised or otherwise disadvantaged whilst seeking access to the labour market aspire to the same goals of prosperity and security as anyone else (MacDonald, 1997; McDowell, 2000). The key difference occurs due to the closure of avenues that were once open to generations to develop skills and feel themselves to be a core part of a bustling economy, this deficit has had a profound effect on the austerity generation, an effect that we are yet to understand the true result of (Walther, 2006).

Glasgow has become a regular site of empirical research pursuing new understandings of the ways in which working class communities experience inequality and the harsh economic circumstances of austerity (Gray & Mooney, 2011; Fraser, 2013; MacDonald et al, 2014). For the most part research of this kind has led to conclusions which shape the reality for young people as being defined by struggle yet one in which most are simply in the pursuit of decent work (Stuart et al, 2016). Much like the general population the research detailed in this review depicts young people in an area such as Glasgow as having reasonable and relatively modest expectations for their own working lives (Shu et al, 2008; MacDonald et al, 2011; Walsh et al, 2019).

A considerable narrowing of the horizons for young people has been evidenced in the review, with varying reports regarding the effect this has on their aspirations (Furlong et al, 1996). Instead of investing heavily in repairing the damage of the post-industrial shift it appears regressive narratives such as that of 'Broken Britain' and the creation of poverty as entertainment have become common (Kingston & Webster, 2015; MacDonald and Shildrick, 2007). Conditions of this kind also have material outcomes with foodbank use on the rise and mental health issues emerging on an unprecedented level (MacLeod et al, 2018; Hayton, 2012). Conditions such as the aforementioned contribute to a legacy of economic neglect which has a profoundly political dynamic that is understood to be both deliberate and callous by many (Giroux, 2017). Allowing

such neglect of a young, fully able workforce will almost certainly have ramifications for generations to come. Investigating how these narratives play out in relation to perceptions of work among those leaving school at 16/17 will provide an insight into how we can amend these processes and revisit how transitions are structured to improve outcomes for young people from working class backgrounds.

## **2.4 Social Mobility**

The concept of social mobility, and the contested viewpoints surrounding it, are central to the academic literature concerning youth transitions. Social mobility is a concept that has taken on particular importance in the age of austerity, giving rise to serious reassessment of assumptions made during times of economic prosperity regarding what is and what is not a meaningful destination for young school leavers. This phenomenon has been further exacerbated by the difficulty for young people to leave school and find employment. Currently in the UK the proportion of employers that recruit people under the age of 25 who are exiting education at any level, continues to fall, a symptom of the declining size of the youth labour market wherein 1976 more than three-quarters of 18 year olds were in work, by 2009 this was down to 40 per cent (Keep, 2012).

In *Section 2.4* the particular political narratives stemming from the conditions described above are investigated utilising contemporary and historical research, painting a picture in which immobility and the success or failure of young people's transitions is detailed. Investigations of this sort are vital to an understanding of the wider debate around youth transitions, and in particular about what work is and what it should be, giving rise in time to fixed attitudes that have failed to adapt to the situation of austerity. Further, the question of class and its role in stalling or spurring transitions is discussed in relation to government interventions to tackle it. Finally, literature concerning the flawed belief that immobility is an individualised phenomenon, followed by a misunderstanding that upwards mobility can be achieved without addressing structural advantage, is also addressed.

### **2.4.1 Frustrated Hopes**

*"The youngsters of the generation now entering the so-called "labour market" have been groomed and honed to believe that their life task is to outshoot and leave behind the parental success stories, and that such a task is fully within their capacity. However far their parents have reached, they will reach further. Nothing has prepared them for the arrival of the hard, uninviting and inhospitable new world of downgrading of results, devaluation of earned value, volatility of jobs and stubbornness of joblessness, transience of prospects and durability of defeats, stillborn projects and frustrated hopes and chances ever more conspicuous by their absence. The higher they looked, the more deceived and downtrodden they*

*would feel.”*

Zygmunt Bauman, *Downward Mobility is Now a Reality* (2012)

In any society based on the exchange of labour and capital there has been a notable and persistent turn towards some form of class structure. The prevailing economic conditions in which young people tasked with combating austerity find themselves in are no different. One major point of discussion upon which this dynamic rests that has become a key concern of sociology is that of social mobility (Goldthorpe et al, 1982; Willis, 2000; Brown, 2018; Bukodi & Goldthorpe, 2018, Major & Machin, 2018). The term social mobility refers to the process by which individuals move from one position in a society to another, positions by which general consent have been given generalised hierarchical value (Lipset & Bendix, 1992). This term is largely used in relation to upward mobility i.e. the process of moving from a lower economic class to a higher one, yet as Bauman (2012) adequately describes, the onset of austerity and the globalised economy we have built has very much made downwards mobility a distinct reality in ostensibly developed economies.

Focusing on mobility is, according to some writers, misplaced and overly focused on achievements in regards salary and position (Grusky & Weeden, 2006; Pfeffer, 2014). In Hoskins & Barker's (2017) research consisting of 32 interviews with pupils from academies in England they found that young people's desire for occupations that could provide opportunities for job satisfaction was often rooted in their family background and environment, and if the impetus to pursue this was lacking, so too was the desire for job satisfaction to some degree. In this they further identify that aspirations for job satisfaction are largely linked to professional and personal happiness, with an emphasis on status above income, a notion which is almost entirely absent from policymakers' expectations. McPherson (2019) studied this phenomena with young people in Clackmannanshire, a semi-rural location and Scotland's smallest council area, and found that interviewees' sense of mobility was severely restricted by the area they lived in and the immediate opportunities available to them. In such areas the roles that are deemed to be upwardly mobile are largely unavailable, furthering individuals' need to exhibit status through their professional responsibility over others rather than financial or skills based advancement.

The over emphasis on promoting upward social mobility is partially concerned with improving the lot of the worst off without damaging the interests of the more advantaged, particularly those with inherited wealth (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2009). Despite this, the growth in poverty and the exclusion felt by many in society are genuine concerns felt by global lawmakers and establishment figures, largely as such sentiments do not fit with the idealised perception of a capitalist economy even its most fundamental advocates would like to broadcast. Even in the land of manifest destiny, the United States, the dream of mobility is dying, where

rates of upward income mobility have fallen sharply over the past half century (Breen, 2019). Further, there have been two important macroeconomic trends that have affected the incomes of children born in the 1980s relative to those born in the 1940s in the United States: lower Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth rates and greater inequality in the distribution of growth (Chetty et al, 2017), a trend that is reflected in the UK also.

During times of economic prosperity the argument that social mobility was on an upwards curve was easier for policy makers to articulate as the expansion of higher level jobs drove a growth in the need for high skilled workers (Mitchell, 2005). The growth in skilled workers was matched by an expansion in higher education graduates, who in the initial decades of the liberalisation of degree entry at least found fruitful returns on their years of study, a trend that has not lasted in the UK (Naylor et al, 2015). Growth of this kind led to the widely accepted expectation that young people would inevitably do better than their parents, an expectation assumed with each passing generation, and one that until now rang true (Corlett, 2017). Yet even before the onset of the financial crisis, this polarisation of the economy between high and low skilled rapidly led to an increasing difficulty for those beginning in low skilled jobs to climb the career ladder (Plunkett & Pessoa, 2013). Gone were the progressions from shop floor to upper management, as now the same position not only required experience, but a variety of academic certification too (Goos & Manning, 2007; Gardiner & Corlett, 2015).

There is plentiful longitudinal research on the subject of social mobility that suggests the UK in particular experiences relatively low social mobility (Dearden et al., 1997; Blanden et al., 2004; Goldthorpe & Mills, 2008). Further, there is a widely assumed narrative that generational differences have heightened expectations among young people regarding where their futures might lie and their ultimate career destinations. Despite this, Turok et al's (2009), study of 12-13 year olds in three schools, concluded that aspiration differences between children and their parents, despite divergent upbringings, were largely the same and that this had remained consistent across generations with only marginal variance. Erikson & Goldthorpe (1992) had previously evidenced this trend when showing that relative differences among social classes have not substantially changed over time in nine industrialised countries, including the UK. Though mobility is a problem for the entire world, the systems that have prevailed in the developed west have been particularly poor at allowing for this form of progress (Esping-Anderson & Cimentada, 2018). As Gugushvili (2017) found, mobility is lower in more unequal, democratic, and liberalised societies – particularly among those aged 25-40, calling into question the belief that liberal capitalism has necessitated an upturn in social mobility. This potential failure has warped what is perceived as valuable work and in order to better understand whether that remains within the classic wage labour paradigm it is imperative to speak to young people directly about these concerns.

The declining mobility in western economies is of great concern to the liberal democratic project as it suggests, not without evidence, that for all of the prosperity and educational amenities we have developed a young person leaving school at 16 is not likely to be much worse off in the long run than one of their peers who continues on to higher education and beyond (*Chapter 6 for the research participants' accounts on the issue of social mobility*). Further, this problem is exacerbated by the view which suggests that those already disadvantaged by the system, i.e. the working class, are subject to very limited educational experiences within the existing system. Reay (2018:31) describes this phenomenon when she says 'working-class schools have become punishment factories that increasingly subject their students to pedagogies of control, discipline and surveillance. Pedagogy has been emptied of critical content and now imposes on students mind-numbing teaching practices organized around teaching to the test.' As McKnight (2015) found, the downward mobility among initially low attaining children from advantaged backgrounds partly contributes to there being fewer opportunities for high attaining children from less advantaged backgrounds to succeed as they grow up. Reeves & Howard (2013) represented this idea through the lens that individuals born to affluent families are largely protected from this phenomenon of downward mobility, even when they have performed poorly educationally, an observation they refer to as a glass floor. Our educational and employment system is ostensibly based on a meritocratic system of effort-laden input and output in the form of financial success and/or career fulfilment, yet the data simply does not support the idea that such a system is prevalent for all, rather it is largely the preserve of a particular class. Despite this, some commentators have claimed that as a society we are advancing closer towards that ideal, yet the measures by which we assess social mobility are ill equipped to represent it (Payne, 2012; Nunn, 2012).

#### ***2.4.2 Policy Solutions in an Age of Austerity***

The class system of the 21<sup>st</sup> century may now be more fluid than was the case throughout the majority of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but the fundamental destinations of those born into the class that engage in low paid employment is still remarkably predictive of that individual's eventual educational attainment and career destinations (Wright, 1996; Egan, 2005). Such limitations create a situation in which stalled transitions are common, a problem that has been exacerbated further still when wider economic unrest is taken into account. Between the financial crisis of 2008 and the onset of austerity led policy, young school leavers in Britain have experienced this problem in a very tangible sense, coming to encounter paths fraught with immobility (Iannelli & Paterson, 2006).

Social mobility in its simplest form is a pathway out of poverty, and from there supplies a roadmap to prosperity, in theory at least. Townsend & Gordon (2000:443) highlight the failure of this theory, that can be applied across much of Europe, when stating that 'the scale and rapidity of economic and social

development seems to have outstripped the capacities of governments and public to react proportionately' when catering to the mobility trajectories of a young generation much more highly educated than its predecessors. It is generally assumed that these expectations vary considerably between different class groups, yet Calder & Cope (2005) found that aspirational differences between disadvantaged young people and their control group were relatively similar. The key difference was that the former group faced multiple barriers on the road to reaching their goals, often leading to longer term underachievement as a final outcome. Todd (2018) notes that conversely in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century the reality for working class kids who did end up doing well was always one of disparate expectations and unfair standards:

*'In Britain, the longstanding entrenched power of the aristocracy has fuelled a belief that 'true' superiority is hereditary and that the very best talents are innate. Middle-class or upper class schoolchildren, bank clerks or doctors might be praised for their effortless brilliance. But working-class entrants had to show themselves 'diligent' and 'focussed', to be deserving of their special chance. They also had to show themselves – in the words of Billy Fisher, protagonist of Keith Waterhouse's 1959 novel Billy Liar, about a young man who wants to escape his dull clerical job, as 'grateful, grateful, grateful' for their chances.'*

The focus on social mobility as a metric for reform of liberal, neoliberal and social democratic governments is one that has fundamentally altered the way in which we view poverty and unemployment. Social mobility has been used by successive governments at a UK level to justify wide ranging reforms as varied as Workfare, SureStart, and child tax credits (SMC, 2017). The effects of these reforms on young people in particular have been disastrous. The concept of social mobility has also changed the emphasis on what kind of jobs are deemed to be upwardly mobile or suitable for a particular demographic, transitioning from an economy once focused on developing skilled professions with one focused on hierarchical career paths that ultimately lead to positions of responsibility over others as a benchmark for success. In his recent study on young working class men in Russia, Walker (2018) found that traditional ideas of service employment being associated with femininity was now much less prevalent, the key concern was rather the ability of their jobs and prospective careers to underpin wider transitions to adulthood. Roberts (2013) who interviewed young men working in the retail sector in Kent, England found that many of the participants found ways to reconstitute their role to reflect more traditionally masculine focuses of physical and visibly exertive work and thus adapt traditional ideas to a modern setting. In these and other studies we see not only the presence of seeking to get ahead through adapting transitions to the new economic context but also a mobility in terms of traditional ideas of masculine work (Nixon, 2009; 2018; Jiminez & Walkerdine, 2011; Andersson & Beckman, 2018).

Addressing social mobility is an issue with cross party political appeal precisely due to the fact it is widely seen as desirable objective by all major political strands, the disagreement rests on how it should be carried

out (Clarke et al, 2004). Kennedy (2014) notes that the UK Conservative party has long been of the view that tackling child poverty should be about addressing what it considers to be the underlying causes of poverty (e.g. youth unemployment and poor school attainment), rather than focusing specifically on income inequality. During the period of New Labour governance (1997-2010) however the focus was much more acutely on redistributing, albeit in a modest sense, towards those who are less able to offer the time and resources to their children that might aid their mobility, a focus carried on from previous Labour governments of the 1960s and 1970s (Bonoli, 2009; Scase, 2016). Reforms of this kind operate in a climate where fourteen million people live in poverty in the UK, which equates to over one in five of the entire population eight million of whom are working age adults (Barnard et al, 2017). Much of our assumptions regarding what social mobility is and how it operates is based on a relatively thin grounding of evidence that does not take into account a vast swathe of individuals and fails to measure well the penetration of poverty into the broader labour force (Grusky et al, 2015).

What we can be sure of is the role of inequality in exacerbating this problem. Higher income inequality in particular directly leads to family background becoming more important in determining the adult outcomes of young people, with those young people's own work or skills playing a commensurately weaker role as a result (Corak, 2013). This income inequality continues to be ignored on a rhetorical level however, with an overriding focus on what many commentators opt to refer to as 'Broken Britain', a deliberate ignorance in order to create a pretext for further spending cuts (Slater, 2012). The major intervention to promote such cuts came through the Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016, which attacked the four income-based targets on child poverty set out in the Child Poverty Act 2010 Act, withdrawing them and replacing them with a duty to produce an annual report on levels of worklessness and educational attainment. The net effect of these reforms was to take almost £13bn a year from claimants by 2020-21, harming working class communities indelibly (Beatty & Fothergill, 2016). This decrease in standards led to the State of the Nation reports and the Social Mobility Commission's (SMC) 2017 report *'Time for Change: An assessment of government policies on social mobility 1997 to 2017'*, a concession made in order to push through this neoliberal approach. Foremost among its conclusions were that in-work poverty has for the most part become the driving factor in the deep economic disparities that are now predominant throughout the UK, a factor that is particularly developed in urban areas (McKendrick et al, 2003) . Youth unemployment fell from 14.6 to 12.5 per cent over the period 1997-2017, after peaking at 22 per cent following the financial crisis, a factor largely due to a significant increase in the number of young people in full-time education, rather than those young people being in work (Bell & Blanchflower 2011a). For those young people who are in work, they suffered a decrease in wages of around 16 per cent, starkly worse than the average for all ages of 10 per cent. This trend adversely affected young people with less qualifications in particular. According to the SMC's (2018) report *Social Mobility Barometer* 46 per cent of people say that where you end up in society is largely determined by who your parents are. 40 per cent of those surveyed believe that

it is becoming harder for people from disadvantaged backgrounds to move up in society. Furthermore, it is typically younger generations who feel more acutely that background determines where you end up, with 48 per cent of 25-49 year olds agreeing with this statement compared with 38 per cent of those aged 65 and over. In turn, this creates a circumstance, as identified by Batchelor et al's (2017) interview based research, in which immobility penetrates every aspect of young people's lives – work, home, and leisure, in particular a sense of being stuck in occupations with no chance for progression and poor pay. In work poverty is at the heart of the question of social mobility, during a time that eight million of the fourteen million people in poverty in the UK live in a family where at least one person is in work (Barnard et al, 2017). Yet we have witnessed falls in poverty among families with children, there are two key reasons for this; the introduction of benefits specifically targeted at families and the tax credit system, and the increased levels of employment and pay due to the introduction of the minimum wage (Wills & Linneker, 2013). Decisions of this kind meant that families saw their living standards move closer to those among the rest of the population and were protected from the worst effects of the 2008–09 recession (Barnard et al, 2017).

State led responses to the problems of poverty and social mobility have proven to be viable solutions, even if the data suggests the best it has managed is amelioration. Mendola et al (2009) found that despite the high levels of poverty experienced by young people in Nordic countries in comparison, their poverty experience is often temporary in nature thanks to the generosity of the welfare state provision and the dynamism of their relative labour markets. Conversely in the UK, as Major & Machin (2018) reveal, the inequality gap is widening precisely as welfare provision is decreasing, evidenced by the fact a worker from the top 10 per cent of earners in 1980 was earning 2.75 times more than the worker from the bottom 10 per cent; by 2017 that difference was 4 times. Many writers as a result deem the UK focus on individualising the problem of immobility as a deliberate attempt to pass the buck, and as such is thoroughly consistent with the policy focuses of neoliberal governance since the late 1970s (Wiggan, 2012). The picture in the UK however is somewhat muddled by the presence of devolution, and it is here that opportunities have arisen to further redress downwards mobility, even if it is the case that those opportunities have often been missed as Payne (2017) states.

### ***2.4.3 Social Mobility in Scotland***

A recurring claim since the onset of devolution in 1999 is that the political autonomy afforded to Scotland has allowed for distinct policy divergence, particularly as a means to offset some of the more regressive aspects of UK welfare reform (Mooney & Scott, 2005; Greer, 2009). In turn it is suggested that this has opened the way for greater mobility within Scotland for young people from a wider array of backgrounds, an argument often exemplified with the policy of no tuition fees (Bratberg, 2011). Yet how true is this, and

have these amenities been flexible enough to withstand austerity? In Scotland, almost a quarter of a million children live in poverty, i.e. living in a household with less than 60 per cent of median household income (Congreve & McCormick, 2018). A rate that is relatively higher than many European countries, yet it is generally marginally lower than in other parts of the UK (Bradshaw & Main, 2016), this is only one factor of mobility, yet it has, in part, led to the belief that Scotland is on a better footing, and in some quarters that it is inherently more ostensibly progressive on questions of mobility and inequality, despite conflicting evidence to the contrary (Keating, 2007; Bramley et al, 2010).

On the policy level the Scottish Government has committed to significantly reducing child poverty by 2030 with the introduction of the Child Poverty (Scotland) Bill (Scottish Government, 2017a). The bill is designed with these specific goals in mind: to achieve less than 10 per cent of children living in households that are in relative poverty, which currently stands at 22 per cent; to achieve less than 5 per cent of children living in households that are in absolute poverty, which currently stands at 21 per cent. (ibid). At the time of announcing the bill the Cabinet Secretary for Communities, Social Security and Equalities, Angela Constance MSP remarked that “poverty is not inevitable” and argued for a focus on “intergenerational inequality” (Scottish Parliament, 2017a), reflecting a common policy approach of at least rhetorically diverging from the welfare policy of the Conservative government at Westminster.

This observable shift follows from a supportive policy environment that emerged in Scotland at the tail end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> leading to many families moving out of poverty, however this trend has been reversed, with the Scottish Government stating this is due to UK government imposed welfare cuts. The Scottish Government has stated publicly its fundamental disagreement with the UK Government on the issue of repealing the four income-targets from the 2010 Child Poverty Act, requesting an opt-out from the UK Government’s approach, a wish that was granted by the passing of the Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016. Their opposition to the replacement of the income-based aspect was driven by an opposition to the idea that poverty lies with individuals and lifestyle issues “rather than addressing the social and economic drivers that cause people to fall into or remain in poverty” (Scottish Parliament, 2017b). There are promising signs of a potential divergence from the UK path that has exacerbated downwards social mobility, yet it remains that 58% of people in poverty and 70% of children in poverty live in a household where someone is in employment in Scotland (ONS, 2018.) Child poverty fell by 13% between 2000/01 and 2011/12, but has started to increase again in recent years, a trend which is in line with the rest of the UK (Scottish Government, 2016). The mitigation effect of devolved power is as such a varied picture across the board. Furthermore, poverty in Scotland is predicted to increase to an even greater level over the next few years if action is not taken to address it, and at this moment in time the proposed reforms are having a mixed effect (Macnab, 2018), a factor that has led to the rise in interest of alternative forms of governance to address this. Smith (2017) notes in his ethnographic memoir of identity

politics during the 2014 Scottish independence referendum that this has come to take the form of national rather than class based narratives regarding what is the correct path to amend structural inequality in Scotland, subsequently altering the sort of policies that are deemed appropriate. This trend is further reflected by contemporary qualitative research regarding social attitudes in Scotland that point towards an upturn in emotive national justifications for reform (Dalle Mulle, 2016; Ford & Goodwin, 2017; Mann & Fenton, 2017).

Unfortunately there is very little specific data regarding social mobility in Scotland, a problem prevalent regarding social mobility data across the UK also to a lesser extent. The direct information we can garner comes from the Labour Force Survey (LFS). A clear line of enquiry drawn from this data is that the influence of parental occupation on one's own occupation appears at least as strong in Scotland as it is in the rest of the UK, and the odds of an individual with a parent working in a professional or managerial occupation ending up in professional or managerial employment themselves are 2.2 times higher than the odds of someone from any other background ending up in professional employment (Eiser, 2018). In short, what meagre information that is available seems to suggest that social immobility is fairly consistent across the UK. The key reasons for this are clear. There are high levels of inequality in Scotland, just as there are across the UK, and the small barrier devolved settlements and matching policy initiatives can provide are dwarfed by the much greater incidence of austerity. Even in the case of the Scottish Parliament's flagship pioneering policy of zero tuition fees for Scottish students, evidence suggests the policy has led to the slashing of grants for poorer students, resulting in middle class families being almost £20 million per year better off than their counterparts in England, voters are pleased with its outcomes and see it as a source of pride (Blackburn, 2014). Pautz et al (2019) have moderated this somewhat by noting that the current SNP government's more consultative and cooperative partnership approach to policy-making may be present but it should not be overstated in relation to Westminster.

In 2015/16 the top 10 per cent of the population in Scotland had 38 per cent more income than the bottom 40 per cent combined, a factor that is the strongest determinant of poor upwards mobility (Kopczuk et al, 2010). In that same period men in the most deprived areas of Scotland were expected to live 26 fewer years in good health than those in the least deprived areas and were expected to die 13 years earlier, a persistent and lethal problem that has particularly afflicted Scotland's urban areas (Watt & Ecob, 1992; Ford et al, 1994; Cowley et al, 2016). The trend towards decreasing standards extends to education too, by the time young people from the 20 per cent of least deprived areas leave school they are almost twice as likely to achieve one or more Highers or Advanced Highers compared to young people in the 20 per cent most deprived areas (Eisenstadt, 2016). What is apparent is that rather than simply being a case of stalled mobility, there are distinct structural problems in Scotland's society and economy that are in most ways very similar to those experienced across the entirety of the UK.

#### **2.4.4 Diversions in Destination**

At the root of this structural deficit are the same forces that stall many transitions, and lead to the sense prevalent among young people that in truth their mobility is purely functional for the economy and ultimately devoid of purpose (Furlong & Cartmel, 2006; Bradford & Cullen, 2014). There are consistent differences between the career paths of young people from varying backgrounds in many societies – and even within societies, as detailed in Staff & Mortimer's (2003) analysis of North American transitions. In the UK, possibly to a greater extent than many other so called developed western nations, this is the case. These differences are partially class related and thus bound by the limits of mobility (Macleod, 2015), and equally they are as a result of deliberate policy decisions designed to favour one group over another (Rhodes, 2007). Even where policy interventions have been beneficial it has often been insufficient. Between 1997-2017 the attainment gap between pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds and their more affluent peers only decreased by two per cent across the UK (SMC, 2017).

More than 40 years ago, Ashton and Field (1976) identified three broadly different types of work which they referred to as long-term career jobs, which were dominated by the middle classes; working-class career jobs which included technical, clerical and skilled manual occupations; and low-skill jobs including unskilled manual and shop work. Since they devised these categories, there have been major changes to the educational systems that prevail in the UK, to the labour market itself and to the entry requirements to work. Despite these changes, prominent data sources such as the Young People in Scotland Survey confirm the validity of the Ashton and Field classification (Furlong, 2002; Hodkinson et al, 2012). Fundamental to the reasons why individuals end up in one or another type of job is social class. The number of young people now seeing themselves in terms of the working class is greatly diminished (Bertaux & Thompson, 1997; Evans & Tilley, 2017; Manstead, 2018) and this has a knock on effect on policy solutions to that debate, most notably manifesting in concepts like the third way (Giddens, 2002) and the big society (North, 2011). In Goodman et al's (2000) research looking at social class identification among working class and middle class 16 year olds, the young people from traditionally working class backgrounds were much more likely to misclassify themselves in regards where they sat on the class spectrum than their middle class counterparts. According to Heath et al (2009) the common trend is towards a decline in class identity across the UK and this in turn led to the rise of politics based around other identities and policies such as nation, trade, and economic conservatism. Griffin et al (2009) however conducted research which contests this point and found that class identities have simply morphed into collective consciousness around certain activities, behaviours, or locations a finding backed up by Allan (1989) and Hodkinson & Deicke (2007). Working class young people are still largely underrepresented in the bracket of long term career jobs, so much so that in Scotland the number who meet that criteria working in these jobs is decreasing (Li &

Devine, 2011; Paterson & Iannelli, 2017). Failure to get working class young people into what are considered good jobs however is not surprising given the other economic and cultural pressures such communities face. This is a result of what Lareau (2011) sees as working class families following the accomplishment of natural growth i.e. as long as children and young people are provided with comfort, food and shelter, then a considerable success has been achieved. In short, it is not easy being up against it. Despite this there is a general sense of positivity to be found when measuring this question as McKendrick et al's (2007) survey of teenagers from a deprived council estate discovered, revealing that the participants were ambitious for their future despite the economic reality they faced.

The geographical socio-economic polarisation of the UK has been highlighted by Dorling and Thomas (2004) who argued that, socially and economically, the country was divided in two: an extended Greater London metropolis (effectively covering a large section of southern eastern England), with the remaining areas (including Scotland) described as a series of poorly connected city cluster islands that appear to be slowly sinking demographically, socially and economically. This divide has also been highlighted recently in health terms by Möller et al (2002) who showed the persistent divide between the north and south of the country, with the gap in mortality rates between the regions particularly widening in the last decade. All of these factors put further external pressure on individuals who may ostensibly perform well academically and be proactive in their search for work, yet feel that there is something of an imperceptible force preventing them from getting on, thereby diverting their path (Stahl, 2015; Baars et al, 2016).

Evans (2002) studied 900 young people in England and Germany in 3 equal cohorts of those in higher education, those who were unemployed and those who were employed in England and Germany, finding that the belief individuals did well due to competence and strength of will was particularly prevalent in the UK context. Further, her findings suggested a distinct belief among the cohort in the UK that success stems from official certification i.e. degrees and qualifications, leaving those that do not pursue this path somewhat underresearched. Giving such status to official achievements plays a part of great significance in the respective mobility of individuals, and it is here in particular where the self-perception of a class ceiling ingrains itself (Friedman et al, 2015; Miles & Leguina, 2018). This is particularly clear when we take into account those who choose to leave education at 16, a number that is growing now various forms of financial support have decreased (Weedon, 2016). Students from less financially abundant backgrounds who received some form of financial support were seven per cent more likely to stay in education until they were 18 (Dearden et al, 2011). Yet even once working class individuals have broken this ceiling and reached the perceived security of a degree level education the increasing supply of individuals with a higher education is outstripping demand (Bowers-Brown & Harvey, 2004). Furthermore, the inflation of academic credentials is having the effect of employers not valuing degrees as much as they once might have (Dolton & Vignoles, 2000). Due to the fading prevalence of graduate jobs there is a 'bumping down effect' on the

labour market value of all lower level qualifications, resulting in an overqualified and largely dissatisfied young workforce (Goldthorpe, 2016:102). This change has in turn meant that working class young people's experiences are increasingly being informed by their relationship with education whilst particular career paths and forms of work are promoted by that education at the expense of others.

#### **2.4.5 Conclusion**

Rather than social mobility itself being entirely a myth (Saunders, 1997), it is more accurate to reflect that the research suggests the desire by various post-industrial governments to solve the problem of social mobility have been based on flawed beliefs. As in Scotland, well-meaning political and educational reform has garnered only marginal gains, leaving the inherent class system that perpetuates social immobility largely untouched. In so doing a space has been vacated to research that gap and better understand how educational experience influences it. Despite this the class system no longer carries the identification it once did among various groups and in particular appears to have lost its prominence in the beliefs of young people. There remains an ingrained faith in the need to follow official paths of certification and career progress, suggesting a fairly limited transitional path for those least equipped to prosper from it (Evans, 2002). Chief amongst the flawed beliefs inherent in the social mobility debate is the perception that immobility is solely an individualised phenomenon, followed by a misunderstanding that upwards mobility can be achieved without addressing structural advantage that many working class young people simply do not have access to (Wright, 1996; Egan, 2005).

*Section 2.4* has evidenced the processes by which the mobility of the individual is partially solidified during the key passage of years between 16-25, and thus the failure to rebalance inequalities inherited at birth through the form of the class system (Wiggan, 2012; Payne 2017). The role of income inequality is pervasive in this sense and carries on well past the young adulthood stage into the formation of families and community roots, as Reay (2017:1970) states 'We should not expect people to transform their lives if they have not been given the resources to make that possible' (Reay, 2017:1970). Young adults from more disadvantaged backgrounds in the UK are much less likely to ever own their own home for instance, even after controlling for the kind of job they do and other characteristics (Cribb et al, 2018). This is not to say that the reforms carried out by various governments have not been worthwhile, only to clearly state that they have been insufficient. Despite these marginal advances it is widely critiqued that the idea of mobility, particularly at the sharp end of the economic spectrum very difficult to achieve. A phenomenon well reflected well by **Jennifer**, an interview participant in this research, when she said:

**Jennifer:** *My Gran lives up the road in Whitlawburn and she told me that moving there was like becoming posh. She went there in the 70s or 80s but Dad stayed in Glasgow*

**Researcher:** *What do you think she means by posh, in that context, would you say Whitlawburn was posh?*

**Jennifer:** *No, of course, not. But my Gran means like having your own front door and place for your car. One of the new schemes where it's still shite but there are less junkies.*

Whitlawburn, for context, is a housing estate (scheme) built in the late 1960s and early 1970s to alleviate housing shortage in the Greater Glasgow area. It is in the top 0.5 per cent of areas for deprivation in Scotland (SIMD, 2016). This may be a particularly specific example, but it does speak to what Clark (2014:3) describes as people's perception from their "own experience of their families, friends, and acquaintances, that we live in a world of slow social mobility. The rich beget the rich, the poor beget the poor. Between the old Etonian and the slum dweller, between Govan and Richmond Drive, lies a gulf of generations". If slow social mobility is the norm then understanding which educational processes go towards influencing that outcome is a necessary subject of academic study.

## ***2.5 Universal Basic Income***

Following the onset of austerity across many previously prosperous western nation post-2008, new policy proposals have leapt forward designed to be the cure that can radically alter the landscape of inequality for generations to come. One such proposal is that of Universal Basic Income (UBI). Though UBI is not new in reality, having been proposed in some form or another for more than a century, it has received significant interest post 2008 as a model to counteract the failings of prescriptive welfare systems that remain prominent in the UK and abroad. As the following review will detail, despite its popularity as an idea the same issues inherent in individualised risk models of welfare and reform are not eradicated by it, as such it is worthy of considerable analysis to better understand its applications, and consider what those applications might mean for the purpose of meaningful transitions.

In regards finding a solution to the problem of work, social mobility, and inequality many have come to the belief that UBI is a solution of significant merit. Yet what does the policy evidence and academic literature suggest following the trial and failure of a number of prominent pilot studies, and where can UBI go from here in relation to the big questions presented by the age of austerity? The particular test case of UBI has been chosen as a means to express popular forms of alternative work models, the likes of which are a secondary focus of this research.

### **2.5.1 Should We Be Compelled to Work?**

*“The plan we are advocating amounts essentially to this: that a certain small income, sufficient for necessities, should be secured to all, whether they work or not, and that a larger income – as much larger as might be warranted by the total amount of commodities produced – should be given to those who are willing to engage in some work which the community recognises as useful. When education is finished, no one should be compelled to work, and those who choose not to work should receive a bare livelihood and be left completely free.”* Bertrand Russell (1996:93), *Roads to Freedom*

A contemporary policy initiative which has received renewed interest and even well-funded pilot studies in Finland and the Canadian provinces of Ontario and Manitoba (De Wispelaere et al, 2018; Calnitsky & Latner, 2017), as well as a much publicised referendum in Switzerland resulting in its rejection (Henderson, 2017), has been that of Universal Basic Income (UBI). This idea has circulated within policy and theoretical discussions for decades and has now been revived, undoubtedly as a result of concerns of increased inequality and disruptions to regular employment fluctuations. As a result we are witnessing a key contemporary debate that conveniently addresses the conflict between technological development and the need for employment growth.

UBI is a lump-sum monetary transfer, universal and often unconditional, to all citizens or in some cases a defined population with the purpose of providing a basic level of income for all (Tondani, 2009; Esping-Andersen, 1990). Though not fully implemented in any single nation or area of local government in Europe, it is an idea that both the political left and right have found sustenance in over recent years. One early and influential suggestion in the British context of such a reform dates back to the work of C.H Douglas and the Social Credit movement (Douglas, 2012). Douglas believed that the capitalist economy had solved problems of abundance yet remained dependent on continual new investment and growth, therefore the people required much greater purchasing power whilst limiting the amount of hours they expended in work. One significant aspect of Douglas’ social credit reforms was a plan to pay every household a form of UBI to stimulate growth and encourage a participatory economy (Gerber, 2015). Douglas was followed by the more directly political proposals of Juliet Rhys-Williams to integrate the tax and benefits system around the same time as the Beveridge reforms in 1942, a policy at the time referred to as a social dividend (Sloman, 2015). The social dividend in this context has much in common with the spirit of ideas that inspired David Cameron’s so called Big Society approach during the 2010 election (Jordan, 2011). As is clear, the early proponents of such reforms were much more aligned with classical liberalism than any form of socialist or Marxist transformation, and it is only in recent years that the concept of a UBI has been more explicitly associated with the political left.

On the continent, André Gorz was popularising the idea once again later in the century in *Critique of Economic Reason* (1989), yet this time from a more traditionally Marxist perspective. He put forward the idea that as production comes to require less working hours and individual workers, the right to some form of income can no longer only be reserved for those who have formal jobs. Equally, the level of income workers receive has come to bear less and less relation to how much work is actually done, as the onset of technological advancement has become paramount (McKnight, 1996). At this time Gorz and other adherents did not perceive of the possibility of moving away from the idea of work itself, and did not question its centrality to the social good. Following the neoliberal turn however, theorists and researchers who advocated a UBI began to respond to the unprecedented decline in the financial system and its knock on effect on work, by beginning to question the assumption of wage labour as the sole source of mutual contribution, with many looking to install a basic floor through which no one could fall through (Standing, 1997; Zelleke, 2016). Others were more concerned with attacking the welfare system as it currently existed and to replace the emphasis on the individual rather than the state (Zwolinski, 2015; Boyle, 2018). The approaches associated with both sides were however met with sharp criticism from peers who felt that UBI fundamentally misunderstands the primacy of work.

Kathi Weeks (2011:146) astutely identifies why such suggestions were resisted on both left and right, precisely because they moved away from the central pillar of work:

*“It is worth noting that in debates about basic income, cost is not necessarily the primary point of contention. Rather, it is the ethics of the demand that, often seems to generate the most discomfort specifically, over the way the demand is seen to denigrate the work ethic and challenge ideals of social reciprocity that have been so firmly attached to the ideal of the labour contract.”*

UBI for precisely this reason has been variously presented as radical and utopian ideal by some commentators in the contemporary age, in an attempt to tar it, often with very little analysis to support this view (De Wispelaere, 2016). Despite these objections it is a model that is gaining considerable traction within the policy sphere of many post-industrial nations, and a term which is gaining broader understanding among the general electorate than it has possessed at any point post the Second World War (Jordan, 2011; Torry, 2018). Part of the reason for this growing consciousness is the debate around welfare benefits and who claims them, a root that is not according to many commentators a progressive one. A debate that is perhaps best exemplified by the 2010-15 Conservative/Liberal Democrat UK government’s introduction of Workfare (Peck & Theodore, 2000, 2001; MacLeavy, 2011). Rather than carrying out tasks to expand their knowledge and develop skills that might benefit their communities, young people subject to this (though not the exclusive targets of Workfare) were often working in menial roles for multi-national companies and high street retailers. It has been argued that such practices devalue commitments like the

minimum wage which were born out of a liberal collectivist social model, a model which was considered valuable even during the height of Thatcherism (Grimshaw, 2014). Commitments that were by their intent damaging to the very concept of a decent day's work for a decent day's pay valued by economies on both ends of the economic and political scale (Streeck, 2011). The false ethos that many people are unwilling to work unless forced is utilised in such a way to justify 'the individualisation of their poverty' (Poppo & Redmond, 2000:396). Advocates claim that UBI on the other hand removes the expectation of labour for labour's sake and puts the onus on the individual to use the flexibility they have been provided with to better themselves or at the very least provide a solid floor below which no one can fall.

### ***2.5.2 Incentivising Work***

There are two forms of UBI that are often presented as potentially viable, work-unconditional and work-conditional. Van Parijs (2003:12) states that "a work-unconditional basic income endows the weakest with bargaining power in a way a work-conditional guaranteed income does not. Put differently, work unconditionality is a key instrument to prevent means-unconditionality from leading to the expansion of lousy jobs." This distinction is of considerable importance, as a work conditional form of basic income can lead to a replication of Workfare on a larger scale, a form of UBI that does not reflect the autonomous work forms desirous of many young people. It is the contention of Van Parijs (2003) that the focus of UBI should not solely be on economic output but on the benefits for human capital as well, a concept that lends itself well to the key concern of this research i.e. how do we bridge the gap between the educational stage and meaningful transitions.

The key contention of many of UBI's critics is that it will lead to the disincentivisation of work, and in turn the dumbing down of skills based education (Battistoni, 2017). This conflict is at the heart of whether UBI is set to progress as a focus of reform or not, and indeed whether it is an operable alternative for youth unemployment. As such the element of expanding human capital is crucial to offset such a fear. One aspect of maximising human capital is facilitating this smooth transition between education, training, employment, and voluntary work (Wright, 2006). Achieving clear and fulfilling transitions in this area will help to preserve and consolidate that element of human capital that is vital to developing meaning in our work activities. Further critics of the model have suggested that a basic income defined as a uniform benefit to replace many of the current targeted benefits that are prevalent in advanced economies, will not achieve the redistribution of a means tested system, where benefits are targeted to those who need them most (Pareliussen et al, 2018). This criticism is appropriate in an age where the introduction of UBI is continuously discussed only within the terms of reforming the current social security edifice, and is rarely presented as a reimagining of the very concept of social security. In order to bypass the contention that UBI is too theoretical there is a need for clear utilisable data on the effects of UBI within community settings.

The evidence researchers have gathered thus far is inconclusive. Many pilots that have been attempted have taken on a deliberately limited scope, with the sense prevalent among advocates of UBI that neoliberal governments have been hesitant to fully commit to them, yet such limitations are not unusual when pioneering such policies (Dwyer & Wright, 2014; Afonso & Papadopoulos, 2015). Furthermore, very little has been researched in regards how young people view such offers and wider alternative forms of work and remuneration. The paradox in this case is that the where UBI has been trialled in a serious manner it has often been under the auspices of national or local government that very much accept and embrace the neoliberal model (Hayes et al, 2012). There are currently proposed pilot cases in Scotland, pushed by councils in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Fife and North Ayrshire (Scottish Government, 2018a). A fund of £250,000 has been made available for the four local authorities to bid for, covering a two year period from April 2018 to March 2020 through the Scottish Government. The funding is to support feasibility work and will be made available on the basis of a short business case, setting out how the money will be spent. No provision has been made for additional funding over and above the £250,000, which when compared to other pilots is not a great deal. At the time of writing the initial funding is still being delivered and no commitment to focusing any of the funding on youth unemployment has been stated, as such no clear conclusions can be drawn.

During the 1970s the Canadian province of Manitoba conducted a high profile basic income experiment, referred to as Mincome (Forget, 2011; Calnitsky, 2016; Calnitsky & Latner, 2017). Utilising a randomised control trial in a major urban area (Winnipeg) and rural parts of the province, with one small town (Dauphin) where all citizens received the UBI, the experiment allocated members of lower-income households either with an income guarantee or a substantial cash benefit dependent on the size of their family unit, which was then decreased in relation to how many hours they spent in paid employment. The results suggested only a negligible disincentive to work among those who took part, yet there was some evidence that the UBI exacerbated marital dissolution (Hum & Simpson, 2001), a factor that may be of the era rather than something that would carry over to the contemporary day in a similar economy. A positive outcome of the experiment was the perception that UBI was treated as a benefit without stigma, thereby obscuring the distinction between deserving and underserving poor (Calnitsky, 2016; Forget, 2011). The Mincome experiment was eventually abandoned due to budgetary restraints, its ultimate cost was estimated to be in the region of \$17 million (Canadian). This remains a rich source of data on UBI, yet it must be acknowledged that Mincome information dates from 40 years ago, and both labour markets and the broader socio-economic demographics have changed (Simpson et al, 2017)

Finland's limited trial was refused further funding in April, 2018, by the same centre right national government that had started it. This was commented upon as being a result of budgetary pressures from above and a desire to reduce the country's 8.5% unemployment rate via more traditional welfare to work

measures. Though not fully a UBI in the purest sense (as participants did not receive a minimum amount sufficient to live on and the subject group was restricted), it was considered the first national government led step in proving the viability of such a case, having been developed from examples set previously in the Netherlands (Groot & Van Der Veen, 2000). In the trial, which began in January 2017, a random sample of 2,000 unemployed people aged 25 to 58 were paid a monthly stipend of €560 (£475), with no requirement to seek or accept employment. In the event that a recipient took on a job they were still provided with the stipend. This experiment's future was cut short before clear conclusions could be drawn, conclusions that hopefully will come once the trial finishes, but it is apparent that the relative benefit to claimants from the data available were not sufficiently greater than that drawn from traditional benefit reforms (Halmetoja et al, 2018). Remarkably Finland is now suggesting moves towards a Universal Credit model, and introducing expectations of voluntary work and training in order to claim benefits as an alternative to the UBI model (Bjon, 2018). This is something of a mirror image of the situation in the UK where Universal Credit is being heavily criticised and the Workfare scheme has been pushed back. This highlights a prevalent fear of the UBI experimentation phase, that if clear and fruitful results cannot be shown, it will be used as a justification to revert to more directly hostile models of social security.

In the Canadian province of Ontario a basic income experiment began in October 2017, pushed once again, largely from a conservative perspective (Boyle, 2018). Participants commented on the effect the extra income had, including allowing for healthier eating, purchasing warmer clothes for the winter, and being able to consider visiting a dentist again (Hamilton & Mulvale, 2019). Many participants used the funds to return to education or invest in small businesses. The approach utilised in Ontario was generally cautious and suffered a great deal of scrutiny from the general public and the media at large (Stevens & Simpson, 2018). In an increasingly familiar tale this experiment was also cancelled in 2018, marking it perhaps the shortest high profile experiment on record.

Further experiments that have largely been equally inconclusive include the Madhya Pradesh pilots in India (Standing, 2013; Davala et al, 2015), attempts in Belgium to introduce pilots which met significant institutional resistance (Vanderborght, 2006), and due to government incompetence in applying the necessary measures in Namibia (Klocke-Daffa, 2017; Haarmann & Haarmann, 2012). Though all of these experiments showed positive results in a variety of areas, there has been a lack of data which attests to a clear and evidenced UBI alternative that (a) shows cost effectiveness (a key concern of most democratic economies) (b) is able to replace means tested benefits in terms of efficiently targeting individuals of the greatest need, and (c) is able to successfully evidence and convince the public at large that these measures do not disincentivise work.

Of note in particular is that there is evidence aplenty to suggest that UBI does not adversely alter work incentives, yet the general perception that it does continues unabated. Perhaps the key surprise from these short lived experiments as a result, is as De Wispelaere et al (2018) conclude, that they were allowed to happen in the first place. Examples of radical approaches to the impending crisis of work are few and far between, and it is to the credit of researchers and policy makers who have contemplated these solutions., who by and large have had to struggle against misinformation on the topic consistently. There are variations on the UBI models popular at this moment, which are in their most effective form an unqualified state payment for everyone. The most common alternative are state dividends – usually based on profits related to state run industries, in particular mineral wealth. These dividends are often highly reliable and produce a positive economic impact for the distributing state in the form of increased expenditure. It is notable however that many of the jurisdictions in which they exist have much diminished social welfare and educational maintenance models compared to that of advanced economies in Europe (Widerquist & Sheahan, 2012).

Since 1982, all residents of the US state of Alaska have been provided with a cash dividend from the Alaska Permanent Fund. In 2015 the pay-out was \$2,072 per person, but on average the amount varies between \$1000 and \$2000 (State of Alaska, 2017). Jones & Marinescu (2018) found that this payment had no adverse effect on employment and may indeed have increased part-time work rates. These universal cash transfers do not appear to alter aggregate employment positively or negatively, with Alaska recording the highest unemployment rate in the United States in 2017 (Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, 2018), a fact exacerbated by the heavy seasonality of Alaska's economy – a factor also prominent in many Northern European economies. The Eastern Cherokee Native American tribe of North Carolina in the US provides a payment to members of its community drawn from the revenues derived from tribal casinos. These payments amount to around \$4,000 (US) per person per year. There is evidence to suggest that the payments had a positive effect on children's educational attainment and decreased criminal arrests (Akee et al, 2010). Researchers did not find a significant impact on labour force participation however (ibid). These alternative forms of a UBI are also exemplified in James Meade's (1989, 1993, 1994, 1995) blueprint for a fair and efficient economy, which formulates a position on which a social dividend could be funded from the returns available on publicly owned productive assets.

### **2.5.3 A UBI for the Young?**

The key to developing a programme of youth employment that respects the difficulties of the contemporary school to employment transition is to understand the requirement to flourish and foster the development of skill (Hodkinson et al, 2012). It is fair to assume then that with this desire society would be well served by a system of a universal minimum payment that encourages individuals to feel a greater sense of security whilst giving them more time to pursue interests and economic opportunities that suit

their desires and skills. Indeed in a much smaller redistributive sense, the young have enjoyed some notable specific benefits which are widely available (though not fully universal) in the form of cash transfers. These include Educational Maintenance Allowance (Holford, 2015) and student maintenance grants (Round & Gunson, 2017). This often follows from what some have deemed a social investment state (Lister, 2003).

This does not mean to dismiss the concept of UBI however, for it is undoubtedly an idea whose time has come, yet at this moment there is insufficient data to suggest that it would allow the kind of emancipatory work forms that may lead to a system of work that better allows for the shocks that young workers in particular experience during periods of austerity. Furthermore, it does not create a fortuitous environment for to promote lifelong learning, when the current forms of UBI suggested are only redressing years of frozen wages and poor growth. In a situation predicated on another recession, something deemed quite likely by many notable economists (Streeck, 2016) it is probable that any UBI reform would be an early victim. Valiente et al's (2019) research shows that youth unemployment has been prioritised as the main social problem to be addressed in Scotland, and most of the limited public resources for lifelong learning have been targeted towards youth at risk of unemployment at the expense of the rest of the adult population. Despite this at the same time cuts to college places has meant avenues for formal education for the immediate post-school age group that is not higher education based has had a considerable knock on effect as shown by McMurray (2019). A UBI approach could theoretically alleviate this issue and give individuals more opportunity to pursue lifelong learning, yet the reality is that any improvement in standards will inevitably only cover sustained losses after years of frozen wages and increasing costs (O'Hara, 2015).

Advocates of UBI implicitly accept automation as an inevitability, which comes into conflict with the established and stubborn human infrastructure that is prevalent, and automation will only be welcomed if it works in conjunction with that rather than against it (Carr, 2015). The assumed western conservative bias towards hard work and self-sufficiency (be it partially imagined or not) is not a throwaway factor that can be overcome simply by policy reform. There is further to this a considerable issue with the driving logic behind UBI and its adopters. As Jordan (2011:2) states a UBI "without a level of adequacy, and with continuing work conditions for eligibility, could lead to further fragmentation of labour markets, and falls in wages." In fact this is precisely what Universal Credit has been designed to do.

UBI allows for the subsidising of low paying employers and gives further justification for holders of capital not to pay workers correctly. This is a fear which has some historical precedent, most notably in the Speenhamland reforms of 1795 in Berkshire (Pitts et al, 2017). This system, which has some similarities to a UBI, but is perhaps better termed a universal subsistence, was paid to those displaced by the technological

advancement in agricultural and weaving communities at the time. What followed was the preservation of unemployment with only a very basic level of safety net to catch those who fell victim to it, and no advancement into formal work available beyond it. It does not take a great deal to imagine how a similar set of circumstances could afflict young people in the service industry, who struggle to find work experience currently already. A way to address this would be to significantly increase the level of any given UBI remuneration, yet even in this case Martinelli (2017) has found that schemes based on more generous UBI payments, and so require slightly larger tax rises, still imply increases in poverty rates or only modest increases in overall poverty rates at considerable fiscal cost. Rather, UBI, and many similarly shaped reforms take these possibilities as a given and stride forward under that consideration. Unfortunately the results of various pilot studies have not been as positive as initial hopes would have suggested, and the questions surrounding the intentions of state UBI advocates are of considerable concern. Much of the appeals to a UBI are couched in the language of neoliberalism, seeking to make it palatable to an elite that stand steadfastly opposed to reform. This is well evidenced by Standing (2015:1) who states “A basic income would help people be more rational, more long-term in their outlook, and more prepared to *take entrepreneurial risk.*”

Critics of UBI do not contest UBI is affordable in a fiscal sense, but remark that its costs are not worth its meagre outcomes (Goldsmith, 1998; Burczak, 2009). Where individuals have access to numerous targeted benefits (in the UK - housing benefit, employment support allowance etc.) they may well be forced to accept a one off lump sum payment as an alternative. Further critics have remarked that is difficult to imagine that such a reform would not be used by regularly re-elected neoliberal governments to cut back on other long constituted benefits, as has been a policy goal of successive governments in the UK (Smith & Jones, 2015; Hamnett, 2013).

#### **2.5.4 Conclusion**

Universal Basic Income is a considered response to the ills real or perceived of technological development. As reflected in *Chapter 3*, such responses often grow out of a desire for efficiency and resign themselves to the inevitability of a coming social or economic change. They are not designed to be a resistance to, but a reaction to. Despite this, the experimentation with UBI in the 1970s to the present day suggests a resurgence of attempts to actually solve the associated problems of unemployment rather than ameliorate it, and this spirit can be traced back to the belief in the possibility of long lasting solutions to poverty and precarious work (Jordan, 2011). Despite this, UBI faces many problems that make it ill-fitting for the pursuit of purposeful transitions for the young. A remarkable factor of the aforementioned UBI trials has been the seeming disinterest in creating specificity to deal with youth unemployment in particular. It is after all undoubtedly the case that those sectors most under threat by technological development and growing

unemployment are those disproportionately staffed by the young. As Frey & Osborne (2013) found we are heading “towards labour market polarisation, with computerisation being principally confined to low-skill and low-wage occupations.”

UBI is not in its conception designed to weaken the position of labour but it is clear that is a concerning side effect of it. It is of note that trade unions are largely united in their resistance to it (Vanderborght, 2016), and not solely for reasons of self-preservation. There is an acceptance, albeit implicit, that the skills and purposeful employment, once a staple of trade union membership ranks, is dying out – and such a reform further threatens that phenomenon. Furthermore, UBI as a formulated policy struggles to overcome arising social and cultural narratives focused around the individual and the concept of indigenous communities, even in states where it seemingly has initial support (Bay & Pedersen, 2006). This conflict with working class concerns continues to be the downfall of many well-meaning reforms and one which politicised reform solutions regularly forget (Evans & Tilley, 2017). In relation to working class concerns, UBI fails to address the desire for skills based employment by simply rejecting it as a necessity. Fundamentally the barriers that face UBI are ones of structure, a structure that is not yet finished with the notion of labour as a key input. As Hum & Simpson (2005:283) state “the view that generous unconditional transfers should be given to able-bodied persons who simply choose not to work is too controversial in a market economy that must still rely on labour input to produce goods and services.”

There is a failure inherent in UBI projects, and particularly in the foundational work of Van Parijs (2003), that neglects the social dynamics that presently exist in many post-industrial economies. Despite this the reasons for UBI’s perceived failures at this point are largely political. Academically it is insufficient to say UBI has a limited future purely on the basis of political interference, but this is the environment within which reform must be considered. Can the utopian vision of early proponents truly match up to the disassembled and defunded experiments seen in Canada and Finland? The data is inconclusive to say the least. Such reforms however do not take into account significant aspects of this conclusion, which are the key variables of purpose and skill. Cash transfers and to a lesser extent basic income reforms are in essence direct redistribution with an aim to raise the basic level of prosperity, there is no commitment to development of skill or to engender purpose in a generation that have come to learn that their future is by and large set to be worse than any their parents experienced.

## **2.6 Chapter Conclusion – Developing the Research Questions**

In this chapter the key debates concerning what can be considered meaningful transitions have been critically assessed including varying discussions around social mobility, the lived reality for working class young people in Glasgow, and potential policy solutions to meet the concerns arising from the age of austerity. Though far from an exhaustive treatment of an issue as broad as it is vitally important, this does cover the key aspects of the debate surrounding austerity, the future of work in regards the transitions young people go through and how this relates to contemporary policy.

The insights drawn from the literature review suggest that the kind of work we as individuals perceive to be of value and in what aspects of work we place meaning on are still very much situated within the predominant neoliberal perspective of individualised risk (Furlong & Cartmel, 1997; Korpi, 1997; Blyth, 2013; Hardgrove et al, 2015). Despite vigorous debate regarding the future of work and the varied radical reforms presented it is evidenced that a traditional localised and conservative attitude towards the value of work remains prevalent (Wight, 1993; Grasso et al, 2017; Snee & Devine, 2018). The cultural dimension of this concern is key, and many young people's attitudes are shaped by their surroundings and the strong family connections that take up so much of their life (Hardgrove, 2015; MacDonald & Shildrick, 2018).

Further, the perceptions young people hold onto regarding what work is and their own understanding of where they might end up appears to be considerably influenced by education (Stahl, 2015; Weedon, 2016; Baars et al, 2016). This is particularly prevalent in working class communities where the perceived lack of educational advantage and accompanying diminished investment fosters the impression of a demographic ignored. Following that logic it is fair to begin from a point where the research assumes that those young people seeking to leave school post-16 and find work will have a particular context from which they can reflect and that in some way this has been influenced by their educational experience.

Further, there is a prevalent gap in the field regarding this particular group, who due to growing educational opportunities and the diminishment of secure post-school career programmes and training are becoming less and less numerous. Where significant research has focused more generally on the transitions of young people across a specific cultural or geographic context, the research born out of this review encapsulates a specific economic period and focuses keenly on the group most likely to experience the deleterious effects of it.

These insights have led to the development of the primary research question:

**1) How do young people, in particular the working class, imagine and negotiate modern employment contexts and how is this informed by educational experience?**

The literature reviewed here delves into the question of alternative work forms also, defined in *Section 1.3* as a reformulation of the traditional wage labour model, to varying degrees, with a particular emphasis on alternatives which are not solely driven by the profit motive and have a purpose for the common good (Shorthose, 2000; Harvey, 2011). As identified in a number of research publications and supporting commentary, the desire among workers to consider alternative paths beyond the change to self-employment is largely non-existent (Illich, 1979, 1981; Bell, 1999; Groot & Van Der Veen, 2000; Bjorn, 2018). Though it is equally evidenced that the alternative work forms that have some semblance of traction are not those of a large scale radical overhaul but more practical and grounded considerations such as UBI (Jones & Marinescu, 2018) and flexible working hours (Bessant, 2018), with varied degrees of support in the research outcomes presented in this review.

It is apparent in this case that the kind of research previously conducted into the willingness to engage with these types of alternatives is limited on the question of how work will change in the future and there is a space to be filled (Staff & Mortimer, 2003; Bradford & Cullen, 2014). In Glasgow where this research takes place the nature of these debates take on tangible form. In the 'Dear Green Place' like so many other cities, individuals and communities are simply seeking to get on, and to find meaning in their pursuit of a purposeful existence (Robertson, 1998; Garner, 2017). Despite this, avenues have been closed off to particular communities, with the transitions experienced by a community in one part of the city often being vastly different from another (Bailey et al, 2016; Bailey & Minton, 2017; Kay & Trevena, 2019). This disparity has inevitably led to neglect of a young, fully able workforce during the extensive period of austerity post-industrial cities in particular have suffered from in the UK in recent years. There are a variety of research projects presented in this chapter which present potential exits from this reality, but they have to be embraced by the wider economic and educational structures (the collectivising of risk; moving beyond certification; skills based training opportunities) in order to be effective.

Much of the research presented in this chapter has attempted to define transitions in relation to a particular policy reform or changing economic circumstance, but few have presented a cohesive analysis of the way in which educational experiences shape not only the transition itself, but indeed the sort of destinations and employment practices young people think are likely and fruitful, which are often when touched upon defined as modest and locally focused.(McKendrick, 2007; Lareau, 2011; Goldthorpe, 2016). Unfortunately the way in which one major reform to amend this, UBI, has been shaped and rolled out, as evidenced in this review (Hum & Simpson, 2005; Standing, 2015; Evans & Tilley, 2017) in the various pilot

studies that have gained traction has prevented it from becoming such a viable reform. This however does present an opportunity and the laying of the groundwork for solutions that are outside of the usual expected narrative, and it is of interest to the academic debate in this area to assess young people's openness to ideas such as UBI.

The foundation for this argument stems from the adjoining debate regarding social mobility. In this review the belief that immobility is an individualised phenomenon, followed by a misunderstanding that upwards mobility can be achieved without addressing structural advantage, has been critically assessed utilising research focusing on questions of successful transitions (Goldthorpe et al, 1982; Willis, 2000; Brown, 2018; Bukodi & Goldthorpe, 2018, Major & Machin, 2018). In particular the role education plays in that debate has been reviewed, with the conclusion that there is a focus within schools towards particular career paths and forms of work at the expense of others. The existence of social mobility as a concept itself has changed the emphasis on what kind of jobs are deemed to be upwardly mobile, transitioning from an economy once focused on developing skilled professions to one focused on hierarchical career paths that ultimately lead to positions of responsibility over others as a benchmark for success. Establishing why this is, is key to understanding what young people in Scotland and beyond perceive as valuable work, and if this remains within the classic wage labour paradigm. Researching individuals and recording their narratives who have experienced sustained austerity provides a unique insight into the sorts of transitional experiences we can expect to encounter in the future, and in turn the ways in which narratives on social mobility should be reconsidered.

Following the review and these considerations the secondary research question will be:

**2) To what extent can it be said that there is an appetite for alternative work forms within the 16-18 age group, in particular the working class, and how is this shaped by educational experience?**

Bringing together these two core research focuses a framework for this study has been built that allows for a project that asks new questions in this field and develops on existing research in a way that can add detail to our collective understanding. In the next chapter the theoretical foundations of these problems will also be considered in light of the knowledge derived from this review, and the understanding of why theoretical constructs often fail to match up to the expectations of young people will be highlighted in the pursuance of a new approach that will benefit.

### **Chapter 3 – Critical Review of Theoretical Literature on Youth Education and Employment**

The following chapter critically engages with relevant theoretical literature on the past and contemporary context of youth employment and education, and critically assesses the political background via which this project came to fruition. In doing so a clear theoretical framework is developed which highlights the form of a meaningful transition and gives a framework by which the results and responses to the key research questions can be assessed.

The relevant sections are as follows:

*Section 3.1 – Introduction* - contains a brief overview of the background to the current theoretical and debates sociologically and economically that frame this research, including the inspiration for its beginning, with particular reference to the key theoretical constructions that guide this research.

*Section 3.2 – The Problem of Work* - the problematisation of work is considered, with particular focus on the theoretical underpinnings which have contributed to and exacerbated the age of austerity. Further attention is paid to Gorz's key concept of the dual society, Standing's notion of the Precariat, and how this relates to Sennett's concept of craftsmanship, leading to a discussion about the role of wage labour in contemporary society and how that might be changed.

*Section 3.3 – The Future of Work* – considers the threat of automation and what that might mean to the world of work that is to come. With particular reference to the development of technology as both a force for emancipation and indeed the promotion of unemployment, a variety of theoretical approaches are considered and how they might apply to the employment futures of young people in an economy like the UK.

*Section 3.4 – A Pedagogy of the Working Class* - theoretical literature from education and pedagogical studies are considered, in particular that of Ivan Illich, in relation to the overarching research questions. Further consideration is given over to the propensity for and possibility of lifelong learning with a particular emphasis on the way the working class interact with education.

*Section 3.5 – Chapter Conclusion – Developing the Theoretical Framework* - Summing up the various debates in *Chapter 3* this conclusion reflects on the theoretical strength of these debates and in turn how they have become relatively weakened since the beginning of the age of austerity, calling for a renewal of engagement in the academic and political sphere, and a recognition of how education shapes the world of work.

### **3.1 Introduction**

The world of work that young people are entering is changing rapidly every decade. For some writers the primary reason for this is advancement in technology, the internet of things, and specifically automation (Wallace, 2004). This economic change has catalysed persistent and globally realised social changes, leading to the reimagining of urban environments, public services, and of course work itself. Changes of this kind in tools, data processing, and robotic manufacturing are creating a world in which labour has become of lesser importance and the supposed pragmatism of industry has led to questions about the long term need for large numbers of human workers when many of their tasks can be performed by machines. For some writers this is a potentially positive outcome who view the process as part of a long march of cultural and social change which drives humans into different forms of living and leisure, bringing about new interactions in the workplace also (Rojek, 2002; Lewis, 2003; Veal, 2018). In the case of others technological change will inevitably lead to the loss of workers security and hard won rights (Leontief & Duchin, 1986; Arntz et al, 2017).

Rifkin (1995) views this debate as a symptom of the expanding unemployment crisis, coupled with ever more capable technologies, which will lead to a world of work in which human intervention is minimal. The UK in particular has embodied this transition in its continuing focus on high tech industry and remote digitally controlled services and manufacturing (Watson, 2011), a reality that has begun to permeate educational focuses also with the increasing concerns regarding the relative lack of young people taking STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) subjects (McMaster, 2017). In the global West where labour is relatively expensive, compared to the situation in developing markets, this has led to an increasingly antagonistic relationship between employer and employee (Fevre, 1992), which in turn has limited opportunities for young people to find long term sustainable work.

There are those however who see the potential of this situation as a stimulating factor for emancipatory forms of work (Comninel, 2019; Susskind, 2020). In a political climate where the dominant democratic parties in the UK and Scotland are at best unimpressed by overt regulation and in some cases openly hostile to it, a narrative which can couple deregulation with progress is fortuitous to their long term goals. For those who have grown up in working class communities this situation engenders anxiety and a sense of being without a realisable trajectory towards secure, well paid employment, a reality well reflected in the results of this study (*Chapters 5, 6, and 7*). In order to fully understand how young people navigate modern employment contexts, their sense of risk and anxiety must be understood not only as a key symptom of austerity currently, but long term economic decline in general. In turn their anxiety to succeed shapes the beginnings of what can be defined as a meaningful transition, namely the potential to progress.

The varied accounts of how work is in opposition to life and therefore community, rather than concurrent with it, that follows in this chapter suggest a problem which at its heart is inherent to the current way we classify work. Illich (1973) sees this not only in terms of our relationship to work, but its relationship to us, and it is a relationship that is becoming increasingly confused. As was most famously opined by Marx, work is a form-giving activity (Sayers, 2007), another way of stating that it prescribes meaning to our lives possessing a liberating nature and purpose outside of simply production. In stating that understanding the concept of a meaningful transition must also possess this form-giving quality. The pursuit of that understanding supplies the foundations for pursuing a research focus that can question whether the dominant working class ideology of work for work's sake (Gorz, 1997) remains within this younger generation, or if indeed there is an appetite for fresh approaches to work that stray from that path.

### **3.2 The Problem of Work**

In this section the problematisation of work is considered, with a particular focus on the theoretical underpinnings which have contributed to and exacerbated that problem during the age of austerity. Further attention is paid to Gorz's (1999) key concept of the dual society and how this relates to Sennett's (2009) complementary concept of craftsmanship, leading to a discussion about the role of wage labour in contemporary society and how that might be changed.

In doing so, the key understanding that remunerative labour must take into account the space of individual expression is added to the theoretical framework of this research, and the wider consideration of what role risk plays in enforcing that dynamic is considered, particularly through the lens of Guy Standing's precariat concept (2014).

#### **3.2.1 The Dual Society**

*'The unintended consequence of the neoliberal free market utopia is a Brazilianisation of the West. For trends already visible in World Society – high unemployment in the countries of Europe, the so called 'jobs miracle' in the United States, the transition from a work society to a knowledge society – do not involve a change only in the content of work. Equally remarkable is the new similarity in how paid work itself is shaping up in the so-called first world and the so-called third world; the spread of temporary and insecure employment, discontinuity and loose informality into Western societies that have hitherto been bastions of full employment. The social structure in the heartlands of the West is thus coming to resemble the patchwork quilt of the South, characterised by diversity, unclarity and insecurity in people's work and life'*

Ulrich Beck (2008:1), *Brave New World of Work*

The field of youth studies since the late 1970s has primarily concerned itself with young people's education and their transitions from school to work. This period is fraught with difficulty, stress, and insecurity – as has been evidenced in *Section 2.4* detailing the debates concerning social mobility. Understanding this dynamic is key to the development of an effective theoretical framework within which to situate this research, and in particular the understanding of risk and how that alters the transitions of young people in the UK and beyond.

A key consequence of a society based on risk in the transitional stage is the expansion and elongation of education, which has sought to mitigate the effects of having too many jobseekers who lack the necessary qualifications to find the kinds of employment that now predominate in a post-industrial society (Bell, 1999). This is conceptualised both as a concern for the dependency children experience to their guardians and the state, and as a concern for autonomy and extending responsibility. Youth studies therefore negotiates this dichotomy by assessing the risk factors which might hinder a smooth transition from one to the other (Cieslik & Simpson, 2013). Yet when we apply the same consideration to work, the very notion of unemployment is stigmatised and problematised to a much greater extent, especially in the period of life defined as youth that is fraught with individualisation (Kelly, 2001).

Sociological debates concerning this key point in a young person's life are underpinned by a normative understanding which views youth as inherently transitional; we become someone (Wexler 1992). It is less common however to consider to what extent this becoming is actually a cessation of something fundamental, and in relation to unemployment it is socially accepted that a person experiencing it has become no one (Breakwell, 1985). A job is what defines us, it is our reason to be in a neoliberal capitalist economy according to some writers (Gini, 2009; Selenko et al, 2017). Work when considered in a purely economic sense takes on an inherently dutiful role. Over time, as the nature of work has changed, it is apparent that young people's perceptions of work have begun to broadly reflected this duty also. Given the political climate of austerity, this duty has come to be seen as something owed to the state as recompense for minimal benefits (Davies, 2014), a dynamic which fosters resentment in working class communities who do not believe that they played a role in the financial crash. It is perhaps time we asked as a result whether our work and employment can extend to autonomous human activity, and increase the possibilities for individual self-fulfilment, whilst it is being forced on us as a duty. Why should that duty after all not reflect the broader concerns of the individual, the family, and the community?

In this research transitions from education to work can be considered to be situated within Gorz's concept of the dual society, that of heteronomous and autonomous forces that impact an individual which primarily concern the distribution of work and the form and content of non-working time (Gorz, 1994). To state this in relation to the research directly, there are external forces which dictate the nature of work and sort of

transitions young people experience (their education or the economic environment of austerity in this case), and equally there are individuals who are socially integrated into expected transitions by a common understanding of what work is (cultural and environmental factors that go towards developing individual character and expectations). In essence, this conception does not eliminate the heteronomous forces which construct our understanding of work, but acts to delimit and subordinate it in order to let the autonomous become predominant. Understanding the dual forces of society was a fundamental concern of Marx in his conception of class conflict as the key determinant of revolutionary change and for many writers still has primacy in our struggles with rebalancing power over work (Gorz, 1997; Gollain, 2016). Whitbread (1985) and Howard (2016) see the dual society as a struggle between spaces of control i.e. our aspirations and desires, and spaces of alienation i.e. power that is enacted upon us.

The study in part seeks to investigate whether this dual society, which encapsulates assumptions about human nature, is present not only in the traditional shopfloor Marxist analyses of old (Burawoy, 1985), but whether it can be a guide for the transitional conflicts that young people face when leaving education and entering work. In short, can we alter education and work to better reflect the personal wishes of this ignored group, without completely doing away with efficient labour systems? Narratives of this kind see autonomy through the lens of mobility, the freedom to achieve a better condition for oneself. Young (1986) saw this question in terms of the autonomy of the individual and their autonomy in relation to the state and argues that personal autonomy implies individual self-determination in accordance with a chosen plan of life. In turn this feeds into debates regarding social mobility that are not only viewed through an economic lens but through a varying definition of success.

Gorz has often been misrepresented as subscribing to a purely existential analysis, but with increased interest in ideas like a Universal Basic Income (UBI) (*Section 2.5*) (Jordan, 2011; Taylor-Gooby, 2013) there is now space to incorporate his analysis more widely. Our inability to gauge the value of activities and relationships which have neither economic worth nor societal utility, as exemplified by the general resistance to the UBI as a policy reform, is in itself symptomatic of 'the production of a world without sensory values and a hardened sensibility, which hardens thought in its turn' (Gorz cited in Bowring, 1996:4). In this sense Gorz theorises that all work when coerced directly or indirectly has a dehumanising quality, though this in itself is not necessarily wrong, what is false is the perception that the processes can be humanised without humanising the outcomes.

If we apply the concept of duality to the question at hand the perception of work presented by young people in this study (*Chapters 5, 6, and 7*) is often one that sees mostly remunerative value, or career progress, yet often little else of value within the action of work. Standing's (2014) analysis of the emergence of the Precariat class alludes to such a connection also in so much as he classifies much of the

work done by this class as work-for-labour. In essence this refers to unremunerated activities that become indirectly coercive as failure to take part will prevent individuals from a decent standard of living. At the extreme end this concerns Workfare, but on a much more general level young people are expected to engage in such activities daily (Walther et al, 2015). Calls for extended years spent in school are common in the UK, as well as time spent on often potentially superfluous training courses for jobs that do not exist.

There is a sense among some commentators that risk (in this case unemployment) is being mitigated solely for the benefit of the state (Jentsch, 2004; MacDonald, 2006). The risk society described by Beck (1992) sees the labour market as the motor of individualised risk, but if young people are delayed from entering that market or indirectly prevented from entering it altogether the risk for those already occupying positions of power are mitigated but not those of the young person themselves. Individualisation 'manifests itself in the acquisition, proffering, and application of a variety of work skills' (Beck 1992:93) which in turn creates a sense that failure to succeed is a failure on your part alone. Further, individualisation inculcates a dependence on wages and consumption, thereby promoting geographical mobility in order to find even subsistence level employment. In distancing individuals from their families and childhood support networks risk becomes further individualised, and notions of autonomy are only realised in terms of spatial movement promoting greater competition for diminished opportunities, and further mitigates away risk from employers, schools, and governments. In the consideration of these two core theoretical concepts: risk and the dual society, a space opens up for a new debate in regards to youth transitions.

### ***3.2.2 Reclaiming Work and Education***

If the theoretical standpoint that encapsulates these two theories can be supported by evidence of a generally pessimistic viewpoint amongst young people regarding the benefits of formalised work then any actions to resolve this must seek to in some way reclaim the autonomous space of work and education, even if it is only partial, a viewpoint supported by Hall (2018). It is however particularly difficult to do this when the prevailing economic trend is towards fiscal austerity and even more precarious work patterns, a trend characterised by permanent jobs becoming difficult to acquire but it also manifests as a sense of forever being in transition. 'We are now faced with a situation throughout the world in which there is, on the one hand, a privileged stratum of permanent workers attached to the enterprises in which they work, and on the other, a growing mass of casual labourers, temporary workers, the unemployed, and 'odd jobbers' (Gorz, 1989:65). Sennett (1999) navigates this particular problem of work by relating its current form to the absence of something lost, a cultural deficit. The isolation that stems from that loss subsequently leads to detachment which we see amongst those who do not work, and those who work in supposedly menial or unfulfilling jobs. This deficit is often characterised by isolation in the public sphere

also (Sennett, 1976) which has grown out of the post war economic paradigm and constructed upon 'a universal trend towards bureaucratisation and intricate dependence on productive machinery' (Caplow, 1954:19). All of the young people in Stage 1 of this research who had experienced employment fell under this latter definition, which could be described as casualised labour, a form of work that has been characterised by Watson (2019:2) as the key process leading to a 'decline in full-time job openings for teenagers and young adults which has eliminated career opportunities for a considerable minority.'

The condition of the poor and underemployed in contemporary society is well known and regularly depicted in fictional media (Blackman & Rogers, 2017), yet it remains the case that the non-fictional articulations by which the most disadvantaged of our number are understood is the product of a select group of articulate outsiders (Wakeling, 2016). The voices of the actual working class are relatively absent. The relative literatures which cover the question of what work is in the contemporary age generally fall on two definitions. Work as an organisational structure and work as an adopted identity. Many such accounts relate to both of these but it is in the positive and negative social aspects of each that the true picture of work is revealed. If work can incorporate both of these definitions then first we must understand how those for whom work is fundamental as both identity and subsistence (the working class) view this, and whether it can possess any new character we are ignoring.

Engels depiction of the industrial working class of 19<sup>th</sup> century Manchester was taken up by Marx and spread across the world as a materialist analysis of the situation as it was at that time, and to some extent ever shall be (Engels, 2009). Yet even within a decade of their primary publications these depictions were altogether archaic and rapidly transforming, and by the 1960s had been edited and revised by Thompson (2013). The contemporary age has had many other subsequent revisions (Lukács, 1975; Poulantzas, 1978, 2014; Frey, 2019) yet all rest on the common assumption that there is a distinct power imbalance in the way the working class relate to work, and those who benefit from their work. Yet there is a problem with these interpretations, one in which the technological age has moved on, creating a new form of inequality that is not easily measured by the same rigid class analyses (Bonoli, 2006). It is the case that in as much as the champions of neoliberalism have imagined the life giving properties of wealth creation they attribute to capitalism to be true, so too have its detractors comfortably imagined the truth of poverty to have remained culturally if not materially constant (Barley et al, 2017).

In many ways the situation has got worse for this group of people, particularly in regards to how much time they must spend looking for work, interviewing for work, and ultimately finding out they have failed in that endeavour. Activities of this sort are part of a process of unbuilding and reduction down to a singular activity in pursuit of prosperity or *abbau*, as Lewis Mumford (1938) referred to it, is a characteristic of the contemporary labour market that those who are comfortably placed within it ignore. The unbuilding

process was astutely characterised in Ken Loach's (2016) film *I, Daniel Blake* which followed the travails of a working class man who has been denied employment and support allowance and must go out to find work despite his doctor finding him unfit for work. The experiences he encounters are representative of the knock on effects of the Big Society that prevails in what should be a flourishing economy that works for all (Levitas, 2012). The concept of an economy that works for all implicitly accepts a failure of past systems and governance to provide and care for a seemingly unnamed group. It is convenient for such narratives to assume those out of work, regardless of the period for which they have been workless, are in some way feckless rather than subjects of forces beyond their control (Garthwaite, 2011). This phenomena is best expressed on a global scale by the failure of numerous global governments to prosecute anyone who was partially responsible for the 2007/8 financial crisis, preferring instead to individualise the responsibility onto the shoulders of working people (Mirowski, 2013). Notions of this kind align with the belief that the failure of capital is a natural event one must simply suffer, not the product of incompetence or wickedness.

Young workers in general will not only be subject to the pressures of the economic downturn themselves directly, they may also experience the weight of a close loved one or guardian suffering a debilitating illness or disease being forced to work or have difficulty getting care due to the harsh austerity regime. Higher rates of caring by young people can be found in areas of heightened deprivation and amongst groups on lower incomes in Scotland (Scottish Government, 2017b). The most recent Census data also shows that 4% of young people in the most deprived areas of Scotland provide unpaid care and this gradually drops to just 2% in the least deprived (ONS, 2011). It is clear to see that in this context what is defined as work and that which is seen as leisure or voluntary work are entirely dependent on cultural, spatial and temporal conditions (Grint, 2005:7).

### **3.2.3 Defining Work**

Through work we shape our ambitions and sense of place in society. It is therefore of great importance in some sectors to have what one does on a day to day basis defined as work rather than leisure or even idleness. The classic example of such definitions comes from the changing role of what has in the past been derogatorily referred to as women's work (Gatrell, 2008; Abel Kemp, 1994). No section of society is more likely to engage in various forms of paid and unpaid work than women (Wilson, 2000). For young women approaching the world of employment in the UK today positions of care in both the home and the workplace are becoming continuously trodden employment paths (Glover & Kirton, 2006). A dual role as both employee and carer places women in a unique position from which to view what constitutes work. The nature of the jobs women tend to take are therefore much more community focused than their male counterparts (Warburton & Oppenheimer, 2000:119). Definitions of one demographic's work activity is contested precisely because it suits the concerns of capital to do so (Rowbotham, 1989). As women holding

paid employment became vital to the post-war rebuilding of many western economies, this definition slowly dissipated, though it has yet to fully be killed off. From such a contested example, we can see how the entire edifice of what work is becomes contested also. We have gradually moved further towards a rather opaque definition of work and labour in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Hardt & Negri (2000:237) call this approaching state the 'social factory' in which our everyday life including leisure and what may be perceived as free time works towards the mode of production – a phenomenon that begins at an early age. This system of production has both a negative effect on how we define ourselves (i.e the phenomenon of content creators in Billing, 2017) yet also opens up possibilities for new, more personalised forms of work (Rainie and Wellman, 2012). It is in this realisation that the forms of work we take part in have gradually developed a degree of autonomy (Robertson, 1985), even if it is within the hegemonic state of production.

In the contemporary labour market, doing good work is no guarantee of good fortune, nor in fact is doing work at all a route to any form of obvious happiness. Most workers in the 21<sup>st</sup> century spend the hours prior and after work expending great energy getting to and from work (Mattisson et al, 2014). The desire to do a good job is one way to make these hours matter, yet this insistence on quality and craft is so often missing in the work of the young. Competence and engagement, the craftsman's ethos, appear to be the most solid source of adult self-respect, according to many studies conducted in the UK and the US (Darren, 2014) yet the same cannot be said for those below the age of 25. The development of skills as a craft has been quashed by management structures that do not respect any inherent dignity in work nor appreciate any moral basis for the importance of skilled work. This in turn has altered the skills and employment that young people train in (Furlong, 1992; Goodwin & O'Connor, 2005). Processes which culminate on a local level are part of a wider global trend that Giddens (2007) defines as intrinsic to globalisation, a trajectory which has continued since modernity. Global markets and advancements in communication have pushed the aforementioned changes and in the process they have become deeply rooted in the forms of work we partake in. The days of craftspeople have now been replaced by a focus on human association and solving technical problems as the purpose of the working day (Bell, 1970:24; Anthony, 1977). Such roles are considerably more demanding in terms of altering one's identity than the traditional manufacturing or agricultural and industrial jobs of the past. Customer service for example requires workers to perform their task with enthusiasm and personal engagement with those they encounter at work (Tolich, 1993). This is a sector of employment which is regularly staffed by under 25 year olds who are likely to be left without an attainable narrative of occupational development (Standing, 2014) due to graduates and displaced workers from elsewhere taking up management roles. As such they are forced to spend many years in lower rung jobs with very little chance of advancement or benefits (Furlong & Cartmel, 2007:8).

The overlapping of personal identity and work is a direct result of the performance driven requirements which have stemmed from globalisation such as brand management, industrial schooling, and diversity of

choice on the high street (Walsh, 2016b). These performance requirements take an often detrimental personal toll on workers as Hochschild's (2012) study of flight attendants and bill collectors found, leaving workers often estranged from their emotions and unable to properly perceive their own worth. Given all of these relative stresses and the seeming disinterest from capital in how one element enacts on the other, we can safely assume that the predominant definition of work that holds both for society and the individual is that of wage labour, and little else.

### **3.2.4 Wage Labour**

The process of globalisation has far reaching consequences on the way society and the individual construct themselves. Beck (1999) saw the influence of globalisation as having a direct influence on people's lifestyle and human relations. The individualising of work and therefore your own success within it becomes a lifelong project, often referred to as a career path (McCabe, 2007). This path is by no means a straight or guaranteed route and the inability to cope with failure and lack of advancement is not a trait instilled in workers who are subject to the globalist view of work (Lee, 1996), their lot is to toil and for doing so they will receive remuneration, fair or not - this is the essence of wage labour and a cornerstone of the theoretical framework utilised in the research. With regards to young people specifically the very inability to find a job in the first place can be very demoralising, as they do not gain access to the social status that comes with wage labour (Young, 2012). Taking that notion further it is clear how pervasive the idea of work as a social entity can and has become. Capitalism however has many contradictions and as such these theories are often not based within the lived experience of those who are influenced by it. Our current modes of work, rather than being an epochal shift towards an ultimately workless society, represent a reflexive modernisation (Lash, 1994) that is liable to change with the fluctuating alterations in our economy. The future of wage labour in this context is not certain, in particular with the onset of the age of automation.

Gorz's (1999) attempts to reclaim work within the current structure of wage labour state that work is an ideology and has begun to dominate conditions and the price of labour. When sociologists speak of wage labour they highlight this relationship and a belief that there is an inconsistency between the work we do and that which we receive in return. Growing out of the Marxist tradition, the concept of wage labour is central to any contemporary understanding of the role of work. Castel (2003:305) refers to it as the 'proletarian condition', one in which workers earn just enough to maintain themselves and their families but not enough to invest in the consumer society itself. It is only since the late 1970s that the salaried relationship has become particularly problematic in supposedly economically advanced nations such as the UK (Aglietta, 2000). Common amongst all forms of work is the devoting of time and labour to a task for some perceived reward (Deakin & Wilkinson, 2005). The most common reward for labour is that of a wage

in the form of financial gain. In order to maintain such a structure of exchange it is necessary to have both employers and employees, according to the accepted capitalist model (Gintis, 1976). The maintenance of this relationship can be antagonistic, cooperative, or based on methods of solidarity (Edwards & Wajcman, 2005), and is also entirely dependent on local factors. It is specifically the antagonistic form of labour which greets young people however as they have little past investment in their job and as such are ideal candidates for precarious positions (Poplin, 1972).

It is from this exploitative relationship that the process of wage labour achieves such value. The nature of employment as a means of producing and distributing social resources is considered essential and rarely challenged and to some it even has transformative potential (Glucksmann, 2007; Rothstein, 2019). Even when the current economic system of austerity in the UK has met rising opposition and criticism, this facet of our society remains concrete with little to suggest it can be restructured to suit the experiences of those struggling to get by. Weeks (2011:173) believes that the restructuring of labour must 'appeal to a broader constituency and make it possible for new political alliances across race, class, and gender lines' in order to succeed. When much of sociology is concerned with understanding such ingrained social problems as homelessness or child poverty it is difficult to present ideas which posit that work, or at least its wage labour form, in itself is not a necessarily a good thing (Parry, 2005). To add to this sense of impossibility the decline of community (Stein, 1971) and the passive citizen (Campbell, 1962) as trends have not only continued but become the archetypes for the modern society and its relation to the individual. It is for this very reason that analysis of whether it also remains the case for young citizens is of clear import to the current study of sociology.

### **3.2.5 The Precariat**

As previously mentioned a developing analysis surrounding the state of wage labour and its particular effects on specific communities is that of the precariat (Standing, 2014:19):

*"The precariat experiences the four A's – anger, anomie, anxiety and alienation. The anger stems from frustration at the seemingly blocked avenues for advancing a meaningful life and from a sense of relative deprivation. Some would call that envy, but to be surrounded and constantly bombarded with the trappings of material success and the celebrity culture is bound to induce seething resentment. The precariat feels frustrated not only because a lifetime of flexi-jobs beckons, with all the insecurities that come with them, but also because those jobs involve no construction of trusting relationships built up in meaningful structures or networks. The precariat also has no ladders of mobility to climb, leaving people hovering between deeper self-exploitation and disengagement."*

The precariat is a concept that has grown out of the work of Bourdieu (Wacquant, 2013) and popularised in relation to the post financial crisis generation by Standing (2014). In essence it suggests we now have a globalised workforce beholden to the whim of free markets and the politics of flexibility. This flexibility inevitably engenders insecure labour relations and low pay with an assumption that this is the first generation for more than a century who cannot expect to enjoy a quality of life better than that of their parents (O'Connor, 2018). The prevalence of wage labour as the primary form of work owes much to the socio-economic factors which have also constructed the precariat. The wage labour paradigm has consistently been referred to as a factor of a post-industrial age (Casey, 1995; Bell, 1999; Strangleman and Warren, 2008), but there is also an element that speaks to the fact we now live in a post-labour age. This is a time characterised by a growing service sector which now constitutes around 80 per cent of the UK economy (Partington, 2019) and a declining manufacturing industry, a situation which typifies the UK today, especially in a city like Glasgow.

Developments which have led to the precariat have created a less tangible economy which has by its very definition created a precarious relationship between national prosperity and job security. Gorz (1999:72) refers to this as an inherent failure 'to distribute the wealth which is now produced by capital employing fewer and fewer workers.' As a result the security of a guaranteed wage has become a matter of survival. In light of heightened levels of precarious employment it is now required of sociologists to look at not only the related socio-economic effects, but the actual social causes of remaining unemployed (Mooney et al, 2010). Unfortunately the notion of the precariat has largely remained of academic interest and to a broader extent to professional economists. Social attitudes perhaps suggest that individuals do not like to consider themselves to be in any sort of precarity, even if that is what the data suggests (Bourdieu, 1987) further evidence presented in this research and others suggests the social attitudes of young people are much more conservative than many assume (Grasso et al, 2017), which would suggest the notion of a precariat does not address cultural needs. This is of considerable importance in understanding one aspect of the theoretical basis for this research, the dual society, in so much as the expectation from the academic consensus is to see menial work as inherently negative and unfulfilling (Foster, 2017), or indeed as an example of a neoliberal mindset (Mendick et al, 2015; Franceschelli & Keating, 2018), yet the perception expressed by many young people is to see this kind of work as an identifier of place and progress on a potential path to better outcomes (Snee & Devine, 2018).

Standing (2014:11) refers to the problem of the precariat addressing the experience of ordinary people directly when he states "the evolution of the precariat as the agency of a politics of paradise is still to pass from theatre and visual ideas of emancipation to a set of demands that will engage the state rather than merely puzzle or irritate it." This addresses fundamental concerns relating to alternative work forms as currently they remain abstract and feel unrelated to people's everyday lives. The aforementioned is a

challenge for sociology that is not set to go away. The perceptions of what work is, and what work is available is considered by some writers to be different for a young person arriving on the job market today than it was for their parents (Kalleberg & Marsden, 2019), but for others this disparity is a lot lesser than assumed (Parry & Urwin, 2011). As previously referred to, there is a perception that job opportunities are now arbitrary, and that any job is better than no job (Rose, 2003). People need opportunities for income, security, creativity and social contact and they therefore cannot do without work opportunities regardless of how generous benefits may wrongly be perceived to be, or poor wages are (Ransome, 1996:190). Yet this does not mean to say that what work is, and what work can become, should not be questioned. Rather that the quality of that work and its ability to provide an income or sustenance should be the primary focus. This conception of income opens up a critique of what are often described as emancipatory forms of work, many of which have been suggested in response to the precariat concept.

A primary focus stemming from that consideration has been on institutions with a cooperative structure, possessing as little hierarchy as possible, which have stemmed out of the New Left tradition of political formations (Roussopoulos, 2007). Such formations are often based around the idea of economic communities. Harvey (1996) states that a fixation on strict barriers to defining a community actually detracts from the potential to form them based on geographical, mainly urban, boundaries. These approaches are challenged by many commentators and academics as utopian and unrepresentative of the capitalist modes of production which are enacted on a global scale, despite some notable examples such as Mondragon in Spain finding success, despite the corporation's move towards a more globally focused position over the last decade (Erasti et al, 2003). Cooperative attempts to remodel capitalism are regularly critiqued for holding back progress and innovation (Brass, 2017; Bhowmik & Chakraborty, 2019), but they have received renewed interest from scholars of the left as a bulwark against the excesses of capital despite Fukuyama's (1992) classic aphorism that we have seen the end of history and capitalism is its culmination.

The problem with community based approaches as Lees (2004:86) states is that in the search to have someone speak for that community it immediately becomes removed from the group, and reverts to a figure head approach. For young people with little social or economic capital such an outlet is difficult to imagine. The precariat concept according to some writers has fallen into this trap (Jørgensen, 2015; Wright, 2016) and in other cases claims that this represents a new class formation have been questioned (Fraser, 2013). Given the precariat as a concept has no tangible movement and behind it no obvious community from which to draw conclusions it has struggled to move forward and create a robust theoretical proposition for the reality young people entering the world of work find themselves in.

### 3.2.6 Conclusion

In this section the theoretical underpinnings of the problematisation of work have been elucidated. In particular the problematic notion of wage labour, its adherents and its opponents, have been critically considered with an understanding that in relation to the working class this is a system that has not worked for all. These concepts are not without their problems and it is clear that in the case of ideas such as the precariat and the resistance to wage labour they have suffered without a cohesive campaign or philosophy behind them. As part of this critical reflection it is important to understand the individual need for expression, through craft or skill, in the work of young people as they are becoming economic actors in society. Within that process however is the consideration that transitions are fraught with risk and it is evident we have constructed our economy around the need to overcome that risk or face the prospect of failure. As Daniel Bell and Stephen Graubard put it (1997:xii):

*'The economy may be a "system" but the polity is not. It is an "order" ...in which diverse individuals and groups compete for advantage, or for the implementation of their interests and values, through the political rules and mechanisms of a society.'*

Competition of the kind referred to above does not suit the start in life that many young working class people experience, leaving a distinct period in which their pursuance of progress is much more focused on catching up than ultimately succeeding. This leaves less room for the development of skill and craft, enacting a considerable outside force on their working life which is further exacerbated still by the period of austerity they are living under. Through the lens of the dual society and Sennett's understanding of craft the foundational theory of what is required to experience a meaningful transition has been introduced, primarily requiring a personal sense of meaning, societal value, and the utilisation of skill and craft. Highlighting such an understanding is of particular importance in research dealing with the recent period of economic austerity where a sense of anomie is only on the rise. A factor perhaps best exemplified by a survey detailing that 37 per cent of British workers felt their job was meaningless (Dahlgreen, 2015).

The literature evidenced in this section clearly points towards that gap in our academic understanding of this deficit between transitions of the sort discussed in Chapter 2 regarding what the reality of work is for young people today and the realisation of meaningful work. In order to better understand how that divide can be crossed, we must also understand the future of work.

### **3.3 The Future of Work**

In the following section the threat of automation and what that might mean to the world of work for young people is addressed. The debate concerning automation is of particular importance to the research as automation is widely seen as the catalyst that will gradually begin to end work as we have known it (Celentano, 2018; West, 2018). With particular reference to the development of technology as both a force for emancipation and indeed a factor in the promotion of unemployment, a variety of theoretical approaches are critically considered and how they might apply to the employment futures of young people in an economy like Scotland. The theoretical standpoints of André Gorz and Ivan Illich in particular are considered as advisory positions from which to consider the future manifestation of work and resistance to that change, and indeed how this relates to the consumerist society that has been created around us.

When considering the theoretical framework of this research an approach which develops new theories about work and youth transitions necessarily has to look towards the future and not simply assume the class conflicts and economic disputes of the past will predominate as time moves on. In doing so, the theoretical ideas about the approach of automation will be considered in conjunction with questions arising from the earlier review on UBI.

#### **3.3.1 The Robots Are Coming**

*“A man, for instance, who at the rate of 1 mark per acre mowed 2.5 acres per day and earned 2.5 marks, when the rate was raised to 1.25 marks per acre, mowed, not 3 acres, as he might easily have done, thus earning 3.75 marks, but only 2 acres, so that he could still earn the 2.5 marks to which he was accustomed. The opportunity of earning more was less attractive than that of working less [ ] An obvious possibility was to try the opposite policy, to force the worker by reduction of his wage rates to work harder to earn the same amount than he did before” André Gorz, Critique of Economic Reason (1989:111)*

The above scenario described by the radical philosopher of labour André Gorz neatly encapsulates a key contention in this debate. What is enough work? What constitutes good work (for the worker)? - and will that ever change? The future of work debate has primarily contended with notions of a future free from work (Rifkin, 1995; Srnicek & Williams, 2015), yet there are also a host of practical and timely contributions which more precisely focus on reform of work and what that might mean for the day-to-day lives of ordinary working people (Miliband, 1954; Lepinteur, 2019). This has included such measures as limiting working hours, providing more adequate flexibility in working time, and allowing for remote working. The academic focus of reforming work however has traditionally met with utopian visions, particularly prior to the age of readily available quantitative data. That focus is a trend in sociology, economics, geography etc

that has attracted debate from such writers as Marx (1976, 1978), Weber (2010), Durkheim (2013), Bell (1999), Galbraith (2007), Giddens (1991, 2002), Beck (1999, 2008), Keynes (1930), Castells (2009, 2012) and Russell (1996). In particular Gorz (1987, 1989, 1999) and Illich (1979, 1981, 2001) have written extensively on the subject focusing acutely in relation to the necessity to reimagine work in an age of increasingly precarious employment practices.

Illich's approach is fundamentally an anarchist attempt to remove the power of industrial capitalism over individuals to express themselves through their labours. He remarks that "wherever the shadow of economic growth touches us, we are left useless unless employed on a job or engaged in consumption" (1979:10), articulating a vision of society familiar to many. This belief that workers are fundamentally exploited both economically and morally guides a great deal of opposition to the existence of industrial labour as the assumed form of work. Growing from this opposition is the understanding that the world of work as it is currently formulated cannot be changed through natural evolution alone, workers themselves must be empowered and their desire for independent thought and action fostered. Illich (2001) imagined the methods by which this might be done as the development of tools for conviviality which would give people an opportunity to guarantee their right to work with independent efficiency.

One important aspect of Illich's approach was to herald the future role of computers in liberating us from work, the coming of a new information age. Castells (2009) sees this information age as presenting particularly difficult problem, namely the devaluation of labour. The approaching information age according to Castells has and will continue to polarise the labour force, with particular skilled groups who are adaptive being able to become actors within capital, and those who are limited and not possessing of informational skills being subject to it. According to Williams (2007) the development of the information age has led to the discarding of human potential and calls into question whether growth and technological advancement will actually cause more harm than good, a notion that is at odds with the traditional Marxist perspective.

The influence of Marx and the legacy of Marxism cannot be underestimated in this subject, for it is in the imagined futures of radical socialists that these questions were popularised (see Marcuse's *One-Dimensional Man*, 2002). Yet that is not to attribute this legacy solely to that school of thought. There is a long and seemingly more directly influential tradition among free market thinkers and advocates of heightened individualism to redress the role of work in society, a legacy that has shaped the work environment into which young people today strive. In 1930 Keynes predicted that by the end of the century we would be enjoying a 15 hour work week (cited in Graeber, 2013) a prediction that did not nearly come to pass. Increased living standards and economic growth have not led to a world of satisfaction and maximal leisure, quite the opposite as the resurgence of left and right anti-establishment narratives attest

to (Nagle, 2017). In the early 2000's Britain recorded Europe's longest working hours, with over a quarter of employees working over 48 hours a week (Kodz et al., 2003), a fact that is not dissociated from the uninterrupted Thatcherite spell followed by Third Way governance that sought to strip back only a minimal number of Thatcher's regressive labour reforms across the 1980s and 1990s in Britain (Driver & Martell, 2002).

The relationship between increased growth and longer working hours is particularly prevalent at the lowest and highest ends of the economic spectrum with those earning the least and the most working largely unhealthy hours (Warren, 2002; Chatzitheochari & Arber, 2009). Despite this there is a mixed picture in terms of how quality time is spent, for instance Gauthier et al (2004) found that data from 16 industrialised countries across the globe since the 1960s suggests that in fact parents are spending more time with their children now than they did during the mid-late portion of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Further evidence for this is contained in the fact the number of hours worked in the US has remained consistent for decades, and stands at 30% higher than in Europe (Rogerson, 2006). Europeans on average tend towards utilising all of their holiday entitlement whereas Americans do not, despite usually having a smaller entitlement, a salient example of how workers have internalised the factory mentality. Due to this, the American model is beginning to win out. In 2008 the Sarkozy government in France opted to scrap their landmark 35 hour week and in the UK the onset of Brexit has bred calls for further deregulation of the working time directive (Dobbins, 2017).

This neoliberal American led (though far from exclusively American) model is winning the day. Debates of this sort however began to gain prominence long ago, having developed and remodelled themselves from generation to generation since the industrial revolution (Hobsbawm, 1999; Thompson, 2013). The history of these questions around the future of work reached their height at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Hunnicutt (1988) opines that the growing belief that industrialisation and advanced technology would eliminate hunger and the worst excesses of disease drove workers during this time to believe that not only would work come to an end, but it would be replaced by leisure in abundance. At this time, particularly in the major industrialised nations of the UK and US, these reforms attracted adherents outside of the academic locus and gained support amongst trade unionists and some political groupings. The debate particularly centred around the role of leisure and the traditional work carried out by women (which at the time remained house work), something Illich (1981) referred to as shadow work, i.e. the labours we must partake in without pay, but with no seeming intellectual, relational, or artistic benefit. Such debates were possible due in part to increases in productive capacity and efficiency, which allowed for room to reimagine the time spent during the working day. One of the sources of increased productivity, and a key driving force behind much of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century's ability to produce efficiently, has been technological advancement, in particular the rise of automation. The technological developments which led to this

debate have been met with concern and distrust from the public beginning in the early days of the 20th century all the way up to the present day. Mumford (1964:6) opined that automation hid a concerning prophesy that ‘under the pretext of saving labour, the ultimate end of this technics is to displace life, or rather, to transfer the attributes of life to the machine and the mechanical collective, allowing only so much of the organism to remain as may be controlled and manipulated.’”

We see evidence of such debates in the industrial discourse prevalent at the time where Taylorists concerned themselves with such advancements under the auspices of providing healthy working hours (Nyl, 1995), most commonly acknowledged in the factory reforms of Henry Ford. Fordism was based on the mass production of uniform products, using the rigid technology of the production line with dedicated machines and standardised work routines which secure increased productivity through economies of scale, the deskilling and homogenisation of the labour force, and the intensification of labour (Clarke, 1990). Mechanisation, the efficiencies of the factory process line, and indeed the rising employment of women all sowed the seed for this new reality that has expanded and been refined in the century that followed – come what may. The desire and vision to reduce working hours among the Taylorists may not have been perceived as genuine, but it was a hope that came to pass to a varying degree, though never to the extent Keynes predicted. This is an issue which has once again hit the political agenda of late with discussions by the UK Labour Party starting in 2018 about introducing a four day working week (Hope, 2018), a call reiterated by the UK Trades Union Congress (TUC) (Wearn, 2018). A development that follows on from the democratic spirit of the Mitterand presidency in France which introduced the 39 hour working week during the 1980s, followed by a 35 hour working week under the Plural Left government of Lionel Jospin between 1997-2002. In Germany the largest trade union won the right to a 28 hour working week in 2018 for metal and electrical workers in Baden-Württemberg (Chazan, 2018), a deal that is seen as a precedent that will likely be rolled out across the country in the coming years.

Despite these contemporary advances the reality of automation struggled to engender positives for anyone but those who owned the means of production for many decades, not only this but its effect on the income of ordinary workers was seen as having a profound effect on the economy during the post-war period and beyond. Barany & Siegel (2018) suggest that automation gave rise to the eventual dominance of the service sector in the UK. One of the major causes of rising wage inequality across the world is the decline of manufacturing jobs relative to service roles. This was recognised at the time publicly also. The recession that hit the US in the 1950s was referred to by The Nation magazine as an automation depression (Wartzman, 2017), whilst calling on factory owners to scale back their plans for further advancement.

As remarked by Granter (2009) many American writers took the depression of the 1930s and recession of the 1950s as indications that technology was at the stage where people were set to be permanently

eliminated from the production process. This launched a growing desire, particularly among the increasingly wealthy middle class, that a future lay ahead in which the drudgery of nine-to-five labour might be replaced by a much more fluid and individualised working day (Loeb, 1933). The belief that followed from this possibility was that it might allow for the flourishing of creativity free from the constraints of the severely limited working day. Yet this new future was not without its detractors, Lippman (cited in Hunnicutt 1988: 261) writes of a common fear during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century time that such freedoms would allow the working classes far too much time to spend on wasteful hedonism that offered nothing to the collective growth of society. This was a fear not entirely of a restrictive nature, rather reflecting the apprehension that where the end of work might set us free the opportunistic nature of leisure capital would only step in to fill the void. Rose (2010) in contrast remarks upon the growing desire for self-education and lifelong learning amongst the industrial working class in Britain at the time in light of the introduction of the non-working weekend and various reforms to liberate fathers and mothers from the factory floor during this period. This fear was exaggerated by some who were apprehensive about a growth of consciousness among the working class and indeed the degradation of the masculine character (Cuordileone, 2005). During this time many prominent figures suggested a three day week was 'imminent' in the United States, and connected this to the McCarthyite fear of communism during the Cold War (Lynes 1958:346)

Moreover, during the period of greatest fear/celebration that such an unencumbered age may come about there was growing concern that our social norms, values, and broader way of life was not prepared for such liberation on both sides (Srnicek & Williams, 2015). This turning of the tables was seen as a reality that the establishment on a national and international stage was positioned to resist. The welfare state in its 20<sup>th</sup> century conception was constructed in ignorance of this change and thus the march to full employment continued unabated as the system moved towards a system more closely linked to workfare (Jessop, 1996). This engendered a situation in which the welfare networks created to support workers were ill equipped for the future of work to come. This shift mirrored the industrial shift from Fordist work models (large scale factory floors dependent on production lines) to post-Fordist forms of production (small batch production and specialised products) (Jessop, 1990), designed to facilitate the rise of mass consumerism.

### **3.3.2 The Role of Consumerism**

*"The morbid and dangerous habit the work ethic was meant to fight, destroy and eradicate at the time it entered into the public debate, was rooted in the traditional human inclination to consider one's own needs as given and to desire no more than to satisfy them. Once their habitual needs had been met, the traditionalist workers saw no rhyme nor reason to go on working, or for that matter to earn more money; what for, after all? There were so many other interesting and decent things to do, things one could not buy*

*but could well overlook, neglect or lose if one was running after money from dawn to dusk.” Zygmunt Bauman, *Work, Consumerism and the New Poor* (2005:6)*

Key to capital’s resistance to work reform was the proliferation of consumerism, a strategy that was initially targeted heavily at the growing role of women in the household and the workplace – who in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were the key purchasers of goods in the retail market. Writing on women in post-war West Germany Harsch (2002:749) contends that “they scrimped, made choices, and restricted the immediate consumption of their family and, especially, themselves in order to invest family resources in a domestic infrastructure whose construction helped to feed the [consumer] boom.” The new need for products over sustenance (which seemed to have been largely secured) would further exacerbate the division of wealth in society and made it more obvious who was doing well and who was not. Key to this was diminishing the importance and perceived quality of domestically produced goods and services, replacing them with commercially available technology and utilities. Hunnicut (1988:50) refers to this period as following a ‘gospel of consumption’ that was purposefully constructed in order to focus minds and time on wage labour and the growth of industry. As the trend for consumer led societies limited the power of traditional values of prudence and thrift (as theorised by Weber, 2010), consumption grew, creating new markets for those engaging in rising levels of production. This process however fostered attitudes which were not conducive to the form of disciplined and non-individualised work practices capital wanted us to follow. This process “required the nurture of qualities like wastefulness, self-indulgence, and artificial obsolescence, which directly negated or undermined the values of efficiency” (Marchand, 1985:158), and ultimately led to a mass of workers who were much less able to accept the limited lot they had been given. The consumerist revolution also drew young people ever away from education and into the world of work, a process which has been reversed as the economy has declined.

The nature of consumerism as inherent to the development of the work culture we see today was best theorised by Gorz, who explicitly linked the increase in consumer goods with a new abundance of poverty (Little, 2013). Following the conventional Marxist critique of alienation, Gorz (1989) theorises that the use value of luxury goods is not readily apparent and the moment they become affordable to the common worker, they lose their luxury status, a phenomenon equally apparent in the acquiring of skills by young workers, most commonly attributed in the UK to the proliferation of degrees which are readily dismissed as having been devalued by the increasing number of ordinary working people who are able to acquire them (Naylor et al, 2015). Consumerist goods therefore, much like automation, are proliferated with the intention of reducing poverty yet fundamentally leading to the exact opposite effect.

### 3.3.3 The End of Work?

In the contemporary era the celebration of new work opportunities due to automation and technology is by no means exclusive to the left of the political spectrum, and fear of it not exclusive to the right. This is epitomised by the fact earnings have decoupled from productivity and this has been the case for the last decade, as such raising productivity is no longer sufficient to raise real wages for the typical worker, causing a considerable problem for the core arguments of both traditions (Schwellnus et al, 2017). Tamny (2018) visualises the end of work as a period of growing individual and economic liberty, where we are able to make our hobbies and interests our day-to-day jobs. In this understanding the freedom from work is a method by which the controlling hand of government can be decreased and the opportunities of the market allowed to expand. Whereas socialist thinkers fear that such technological advancement will lead to the erosion in the quality of work available as well as from the loss of jobs. Ultimately for the trade union led left, the security of workers of all forms depends on broader changes in ownership rather than methods of production (Spencer, 2018).

In his book *Bullshit Jobs*, Graeber (2018) has taken a much more relaxed approach to the rise of automation and sees it as an opportunity to free us from the monotony of pointless employment that serves no one in the present day. Graeber believes that in technological terms many western countries are more than capable of vastly diminishing the amount of work that is done by people across the globe, yet instead new and largely meaningless jobs have been created to prevent that happening. The onset of automation, and the continuing existence of cheap labour in the East, has swallowed up the majority of productive jobs which in turn has created entire new industries such as telemarketing, corporate law, vast swathes of administration, and human resources to fill the void. He sees this phenomenon as having a profoundly negative effect on the moral and spiritual existence of humanity. This surfeit of meaningless and poorly paid jobs is not supposed to happen in the innovation based capitalist society we live in, yet it does.

We are told that we live in times of overwhelming material abundance, yet this abundance rarely trickles down to those who have spent their life without it. This, alongside automation, is at the root of the debates around the future of work post the financial crisis. Whereas Bell (1999) theorised the post-industrial society, it is pertinent to consider whether we now live in a post-career society. This is typified by the reliance of the gig economy on advanced algorithms and software development to foster productivity, with much of the net job growth in recent decades accounted for by these alternative work arrangements (Katz & Krueger, 2016). The most well-known gig employers such as Uber, Deliveroo etc. are only a tiny proportion of this growth, with almost every sector of the economy utilising and fostering such practices. This includes the steady rise in not only self-employment but bogus self-employment too, particularly in the construction industry (Briscoe et al, 2000), and logistics and distribution (Haidinger, 2015).

Beck (2008) foresaw the trend towards casualised working and argues that we are rapidly moving from a work society to one based around knowledge. This knowledge society has done away with the old Fordist regime and replaced it with a regime based on risk and insecurity. The Fordist form of production required a lot of human power to work effectively, yet as the century wore on many of these tasks were replaced by machines. The robust trade unions and collective bargaining arrangements that existed due to such a high frequency of labour were further dissolved by the loss of these jobs. The traditional socialist/social-democratic goal of full employment was now neither possible nor particularly desirable for many of its former champions. Beck (ibid:77) characterises this as is a destandardised and fragmented, 'underemployment system' heavily reliant on precarious and underpaid labour. Through the fragmentation of the labour force a future return to true full employment appears to be unlikely. We currently technically enjoy full employment, yet the vast swathes of underemployed are often considered as working to similar levels as those who work 36 hour weeks, an attempt according to some to deliberately finesse the statistics (Wilkins, 2007). Beck has opined that a more likely scenario is the 'Brazilianisation' of the West (Munck, 2002:4), an outcome which in essence means that stable and secure employment has become scarce and has been replaced by a casualised and precarious workforce, leading to a clear division between a permanent and temporary class of workers, creating a new dynamic that inflates the insecurity already seen in society. Here is a vision of the future that both conflicts with traditional notions of work bringing security, and the dominant Protestant work ethic of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The two simply cannot sustain under such a system where current wages are barely meeting subsistence levels and state support is required just to get by in Scotland (Bailey et al, 2018).

Gorz (1999) believes that this strain is caused by an evolution of the Protestant work ethic which is a feature of work-based societies, which readily consider work not only as an economic imperative but also as a key element of our moral duty. The reason for such an emphasis is that personal success is viewed as the epitome of the good life and anything derived from that pursuit inherently has value. The Protestant work ethic is culturally prominent in the output of American cinema, which remains globally popular, and critically evidenced in such contemporary films as *There Will Be Blood* (2007), based on Upton Sinclair's *Oil!* (2008), and *The Founder* (2016), detailing the founding father of the McDonalds fast food empire. In a precarious or so called Brazilianised model of employment these archetypes of the hard working individual simply collapse.

As an example of how pervasive the aforementioned ethic is in the UK, the well recorded antipathy towards benefit claimants is a matter of record (Hancock & Mooney, 2013; Mooney, 2009). Ideology of this kind is deeply ingrained in many global societies and transcends common reference points of the political left and right. The dominant ethos follows that if we are to beat unemployment then we must work more, not less. For Gorz (1989; 1999), that work ethic has become largely obsolete even if its prominence

remains. Increases in production and the drive towards Stakhanovite (i.e. exceptionally assiduous almost zealot like fervour for work) work practices bears little relation to living a better and more fruitful life. The needs of most individuals within western society have been met many times over; it is only through avarice and unequal distribution that deficits occur. In order to meet the needs of all we need not produce more but produce differently, and in order to do this we must reimagine the method of that production i.e work. The onset of automation therefore provides us with an opportunity to cast off that work ethic and work less.

### **3.3.4 Conclusion**

The literature assessed here shows that various forms of social organisation (capitalism, social democracy, communism, and feudal societies) have all in different ways failed to understand the inherent human desire for creativity and autonomy. Contributions from Illich (1981), Graeber (2013), Castells (2009) and Gorz (1999) reveal the alienating nature of capitalism in the contemporary age not only in the workplace but in the sense that individuals are alienated from their own future through threats to their ability to work, in this case automation. This reflects what Marx (2000) identified in his *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* i.e. the assumption that freedom from work will be freedom in all senses is wrong, identifying as others have since that it is not only work that alienates individuals from control over their own lives but the very reality of living in late capitalism itself. Inevitably forces of this kind manifest in competing suggestions to rebalance the divide, detailing a debate we have come to refer to as the future of work. Many ideas related to the future of work are defined as utopian, yet the level to which they meet a notion of far off possibility has decreased considerably since the advent of the post-industrial age, in particular with the onset of a younger generation less wedded to 20<sup>th</sup> century notions of how to conduct resistance to overarching norms.

Undoubtedly the diminished reliance on human labour going forward, which some writers deem to be inevitable (Kaplan, 2015), has presented the opportunity to revisit these arguments, but it must first be seen to be feasible and desired. The space where that possibility is most likely to be visible is in the attitudes and behaviours of young people, particularly those leaving school straight for the world of work, a generation which has been raised on the predominance of technological solutions. If indeed it is not visible here, then the hoped for reforms of many of the voices detailed above require revision. Indeed, it may be the case that young people have already internalised and accepted individualist narratives regarding the inequality they suffer (Cote, 2014; Pimlott-Wilson, 2015). The assumption that the future of work is dependent only on technological development and not the shared will of communities and wider society as such is potentially short sighted.

Leading on from this we can shine a light on a building block of the theoretical framework present in this research, that of the dual society. If heteronomous forces from outwith the individual begin to predominate then any attempts to reshape work towards the needs of individual expression will be limited in their capacity to succeed. It should be stated however, that awareness among the general population of this changing environment is minimal, despite the great importance placed on it by elite commentators such as Davidow & Malone (2014) who have said that “we will soon be looking at hordes of citizens of zero economic value. Figuring out how to deal with the impacts of this development will be the greatest challenge facing free market economies in this century.”

Despite this oncoming reality it is clear that there has been no let up in the desire of governments to diminish the societal predominance of wage labour. Through the process of glorifying work and demonising non-work, the system of capital has encouraged people to risk a great deal of their own happiness to find a paid position, a process through which competition drives down the costs of labour, as stated by Bauman (2005) and Barany & Siegel (2018). This is in essence an attempt to revitalise an industrial revolution era mentality and once again capitalise on that base of opportunity. The ability of communities to adapt this mentality to an age of automation and reduced public expenditure is fundamental in understanding what it means to have a meaningful transition going forward, and the stresses that expectation puts on young people. If however evidence can be found that young people, even in a partial sense, are not conforming to this then a different future may be realised, and that non-conformity may in some way be derived from our educational approach. In the following section this paper will contemplate literature which contends with this possibility.

### ***3.4 A Pedagogy of the Working Class***

Here a selection of theoretical literature from education and pedagogical studies are considered in relation to the overarching concerns of the research. The employment pathways that young people are guided towards are assessed in terms of their long term effect on particular working class communities and further consideration is given over to the propensity for and possibility of lifelong learning as a cornerstone of developing meaning not only in work but in further social pursuits.

With a particular critical focus on the work of radical social critic Ivan Illich, this review concerns itself with the role of austerity in education and how indeed educational experience has shaped young people’s understanding of work in the past and contemporary age. Reference is made to the activities of institutions and the individualising processes that take place throughout the educational life course and how this shapes and deconstructs class identity in the long term.

In constructing an overarching theoretical framework for the research the importance of developing tools for conviviality is considered, a response to the processes in which knowledge is specialised and elitism is proliferated to prevent people in working class communities from developing practical knowledge that could give meaning and prosperity to their education and work lives. This concept is inherently tied to Sennett's (2009) earlier discussed concept of craftsmanship.

### **3.4.1 Convivial Education**

*Incidental education cannot any longer return to the forms which learning took in the village or the medieval town. Traditional society was more like a set of concentric circles of meaningful structures, while modern man must learn how to find meaning in many structures to which he is only marginally related. In the village, language and architecture and work and religion and family customs were consistent with one another, mutually explanatory and reinforcing. To grow into one implied a growth into the others. Even specialized apprenticeship was a by-product of specialized activities, such as shoemaking or the singing of psalms. If an apprentice never became a master or a scholar, he still contributed to making shoes or to making church services solemn. Education did not compete for time with either work or leisure. Almost all education was complex, lifelong, and unplanned.*

Ivan Illich (1971:22), *Deschooling Society*

Teaching and learning are experiences all humans go through with profound social and economic consequences, and it is through that dynamic many individuals come to understand their place in the world, and indeed the place in the world they may one day reach. Education however is not reducible to a singular mechanical method of instruction, nor is it a package of facts and figures which can be fed to a subject without context and consequence. As Shor (1993:24) says, "classrooms die as intellectual centres when they become delivery systems for lifeless bodies of knowledge". In the spirit of the cited inefficiency and lack of creativity there has been numerous powerful critiques of the educational systems that predominate in western society, with a particular emphasis on the role of class and indeed the consequences of economic austerity. According to many writers the background to our current educational landscape is one shaped by this latter force. Cuts to teacher education (Menter & Hulme, 2012), teacher pay - more than 5% since 2005 according to the OECD (Denholm, 2018), the numbers of teachers in relation to pupils (Scottish Government, 2017c), and indeed school support staff (Freeman, 2017) have all had a remarkable effect on the kind and quality of teaching that is available to young people growing up in some of our most disadvantaged communities in Scotland, in particular since the onset of financial austerity. Cuts of this kind are a political choice, albeit not explicit, and reveal an ambivalence towards education from different sectors of the establishment promoted through the sort of laissez-faire localism inherent in the Big Society concept (Hodgson & Spours, 2012). Yet behind material cuts there is also an underlying sense

that the value within which education is held and its importance to creating so called moral individuals has been cut too (Peters, 1959), a sense expressed from many conflicting political and philosophical viewpoints. Naturally this leads towards calls for a new approach that better encapsulates the different requirements for educating those at the sharp end of the scale in times of economic decline. Yet in order to do that there must first be a better understanding of what education itself is.

The prevalent role of education in our society despite the emphasis government policy places on it, is often widely misunderstood. Not only do educational institutions and actors teach us to do they also teach us to be, often in the process creating individuals who embody what the economy requires of its citizens (Callan, 1997). It is that developmental understanding which is key to how it is we have had generations of young people ideally suited to a labour system that is now disappearing, leaving them poorly prepared for any new formation that might be yet to come (Freire, 1996). The educational system in conjunction with the labour market deprives those affected by it of their freedom and power to act autonomously and live creatively according to Illich (1979). In doing so traditional ways of life and valuable cultural understandings are lost, in particular those that reflect the values and identity of the working class. Loss of this kind creates an environment in which young people are perfectly adapted to wage labour but little else (White, 1997), creating a hostile environment that undoubtedly has the greatest effect on marginalised communities and persons (Marger, 2002) where the ability to gain an education outside of the work paradigm is significantly diminished.

What possibility then for a pedagogy and educational structure that teach young people to create new forms of learning throughout the life course, or indeed a general pedagogy of the working class that better reflects their outlook? In the work of Ivan Illich (1971; 1979; 1981; 2001) there is a plea to this end, and it is one that has new found relevance in the age of austerity. Illich's (1971) *Deschooling Society* is a manifesto for educational change in which he calls for the unmasking of ritualised beliefs, the disintegration of formalised learning, and the prescient introduction of new technologies to hand power over to the agents of change, namely in this context, the generation of young people who will soon be adults. Reflecting some of the key debates regarding autonomy mentioned in *Section 3.3* (1971:2) he opines 'As long as we are not aware of the ritual through which school shapes the progressive consumer- the economy's major resource – we cannot break the spell of this economy and shape a new one.'

In this we can understand the basis of the educational policy reforms discussed in *Section 2.4*, and the implicit structures that lie beneath them. There is a profound lack of ambition regarding what young working class people are and what they are capable of in the fundament of our educational structure (Kelly, 2011), and often times this has been influenced by a sense that those of a lower social class are less adept at the metrics education measures success on (Kane, 2006; Dunne & Gazeley, 2008). Consistently these

metrics are ignorant of wider social and economic concerns, in particular the pervasive effect poverty and class have on the way individuals interact with different systems.

*Deschooling Society* neatly encompasses the two bêtes noires of Illich's work, modernisation and the illegitimate institution. For Illich language is very important and by speaking the language of the poor and allowing them to speak for themselves, he hoped to find new modes of learning unfettered by structural imposition. This owes some of its legacy to the work of Stirner (2005:36) who stated that 'pedagogy ought to espouse the molding of the free personality as its starting point and objective'. This is closely related to other work which understands that part of the educational deficit is that it excludes the voices of the working class (Rose, 2010; Gilbert, 2018), in much the same way as economic policies have done so (Willis, 2017; Evans & Tilley, 2017).

Illich believed we should seek to create tools for conviviality, not useful machines through our educational endeavours. A tool by his definition is capable of a variety of functions and purposes whilst still being an extension of the wider character the individual holds (1971). In this sense he was primarily discussing technology, yet this concept has further application for educational tools too. This concept allows for a broader repurposing of economic potential that is not only useful but also has meaning to the individual. In this we can see some relation to the concerns and philosophy of Sennett (2009) on education when he says that creating craftsmanship is a matter of bonds of mutuality, learning, cooperation, and collaboration in a continuous exchange of dialogue skills.

At this point it would be wise to clarify what is meant by conviviality; the easiest way to describe it in Illich's context would in this case be to say it requires non-manipulative, or tolerant and accepting forms of engagement and development. Illich (2001:12) argued it to be:

*'Individual freedom realised in personal interdependence and, as such, an intrinsic ethical value. I believe that, in any society, as conviviality is reduced below a certain level, no amount of industrial productivity can effectively satisfy the needs it creates among society's members.'...A convivial society would be the result of social arrangements that guarantee for each member the most ample and free access to the tools of the community and limit this freedom only in favour of another member's equal freedom.'*

Here Illich is attempting to show us what lies beneath the widely held beliefs that construct our supposedly benign institutions – schools, corporations etc – and at the same time pose questions regarding how individuals can change them. These tools for conviviality when combined with the understanding of Sennett can be understood as a form of skills. Skills of craft, skills of learning, and skills of dialogue. As a new desire for teaching the skills of critical thought has developed in recent decades (Shor, 1992) we have gradually deskilled practical education at the same time, focusing instead on the process of advancing

towards the next step of formal education (further or higher). As Dewey (2008) understood, all education comes from experience and yet the majority of experience young people receive is simply that of being educated. Though it might seem a cliché, the benefit of hands on education is well documented and it equally gives young people the chance to better understand the world of work that potentially lays before them, only if and when they understand this can they be best placed to change it (Kincheloe, 2018).

The social experience of class and the lived reality of the individual is not truly reflected in our educational process and as such young people from disadvantaged backgrounds are much less likely to see themselves in it, as adeptly identified by Reay (2017). At the same time we can anticipate that young people from disadvantaged backgrounds are unlikely to see themselves in alternative forms of work and education also, as these avenues have not been open to them through any meaningful social or political movement except perhaps on the right of the political spectrum who have sought to capitalise on the absence of a socialist presence in the discourse of class (Gest, 2016).

The above described process which leaves working class young people left out is hegemonic in the sense that intensification of globalisation has led to an educational system in which inequality and disadvantage are rarely challenged; they are simply facts of economic reality (Mayo, 2015). All of the social structures and hegemonies we create are forms of non-convivial tools as defined by Illich (1971), however they are all too often malignant in nature. In finding new tools for conviviality, it is hoped that we can become a society of individuals within a purposeful efficient structure that has meaning at its core.

Illich also wrote extensively on the function and role of the human being at work. His texts *Shadow Work* (1981) and *The Right to Useful Unemployment* (1979) further explain his benchmark philosophy of conviviality, a benchmark which is all important in developing an understanding of alternative work forms influenced by education. What is clear from Illich's philosophy and that of other radical philosophers on the subject of education (Hooks, 1994; Giroux, 1997; Suissa, 2010) is that we cannot simply rest on reform of the individual, but we must also focus on the activities and nature of institutions.

### ***3.4.2 The Role of Institutions and the Potential for Lifelong Learning***

The interaction between young people and education is fundamentally based in institutions (schools, universities etc), though we may not think of these often amorphous community spaces as such, that is fundamentally what they are. There are two types of institution, the manipulative institution and the convivial institution according to Illich (1971:53).

In the UK today these two elements co-exist but the latter only exists at the behest of the former, the fundamental organs of control remain very much under the auspices of manipulative institutions. Hern (2003) presents a passionate argument for these convivial institutions by showing that local communities are in the best position to create new forms of education and teaching, yet despite this community narratives have often been co-opted by the political right as a means of pushing through further austerity (Lowndes & Pratchett, 2012).

Manipulative in this sense should not be understood as inherently a negative thing, simply as an overt and directed form of control, often towards an explicit or implicit end. This argument regarding the creation of knowledge as a manipulated process is elucidated by Meyer & Rowan (1977:341) who state that knowledge is 'legitimated through the educational systems, by social prestige, by the laws, and the courts'. In this sense we can understand the role of educational institutions as interlocutors between power and young people. In order for reform of work to take place it is all important that so too these institutions are reformed. The penetration of manipulative institutions is so much however that it is these institutions which characterise our understanding of education almost entirely (Olssen & Peters, 2005). This understanding leads to an education system which is dependent on results and the meeting of targets, rather than fostering independent thought.

This is the desired culmination of what Durkheim (2005:4) saw as the purpose of education itself, to create the perfect 'social beings'. Social beings in this sense can be understood as obedient beings. The nature of classrooms as competitive arenas to foster these social beings has become both socially and physically detrimental (Abouserie, 1994) leading to environments in which young working class children are less adapted to, often lacking the same narrative of career based trajectories from their home lives that middle class children enjoy.

The shrinking of classrooms as 'imaginative spaces' (Gallas, 2003:10) has also required us to question whether such spaces are truly educating young people or simply enabling them for a lifetime in the employment of the fluctuating market economy. This dynamic reproduces inequality and in turn leads to a sense of hostility towards the person who does not find themselves naturally adept in such scenarios. These institutions are also usually our first interaction with the need for and development of interpersonal skills and networks with those outside of our immediate family. Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) discuss this in terms of social capital, the notion that our connections within a networked society heavily determine our place within that society. Young people are by definition deprived of social capital, particularly in the working world, due to their inexperience and perceived immaturity and it is the role of the educational institution to rebalance this. Morrow (1999) sees young people's social capital rather as a set of processes and practices that are integral to the acquisition of other forms of capital in the long run. In this event many

young people feel that the only groups where they can enforce a platform of belonging is amongst other young people, specifically at school and other educational institutions, if they are not able to do so due to a perceived lack of economic standing then this can set them on a difficult course throughout their lives. As Wilson (1996) states, a defining feature of being poor is that an individual can be actively excluded from certain social networks and institutions which could be used to secure good jobs and decent housing.

In the event that a young person does develop adequate social capital within this sphere it can be difficult to maintain it afterwards without the reward of a job or continued education (Freitag & Kirchner, 2011). It is from this consideration that the idea of consensus building and increased participation (or tools for conviviality) can be seen as a way of harnessing and increasing our social capital (Putnam, 2000) outwith these institutions. It is understandable why institutions do not do this as they themselves have a vast number of external financial pressures which lead to the prioritising of marketable traits (Hargreaves, 2003) rather than prioritising the advancement of social capital. This relates directly to Illich's (1973:75) concern regarding the rigidity of our education systems 'In a society caught up in the race for the better, limits on change are experienced as a threat. The commitment to the better at any cost makes the good impossible at all costs.'

Creativity and the pursuit of knowledge, which is not immediately profitable, has become diluted in this process thereby leading to a deskilling of the workforce making the transferability of their knowledge and experience greatly diminished (Sennett, 2009). This is inextricably connected to the problem of the future of work and the coming of the automation age discussed in *Section 3.3*. A concept which does potentially provide creativity and knowledge that is not distinctly for profit is that of lifelong learning which has received greater attention in recent years. Lifelong learning can be described as the informal learning practices many of us engage in with a view towards developing skills, knowledge, or indeed for career progression (Longworth & Davies, 1996). Though largely concerned with the continuing education of older adults it is a concept which requires consideration also regarding the learning lives of young people, particularly those who leave school at 16/17 as the participants in the second stage of this study did (Osborne et al, 2007).

As Coffield (2000) notes, it is very common for policy makers, researchers, and practitioners to understand the importance of informal learning only to then develop policy, theory, and practice without any further reference to it. Unfortunately many interventions in favour of lifelong learning have been with the goal of increasing economic competitiveness in mind (Edwards, 1997) a trend that has become ever more apparent in many educational reforms in the age of austerity. Jarvis (2004:5) however contends that lifelong learning should be a means of getting around the market reasoning of contemporary education when he says 'we are nearly all aware of the way in which education, even state supported education, has

become a commodity to be sold on the learning market rather than a state provision for the good of its population'. Despite this the continuous focus of lifelong, or informal, learning practices are not young people but instead adults well into the process of their working life. What potential then for a lifelong learning practice for the young, and how could this feed into the conviviality approach considered above?

The identity of young working class men in particular is neglected in debates regarding lifelong learning, leading to a further sense of exclusion (Quinn et al, 2013). These young men often struggle to fit the accepted fluid paradigm of the new lifelong learner and are constantly being fixed in place by structural inequality and institutional practices. Their tendency to drop-out is shaped by masculinity, but need not be viewed pejoratively (ibid). Theirs can be a frustrated search for lifelong learning, often inspired by a love of informal learning that goes unnoticed by most as it may not be within the conventional mode of what constitutes worthwhile learning. A notable example of such schemes are the Workers Educational Association (WEA), which in particular during the industrial era found great success in bringing those who had left formal education towards new understandings and indeed class based theoretical discourse (Rose, 1989). Indeed it was this form of interaction between workers and educators that gave rise to both the adult education edifice we now have in the UK and to some extent the broader range of higher education opportunities available to all, a fact diminished since the introduction of considerable fees and economic barriers to attendance for those from disadvantaged backgrounds (Lee, 2018).

Hegel argued that societies are cognitive and moral projects, of which education is a key constitutive part (Eagleton, 1989). If this is the case then any project which seems to exclude a key section of the most disadvantaged sections of itself from education, or at least does not actively give full opportunity to that group, is by definition failing in this moral project. The labour movement has in recent centuries been able to act as a social movement, an education in democracy, and a struggle for a democratic education (Merrill & Schurman, 2016). Recapturing that essence for non-workers, in particular young people, through the prism of lifelong learning is potentially a key part of creating a working class pedagogy that utilises all of the tools for conviviality that are available to us.

### ***3.4.3 The Role of Language***

Illich presents an interesting case for rethinking how we live, work, and learn, and it is with this in mind that we can seek a radical alternative in increasingly unimaginative times. There is a need to better understand the role language plays both in our society and within our educational institutions, as this is fundamentally what shapes the day to day reality faced by young people in these contexts. Wittgenstein (1953) proposed that rather than we seek truth (in life, in education, or even at all) we seek new ways of thinking; that we should think for ourselves as a means of understanding the world. In some quarters this has been viewed as

a comment against education, but it is far from it. Classically a child is trainable in a socially structured environment in which the ability or competence to be taught is already mastered by the teacher (Williams, 1994). The goal of teaching therefore is to enable learners to see rather than for them to directly interpret (Budd, 1987). Wittgenstein chooses to emphasise the respect for difference as a response to this and therefore does not see the self as essentially dialogical as the likes of Habermas and Heidegger do (Richardson et al, 1998), it is more representative to say that he sees the self as pedagogical. To presuppose that our language or objects have any essential order or shape is wrong to Wittgenstein (1953), they only have use, and this should be true of how we educate also.

Something of the above approach to language has crept into our contemporary teaching practices, particularly regarding how we understand class (LeCourt, 2006). It has long been known that individual groups and communities create and foster their own idiolects. It is a secondary purpose of education however to remove or at least suppress such forms of language in order to better prepare individuals for the labour market. Bernstein theorised as far back as 1960 that working class kids have limitations on their language use which, although allowing for a vast range of possibilities, discourages expression of subjective intent and leads the user towards descriptive rather than abstract concepts (Bernstein, 1960). Limited expression immediately disadvantages working class young people in the process of learning and is at times perceived by some as a form of unintelligent behaviour. Reay (2006) notes that this form of discrimination is implicitly prevalent across state schools in England, and we can fairly reasonably assume the case is similar here in Scotland. If we were to more clearly free working class young people to speak and articulate themselves as they personally feel is comfortable and effective then this may well have a profound freeing influence on the educational potential of these individuals. As Illich writes (2001:97) 'People can defend language as inherently theirs; they can find in their inalienable natures the confidence to use their unchanged formal structures to express contents entirely opposed to those for which they were taught to use them in their childhood.'

Sociolinguists have formulated evidential theories which suggest that slang is part of the innate construction of social identity, this is particularly pronounced among pupils at secondary/high schools (Labov 1982; Eckert 1989). Words therefore become the soul of both the individual and their community identity, thereby becoming the dormant means by which we can express discontent and truly reflect our own struggles. Unshackled expression of this kind could equally allow for the cosh of institutional arrangements to be lessened with a reciprocal dialogue between pupil and teacher being created.

Returning to institutions, the class dynamic is somewhat difficult to get round given the vast majority of higher education students in so called elite institutions are of the middle class, and the expectation is that education should prepare young people for that potential eventuality. O'Dair (2003) argues that the

important point is not to necessarily change language but to teach working class kids through a new pedagogy that middle class culture is not superior to that of the working class, in doing so giving them the opportunity to be valued by society. This approach, though sensible within the structures we currently have, makes no attempt to radically redress the imbalances we see in our systems of transition. O'Dair's position suggests that the role of working class pedagogy and academic discourses function in opposition to rather than in relationship with each other (LeCourt, 2006). Working to incorporate working class pedagogy into every aspect of teaching, thereby normalising it and removing the long running stigma, could have potential advantages in this area. Furthermore, the theoretical discussions around this subject pointedly neglect the desire, and in many communities absolute need, for post-school destinations beyond education. That desire is well reflected in the results of this study (*Chapters 5, 6, and 7*) and yet there is a dearth of research concerning it as a post school destination. Though perhaps only one aspect of a much wider issue, the language we use and allow young people to use in the educational setting can go some way to altering class barriers and giving rise to a new working class oriented pedagogy.

#### **3.4.4 Conclusion**

In this section the theoretical basis for understanding working class experiences of education during a period of economic austerity has been laid out. Though not fully realised we can understand from this that there is a deficit in terms of instruction and institutions which tends towards driving young people away from an educational path that suits their needs and desires, towards educational paths that benefit the economic interests of wider economic actors. This process bears a resemblance to the concerns laid out by Illich in his quest to discover tools for conviviality and is summed up well in the following quote (1973:10) *"For a hundred years we have tried to make machines work for men and to school men for life in their service. Now it turns out that machines do not "work" and that people cannot be schooled for a life at the service of machines"*. Reflecting back on previous discussions regarding the future of work (*Section 3.3*) we can understand that our educational system may have been suitably adapted to the needs of the economy and society throughout swathes of the 20<sup>th</sup> century but that this is no longer the case in the view of many (Gallas, 2003; Reay, 2006; Rose, 2010; Gilbert, 2018). It is important therefore to learn the lesson of Wittgenstein (1953) and treat the self as pedagogical, freeing young working class people from the constraints of the market doctrine in education. This is not to say that Illich's (1971) proposal of completely doing away with institutions is appropriate, only to understand that the institution in this regard can and does have a pernicious effect when it comes to the education of certain demographics.

Illich understood that systems – be they hierarchical, communitarian, despotic, or religious – are complex, and rarely can the fundamentals of a sound idea percolate from generation to generation without disharmony (Illich, 1997). That disharmony has meant that lifelong learning which had its roots in the

workers movement has moved towards a more career driven focus before anyone had the opportunity to notice it was happening. In order to create a theoretical framework that aids the development of new approaches to work and education in a period of economic difficulty that assumption has to be reversed and lifelong learning must be revisited in the form of the development of personal skills and understanding. This important dynamic was reflected well by interview participant **Billy** who responded to a question regarding post-school destination as below:

**Researcher:** *Now, you said that you would've stayed on at school if you had wanted to, do you mean to say you left early?*

**Billy:** *Earlier than I should've anyway. Aye well I hated them and they hated me so what else could I do really.*

**Researcher:** *How did they hate you, the teachers you mean?*

**Billy:** *Them and the rest. Maybe not hate, but they didn't really have any time for me. I suppose I wouldn't have either, I wasn't exactly a good kid [LAUGHS]. Look I just wanted to work, and I am working, so for me that's doing well, right. Only my mates understood that. If you spoke to a teacher about it, it was like they were paid by the bloody colleges or something, right. Do this, do that – one even told me I would be a good vet! Me! A vet. Imagine that, I think I got an F in Maths or something. They're not speaking to you on your level. I don't have a problem with them, that's their thing, I know they need to do it – but by the end I just wanted out.*

In the above exchange we can see the essence of how a minority struggle with our market based educational structures. Whilst this may be suited to some, and undoubtedly for many it has delivered (Spohrer, 2015; Dunlop, 2016), it has not delivered for others. It is important our understanding of why that is expands so as not to continue with a model that leaves some behind.

### **3.5 Chapter Conclusion – Formulating a Theoretical Framework**

What is clear from this literature review is that there is a vacant space in the study of youth transitions on how to approach the question of what work means to young people during periods of sustained economic upheaval. In order to do so effectively, a robust theoretical standpoint must be presented incorporating the construct of the dual society, individualised risk in an age of austerity, the necessity of craft and skill, and the need to take into account propensity for lifelong learning. Further lessons must be learned from the experience of Standing's notion of the precariat to guide a nuanced understanding of the experiences young people face in an urban context like Glasgow and the sort of employment that is available to them when leaving education.

As a starting point highlighted in *Section 3.2.1* the dual society offers a broad guideline from which to begin constructing a theoretical framework for this research. The understanding it offers, as argued by Bowring (1996), Whitbread (1985), and Howard (2016) is that of a theory of alienation and the practical reasons for overcoming it. Various commentators have seen this as a struggle between spaces of control i.e. our aspirations and desires, and spaces of alienation i.e. power that is enacted upon us, and that dynamic adequately reflects the concerns facing young people who have been subject to the realities this research seeks to understand. The dual society coupled with our already existing assumptions of austerity enacting on young people, against their individual desires to get on and flourish in spite of our system of wage labour, is the primary framework by which the data collected in this study will be assessed.

In the introduction it was posited that technological change has been a key catalyst in altering social attitudes and economic reality, and to many authors this has been defined as a revolutionary change (Williams, 2007; Castells, 2009; Srnicek & Williams, 2015; Tamny, 2018). As automation approaches on a grand scale (Vermeulen et al, 2018) the nature of how work is practiced is set to change even further, giving rise to a number of key alternative forms of engagement considered in *Section 3.3*, that may well become necessary as more and more of us are no longer required by an economy that once promised prosperity. For young people to capitalise on that change it is important there is still space for the group most likely to leave school and move straight into employment to develop skills that will be applicable to their employment future. As such a primary part of the theoretical framework developed from this review is identifying experiences that reflect an understanding of the changing economic future and how that has been shaped by education and personal experiences of austerity. The research therefore will be understood through the concept identified by Illich as developing tools for conviviality, a complementary theory in line with the dual society, as articulated in *Section 3.4.1*. Illich (2001:7) said that tools for conviviality are "those which give each person who uses them the greatest opportunity to enrich the environment with the fruits of his or her vision". This understanding will underpin the accounts collected in

the research, particularly in relation to the desired transitions young people wish to make and how this compares to their experience of moving from school to work.

Work in an age of austerity is inherently a problematic concept. Who does it, when does it have value, and to what extent can it be said that work provides reward are all questions that have changed shape in the age of austerity. In *Section 3.2.6* key literature concerning that question was assessed revealing solutions that have been presented to this problem, encapsulated most recently in the concept of the precariat. Despite this a number of theories pursuing this goal have failed to penetrate the world of ordinary working people (Standing, 2014; Roussopoulos, 2007), leaving them as theoretical abstracts that are unable to move new forms of work and organisation forward. A clear representation of this problem is evident in the work of Jørgensen (2015) and Wright (2016) which evidence the ungrounded nature of theories that seek to claim a new class formation. Despite this it is evident that something of the material reality of young people is contained in these analyses and any subsequent attempts to theorise them must take stock of the particular nature of education to work transitions in the age of austerity. To highlight this the theoretical framework of this research will adopt certain assumptions about the nature of transitions under austerity conditions, in particular taking a lead from Standing's (2014) precariat in viewing short term employment solutions as inherently damaging and the likely inability of many participants to foresee their future beyond these confines as having a limiting effect on their ability to flourish.

Sennett's (2009) overarching philosophy outlined in *The Craftsman* articulates a keen perception of the missing factor in the above theoretical standpoints, that of quality and experience. What desire exists to experience work and education in a sense beyond simply the functional? Incorporating this theory allows for the ability to measure participants contributions from a different perspective and assess the existing appetite for alternative work forms and the desire for lifelong learning. Given we know recessions and periods of poor growth disproportionately affect young people it is reasonable to assume that any further fluctuations in the economic bedrock will in all likelihood disproportionately affect them again (Bell & Blanchflower, 2011a). In this event it is necessary that we revisit our understanding of school to work transitions and ask if they adequately reflect the experiences of a new generation that is well accustomed to the idea of not prospering as well as their parents (Arnett, 2000). It is of note as a result that austerity, rather than bolstering resistance to classic ideas of work and education in this climate, may well have simply made individual anxiety greater about losing these things, thus moving towards a scenario in which the old models of work for work's sake are protected. Reflecting on that conservative dilemma is necessary to construct any theoretical framework dealing with the young working class today.

Finally, a key component of the review and the research to follow is that of class, and specifically the educational experiences of the working class. A significant aspect of that identity is where and how you

experience education as identified in this review by Odair (2003) and Reay (2006), articulating that the working class experience is a specific and culturally shared one that shapes future engagement in work. As clarified by Reay (2017) the social experience of class is not reflected in our educational system and thus young people from those backgrounds are much less likely to see their place in it. Utilising this understanding it is appropriate to see which participants do conform to these assumptions and question whether that then has a detrimental effect on their ultimate transitional destination.

The above theoretical standpoints are in essence the foundation of meaningful transitions, a mixed understanding of young people's place in a technologically and culturally shifting economy, their class position within it, and what – given these prior factors – they can reasonably get out of a situation as restrictive as the economic collapse we saw post 2008 and the particular set of circumstances that have arisen from the so called recovery. Utilising the theoretical framework described here the research can progress and develop a methodology that adequately answers the questions at the heart of the debate concerning youth transitions in an age of austerity.

## **Chapter 4 – Methodology**

The following chapter describes the steps taken to address the core research questions derived from the policy and research literature review in *Chapter 2* and how the subsequent research is framed by a mixed methods approach that can then be analysed utilising the theoretical framework outlined in *Chapter 3*.

To reiterate those questions:

*1) How do young people, in particular the working class, imagine and negotiate modern employment contexts and how is this informed by educational experience?*

*2) To what extent can it be said that there is an appetite for alternative work forms within the 16-18 age group, in particular the working class, and how is this shaped by educational experience?*

Where appropriate relevant examples from both data stages are used to highlight the application of the methods in question, however full analysis of the data results can be found in *Chapter 5, 6 and 7*.

This chapter begins with an explanation of the fundamental rationale that went into the practicalities of the research. It is followed by an overview of the research structure and timescales as they played out. Key issues that arise when conducting research of this nature in the field are considered, with special acknowledgement given to the way in which class is understood in the field. The discussion contained within is informed by the experiences of other researchers who have conducted studies of note that closely relate to either the methods or the spirit of this particular study. Subsequently the design of the research itself is explained, including the methods utilised to gather and analyse data. Further detail is included in respect of the selection criteria utilised, the location of the schools that took part, and the way in which definitions were used during the research process. The process of research instrument building during the process when utilising a mixed methods approach is included with some critical analysis of the benefits of the chosen instruments, in this case survey questionnaires and interviews. Penultimately, a critical discussion of the ethical implications of the research is detailed with reference to the practical steps that were taken in order to avoid contravention and to respect the contribution of the participants. Finally, a reflective conclusion is included that considers the aspects of the methodological approach that went well and those which could be improved on in later studies.

#### **4.1 Rationale**

The research detailed in this thesis attempts a form of longitudinal investigation that is rarely employed in pursuit of the question of youth transitions, largely due to time constraints. It was felt that in order to capture the experiences of that all-important first year in the labour market, or indeed failure to engage with it, it was absolutely necessary to allow for this time difference. In discussion with the project supervisors this gap between questionnaire and interview became increasingly more important to the development of the research as time went on. This group of young school leavers who have explicitly decided to leave school at 16 to seek out work or enter a path that isn't formal education are a particularly hard group to reach precisely because they have often left education with the explicit desire to no longer be engaged or associated with it. A post-graduate researcher from a so called elite institution only further reminds them of that connection.

Unlike many research projects which make assumptions about young people based on the views of university students this project sought to directly engage with and meet working class young people on their own territory. Doing so was a key commitment from the beginning of the project and it is one that the research has benefited from. Broadly the research is looking at individual experiences within the wider social and economic contexts of work and class. The individual factors which contribute to negative transitions range from apathy to a poor education, but for the most part such stunted transitions are related to structural factors such as poverty and inequality according to many writers (Reay, 2006, 2007; Hick & Lanau, 2018). Positive transitions conversely are often highlighted as being products of the reverse of this i.e. narrower income distributions and high educational attainment (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2009). However, in this research it was key to also understand that many young people who leave school to find work are not necessarily underperformers or feckless (Chadderton & Colley, 2012), they simply chose this path autonomously. Further, it was key that the research shed some light not only on the specificities of the research questions but also broader areas of sociological interests with a view to creating opportunities for future research. The contemporary debate surrounding the question of work, and what comes to be perceived as work, can broadly be categorised into three different questions, and these were a key consideration in that more expansive sociological understanding:

- 1. Which activities constitute work?*
- 2. Who or what is subject to that work?*
- 3. What effect does the predominant construction of work have on society and can it be changed?*

The above individual considerations manifest on a broader social plane that is connected to unemployment, underemployment, alternative employment, and most importantly within the context of class. The nature of what is classed as work and adequate employment is complex and ill-defined as

discussed in *Chapter 3*, and as such it is important to allow young people to give their own account in regards to that, not to simply push the ideas of a researcher onto them. As such some questions were deliberately vague to a in order to engender a desire to suggest new ideas about what work is to young people, and move it away from strict politically motivated definitions that perhaps the interviewer was more accustomed to and potentially listening out for. The semi-structured interview technique is ideal for capturing accounts which delve into the crucial issues at the heart of the broader research questions. Especially in the case of studying young people this consideration of being listened to, rather than simply studied, is crucial. The chosen methods have been selected to best acquire detailed accounts, and allow for more complex personal narratives to reflect that consideration.

In particular the research drew direct inspiration from the work of Studs Terkel (1972; 2005), Paul Willis (2017), and Diane Reay (2017). The literature review supplies the theoretical background behind these hoped for meaningful transitions and the field research seeks to identify the individual lived experience of those within that social situation. As a result mixed methods are key to the research. Largely quantitative data in the form of survey questionnaires were used in Stage 1 and qualitative methods in the form of semi-structured interviews were used in Stage 2. Survey questionnaires are able to identify certain patterns of employment but they can give little insight into the circumstances surrounding that outcome or how it may develop from that point. Equally, details of alternative work forms are interesting as markers of an individual's experience but they are inconclusive unless wider patterns can be identified through the complimenting interview data. As such both stages add to the foundation of the other and strengthen the data that is extracted. The importance of the dual approach is further discussed in *Section 4.11*.

## **4.2 Field Research Overview**

The research findings are based on key empirical data from 230 questionnaires across 5 different Glasgow schools in Stage 1, and 30 in depth hour long interviews (on average) in Stage 2 with respondents to the Stage 1 questionnaire who matched the set criteria for selection (*Section 4.3* for further detail on the selection criteria). The core empirical research structure was as follows:

### *Stage 1 (April-June 2014)*

Initial data collection in five Glasgow City schools (St. Andrew's School in Shettleston, St. Paul's School in Pollok, Springburn Academy in Springburn, John Paul Academy in Summerston, and Govan High School in Govan) using a mixed questionnaire containing both structured and semi-structured questions in order to facilitate expansive elaboration. There were 36 core questions in total with further sub-questions concerning aspirations, experiences and expectations when entering the labour market, and regarding

participants' educational history up to that point. Demographic data was acquired both to highlight patterns of sociological interest and to help choose suitable participants for Stage 2.

### *Stage 2 (July - November 2015)*

An in depth interview one year afterwards for those selected from Stage 1 based on criteria concerning their intended post-school destination and class background (*Section 4.3.2* for more information on how class was defined). The questions asked concerned the core research focuses and sought to shed light on projections identified in the theoretical framework based on perceptions of work and educational experience. (*Section 4.7* for more information on the questions that were asked).

Of the 230 questionnaire respondents, 48 met the criteria for selection for Stage 2. 10 did not respond to requests for an interview, 2 who committed to taking part never turned up to the interview and did not respond to requests for an alternative date, 6 confirmed that they had changed their mind about their post-school destination and thus did not wish to take part. However a number who took part had also changed their mind as documented below. A relatively fortunate attrition rate given the likely possibility of a much greater drop off. One participant was interviewed in November, **Callum**, however all other participants were interviewed between July and August 2015.

The particular benefit of this two stage approach is not only its suitability to the question at hand, i.e. how do young school leavers experience that key first year within the labour market and how does this shape their understanding of work, but it also captures the development of a building consciousness at a critical stage of the life course giving participants the opportunity to reflect on their previous aspirations and reflexively comment on their progress.

### **4.3 Stage 2 Selection Criteria**

Participants for Stage 2 (interview stage) had to meet a particular set of criteria in order to be eligible for the study. They included:

- (a) Participants must be at least 16 years old (which all were due to previous limitations)
- (b) Participants must have expressed a desire to leave school after the end of the Summer Term in 2014 when they answered the questionnaire in Stage 1 (which ended 28<sup>th</sup> June). This included anyone who answered that their plans were (a) training (if it was non-school/FE based) (b) employment (c) unemployment (seeking) (d) unemployment (not seeking) (e) apprenticeship (f) do not know, and some who stated 'other'
- (c) They met the predetermined criteria of being working class

(d) They did not share the same household as another interview participant. The reasoning being that two participants from the same household may share broadly very similar personal experiences and it would not allow for rich data.

(e) They were willing to give their consent for the interview to be recorded in audio form and transcribed

It is important to note some limitations in regards enforcing a selection criteria also. There was no possibility to enforce a gender split with such a small sample of participants in Stage 2, yet in Stage 1 facilitating teachers were asked to have as even a gender split as possible. Fortunately the disparity was not particularly great in both cases (120 young women and 110 young men in Stage 1, followed by 17 young men and 13 young women in Stage 2) and reflected the known likelihood that immediate school leavers are more likely to be male (Machin & Vignoles, 2005). Further, Headteachers and teachers who helped facilitate the project were explicitly told not to exclude participants based on behaviour as this may unfairly skew the data.

#### ***4.3.1 Particularities of Scottish School Leaving Dates***

In a more flexible system than that prevalent in England and Wales the Scottish school year and when pupils may leave school has some built in variance. S4 is the last compulsory year of Scottish education for most pupils, but the majority will choose to stay on and complete S5 and S6. Most pupils will be 15 or 16 years old at the end of this year. Those who are 16 years old can leave, but those who are not at least 16 years old have to stay on until the end of the next term after they are in S5. S5 is an optional year, unless the pupil has entered S5 at an age less than 16, in which case they are required to stay on until at least the end of the winter term. Most pupils will be 16 or 17 at the end of this year. At the end of S5 almost all pupils will be over 16 years of age. S5 is the year in which pupils would sit their Higher exams, which are the entry level exams for Scottish universities.

Clearly this presents some methodological problems for a study looking to receive feedback from pupils in their final year and then interview them one year later, as such the researcher requested that schools only include pupils in S4 who would be eligible to leave at the end of that school year in the assembly/classroom introductions that took place. All of the participant schools were happy to do so.

Of further note, individuals are only eligible for the national minimum wage (NMW) once you are 16 years old in the UK. For workers who are between 16-18 years old the NMW is £4.20 per hour (rising to £4.35 April 2019). The apprentice wage is set at £3.70 per hour (rising to £3.90 in April 2019). Finally, in Scotland there are three forms of apprenticeships Modern Apprenticeships (MAs), Foundation Apprenticeships (FA), and Graduate Level Apprenticeships (GLA) of which only one of the participants was involved with.

### 4.3.2 Defining Working Class

Naturally there is some dispute as to what the particular classification working class entails and to what extent it can be measured. Participants for Stage 2 were selected in part based on their working class background. The NS-SEC (National Statistics Socio-Economic Classification) measure was used in relation to respondents' primary wage earner at their childhood home (usually a parent) to define class. This classification is based on the Goldthorpe schema of social class (2007), a schema which has been shown to be highly predictive of future prospects and indeed secondary class considerations such as control over work activities and authority relations (Evans, 1992). The Goldthorpe classification is best suited to young people as they are yet to have gathered enough social or economic capital to identify outside of their early adolescent class (Goldthorpe, 2016). As such, only those whose primary guardian falls under the following classifications were selected, the classifications of which can be viewed in *Table 4.1*:

- 5) Lower supervisory and technical occupations (e.g. foreman, shop supervisor, bar manager, car mechanic)
- 6) Semi-routine occupations (e.g. teaching assistant, security guard, carer)
- 7) Routine occupations (e.g. bar worker, retail worker, factory worker, labourer)
- 8) Never worked and long-term unemployed

The primary guardian in this case was defined as the highest earner. The final interview participants' primary guardians broke down as follows:

| <b>Classification</b>                                 | <b>Frequency of participants' primary guardian</b> | <b>Where both guardians met this categorisation</b> |
|---|--|---|
| <b>5) Lower supervisory and technical occupations</b> | 4  | 3   |
| <b>6) Semi-routine occupations</b>                    | 12   | 3   |
| <b>7) Routine occupations</b>                         | 8  | 4   |
| <b>8) Never worked and long-term unemployed</b>       | 6  | 4   |

*Table 4.1 NS-SEC (National Statistics Socio-Economic) classification of primary guardians*

The research adheres to a classical Marxist definition of class, and primarily in the case of the working class. The NS-SEC has been constructed to measure the employment relations and conditions of occupations (Goldthorpe & Jackson, 2007) and thus reflects this power dynamic well. Conceptually, these relations are central to showing the structure of socio-economic positions in modern societies and how mobility works throughout generations. It is important however to encapsulate what Wright (1998) refers to as contradictory class locations. For example, class divisions are no longer entirely centred on production and

certainly not so for younger people. As Bauman (2005) contends, class is also enacted and felt within the sphere of consumption and as such Stage 2 interview questions sought to elucidate this significant variable. As an example **Billy** made the following contribution:

**Researcher:** *You said that your Dad is unemployed in your questionnaire, is that still the case, if you don't mind me asking*

**Billy:** *Officially he's unemployed, aye. But I can't really be saying what he does, but let's say he does alright.*

**Researcher:** *By alright do you mean that he is doing quite well with money?*

**Billy:** *Better than most I reckon, at least round my bit.*

This is something of a curious example but it does spell out how schema of this sort can miss certain aspects of how class, power, and community can intersect in different ways to create unique identities. It certainly cannot be ignored too that many young people have an altered or perhaps diminished sense of class from that experienced by their forebears. This is both a symptom of modernity and one that has altered rapidly in various age groups with the realisation the global financial crisis brought about (Phillipson, 2014). Further to this, in a city like Glasgow there is a strong cultural class memory and a number of the participants associated themselves with jobs their parents might have had as far back as the 90s, before they were even born. Two participants, one of whom had both their parents down as unemployed referred to their Dads as being shipbuilders for instance, both of which came from Govan an area with a long and storied connection to shipbuilding in Glasgow. From this we can assume that the cultures attached to certain professions influence class perceptions among the children of workers, and this is of continuing importance in a city such as Glasgow.

#### ***4.4 Methodological Underpinnings***

Adopting a purely positivist or interpretivist approach was rejected by the researcher given as a rule such approaches tend to rely on the methods of solely quantitative or qualitative research, however this is not always the case (Punch and Oancea, 2015). Through employing a mixed-methods design it has been the intention of the researcher to prevent the enquiry being restrained by the limitations of a single method of data collection, which as Punch asserts is particularly important in current educational research (Punch and Oancea, 2015:19). The benefits of such a mixed-method design permits the researcher to engage in opportunities for imaginative planning and autonomous research, enabling a more adaptable and holistic data set (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003). This particular set of methods equally allows for an in-depth and critical description of the data, whilst supplying adequate room for rich personal data which is ripe for evaluation and discussion.

Within the debates regarding appropriate methods lies the influence of a number of transformational paradigmatic approaches to social scientific research (Kuhn, 1962; Friedrichs 1970). The development of sociological and educational research is not met by linear passage of falsifiable hypotheses that construct upon on the rudiments of the former as is understood by functionalism, rather it partakes in a revolutionary cycle of conflict and critical reimagining. Functionalism has relied on the desire for accurate, detailed, and reliable information about the phenomena in society that are troublesome or contingent upon the development of a sound economy. This supposedly value neutral stance has as a result found it difficult to challenge the interests of the powerful and in turn some aspects of research in the functionalist tradition have failed to question elements of power. A functionalist perspective by its nature does not allow for an in depth understanding of that which lies outwith the purview of normal and expected behaviour. As the *Chapter 5, 6 and 7* show, this research contains rich data which can be considered to meet the former criteria. Functionalist approaches tend to fail to represent the lived reality and concerns of the ordinary worker, student, and child over the considerable resources of managers, multinational interests, and authority experts. As an example research concerning the threat of automation has readily allowed itself to be co-opted by the financial interests of big business (*Section 2.5* on UBI as a contemporary example). There are notable exceptions, such as Kaplan (2015) who suggests that automation will not discriminate based on class specified employment, and it will harm all demographics to varying extents, but this is not representative of the whole.

The research in this thesis sought to move beyond an understanding of young people's engagement with the labour market on a purely descriptive level, instead hoping to make sense of how individuals aged 16-17 navigate and understand the context of leaving school to enter the world of work and assign meaning to it after deliberately deciding to cut themselves off from education, at least in a temporary sense. It sought to acquire a range of complex understandings from a very specific group that it is believed provide a unique insight into the age of austerity. In order to achieve that goal a largely qualitative research design has been employed, with supporting quantitative elements. In doing so certain ontological assumptions are made about how individuals and communities socially interact with the world around them, how that is interpreted, and how those factors also speak to something existing in reality.

Individuals are separate from many of the social structures that enact upon them, the most obvious case in the research presented here being that of class. Class structures do have causal power over various factors such as poverty and resource allocation, which in turn allows privilege for some and not for others, a process that is entirely separate from the individual. Purely interpretive accounts of social action therefore struggle to uncover a generalised understanding of the reality of these class structures, hence a methodological theory is required that will uncover and understand this determination, rather than simply accounting for how it operates (Smith & Elger, 2012). Human behaviour cannot be understood without

reference to the meaning individuals ascribe to particular understandings, aspects of their character, and aspirations. This understanding is of particular import when dealing with subjects who are 16-17 years old, a key age range in the development of what will ultimately become their adult self (Sebastian et al, 2008). Broadly as a result this research adopts a critical realist ontological perspective (Bhaskar, 2016), which is a perspective by which researchers gradually improve the concepts they have utilised to understand the subjects of their research. In essence this means there is a real world that can be manipulated, yet the causal relationships that manipulate that world are not clearly perceivable except through the meaning we assign to it. As Bhaskar (1998:12) describes it:

*'Science identifies a phenomenon (or range of phenomena), constructs explanations for it and empirically tests its explanations, leading to the identification of the generative [causal] mechanism at work, which now becomes the phenomenon to be explained, and so on. In this continuing process, as deeper levels or strata of reality are successively un-folded, science must construct and test its explanations with the cognitive resources and physical tools at its disposal, which in this process are themselves progressively transformed, modified and refined.'*

The social sciences generally adopt a relational approach to investigation, i.e. that relations rather than isolated social entities should be the primary unit of analysis (Jessop, 2005). However, a distinctive feature of any realist form is that it denies that we can have any objective or certain knowledge of the world, and accepts the possibility of alternative valid accounts of any phenomenon. All theories about the world are seen as grounded in a particular perspective and worldview, and all knowledge is partial, incomplete, and fallible (Maxwell, 2012). As an example this research is explicitly situated within a broad Marxist worldview that understands power in a particular way and the research and methods used as such must be understood with this in mind.

Reality, whether we would like it to or not, does not answer to empirical survey in a consistent fashion, and that is clear when conducting any research. Given the focus of the research presented here, that understanding is grounded in the existence (or lack thereof) of a desire for different forms of work, it is important to have a perspective that seeks to deal with what kind of entities do in fact exist in these relational approaches and to understand what they are actually like. Sociology operates with certain beliefs about the structures and processes that formulate our world, yet often these particular beliefs are not reducible to empirical data, yet are taken for granted nonetheless. How these beliefs are navigated is clearly laid out in the research in question (*Chapters 1, 2, and 3*) revealing the assumptions and understandings of how power works in the world of work and education, yet inevitably the data that has come out of the research is in some sense reconstructed in theoretical assumptions after the fact. In order for this to be appropriate an approach is required that does deal with these abstract philosophical

questions that arise from empirical investigations (Archer, 1995; Rutzou, 2016). Critical realism as such provides an analytical and explanatory framework that best contends with the interplay between structure and agency, especially in this specific case between the individual and the institutions of school, work etc. Critical realism also allows for ‘the analysis of structural relations, and the ways in which these affect, and are affected by, the subjective meanings of human beings’ (Keat & Urry: 1982:174) which as is clear is a key aspect of the research. Key to understanding those structural relations however is the ability to utilise both interpretive and explanatory understandings simultaneously, which in turns allows for rich and detailed accounts. Critical realism therefore complements the interview technique to better understand the interpretations participants place on their particular social contexts, and the constraints within which their reality takes place (Collier, 1994).

It is the opinion of the researcher that fundamentally our philosophy of science must be fit for real people in real situations with the kind of tools that are actually available to them, if the social sciences are to be at all applicable to peoples lived realities (Wimsatt, 2007). It is the case however that in the process of research these ontological debates can overshadow the importance of the work being done, at the centre of the research are the research questions and the concept of meaning in regards work, transitions, and indeed education. That is the fundamental core of this project, and that should be understood going forward. It is important to also recognise the role of the researcher themselves. Elements of both the research topic and the methodology are heavily influenced by personal biography and experience, particularly in relation to the role of class and institutions, and how that inflicts a lasting impression on the individual. As such the emancipatory social practice of critical realism has great appeal in this sense also as it allows for self-reflection (Sayer, 1997).

#### ***4.5 Designing and Piloting the Research Instruments***

In the research presented in this thesis the core instruments for collecting data are a survey questionnaire in Stage 1 (with a sequential explanatory design utilising closed and open ended questions) and semi-structured interviews in Stage 2. The design follows examples such as Harocopos & Dennis (2003) and Millar (2007) and can be considered due to the nature of its predominant qualitative focus and longitudinal design as a partially mixed sequential dominant status design (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2006). The construction of the interview questions followed the literature reviews in *Chapters 2* and *3* results and the subsequent analysis of the Stage 1 survey questionnaire. The relevant focuses adopted by the researcher when expanding upon points made by respondents in Stage 2 was influenced by that process also, leading to a reflexive instrumentation. In this sense the largely quantitative element of the research drove the decisions that led to the qualitative element.

The reliability of the survey questionnaire instrument was measured in a number of ways. A piloting procedure took place over three different time periods, each instance two weeks apart, to ensure test-retest reliability. This took the form of 25 questionnaires distributed to 3 different groups at a local college over a 6 week duration. Further, one group received the questionnaire via email with a written brief, the next received it in person with a spoken brief, and the third volunteered themselves by collecting the questionnaire from a teacher. There was no significant difference between the various groups, except that the self-volunteers were less likely to expand on their closed question answers. This information led to the decision to present the questionnaires with a spoken brief. The respondents to the pilot were generally a slightly older age group and due to their location less likely to have experience of direct work, but they were representative of the same geographic locations the final research respondents came from. The pilot offered the insight that room for more qualitative elaboration was required as an addendum to some closed questions, in particular those regarding perceptions of work values. There were no prevailing issues with the understanding of the questionnaire or its focuses evidenced in the pilot.

A key unique aspect of this design is the element of the respondents transitioning from school to work during the duration of the research itself. The research instruments as a result were designed to incorporate this longitudinal aspect and allow for the development of new research focuses over time, with open ended questions regarding where respondents saw themselves in the future included in the questionnaire. Further, it was assumed that through initial exposure to the researcher in Stage 1 the respondents would be more likely to assent to taking part in Stage 2 one year later. This proved a relatively sensible assumption as many of the interviewees recalled the researcher's visit to their school and remarked on. Finally, as previously remarked upon, the structure and content of the interviews was not selected until after the analysis of the Stage 1 data, allowing for the opportunity to reflect any overwhelming findings from the initial data stage and not end up asking young people about the researcher's assumed interests, rather than those they articulated themselves.

The qualitative research interview seeks to describe and understand the meaning of central themes in the life world of subjects. The main task in interviewing is to understand the meaning of what the interviewees say, whilst also understanding the social context in which it takes place (Kvale, 1996). It has been suggested that sociology can appropriately be understood as the science of the interview in the deepest sense. Sociology is concerned with the fundamentals of social interaction and an interview itself is social interaction, it is 'not merely a tool of sociology but a part of its very subject matter.' (Benny & Hughes, 1956:138). From this insight we can understand that rather than interviews simply being a method of this research, the research itself is absolutely dependent on the nature and importance of interviews. Human kind is as Mulhall (2007) postulates a kind of enacted conversation and that is precisely what this research embodies. Interviews cannot claim to capture reality as and when it happens, yet they do provide an insight into the

accounts individuals hold of that reality. Such a method gives us an important representation of how situations, experiences, and attitudes were perceived by the individual respondent. Interviews as a result give us 'insights into particular issues' (Heath et al., 2009: 89), yet do not seek to record the factual reality of a multi-faceted problem. It was decided from the beginning of this proposal to utilise semi-structured interviews to emulate and draw from the naturalistic approach laid out by such qualitative researchers as Savage et al (2001) and Walkerdine et al (2001).

A more potent element of the rationale for utilising semi-structured interviews however stems from the nature of the debate around austerity and what that has come to mean. A great deal of research and discussion on the subject of austerity and its effects has come from above. In the spirit of emancipatory methodologies such an approach is not warranted, and thus it was important, if not necessary, to actively pursue participants and research data which is often ignored precisely because it is difficult to acquire. The selected sample group in this research represent exactly those kind of individuals. This research is an attempt to update and reevaluate these assumptions regarding young people, thus it was imperative that its conclusions were drawn from their very own words and experiences, not the abstract statistical analyses of the spectator. As evidenced by Terkel (1972) and Goffman (1990), these conversations and the way in which we perform them become an indispensable part of ourselves. They become the means by which we communicate hope, happiness, fear and everything in between. The interview method however is by no means simple. There is the further concern that as the researcher was not by any means new to the process of interviewing that the questions and their pattern can become all too familiar and formulaic. In order to best avoid this the key research questions were interspersed throughout a wider conversation regarding the topic of leaving school and entering the world of work with all that entails.

In order to pilot the interview method the researcher carried out 3 preliminary interviews with participants from the Stage 1 pilot. In this instance the interviews were designed to only last 25 minutes on average and were transcribed shortly afterwards. The reflections that came from the piloting process were crucial in identifying problems with the initial research assumptions, particularly in regards questions about participants' self-identification and class. The participants in the pilot found direct questions about class to be irrelevant to their life, yet when they were couched in terms of experiences of inequality and power relations the answers were much more organic. The interview questions that followed from this, or broad themes, were then checked by the project supervisors who had decades of experience in analytical social research to ensure effectiveness.

There are considerable limitations to interviews and the extent to which we can accurately represent what participants say and fundamentally understand what it is they mean. This is in particular of interest to this research when considering that the initial meeting with the participants takes place in a semi-controlled

environment in which the influence of authority is prevalent (at school), as opposed to the second stage in which the power dynamic is only between the researcher and the participant, there is no longer an arbiter of any sort. The interview participants in this sense are all individual actors operating independently of even the sense of themselves that existed one year before. As can be seen from the results the number of occasions in which a participant had altered their opinion was not insignificant. Due to the variety in attitudes and foundational experiences, despite a broad framework of questions, each participant required a somewhat different approach and a varied set of enquiries.

Initially the use of focus groups was considered as a potential method of investigation, but it was felt that the influence of dominant personalities may well be too great and not allow for the level of rich data to be pursued that is more likely to come from a face to face interaction (Stewart & Shamdasani, 2015). The practicalities of this approach given the difficulties in meeting even individuals would also have been considerable. Fortunately the willingness of participants to engage with and elucidate on their own thoughts was consistently high in the interview stage, and this further justified the sense that the correct research method had been employed. Some reflection must be had on the role of payment and the incentive that brings about, and as such a further section below has been added to consider the implications of it (*Section 4.8.1*). In total 30 semi-structured interviews were carried out, with an initial hope of between 40-45. Due to the difficulty of sampling this group it was always anticipated that the eventual total may well be less and this was discussed with supervisors and methods were considered regarding how to counteract this, including the use of incentives and the best way to keep participants interested. As an example select participants from Stage 1 who might be selected for Stage 2 were sent a Christmas card the year prior.

At the beginning of Stage 1 and again before the interviews the researcher provided each participant with a Plain Language Statement explaining the project, this further explained the anonymisation process and the rights each participant had in regards to access to the final data. Participants were informed that direct quotations would be used but under pseudonyms and they would be given the opportunity to withdraw their involvement at any point. No participants chose to pull out other than those who informed the researcher prior to interview that they had changed their mind. Beyond the Plain Language Statement the researcher began each interview with an unrecorded informal chat about who he was, what the research was about, and the extent to which the participants could engage as much or as little as they chose to.

The interviews were recorded on two digital voice recorders, a mobile phone, and a classic dictaphone. They were then transcribed by the researcher in the months following the interview process and kept in a secure folder and deleted from the recording devices, with a key detailing the identities of the participants in relation to their pseudonym. The timeframe in which the participants had to speak was always clarified

before each interview even if they had understood it would on average take around one hour. Only one participant had to leave earlier than anticipated and they informed the researcher of this prior to beginning. If the interview ran over an hour the researcher informed the participant it had reached that point and asked if they were happy to continue, in all cases they agreed to this. In general the interview continued at the decision of the participant rather than the researcher feeling more time was required.

#### **4.6 Questionnaire Analysis**

Questionnaire data was analysed using frequency analysis and thematic analysis in the case of more expansive answers. Further statistical tests of significance and cross tabulations have been produced. This was then analysed to identify and understand key frequencies and to understand potential mechanisms that operate between the variables. This process is explained in *Chapter 5*.

#### **4.7 Semi-Structured Interview Questions**

Each interview in Stage 2 was relatively free form to allow for flexible accounts with the actual questions asked differing dependent on questionnaire responses and arising points of interest specific to the person being interviewed. As such it was not possible to give a direct map of correspondence prior to the interviews. It is the case however that a number of general themes were covered that shaped the focus of each interview. They were:

- 1) What do you class as work?
- 2) What value does work have for you, why do you want to do the work you want to do?
- 3) Do you have any experience of work at the moment and how would you describe that role? (Including hidden or alternative work forms)
- 4) How do you feel the jobs your parents/guardians do are perceived by others?
- 5) Where do you see yourself on the class spectrum, if at all?
- 6) To what extent do you think voluntary work is valuable as a means of either gaining work experience, or assisting the community?
- 7) Are you working, or have you at any point worked whilst also going through education and if so what were your experiences of this split focus?
- 8) What do you think your education has taught you about work?
- 9) If you have spent a year in and around the labour market, how have you navigated that process, what difficulties did you find?
- 10) Where do you hope to be in terms of employment in 12 months, and how will you go about achieving this?
- 11) Are you at a destination now that you expected to be at 12 months ago, and if not, why not?

- 12) How has your school encouraged you into work, if at all? Are you still in touch with them in any way?
- 13) Why have you chosen to end your formal school education at this stage and do you ever expect to return to it?
- 14) What was your general sense regarding how teachers and the school institution treated you and friends during your time there? Did you feel that you were on a level with the teachers?
- 15) Do you look back on your educational experience with fondness?
- 16) If your education had been more skills based would that have made you more or less likely to stay on?
- 17) What would have made your decision not to continue in education easier?
- 18) How do you feel about people receiving social/security benefits?
- 19) What do you think to the idea of Universal Basic Income (explained in a standardised and simplified form)?
- 20) Would you ever see yourself going to university?
- 21) What's your understanding of the economy at the moment, and would you say things have got better or worse for you and your family in the last five years or so?

#### **4.8 Gaining Access**

After gaining ethical approval (*Section 4.10*) every secondary school within the Glasgow City Council region was written to via the Headteacher, a total of 37 schools, requesting access to a predefined group of pupils (S4 and S5 pupils initially, yet this was later revised) to carry out Stage 1 of the research and explaining the broad themes and goals of the project. Initially 100 pupils in each school were hoped for but this quickly turned out to be ambitious given constraints on teacher and pupil time. The average size of the groups contacted in Stage 1 was 46 pupils.

It was always intended to particularly focus on schools in the most deprived areas of the city, and the 10 schools with catchments containing the highest proportion of areas in the lowest SIMD brackets were chosen as the key targets as a result (Scottish Government, 2016). Institutional assistance was utilised to gain access, however every school in the city was contacted in the knowledge that there may need to be contingencies in the event this was not possible. The five schools selected were chosen out of eight that suggested willingness to take part. Five were selected due to both time constraints in terms of maintaining the unique research focus of investigating pupils after one year in the labour market, the further three schools were unable to participate until the beginning of the next school year and as such would not have been able to take part. A process of this kind was risky but ultimately worthwhile, as failure to gain access would have led to the research design having to be entirely changed. The researcher travelled to the schools within a window that was just over one month long and met the groups questioned in each case. Headteachers were happy for the researcher to come and explain the project whilst distributing the

questionnaires. In four cases this was done in the form of a classroom session, in one other it was done via an assembly situation. Nine months later after the data had been processed individuals who met the Stage 2 criteria were contacted with the opportunity to meet the interviewer at a public location of their choice, and receive £20 in return for an hour long interview. The contact was made earlier than the one year mark to give ample time for responses. The shortest interview was 39 minutes, the longest lasted 1 hour and 27 minutes, with an average interview time of 58 minutes.

The role of being seen as an institutional actor is one that requires greater reflection. Within the city of Glasgow it is true to say that the University of Glasgow is perceived as the so-called elite university, in a city with many higher education institutions. The University of Glasgow is one of the UK's research-intensive Russell Group institutions and it sends out a lot of researchers annually to conduct research on a vast array of topics, often utilising some aspects of the same research methodology utilised here. Fortunately at the time of conducting the research there were no similar projects taking place within the UK on these particular questions, however there is more generally a potential problem of research fatigue within communities, especially as universities tend to point PhD candidates, salaried researchers, and historians towards the same institutions given they already have access to them (Clark, 2008). This was a consideration in this research also, as access to the Headteachers of some of the participant schools was facilitated by an academic colleague in the University's School of Education. The problem of potential research fatigue became quite clear when the participant **Simon** made the following comment:

**Simon:** *I could've done another one of these last year but I was on holiday, it was about sport in schools or something. You lot are always sniffing around [LAUGHS].*

With Greater Glasgow having so many large higher education institutions (University of Glasgow, University of Strathclyde, University of the West of Scotland, Glasgow Caledonian University) and indeed professional research organisations based in the city some reflection is required as to the rationale of where and when research takes place. Despite this it is clear that there is a consistent and justified rationale for utilising inner city Glasgow schools in the case of this research and indeed it is the case that the researcher came to Glasgow to complete this project precisely because of the city's unique post-industrial history and still prevalent number of working class communities in and around the city limits. Furthermore the researcher found that to some extent an understanding that the research had been given government funding (ESRC) was helpful in attracting participants, once again perhaps because this implied some sense of extra legitimacy. Having Andy Furlong and Fred Cartmel as supervisors was also of great assistance as their names and reputation are recognised, particularly in Glasgow, and associated with creative and respectful research.

#### **4.8.1 The Issue of Payment**

On the matter of incentives to interview, each participant was paid £20 for their participation in an hour long interview. This process was approved by the University of Glasgow and paid for from research funds provided by the ESRC. In fact the offer of payment is becoming increasingly common in this kind of research (Singer & Kulka, 2002). There is plentiful debate regarding the role of remuneration in research, yet in this case, particularly due to the difficult financial position and in many cases also relatively difficult housing situation of the participants, it was deemed necessary to offer such an incentive. That is the ethical justification for this decision, however there is also a deeply practical justification in as much as giving up even an hour of your time when you are struggling for work or on very low pay is a costly exercise for any individual. It is undoubtedly the case that were the researcher not to offer this incentive very few of the participants would have ever been able to, or decided to show up for the interview. As Head (2009) notes, in the case of difficult to research groups such as that in this research, the potential ethical implications of payment tend to outweigh the drawbacks.

#### **4.9 Thematic Analysis**

In Stage 2 the research utilised an iterative thematic analysis to develop a set of emergent themes from the data itself. This is a method of assessing lexical data that offers a structured and organised way of analysing the themes present in qualitative data, in this case interview transcripts. Subsequently the Stage 2 data were subject to concept saturation and theme generation utilising NVivo. Transcripts were coded line by line to identify the themes that were relevant to the research questions. Based on these themes the codes were grouped together and refined using analytical notes. Emergent themes were then scrutinised for patterns of inter-theme consistency and contradictions to eliminate redundancies and organised categorically (McCracken, 1989). In order for this method to be effective a coding template was created. The coding template organises the data into themes consisting of a number of codes delineated by importance and relevance to the subject at hand. Given the nature of such interviews this code is developed as part of the process and develops as it advances. This began with a number of *a priori* codes, that would suitably reflect the areas highlighted by the research questions. These were:

- Attitudes to work
- Attitudes to education
- Relationship with authority
- Family
- Location
- Poverty

- Financial considerations
- Existential angst

A process that was followed by constructing more specific patterns based on the NVivo analysis and during the process of further analysis refined and expanded upon these to better understand commonalities. The ten key phrases produced through NVivo analysis, eliminating insignificant lexis, were in ranking order from highest to lowest:

- Stress
- Job
- Money
- Bus/Train
- Boredom
- Time
- Going out
- Flat/House
- Mother/Father/Sister/Brother
- Teacher

Each interview was then meticulously processed again with these codes in mind, with a number of recoding exercises applied after more data was analysed and themes emerged, these were:

- Resentment towards authority
- Sense of self autonomy
- Compatibility
- Confusion regarding place
- Time
- Financial concerns
- Family
- Age related pressures
- Class consciousness
- Lack of self worth
- Personal profile
- Respect for parents
- Local pride
- Permanence

In doing so certain other themes that are highlighted in the research of others also emerged. This code was performed manually once the data had been transcribed and various copies of the data was made until there were multiple collections of thematic examples in predefined collections. These collections and examples were then collected into five broader categories which have been utilised in the process of analysing the results (*Chapter 6*). These five categories were:

- Dissatisfaction/Pride with place
- Challenges and compromises
- Resentment and guilt
- Autonomy/Independence
- Financial survival

Further analysis was conducted via key word searches including terms such as *school, money, jobs, loss, success, understand, alternative* under the rubric of the category 'Financial Survival' and many more different sets of words based on the other categories following the example of Byrne (2012).

In order to secure the robustness of these interpretations the researcher reanalysed the transcripts at three different stages both during the research process and the construction of the thesis where adequate changes were made. Attached to each transcript was a detailed account of the context and place in which the interview took place, the researcher's own reflections on its conduct, and points of interest regarding the participant that were spoken before and after the recording (*Section 6.1* for research participant cameos).

#### **4.10 Ethical Considerations**

The legitimacy of this research has been approved by academic supervisors prior to any data collection. It has also passed through ethical approval via the University of Glasgow's relevant ethics board, and has received approval from Glasgow City Council. Each interviewee was required to complete a consent form to be kept by both themselves and the researcher.

Ethical considerations were acknowledged by ensuring that participants were fully informed regarding matters of purpose, content, and confidentiality and the university's ethical guidelines would be strictly adhered to regarding data collection and anonymity. All participants' names were, as previously mentioned, altered in order to maintain anonymity. Only the researcher is aware of which pseudonym corresponds to which interview and consent form and that data is kept securely on file.

#### **4.11 Conclusion and Research Value**

The value of limited data sets such as that presented in the research should not be overestimated but at the same time should not be discounted as irrelevant. Where there is very little research the beginnings of investigations and the formation of their basic theoretical ideas should be welcomed. Regarding the methodological contribution of this research it cannot be said there is anything distinctly radical here, only that which is effective. The various data paradigm wars between quantitative and qualitative researchers are not of any great interest to the pressing concerns of those suffering inequality and a rapidly destabilising economy (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004:15), and it has not been the purpose of this research to take one side over the other. Clearly there is an emphasis towards the benefits of qualitative research but that is in an effort to complement the research questions and acquire data which reflects the meaningful transitions of the young people involved. Quantitative and qualitative researchers naturally believe the elements specific to their paradigm to be ideal for creating methods to answer their research questions, promoting a belief around an incompatibility thesis (Guba, 1990; Howe, 1998) that may well not exist. The understanding that these methods cannot be mixed stems from a belief that there is an incongruence inherent in the make-up of the relative methods which the research seeks to evade (Schwandt, 2000).

Though not unsympathetic to some of these arguments it is the opinion of the researcher that in fact this research has benefited from a mixed method approach. Were it a purely quantitative investigation, accessing a much higher number of school pupils, then undoubtedly wider generalisations could be drawn about transitions and how they play out in a very material sense (Johnson & Turner, 2003). Equally were the investigation based solely around the Stage 2 interview process it would not have been able to access participants who keenly met the requirements of the research nor would there be a broader analysis present regarding young people currently passing through Glasgow's school system (Maxwell & Delaney, 2004). As a result, the research has benefited from the more prevalent support available for mixed methods research that has developed in recent decades (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). A mixed method option in regards a paradigmatic approach to research is perfectly suited to a critical realist perspective and has in a number of cases produced very worthwhile and interesting projects. The particular design employed here was selected to maximise the strongest aspects of the research and avoid some of the limitations they possess on their own (Denscombe, 2008). In doing so, a more holistic set of results has been arrived at which have inevitably led to a foundation upon which more research can take place.

Integrating the data between these two paradigmatic focuses has been eased by the use of an expansive questionnaire with room allowed for further elaboration. This does not mean those problems have been resolved and it would be beneficial to further triangulate this data with wider secondary data sources

where available (O’Cathain, Murphy and Nicholl, 2010). Were only a single method utilised the potential for bias would be much greater, in the form of sampling bias or procedural bias, yet using two methods has helped to prevent distortion of these results in the long term (Yeasman, 2012).

The ideas laid out in this chapter have sought to give a foundation to the results that follow and in doing so make their effect more robust. Where possible attention has been paid to relevant theoretical and methodological debates but the primary concern has been the ease of understanding of the data which must always take prominence.

## **Chapter 5 – Stage 1 Results and Summary Analysis**

In this chapter the largely quantitative results of this project gathered from Stage 1 are presented and analysed in light of the theoretical framework developed in *Chapter 3*. The following structure is observed:

*Section 5.1 – Stage 1 Data Breakdown* – deals with the results from the first data stage involving 256 questionnaires distributed across five Glasgow secondary schools (with 230 valid respondents). Key analysis is presented including frequency data, tests of significance to the research, and cross tabulations to better understand the relationship between different variables.

*Section 5.2 – Conclusion* – Reflections that employ the theoretical framework to locate the findings within the context of the research questions and literature

### **Note\***

*- Spelling errors in any written data have been corrected for ease of understanding but grammatical individuality has been maintained.*

### **5.1 Stage 1 Data Breakdown**

In this section frequency data, tests of significance, and relevant cross tabulations are presented to better understand the relationship between different variables in light of the core research questions. Data is presented with additional commentary representing insights of note from the respondents in relation to the research questions and broader areas of interests, which will be expanded upon in the conclusion (*Section 5.2*). Included in these insights are examples from open ended questions included in the questionnaire that offer elaboration on the questions asked. As Stage 1 was conducted one year prior to Stage 2 whilst the research participants were still at school it is to be expected that insights into how young people experience modern employment contexts during periods of austerity is to be limited. Despite this the data here allows for an approach where utilising mixed methods the development of ideas and attitudes can be observed. In *Section 8.4* a wider reflection on opportunities missed and potential for further improvements in future research has been included.

### 5.1.1 The Importance of Class and Place

The presented data should be considered only as indicative of the participants in this study, the sample is unfortunately not large enough to make generalisable assumptions, but it has value nonetheless in signposting further research and potential improvements to the design of the interviews Stage 2 and will be analysed alongside utilising mixed methodology approach in *Chapter 7*. Further, the observations drawn from this data supply the basis for assessing assumptions made in the literature review (*Chapters 2 and 3*) through the lens of the theoretical framework, in particular how heteronomous and autonomous forces play out in constructing the social attitudes of young people on these topics. Further insight can be drawn regarding alternative work forms and the desire or lack thereof, as well as the desire for skilled occupations and interests. In particular points of interest are derived from the quantitative data between the significance of associations of class and difficult transitions.

There were 230 individual respondents that were valid and 26 individual respondents that were invalid/or largely blank. The total number of returns therefore was 256. As a reminder, the 5 schools in Stage 1 were:

*St. Andrews* in Shettleston; *St. Paul's* in Pollok; *Springburn Academy* in Springburn; *John Paul Academy* in Summerston; *Govan High* in Govan.

All of the schools involved in the study have at least one significant residential area in their catchment that is in the lowest decile for deprivation of the SIMD (2016), many have numerous, with a majority of the young people in this research living in areas recorded as part of the top decile for deprivation in Scotland. Utilising the Scottish Government's postcode checker for the SIMD it is shown in *Table 5.1* that participants who provided this information fell into the following decile ranks based on their home address, with 1<sup>st</sup> indicating the most deprived areas in Scotland:

| <b>SIMD (2012) Rank Nationally</b> | <b>Number</b> | <b>Percentage of Valid Responses</b> |
|------------------------------------|---------------|--------------------------------------|
| <b>1<sup>st</sup></b>              | 85            | 36.95                                |
| <b>2<sup>nd</sup></b>              | 36            | 15.65                                |
| <b>3<sup>rd</sup></b>              | 41            | 17.82                                |
| <b>4<sup>th</sup></b>              | 21            | 9.16                                 |
| <b>5<sup>th</sup></b>              | 14            | 6.08                                 |
| <b>6<sup>th</sup></b>              | 17            | 7.39                                 |
| <b>Did not provide</b>             | 16            | 6.95                                 |
| <b>Total</b>                       | 230           | 100                                  |

*Table 5.1 SIMD rank of participant's home address*

In regards class 67% of participants fell into groups 7 (Sales and Customer Service Occupations), 8 (Process, Plant, and Machine Operatives), and 9 (Elementary Occupations) of the ONS's Standard Occupational Classification (2010) which fits well with the NS Socio-Economic classification used to help define class background for selection in Stage 2. There was a strong correlation recorded between class background and living in areas of higher deprivation with a significant (Cramer's V = .302) association between living in the 1<sup>st</sup> decile of deprivation with respondents who identified themselves as belonging to a working class background or lower ( $\chi^2=6.469$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $p<0.05$ ).

Table 5.2 displays key data broken down by gender regarding such variables as the type of residence respondents lived in, the uptake of free school meals, and ethnicity.

|                                      |   | Female | Male |
|--------------------------------------|---|--------|------|
|                                      |   | 52.2   | 47.8 |
| <b>Residence Type</b>                | Privately family owned property               | 50.0   | 30.8 |
|                                      | Private family rented property                | 10.4   | 9.9  |
|                                      | Council/Housing association owned property    | 39.6   | 58.2 |
| <b>Disability</b>                    | Yes   | 3.8    | 4.2  |
| <b>Free School Meals</b>             | Yes   | 21.0   | 17.9 |
| <b>Lived in Scotland &gt;5 years</b> | Yes   | 99.0   | 93.7 |
| <b>Ethnicity</b>                     | White – Scottish                              | 90.7   | 89.5 |
|                                      | White - Other British                         | .9     | 2.1  |
|                                      | White – Polish                                | .9     | 3.2  |
|                                      | White – Other                                 | .9     |      |
|                                      | Mixed or multiple ethnic group                | .9     |      |
|                                      | Asian - Pakistani, Pakistani Scottish/British | 1.9    | 1.1  |
|                                      | Asian – Other                                 | 1.9    | 1.1  |
|                                      | African - African Scottish/British            | .9     | 2.1  |
|                                      | Caribbean - Black, Black Scottish/British     | .9     | 1.1  |

Table 5.2 Key quantitative data broken down by gender

Associations between gender and residence types were tested, offering an insight into the kind of young people who were taking the questionnaire and thus are present in the schools researched in this study. Using the Chi-square test particular measures were taken to understand whether differences in the sets of data arose by chance. A weak but significant association between gender and residence type was recorded with females relatively more likely to live in owner occupied properties and males relatively more likely to live in social rented sector properties ( $\chi^2=9.100$ ,  $df=3$ ,  $p<0.500$ ). Further, a moderate yet significant association between residence type and free school meals with those in the social rented sector properties relatively more likely to be receiving free school meals and those in owner-occupier properties relatively less likely to receive free school meals ( $\chi^2=24.945$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). Such an association can be expected in the kind of schools that were part of this research, with the association particularly strong in the areas closest to the city centre. Similar findings were published in Chambers et al (2016).

### 5.1.2 Generational Inequality and Social Pressures

Understanding the prevalence of young people in these schools who already had family who were NEET was of interest to the research in regards the theoretical framework's assumption that familial and localised influences were a key determinant in the future destinations of young people, in particular how having parents/guardians who were NEET affected young people's trajectories.

|              |        | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|--------------|--------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid        | Yes    | 70        | 30.4    | 33.8          | 33.8               |
|              | No     | 137       | 59.6    | 66.2          | 100.0              |
|              | Total  | 207       | 90.0    | 100.0         |                    |
| Missing      | System | 23        | 10.0    |               |                    |
| <b>Total</b> |        | 230       | 100.0   |               |                    |

Table 5.3 Anyone in household NEET?

Referring back to Table 5.3 there was a moderate (Cramer's V = 0.329) association between the type of home lived in and whether a respondent was NEET ( $\chi^2 = 19.039$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). A factor that fell outside of the theoretical framework was that there was a weak association (Phi = 0.201) between NEET respondents and the uptake of free school meals ( $\chi^2 = 7.252$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p<0.01$ ) a key indicator of poverty in Scotland.

| Relation to Respondent | % of NEET guardians who were X relation to the respondent |
|------------------------|---|
| <b>Mother</b>          | 54.1  |
| <b>Father</b>          | 9.8   |
| <b>Sister</b>          | 4.9   |
| <b>Brother</b>         | 6.6   |
| <b>Grandmother</b>     | 1.6   |
| <b>Grandfather</b>     | 6.6   |
| <b>Female Cousin</b>   | 3.3   |
| <b>Male Cousin</b>     | 1.6   |
| <b>Other FM</b>        | 4.9   |
| <b>Non-FM</b>          | 6.6   |

*Table 5.4 NEET guardian relationship*

The results detailed in *Table 5.4* throw up an insight into a prevalent issue with NEET classification. Many of the parents listed above may have purposefully chosen to stay at home and not work in formal employment in order to look after their children. In this study the largest group the aforementioned applies to are Mothers, and this would appear to correlate with other research which suggests the number of stay at parents are overwhelmingly women, in particular in ethnic minority families (Anderson et al, 2007). A relationship to others who may share a history of being out of formal education, work, and training was relayed back to those Stage 2 participants it applied to and remarks were made regarding the influence that had. For example from **John** who was committed to joining the Army:

**Researcher:** *Your Mum, what does she do?*

**John:** *She's not working, and hasn't for a long time.*

**Researcher:** *What did she do before?*

**John:** *Worked in a café and a bookies until my sister was born, but it didn't work out after that I think. I'm not sure, I was too young to remember.*

**Researcher:** *What do you think about that, not working? Do you talk to her about it?*

**John:** *Nah, and I wouldn't, it's a lot to do with mental stuff – mental health I mean. When you live where we do there aren't exactly a lot of jobs going about.*

**Researcher:** *Has that altered your reasoning for staying in education or not, the job situation?*

**John:** *It has to but I don't think I ever thought about it like that. That's one of the main reasons I want to be in the Paras, it'll get me out and I can do a bit for Mum but not have to be around all the time. It's not really something I want for myself or my sister.*

This concern will be assessed more closely in *Chapter 7* when discussing the role parents and guardians played in both data stages. In order to better understand aspirations and how they were influenced by familial and other actors respondents were asked who they had spoken to about what they would do after school, with the option of giving multiple answers (*Table 5.5*), an important question to help identify the key influences on the trajectory young people were taking during their end of school transitions.

| Who?                 | Number | %      | % of cases |
|----------------------|--------|--------|------------|
| Teacher              | 140    | 25.2%  | 65.4%      |
| Careers advisor      | 96     | 17.3%  | 44.9%      |
| Parent/Guardian      | 173    | 31.1%  | 80.8%      |
| Older sibling/friend | 85     | 15.3%  | 39.7%      |
| Unrelated adult      | 62     | 11.2%  | 29.0%      |
| <b>Total</b>         | 556    | 100.0% | 259.8%     |

Table 5.5 Influences on future destination

The data in Tables 5.5 and 5.6 suggests a good range of various sources providing young people with guidance regarding their future. How useful this is it is difficult to say, but two of the Stage 2 respondents opined on this question tellingly. Return also to Section 3.4.4 for an interesting insight from participant **Billy** regarding the kind of relationships many participants expressed they had with their teachers in particular.

**Mary stated:** *I saw a careers advisor once or twice and felt like they were the only one talking any sense, they weren't giving me shite about university that I'm obviously not going to.*

**Richard said:** *My Dad has always been very clear with me about getting into work and getting a trade. Like everyone's Dad I guess. It always worked on me because that's what I want myself. Maybe college would be a better way of going about it but I have been doing some odd jobs and helping out mates of my Dad, cash in hand, I reckon soon enough I'll get something and that will be that.*

Mary's comment in particular reflected a common theme of teachers, school workers etc. pushing individuals towards higher education no matter how much they might personally feel ill-suited to it. It could be suggested this grows out of the marketisation of education discussed in Chapter 3 (Illich, 1971; Olssen & Peters, 2005; Nicolescu & Neaga, 2014).

|   |   |     | Female | Male | Total |
|---|---|-----|--------|------|-------|
| <b>Influences on future destination<sup>a</sup></b> | People who've given advice on future – Teacher              |     | 78     | 62   | 140   |
|   | People who've given advice on future - Careers advisor      |     | 55     | 41   | 96    |
|   | People who've given advice on future - Parent/Guardian      |     | 100    | 73   | 173   |
|   | People who've given advice on future - Older sibling/friend |     | 53     | 32   | 85    |
|   | People who've given advice on future - Unrelated adult      |     | 34     | 28   | 62    |
| <b>Total</b>  |   | 115 | 99     | 214  |       |

Table 5.6 Influences on future destination (with gender)

The intentions of the young people surveyed in Stage 1 were varied, but for the most part the majority wanted to go on to some form of education, leaving a limited pool of respondents deciding to do straight into work from which to select Stage 2 participants.

|              |        | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|--------------|--------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid        | Yes    | 39        | 17.0    | 19.5          | 19.5               |
|              | No     | 161       | 70.0    | 80.5          | 100.0              |
|              | Total  | 200       | 87.0    | 100.0         |                    |
| Missing      | System | 30        | 13.0    |               |                    |
| <b>Total</b> |        | 230       | 100.0   |               |                    |

Table 5.7 Do you receive free school meals?

Table 5.7 details uptake of free school meals which is generally seen as a rough indicator of being in deprived economic circumstances in Scotland and the wider UK and it is one that is seen as a reliable measure (Chambers et al, 2016). Scottish local authorities have a statutory duty to provide free school meals to families who meet a set of means-tested criteria. The median number of years for those taking free school meals in this study was 5. Of those who took part in Stage 2, 56% were eligible for free school meals, however a number of participants mentioned they had not claimed it when they were at school due to an attached stigma. Examples of the reasons respondents gave for saying they did not wish to go on to either Further Education (a,b, and c) or Higher Education (d, e, and f) are detailed below:

- (a) *I can do better and need money. Tired of school. Maybe I will return to it in future*
- (b) *I have applied for two apprenticeships in the hair and beauty industry. I have also applied for a full time job as a health care support worker in Yorkhill Hospital*
- (c) *My parents only finished school and I think they are doing okay*
- (d) *Because I applied for college and never got in so I thought I would have no chance to get into uni.*
- (e) *I really don't think I'm ready for uni so I want to improve my skills before moving up to higher courses and gaining more qualifications.*
- (f) *My sister went to university and all she has is debts and a crap job, she told me not to do the same*

Respondents were also asked to detail their planned destinations after they left school and how this compared to their parent/guardian's wishes for them. The crosstabs on this data are displayed in Table 5.8 and correlates quite closely between the wishes of the respondent and the wishes of the parent/guardian, evidencing considerable parental influence on the transitions of their children.

| Destinations                      | Male | Parent/guardian hopes for males | Female | Parent/guardian hopes for females |
|-----------------------------------|------|---------------------------------|--------|-----------------------------------|
| <b>Continue into FE</b>           | 68.7 | 70.4                            | 71.4   | 79.0                              |
| <b>Training</b>                   | 3.0  | 3.1                             | --     | 1.0                               |
| <b>Employment</b>                 | 3.0  | 7.1                             | 4.8    | 6.7                               |
| <b>Unemployment (seeking)</b>     | 3.0  | 1.0                             | 1.9    | --                                |
| <b>Unemployment (not seeking)</b> | 1.0  | --                              | 1.0    | --                                |
| <b>Apprenticeship</b>             | 12.1 | 9.2                             | 6.7    | 6.7                               |
| <b>Do not know</b>                | 5.1  | 5.1                             | 8.6    | --                                |
| <b>Other</b>                      | 4.0  | 4.1                             | 5.7    | 6.7                               |

Table 5.8 Crosstabs preferred post-school destination

The correlation between uptake of free schools meals and the hope for non-educational post-school destinations of respondents, displayed in *Table 5.9*, was however poorly correlated. It is assumed that a lot of the individuals likely to leave school and seek work have a higher probability of being of the economic bracket that are eligible for free school meals. 14 of the participants in Stage 2 were eligible for free school meals, but it is clear that this is not necessarily a reliable indicator that individuals will want to pursue non-education based transitions after leaving school.

| Destinations               | Free school meals = yes | Parental – for meals = yes | Free school meals = no | Parental for meals = no |
|----------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| Continue into FE           | 64.7                    | 80.0                       | 68.7                   | 71.8                    |
| Training                   | --                      | --                         | 2.0                    | 2.7                     |
| Employment                 | 11.8                    | 2.9                        | 2.7                    | 8.7                     |
| Unemployment (seeking)     | 2.9                     | 2.9                        | 1.3                    | --                      |
| Unemployment (not seeking) | 5.9                     | --                         | --                     | --                      |
| Apprenticeship             | 2.9                     | 8.6                        | 12.0                   | 7.4                     |
| Do not know                | 2.9                     | --                         | 8.7                    | 3.4                     |
| Other                      | 8.8                     | 5.7                        | 4.7                    | 6.0                     |

*Table 5.9 Crosstabs preferred post-school destination with free school meals*

Female respondents were relatively more likely to consider further or higher education or but only in the case of or higher education was the statistical association significant yet weak ( $\chi^2 = 5.939$ ,  $df1$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) ( $\Phi = .171$ ). There were no significant associations between uptake of free school meals and whether a respondent was more or less likely to consider proceeding to further education or higher education. There was however a moderate (Cramer's  $V = .325$ ) significant association ( $\chi^2 = 18.927$ ,  $df2$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) between residency type and entry to higher education with those coming from families with owner-occupier status relatively more likely to consider higher education and those in social housing relatively less likely to consider it. In this case therefore it is more telling to look at residency type than it is to look at free school meal status as an indicator of future transitions, an insight reflected in the work of Gorard (2012). Gender had a weak significance in this regard and there was a variety of reported reasons for wanting to pursue their particular path described by males and females, two of which are detailed below:

**Gareth, who lived in a family owned house, stated:** *In my family getting to university was always viewed as success and if I did not go on to do that I think I would just be seen as having let them down*

**Molly, who lived in social housing, said:** *No one learns anything at university. At least at college I can get in, get a job, and get out.*

### 5.1.3 The Influence of Education on Mobility

Respondents were asked to give their relative perceptions of what they feel they had gotten out of school, with a moderate variance in young women reporting a greater benefit from their period in education than young men (Table 5.10).

|   | Female |      | Male |      |
|---|--------|------|------|------|
| <b>School has helped to give me confidence to make decisions</b>        | 41     | 43.6 | 33   | 37.9 |
| <b>School has done very little to prepare me for life after I leave</b> | 5      | 5.3  | 2    | 2.3  |
| <b>School has taught me things which would be useful in a job</b>       | 18     | 19.1 | 21   | 24.1 |
| <b>School was generally worth doing</b>                                 | 16     | 17   | 20   | 23   |
| <b>I enjoyed the social interaction of school but not my education</b>  | 8      | 8.5  | 8    | 9.2  |
| <b>I enjoyed my education at school but not the social interaction</b>  | 5      | 5.3  | 1    | 1.1  |

Table 5.10 How do you feel about school?

On the above question there were no significant differences (t-tests) within group means by age or by free school meal uptake in relation to views about education. There were also no significant differences in group means by residence type (ANOVA). On the question of whether respondents felt that it was particularly important for them to do better than their peers, and that this provided a motivation for their success in education the male mean score (3.23) was significantly higher than females (2.83) ( $t=-2.331$ ,  $df=199$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). This phenomenon is notable in further research where the competitiveness of males in education regardless of class is seen as a key driver, and also a key factor in males doing worse due to their frustration at not performing at a level they are satisfied with (Ahlgren, 1983; Pinkett & Roberts, 2019).

As discussed in the literature review a key debate in the field is how young people imagine and understand employment during a period of considerable economic austerity. That relationship manifests in a number of ways including hoped for post education destination and the respondents' actual expectations of what they can achieve. There was no significant association recorded between respondents having a defined career path they wished to pursue and gender, free school meals, or residency type. This was also the case for those who were expectant of experiencing unemployment, with most respondents expressing positivity about their chances of finding employment. Various answers included:

- (a) *After I finish college/university I would hopefully be working for the NHS*
- (b) *My pal has a plumbing company and has said I can come in at the ground floor.*
- (c) *I will hope to enter the management scheme at TESCO*

In general young men expressed a desire to go into jobs that would take a longer time to qualify or gain certification for, whereas young women's desires were more modest and grounded in the immediate future. For those respondents who were keen to get straight into the world of work a notable prevalence

towards ambivalence about what kind of job they did as long as it paid was prevalent, this was especially the case with those who had some form of familial job opportunity. A number of examples of this were detailed in Stage 2:

**Researcher:** *What made you take that choice, to not stay on at school after S4, did many of your friends do the same?*

**David:** *No, I was the only one I can think of. For me it was simple really, my Dad has a steady job with my Uncle and they said if I wanted to I could get in with them straight away. It wasn't much of a decision really. I did alright at school but I think I did my time.*

**Researcher:** *I think I asked in the questionnaire if approval from your parents was important. Is that still the case now you're out of school?*

**David:** *I wouldn't say approval, naw. But I would say that I look up to my Dad and that's a good thing, it has been for me anyway.*

When asked if she felt her parents were important in her decision making process, **Shona** replied:

**Shona:** *That's all that matters for me. Mum and my baby brother.*

Interestingly there was no clear association between having previously had a part time job and having either (a) greater expectations of employment in future, or (b) still being employed following leaving school. That might suggest a certain uneasiness about the economy and the sustainability of what were largely menial retail based jobs, an understanding reflected in studies conducted by Greenberger et al (1982) and Carré & Tilly (2017). Surprisingly 36.2% of respondents thought they would be able to find a job in their first year out of school (whether they intended to leave school or not). Perhaps there was some confusion with the question here, but there appears throughout much of the qualitative data also a lack of awareness about the jobs market etc. When this is correlated with those wishing to leave school and find a job the expectation of finding one goes up to 63%, and of those respondents only 34% have or have had some form of part-time job before, suggesting a significant relationship between the two.

As discussed in *Chapter 3*, social mobility is a key aspect of understanding the theoretical framework within which this research takes place. In particular this is relevant to the concern of class and how young people in communities such as those researched view their own class status. In order to investigate this respondents were asked to state if they felt they had better opportunities than their parents' did at their age. Those who felt they had better opportunities than their parents usually attributed this to 'better education' but also that there are 'a lot more jobs now'. Those who responded No conversely said that there are 'a lot less jobs now' and usually cited the belief that their parents found jobs easily or mentioned

the recession/austerity. Interestingly, no one mentioned immigration as many adults with a similar demography have in a number of social attitudes surveys (Blinder & Allen, 2016), yet this continuously arose during the interviews in Stage 2.

| Do you feel you have better employment opportunities than your parents/guardians did at your age? |                 |           |         |               |                    |
|---|-----------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
|   |                 | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
| Valid   | <b>Yes</b>      | 85        | 37.0    | 38.8          | 38.8               |
|   | <b>No</b>       | 66        | 28.7    | 30.1          | 68.9               |
|   | <b>Not sure</b> | 68        | 29.6    | 31.1          | 100.0              |
|   | <b>Total</b>    | 219       | 95.2    | 100.0         |                    |
| Missing   | System          | 11        | 4.8     |               |                    |
| Total   |                 | 230       | 100.0   |               |                    |

Table 5.11 Do you feel you have better employment opportunities than your parents/guardians did at your age?

On the question ‘Do you feel you have better employment opportunities than your parents/guardians did at your age?’ which deals with social mobility (Table 5.11) there was a significant but weak (Cramer’s V = .172) association in belief that respondents were better off within this context with females relatively more likely to think that they were better off whilst males were relatively more likely to be unsure ( $\chi^2=6.469$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $p<0.05$ ).

A variety of expansive points were made following this question including for those who thought they were better off (a, b, and c) and those who felt they were not (d, e, and f), examples below:

- (a) *We can travel anywhere we want and find different jobs, most of my grandparents generation never left Scotland except for war*
- (b) *Because for my parents it was go to school leave school as soon as possible provide for the family with money. It was just the way it was in their time.*
- (c) *Yes because a lot has changed since my parents time as young adults but now today gives me a better chance and new opportunities to learn new skills. There is more technology and easier to travel*
- (d) *Pensions are going to be rubbish and you can't just walk into a job anymore.*
- (e) *People with no jobs has increased since my mother/father was my age. A lot of people on job seekers allowance has increased dramatically as well.*
- (f) *There are more people and less jobs now. The unemployment rate is higher now.*

In another question respondents were asked to signal their agreement with various statements regarding hard work, how important work was in shaping their identity and the prospect of taking on benefits

themselves. Males claimed a significantly higher mean (13.74) ‘protestant work ethic’ (as coined by Weber, 2010) than females (11.55) ( $t=-2.514$ ,  $df=185.124$ ,  $p<0.05$ ), with a significant number of the former stating that the work they do would be a key part of their identity.

Respondents were also asked to state their knowledge of various benefits (Table 5.12), with little clear pattern in their responses. The relationship was not deemed to be significant to other variables nor was there any considerable difference in gender.

|                              |                                    | Gender      |       | Total |     |
|------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------|-------|-------|-----|
|                              |                                    | Female      | Male  |       |     |
| <b>Knowledge of Benefits</b> | <b>JSA</b>                         | Count       | 79    | 62    | 141 |
|                              |                                    | % within Q1 | 76.7% | 68.1% |     |
|                              | <b>Income Support</b>              | Count       | 50    | 44    | 94  |
|                              |                                    | % within Q1 | 48.5% | 48.4% |     |
|                              | <b>Budgeting Loans</b>             | Count       | 10    | 21    | 31  |
|                              |                                    | % within Q1 | 9.7%  | 23.1% |     |
|                              | <b>ESA</b>                         | Count       | 32    | 28    | 60  |
|                              |                                    | % within Q1 | 31.1% | 30.8% |     |
|                              | <b>Universal Credit</b>            | Count       | 24    | 25    | 49  |
|                              |                                    | % within Q1 | 23.3% | 27.5% |     |
|                              | <b>Child Benefit</b>               | Count       | 93    | 80    | 173 |
|                              |                                    | % within Q1 | 90.3% | 87.9% |     |
|                              | <b>Child Tax Credit</b>            | Count       | 72    | 47    | 119 |
|                              |                                    | % within Q1 | 69.9% | 51.6% |     |
|                              | <b>Disability Living Allowance</b> | Count       | 57    | 46    | 103 |
|                              |                                    | % within Q1 | 55.3% | 50.5% |     |
|                              | <b>Housing Benefit</b>             | Count       | 72    | 58    | 130 |
|                              |                                    | % within Q1 | 69.9% | 63.7% |     |
| <b>Total</b>                 | Count                              | 103         | 91    | 194   |     |

Table 5.12 Knowledge of benefits and gender crosstabs

There was equally no significant difference between groups willingness to accept benefits nor indeed on the question of whether they would continue to work if benefits were high. This question perhaps lacked the broader understanding of what that might entail, such as a UBI, and thus data received in Stage 2 was more likely to elucidate on that point. When asked to assess what gave them value in a job respondents reported a strong correlation between all variables with a general sense prevailing that factors such as feeling pride in their own work, the opportunity to learn new things, and how much they were paid shared strong associations. Respondents who reported a working class background were the most likely to report that pay was the key determining factor in their transitional choices ( $\Phi = .187$ ).

Table 5.13 details the key question in regards the research focuses ‘In your opinion, if you are not paid for a job are you still working?’.

|              |                 | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|--------------|-----------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid        | <b>Yes</b>      | 103       | 44.8    | 47.0          | 47.0               |
|              | <b>No</b>       | 86        | 37.4    | 39.3          | 86.3               |
|              | <b>Not sure</b> | 30        | 13.0    | 13.7          | 100.0              |
|              | <b>Total</b>    | 219       | 95.2    | 100.0         |                    |
| Missing      | System          | 11        | 4.8     |               |                    |
| <b>Total</b> |                 | 230       | 100.0   |               |                    |

Table 5.13 In your opinion, if you are not paid for a job are you still working?

This was the key philosophical question within the direct Yes/No/Not Sure questions. 44.8% replied Yes, 37.4% No, and 13% Not Sure. The question recorded a significant although weak association (Phi = .180) between the issue of unpaid work and gender with females relatively more likely to say yes and males relatively more likely to say no ( $\chi^2=7.057$ , df2,  $p<0.05$ ). There were no other significant associations based on class or residency. Participants were encouraged to expand on their thoughts in conversational written language following the multiple choice selection as expressively as they wanted to on this point. Understandably many chose not to (62% offered no reply or simply restated their tick box answer). Some of the expanded answers included in the questionnaire, with reference to points of interest and not full responses, are included below:

- (a) *My Mum does work for the St. Vincent De Paul and she seems to enjoy that more than her real job.*
- (b) *If I don't get paid I won't have the money to provide for myself, my life would be a constant struggle and I would have to be careful of how much money I would be spending. I think the most important thing I need is clothes, shelter, food, water. All these matter in my future. I don't see why I should work for free to help other people. No one worked to help me.*
- (c) *Depends on what it is you are doing. Volunteering yes, it's important.*
- (d) *Yes, if you are contributing you are working.*
- (e) *No because then it's volunteer work, and I don't think that is work. It isn't real.*
- (f) *It's important that we help out in the community and if I could do that instead of a job for money I would, but that's not how it works.*
- (g) *I think it's something that you have to do, not something that you choose to do. Not most of the time anyway. So why would you do that for free? It's technically work, but not to me.*

When asked the question ‘Please describe in detail what you hope to have achieved ONE year from now. What are your aspirations and how do you think you can achieve them through work and education?’ the following responses were recorded:

- (a) *I would like to be anywhere but Glasgow. There is nothing here for me. There’s nothing here for anyone except call centres.*
- (b) *Being out of this school. No job would be better than this and your stupid test.*
- (c) *I want to be a doctor but I will settle for a nurse. My Mum has been a nurse all of her life and I think if I can do that it would make her proud and give me a decent life. I have done quite well at school and plan on going on to my Highers and then maybe university. I would prefer to go straight into it and not have the debt but there does not look to be another way.*
- (d) *There are no jobs in this city, if there was you would not be interested in studying it.*

These sentiments represent an understanding that what awaited these young people were in essence only bad jobs and more education. This sentiment was intensely prevalent throughout every stage of this research, with a number of respondents remarking privately to the researcher during school visits that the schools were in essence no hope institutions that were simply there to keep them busy.

**5.1.4 Participation Willingness**

|         |          | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---------|----------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid   | Yes      | 138       | 60.0    | 68.3          | 68.3               |
|         | No       | 15        | 6.5     | 7.4           | 75.7               |
|         | Not Sure | 49        | 21.3    | 24.3          | 100.0              |
|         | Total    | 202       | 87.8    | 100.0         |                    |
| Missing | System   | 28        | 12.2    |               |                    |
| Total   |          | 230       | 100.0   |               |                    |

*Table 5.14 Stage 2 research participation willingness*

Table 5.14 details the willingness to return for a Stage 2 interview among the participants of the Stage 1 survey. Fortunately, most respondents either replied positively to being invited to the Stage 2 Interview (68.3%) or replied that they were not sure (21.3%) which was considered in essence an invitation to be persuaded. The researcher, it should be reiterated, explained during the data collection that there would likely be a financial reward if and when participants attended Stage 2 and it is safe to assume this would have had an effect on these figures. See Section 4.10 for discussion on the ethical implications of this decision.

This offer was reflected upon by **Shaun** who took part in Stage 2 when he stated:

**Shaun:** *I'll be honest a few of my mates were jealous about this one. £20's no bad for having a chat. I wish it was regular work.*

## **5.2 Summary Analysis and Conclusion**

The Stage 1 survey data was intended as an important part of a mixed methods approach to the research, with the added utility of bringing in participants for the Stage 2 interviews. The process drew in a number of key insights of importance to the research questions and reflections on the effectiveness of the theoretical framework. As the focus was not solely to negotiate the concerns of the research questions the data offers a broader range of responses to then be filtered into the prevailing concerns of Stage 2, which can then be incorporated into a mixed methods analysis (*Chapter 7*).

The analysis of this data must begin with the primary basis of the theoretical framework i.e. the dual society. A significant number of respondents recorded views regarding pressures from outwith their educational experience, in particular this manifested in the views of parents/guardians. In general this heteronomous force outweighed the respondents' autonomous concerns (desired outcomes were often ambitious in comparison to their actual expectations). In reference to research question 1 the amount to which this was influenced by educational experience was limited, with local and familial concerns taking the predominant position. Further to this point, the spectre of austerity was evident in the responses also, with a significant correlation identified between diminished future expectations and lower SIMD deciles as well as class.

The responses provided by participants were often directly referring to concerns about social mobility and suggestive of diminished transitional expectations. Though there was variance, the idea of generational disadvantage and the understanding that this generation are likely to experience worse standards of living than their parents did throughout their life was equally evident (Corlett, 2017).

It cannot be clearly concluded from the data in Stage 1 that there is an appetite for alternative work forms, but there is a recurrence of generally socially conservative attitudes to benefits and non-working presented. Very few of the respondents reacted positively to the notion of unpaid work having value and when this was articulated it was largely in the context of voluntary work alongside someone having a standard career path.

## **Chapter 6 – Stage 2 Results and Summary Analysis**

In this chapter the data captured in Stage 2 will be presented and considered in regards the core research questions to better understand what insights have been gathered and where further research could lead from this point. Prior to the core analysis cameos of each of the participants are detailed in order to introduce the characters and background of those who participated. In the core assessment, NVivo analysis of qualitative data based on the themes presented in the Methodology (*Section 4.9*) is also considered, with particular reflections on attitudes to school-to-work transitions, alternative forms of work, and the impact of austerity utilising the theoretical framework. Further geographical differences were also analysed between the participants.

As a great deal of this data has already been presented within various parts of the thesis in depth explanation of the thematic ideas will be the focus of this section, with a concluding section on the possibility for resolution of the research questions. Reflections on potential opportunities missed are included in *Section 8.4*.

### **6.1 Stage 2 Participants**

For the purposes of this thesis the names of the participants in Stage 2 have been changed in the text to ensure they remain anonymous. There were 30 participants in total, 17 young men, and 13 young women. The NS-SEC classifications of their immediate guardians (with examples) are coded as follows:

Lower Supervisory and Technical (foreman, shop supervisor, bar manager, car mechanic) = 1

Semi-routine (teaching assistant, security guard, carer) = 2

Routine (bar worker, retail worker, factory worker, labourer) = 3

Never worked and long term unemployed = 4

| <b>Name and Gender</b> | <b>School</b> | <b>Guardian 1 NS-SEC</b> | <b>Guardian 2 NS-SEC</b> | <b>Stage 1 – Predicted destination</b> | <b>Stage 2 – Current destination</b> |
|------------------------|---------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--|--------------------------------------|
| <b>1 Chris (M)</b>     | Govan High    | 1                        | 2                        | Work for friend's plumbing firm        | Work for friend's plumbing firm      |
| <b>2 Mary (F)</b>      | Govan High    | 3                        | 3                        | Work in a shop                         | Unemployed                           |
| <b>3 Gloria (F)</b>    | Govan High    | 2                        | 4                        | Unsure                                 | Unemployed                           |
| <b>4 Samantha (F)</b>  | Govan High    | 1                        | 1                        | Unsure                                 | Working in retail                    |
| <b>5 Richard (M)</b>   | Govan High    | 2                        | 4                        | Wanted to become a mechanic            | Unemployed                           |

|                        |              |   |     |  |  |
|------------------------|--------------|---|-----|--|--|
| <b>6 Billy (M)</b>     | Govan High   | 4 | 4   | Work with his uncle                                | Works with his uncle, labouring etc                        |
| <b>7 Debby (F)</b>     | Govan High   | 4 | N/A | Work in a club                                     | Working in retail  |
| <b>8 Simon (M)</b>     | Govan High   | 2 | 3   | Become a mechanic                                  | Had an apprenticeship                                      |
| <b>9 Shaun (M)</b>     | John Paul    | 3 | N/A | Unsure   | Gone back to school for Highers                            |
| <b>10 Nicole (F)</b>   | John Paul    | 2 | 2   | Work at a dog kennels                              | Working at a dog kennels                                   |
| <b>11 Claire (F)</b>   | John Paul    | 2 | 4   | Unsure   | Unemployed   |
| <b>12 Kerry (F)</b>    | John Paul    | 2 | 2   | Work in retail                                     | Gone back to school for Highers                            |
| <b>13 David (M)</b>    | St. Andrew's | 3 | 3   | Plastering   | Plastering   |
| <b>14 Jake (M)</b>     | St. Andrew's | 4 | 4   | Join the navy                                      | Has an apprenticeship                                      |
| <b>15 Jennifer (F)</b> | St. Andrew's | 2 | 3   | Unsure   | Working as a carer for brother                             |
| <b>16 Liam (M)</b>     | St. Andrew's | 2 | N/A | Work in retail                                     | Working in retail  |
| <b>17 Aaron (M)</b>    | St. Andrew's | 3 | 3   | Become HGV driver once old enough                  | Unemployed   |
| <b>18 Shona (F)</b>    | St. Andrew's | 3 | 3   | Work at a nursery                                  | Unemployed, maybe going back into education                |
| <b>19 Peter (M)</b>    | St. Paul's   | 1 | 1   | Get an apprenticeship                              | Has an apprenticeship                                      |
| <b>20 Linda (F)</b>    | St. Paul's   | 4 | N/A | Look after sick Mum                                | Gone back to school for Highers                            |
| <b>21 Graham (M)</b>   | St. Paul's   | 3 | N/A | Unsure   | Working in retail  |
| <b>22 Robert (M)</b>   | St. Paul's   | 2 | 2   | Didn't care  | Unemployed   |
| <b>23 Shelly (F)</b>   | St. Paul's   | 2 | 4   | Wanted to continue working at fast food restaurant | Had continued working at a fast food restaurant            |
| <b>24 Andrew (M)</b>   | St. Paul's   | 1 | 1   | Become a security guard                            | Recently lost his job after working for 6 months in retail |
| <b>25 Ciaran (M)</b>   | Springburn   | 3 | 4   | Work in retail                                     | Working in retail  |
| <b>26 John (M)</b>     | Springburn   | 4 | 4   | Join the army                                      | In the process of joining the army                         |
| <b>27 Patrick (M)</b>  | Springburn   | 2 | 3   | Get any job  | Doing a work placement in an office                        |
| <b>28 Callum (M)</b>   | Springburn   | 3 | N/A | Get any job  | Unemployed   |

|                    |            |   |   |                       |  |
|--------------------|------------|---|---|-----------------------|--|
| <b>29 Lisa (F)</b> | Springburn | 2 | 3 | Work on a cruise ship | Ended up staying on at school                  |
| <b>30 Jane (F)</b> | Springburn | 4 | 4 | Hairdressing          | Unemployed wants to go to hairdressing college |

*Table 6.1 Stage 2 participant profiles and their post-school destinations*

The participants were by and large an engaging and enthusiastic subject group with complex and nuanced narratives that cannot be simply understood within the context of this research alone. On encountering **Billy** I was struck by his honesty and humorous reflections on a life that many outside observers would view as troubled. During our conversation he openly mocked the purpose of the study and made errant remarks about the nature of academic research. **Graham** replicated this behaviour but offered a lot less in terms of insight, like a number of participants, including **Liam** who had found relatively stable employment, he showed a genuine interest in the subject but a discomfort with the format. In many senses their observations were correct and shone a light not only on my role as a researcher but also the way in which this kind of analysis is viewed by those subject to it. **John** on the other hand appeared entirely disinterested in my role and treated my questions as if they were hoops to be jumped through, all the while expressing growing resentment towards his peers.

**Simon** came from a relatively deprived background and attended the interview in a cloud of confusion having several times tried to enter the café which he thought was closed, he stated that he often had these issues having begun to suffer from stress due to having very little money. In our conversation he told me a great deal about what he thought work meant to young men like him, and why in many ways the hopes for illusions they had of it were impossible to achieve. This too was reflected in **Shelly's** and **Chris'** contributions, which were often short and deeply resentful towards the educational experience they had endured. In their experience teachers were solely concerned with the good of the school and not the individual and Shelly raised concerns that her little sister would not reach her full potential in the school they had attended. Her focus, much like **Ciaran's** was about staying in work and climbing the ladder no matter how monotonous it might be.

**Debby** was considerably negative about her prospects and constantly referred back to stress as an overarching concern in her life, with emotional concerns paramount in her reasoning for pursuing one path over another. For a number of the participants the driving forces in their life were however functional and practical, including both **Patrick** and **Robert** who almost entirely only stated interest in money and in both cases a strong disdain for public transport, a not uncommon theme in the interviews. **Jake** had decided to spend his waking hours training to join the armed forces and expressed a strong disdain for his local area and the people in it.

Many of the participants engaged in lengthy and detailed contributions with very little encouragement required. Perhaps most keen to engage was **Linda**, who was one of the few who had decided to return to school since agreeing to take part in the interview. She spent much of her days staying at home caring for her very ill Mother and saw her entire future through this lens. In fact her past and present were also viewed through this lens and accordingly she expressed a significant longing for community and shared assistance. **Claire** had come to regret her decision to leave school and pursue work and felt she had left school with nothing to show for it.

My first interview took place with **Shona** who was struggling to find work and described the experience in terms of surprise at a lost future she had hoped to experience. **Nicole** on the other hand was flourishing and expressed befuddlement that anyone would want to go on to education when such freedom was to be had in finding a job. Positivity of this kind was not absent from the interview, with **Peter** and **David** in particular reporting great satisfaction and interest about the topic being discussed, in the latter's case a defined entrepreneurial spirit was on show and he was the participant most intrigued by the prospect of alternative work forms. **Andrew** was actively positive about the idea of skills based learning and allowing people to engage in learning at their own pace, having cited his Uncle's renaissance to study a degree in later life as an example of influence.

Perhaps the most prevalent sense displayed by the participants however was resignation to the state of the economy they were seeking to become a part of. **Mary** in particular had high hopes about her job prospects coming out of school and described the realisation of unemployment as 'hitting a brick wall'. **Richard** equally expressed concerns about the difficulty of getting his foot on the first rung of the ladder, a problem he battled with whilst also finding out he was soon to become a father. **Gloria** reflected some of these concerns also when she described the process of first encountering the Job Centre and how demoralising it was. **Samantha** came from the best off background of all the participants, and described her parents as her role models for work. In her answers about UBI she showed a distinct distaste for people on benefits and relayed stories about her neighbours and their, in her opinion, lowly work ethic.

**Jane** had been a school cross country champion and spoke heavily in terms of winners and losers, expressing concern that she was likely to fall into the latter category. **Lisa** had entirely backed out of her decision to leave school and presented the decision as a lucky escape having seen what her peers had been through. **Shaun** equally saw his earlier enthusiasm for leaving as regrettably naïve and made it clear his parents had heavily dissuaded him from doing so, remarking that he felt leaving school and looking straight for work would have been too 'hard a landing'. One participant who had certainly felt the brunt of that, and life in general, was **Callum** who had experienced significant familial loss and ensuing poverty.

**Kerry** remarked on peer pressure from others to pursue work over school, highlighting the anxiety many young people face to fit in, having been repeatedly interrupted during the interview by her employer asking her to work shifts at short notice. **Aaron** however felt the despondency that came from the inactivity that followed leaving school, expressing a sense that he did not feel a part of society, and was looking for purpose. **Jennifer** on the other hand was able to pull together money from caring for her brother and maintaining her relationship with her once distant mother at the same time.

As is clear from these short cameos, the participant group was diverse in experience but one with shared understandings and a common cultural background. In order to reach a deeper understanding of their reflections on the core research questions however a thematic analysis and extensive detail of their answers is required.

## **6.2 Thematic Analysis**

As mentioned in *Section 4.9*, six broad thematic categories or themes were decided upon after an iterative process of analysing the qualitative interview data. Further, a set of ten lexical themes derived from NVivo analysis of common usage by the participants (Stress; Job; Mother/Father/Sister/Brother; Bus/Train; Boredom; Teacher; Going Out; Flat/House; Money; Time) were identified and that information was utilised to shape this analysis also. It is important to note that this is an analytical process and thus a great deal of the researcher's assumptions are imbued in the conclusion, where possible that has been avoided through rigorous critical analysis of the data, but it is significant to recognise that the data is for discussion and contestation and that is how any such results should be treated.

The data will be presented theme by theme with relevant points regarding the most frequent lexical themes relevant to the former interspersed. The overarching themes are as follows. Dissatisfaction/Pride in Place (*Section 6.2.1*) refers to the general emphasis on experiencing significant dissatisfaction with the participant's local area or family home, and conversely expressions of great pride in those environments and related relationships. Challenges and Compromises (*Section 6.2.2*) concerns the difficulties participants faced during their year in the labour market and the realities they arrived at compared to their earlier assumptions about what they would encounter. Resentment and Guilt (*Section 6.2.3*) collects views expressed regarding individual animosity towards the establishment and peers in reference to the economic situation the participants find themselves in and their own reflections on how they have failed to meet their own expectations or those of others, particularly in reference to their education. Autonomy/Independence (*Section 6.2.4*) is a recurring theme that overlaps the transitions of many participants manifesting as a keen desire post-school to be the arbiter of their own life and economic

trajectory. Financial Survival (*Section 6.2.5*) evidences frequent examples of the overwhelming concern participants had with money and the financial welfare of their families in their first year fully exposed to the expectations of employment or lack thereof. Finally, in *Section 6.2.6* attention is paid to the geographical differences revealed in the data.

### **6.2.1 Dissatisfaction/Pride in Place**

The theme of dissatisfaction with one's local area or immediate situation, and conversely pride in those things, encapsulates many of the participants sense of being trapped by both the physical environment they live in but also the community of which they are a part, whilst at the same time feeling as if it is that dynamic which defines them. Understandably many participants did not immediately come forward with this understanding but as the interviews went on it became more apparent this was significant. A key part of understanding the sense of place that participants exhibited was through the lens of family, one of the most frequently used lexical terms in Stage 2 encompassing brother, sister etc. **Gloria** remarked that her transition from school to work, failed as it was, would have been impossible without the support of her brother:

**Gloria:** *What I found most difficult was leaving a place where you were with your pals everyday to just being at home*

**Researcher:** *What drawbacks did that have, apart from just feeling alone?*

**Gloria:** *Wouldn't say I was alone. I am always with my brother, who is doing quite well working at a garage, but he loves to be at home with me and Mum. We have a good laugh about everything.*

**Researcher:** *Do you see him as an example to follow?*

**Gloria:** *Definitely.*

The wider themes of longing and alienation elsewhere that emerge around the matter of place are reminiscent of the conclusions of MacDonald et al (2005), in particular the nature of how social capital can be limiting in certain environments at the same time as being liberating. Equally of importance here is the earlier discussed process of individualisation, a common occurrence that appears throughout much of this thematic analysis (Beck, 1992), perhaps best exemplified by **Aaron's** intervention when asked '*do you look back on your educational experience with fondness?*':

**Aaron:** *I have good memories of times I had there, but the more I think about school and class the more I just get annoyed*

**Researcher:** *Why's that?*

**Aaron:** *Because I just feel like I haven't done very well*

**Researcher:** *Is that the school's fault, do you think?*

**Aaron:** *I am made to feel like it is mine. The teachers only want to look at kids doing well. All that annoys me.*

Often contributions from participants took on this form, they were less focused on how the curriculum or the culture of schools had influenced their transitions, rather it was focused on failings on the part of individual teachers or the teachers as a collective. In this sense the individualisation is two-fold. Participants projected failings onto themselves and indeed success, but equally often articulated resentment towards certain actors rather than the educational system itself.

When asked, *where do you see yourself on the class spectrum, if at all?*, a number of interesting responses arose that spoke closely to this permanence of place and identity:

**Billy:** *What class am I? Govan class – whatever that is. I was born in Govan, probably die in Govan. I'm certainly not Glasgow Uni class if that's what you mean.*

**Researcher:** *What kind of class would you say go to Glasgow Uni?*

**Billy:** *No offence, but snobs*

**Shaun** also took a similar tack:

**Shaun:** *I see people talking about class all the time and don't get it. Is it like the idea that you are born working class and then just are that always?*

**Researcher:** *Is that what you think it is?*

**Shaun:** *I don't know but I guess it certainly isn't something I think about or I hear other people my age talking about. I want more money so if that means being a different class, I am fine with that.*

In many cases dissatisfaction was expressed in terms of money and the lack of it, with a considerable number of participants referring any questions back to the earning potential of an action rather than any inherent value a task had in completing it:

**Jane:** *It's just money. That's it. When you go to a crap school and live in a crap area, you want money so you don't have to keep doing that. I know that's not a particularly intelligent answer but round here it's the truth, and that's what you want.*

In another exchange on the same question, **Simon**, who was perhaps the most positive of all the participants about almost everything responded:

**Simon:** *Well I know what you mean there. You want to know if I think I am working class, and actually I asked my Dad about this the other night, knowing I was doing this.*

**Researcher:** *[QUIETLY LAUGHS] And what did your Dad say?*

**Simon:** *Well he said what he usually says about all that stuff, Thatcher's a cow, we need to stick up for the NHS and all that. And of course that we are working class.*

**Researcher:** *Do you agree?*

**Simon:** *Aye, I don't disagree, but I am not strong on it like my Dad. I suppose I just see myself as being a Glasgow boy and I am quite happy with that. I don't want to go after anyone, but I think I agree with my Dad that more should be done for people like us.*

Without articulating it explicitly a number of participants chimed in on the idea of class through phrases like 'people like us' and in the case of **Mary** 'my kind':

**Mary:** *There are people that just go off and do whatever they want to do, and their parents pay for all of it. But that isn't my kind.*

**Researcher:** *Do you think that is what separates you from them, how much money they have?*

**Mary:** *That and the way we speak I suppose.*

14 of the 30 participants spoke in collective non-class terms like this, with 41 individual instances of phrases that are aligned with this idea, but only mentioned class explicitly when prompted to by the researcher's question. This might be suggestive of the issues discussed in *Chapter 2* around class (Griffin et al, 2009; Heath et al, 2009) and its failure to be seen as something most people identify with.

Though rarely did any participant state that they felt their limitations in terms of place were actually related to the very constrained possibilities for work they had, it was evident there was a relationship between these factors evidenced in a number of answers to the question, *What value does work have for you, and why do you want to do the work you ultimately want to do?*

**Lisa:** *I suppose for me it's a ticket away from here and an opportunity to get good at something, something of my own.*

**Researcher:** *But ultimately you chose to stay on at school, what changed your mind?*

**Lisa:** *Fear is probably it. Bit of a fear that actually I would get caught in a bit of a loop and then never be able to get out of here. If I am at school or college at least then I can say to myself, yeah – you're doing something*

**Researcher:** *Do you think that maybe your background is a driver for you then, that you want to get on*

*because you haven't had it easy*

**Lisa:** *Yeah, that's it exactly, but also because I think that I would be letting myself down and my Mum if I didn't try.*

**Jake** expressed an even stronger opinion in this regard, coupled with reflections on the pressure a certain locality can have on someone, opting to define his locality and the people in it in the following terms:

**Researcher:** *Do you think Glasgow has been something that has inspired you then, even if it is negatively?*

**Jake:** *I fucking hate the place. The quicker I am out, the better. It's full of idiots.*

**Researcher:** *Do you not see yourself as coming back here?*

**Jake:** *No, never.*

**Researcher:** *How much of that is a result of school and your experiences there, or do you think that was not a part of it?*

**Jake:** *The place stresses me out and that started at school, but I didn't hate school as much as I can't stand where I live*

Here a connection is being made again between the individualisation of success or failure. **Lisa's** ability to succeed is entirely down to whether she strives or stumbles in an arena created for her by the society around her. In **Jake's** case, the stalling of his life has been directly a fault of the location he is in. There are forces in both cases they deem to be out with their control that define their lives. **Lisa** has no broader reference point of success than work, so ultimately what makes her stay at school is a hoped for better form of that work. There is no love of education expressed or sense that she will succeed via either pathway, simply a resignation that this is how it has to be. The participants generally seemed to speak about 'doing something' as if the act of doing was in and of itself worthwhile, regardless of what it ultimately entailed.

**Linda**, who had returned to school, expressed dissatisfaction in a number of interesting ways but in particular in regards to how she felt school had misled her about the potential for job opportunities in her area.

**Linda:** *Careers advisors would tell me that I could do this or that, and we even went to work fairs with school. People would smile at you and pass out leaflets but it never went much further than that. Why don't we get interview prep or work experience that actually counts on your CV?*

**Researcher:** *Do you think you don't have the skills to move into employment?*

**Linda:** *Well we don't have any skills. I have an IT certificate, but who doesn't?*

In as much as many participants expressed a loyalty to their area and the people they lived with, they also recognised that these locales were difficult environments in which to succeed. The aspiration to get on combined with the reality of how difficult that was to do was highlighted as a constant source of stress for many participants, with 11 of the 30 expressing language that suggested they had struggled with mental health problems since leaving school.

### **6.2.2 Challenges and Compromises**

The theme of Challenges and Compromises is where the fundamental concerns about meaningful transitions were played out most potently. Aside from **Simon**, there was not one Stage 2 participant who had entered the labour market, or sought to enter it, who had done so without experiencing significant compromise. The phrase *'that came as a shock'* or some variation on that theme were used by 12 of the 30 participants in reference to the reality of transitioning from school to work, spurred by diverse catalysts such as managers treating them badly or parents expressing disappointment about their lack of progress. Even those who had jobs waiting for them spoke of rapidly having to alter their preconceptions regarding what work would entail once they had entered the labour force. Nicole relayed her experiences in this regard and reiterated the commonly identified link in the NVivo analysis between *'stress'*, *'job'*, and *'money'*.

**Researcher:** *You have continued working, but I suppose you are working a lot more now?*

**Nicole:** *Yep, I basically work full time and sometimes if I need to I work extra shifts just because I don't want to let anyone else look after some of the dogs if they are used to me.*

**Researcher:** *Was that an easy transition?*

**Nicole:** *No, for the first month or so I was late a lot and did think about quitting if I am honest. Just stressed out and tired.*

**Researcher:** *Was that the only thing that made you want to do that?*

**Nicole:** *It's not exactly great money and when you are feeling tired and low getting up to start work sometimes at 6 can be pretty horrible. I think the worst of it is thinking you'll still be doing that in 3 or 4 years. Not having an ending point.*

Quite often during the interviews potential solutions to arising social problems were reflexively dismissed as being too easy or akin to quitting, with 18 of the 30 participants utilising dismissive language when ideas like a shorter working week, community apprenticeships, and UBI were brought up. Observations in regards the aforementioned included the terms *'skiving'*, *'leeching'*, *'cheating'* and *'dossing'*. A very robust rejection of UBI was articulated by **Jake**:

**Researcher:** *What if instead of only doing an apprenticeship you also received this basic income on top, and everyone else got it too, wouldn't that make it easier to look for jobs once you are finished, give you some room to breathe?*

**Jake:** *I am not against free money but there is no such thing, and I am asking myself why I am out working every day and there's someone just sat at home not much worse off for it.*

**Researcher:** *What about using the skills you are learning to offer voluntary services for community groups, people in need – well, more need than most?*

**Jake:** *That's what we have a council for isn't it?*

Despite Jake's response reflecting some understanding of the collective good and the services required to provide it (in this case the council) his answer generally was reflective of a certain dismissiveness towards the idea of imbuing work with relevance beyond its remunerative value, in particular when it applied to the participants themselves. The wider disinterest in reforms like UBI was representative of a very strong sense of pride that was riven throughout many of the subject communities, something partially reflected in Cohen (1997). This instinctual rejection of reform that is seen as given rather than earned certainly plays into the market ideas of neoliberalism and presents considerable problems for any sort of resurgent radical alternatives. Often it seemed the compromise the participants were willing to make was with the sort of individualising capital forces that were causing them problems. However sometimes the compromise that was made was to actually reverse the pathway of their original intended transition. As an example, **Linda** spoke of her initial reasoning for wanting to leave school after 16, and why in the end she altered that decision:

**Linda:** *It's a bit of a long story with me and my Mum that everyone thanks me for but really I shouldn't be thanked for looking after my Mum anyway. Basically I wanted to just stay at home and help her out so she wasn't being looked after by a carer as much. With chronic pain there are some days when you wouldn't even know she had problems and others where she just can't move or do anything. There's no real way of knowing when that will be so I like to be around for her.*

**Researcher:** *With that in mind then, why did you change your mind and stick with school?*

**Linda:** *I can't be with my Mum always and when I am not I felt like I was giving in or letting myself down. I feel still quite confused and unsure about it, but the couple of mates I have who went out straight for jobs, well it isn't really happening for them, so I guess it's the right thing to do for me.*

Returning to the key Nvivo themes in relation to compromise, 24 of the participants were still living at home with their families and this was often cited as a source of considerable stress, with the desire to acquire accommodation paramount for many even when answering questions about school such as when replying to the question 'What do you think your education has taught you about work?' **Claire** remarked:

**Claire:** *It hasn't taught me how to get a flat, a job – none of that.*

**Researcher:** *Are these the main things that concern you at the moment?*

**Claire:** *I'm just like anyone else. I want my own place and to go out every now and then. I was thinking before I came about a moment at school where I felt like they were going to give me that boost, you know, the sort of kick you need to follow something, like my pal she is going into hotels and that.*

**Researcher:** *And that never happened?*

**Claire:** *Nope*

### **6.2.3 Resentment and Guilt**

A core aspect of this research is the age of austerity and the effects that has had on the working class in particular. It is a period in which material difficulty has become the norm for a much larger group of people, as was detailed in *Chapter 2*, in what is supposed to be a very developed country. Yet when you have no other reference point for what the world of work should be like, as the participants in this study first experienced around the time of the research, what kind of feelings does exposure to those conditions engender? A prevailing theme was that many of participants experienced resentment towards their educational experience and this was adversely framing their transitional experience. When asked, *how has your school encouraged you into work, if at all? Are you still in touch with them in any way?* Most of the responses expressed anger about a sense of unfair treatment. **John**, for whom both his parents were long term unemployed, said:

**John:** *No, they don't care and neither do I. The only encouragement they gave me was to fuck off, that's about it.*

**Researcher:** *What gave you the impression they didn't care?*

**John:** *Five years of absolutely not giving a shit about me or my mates*

**Shelly** who had a precarious job in a fast food restaurant on a zero hour contract said:

**Shelly:** *No offence but it's a bit of a silly question.*

**Researcher:** *Why's that?*

**Shelly:** *At my school they just encouraged everyone to leave as quickly as possible. Like, they don't care if I lose my job now, they are just on to the next group. That's it – just like a boss I suppose.*

The other side of this coin is the guilt felt by a number of participants regarding their own performance at school, and a sense that in some way they had let themselves and their families down. That sentiment was particularly prevalent among the young women who had opted to enter the labour market at this age, with the most notable example coming from **Debby**, who when asked, *If you have spent a year in and around the labour market, how have you navigated that process, what difficulties did you find?* Responded as below:

**Researcher:** *I mean to say what has been the hardest part of the process?*

**Debby:** *Actually leaving school at the end and thinking I had failed, that I was thick or whatever.*

**Researcher:** *Does that worry you even now you are working?*

**Debby:** *Worries me more if anything. It's not like working in a shop you're sat there thinking about how well you have done to be there, I work with people who are in the same job as me and at college. Yeah it doesn't make me feel good.*

It might appear to be logical but it was apparent with many of the participants that they had not perhaps understood that in the current economy and society young workers are not necessarily treated with the respect that older workers in the same job are, a process that often leads to dissatisfaction and feeling a sense of meaninglessness. This is in essence a contemporary form of alienation and quite similar to the same one many felt whilst they were still at school (Frymer, 2005). **Richard** experienced this in a very difficult sense as he was about to become a father and opined on the anxiety caused by running short on time, a concern many participants had:

**Researcher:** *I was asking about how you had experienced looking for jobs during the last year or so, let's return to that for a minute. You said you are earning, what are you up to?*

**Richard:** *Nothing proper, just cash in hand stuff before I can get something better. But they treat you like you're a slave, constant piss taking and giving you crap jobs. There's always a group of us and we are given only absolutely pointless jobs to do.*

**Researcher:** *How does that make you feel and when do you think it is likely to be that you'll find something else?*

**Richard:** *Like a kid, not a man. It better be soon with [GIRLFRIEND'S NAME] not long now*

**Researcher:** *Is that difficult, becoming a first time Dad and essentially being unemployed, what challenges are you having?*

**Richard:** *Same as anyone I suppose but it really worries me. You don't want to not be able to do the stuff all Dads are supposed to do. I am really young and being worried about how much time I had to do stuff was never something I thought about, but I do now. I think I just wish there was a bit more time first.*

A lack of meaning or status in the few jobs participants had managed to do was a common problem throughout for those who were working or had worked. As identified by the NVivo analysis a constant theme with 20 participants out of 30 mentioning it was boredom, and specifically in regards their employment experiences, this in turn became another source of resentment with both **Patrick** and **Ciaran** expressing the view that they were progressing very slowly and learning very little in their work roles:

**Patrick:** *I get the bus into the office everyday and honestly from 9 'til whenever I might do absolutely nothing.*

**Researcher:** *Does that feel demoralising?*

**Patrick:** *Yeah, definitely, but I am thinking it will only be a couple of years and then I will get something better with more responsibility*

**Researcher:** *Would you rather be doing something where you are learning, maybe an apprenticeship?*

**Patrick:** *My mate is doing one and they earn even less than me. I'll put up with being the office tea boy instead [LAUGHS]*

**Ciaran:** *I think what people don't get about working in shops is how you are basically there just to be someone for mad people to shout at.*

**Researcher:** *Long term, are you wanting to stay in that kind of job?*

**Ciaran:** *I failed at school so there isn't much else. It is completely meaningless but it pays enough to get me out at the weekends.*

The phenomenon of devaluation of work was astutely reflected in the response of **Mary** when asked "What kind of occupation did you expect you would be able to get in your first year after school?":

**Mary:** *I just expected I'll get a job that doesn't last. Shops and stuff don't care about giving people jobs to keep them, it's just a pair of hands. Something like that. None of the jobs I could get would give me much money worth doing them anyway. Is that what you mean?*

**Researcher:** *Yes that's interesting, go on.*

**Mary:** *I still think I should get a job but it's not something that I get excited about.*

Of the 14 participants who had jobs at the time of being interviewed, 9 expressed sentiments that they had seriously considered quitting in recent months even if it meant they would become unemployed. The intersecting concerns around stress and money were the most regularly cited reasons for pursuing a transition that took them straight into work after school, but they were also the most cited reasons for wanting to leave their jobs manifesting as dissatisfaction with work and poor pay.

#### 6.2.4 Autonomy/Independence

As understood by Gorz (1987) the problem of autonomy is one that affects us all in different yet pernicious ways. The participants in Stage 2 were no different in this regard and they repeatedly reflected a concern for their lack of autonomy in all aspects of their lives. When asked, *what would have made your decision not to continue in education easier?* A few participants opined that in fact what would have eased this transition was if it was more immediately reversible. **Claire** remarked on this point:

**Claire:** *I would like it if I could have gone back on my decision more easily. I wanted to work but it didn't really work out, and I think if the schools gave more people like me the opportunity to try and work whilst at school, or something like that, then that would be better. I know I can go back but depending on the time of year it's really difficult so I'll just have to see what I can do.*

In other cases too this feeling of lacking autonomy or powerlessness was related to unemployment and education was often blamed as the starting point. **Aaron** said in response to the same question:

**Aaron:** *I was struggling at school and now I am struggling not at school. I know I look fine about it, but that's my problem, I act fine about everything. It feels like I have nothing to do and that is actually worse than feeling like you don't know what you're doing. I actually think the schools should prepare people better for going to work or finding jobs, learning how to write a CV isn't a great help if you have nothing on it.*

For many participants they had chosen to enter the labour market as a way of asserting their independence, proactiveness, or just genuine material desire for better conditions. The problem arose however when many realised that few of these hopes had been realised, and worse still their conditions had barely improved. Broader economic understanding was not often displayed unless prompted, but one intervention from **Shelly** did speak to this wider problem:

**Shelly:** *I feel like our generation, or age group, has got a pretty bad deal. It's interesting hearing old people complain about the price of the buses and what it used to be like, and I'm sat there thinking that it's never been any different.*

**Researcher:** *Do you think it's going to get better for you?*

**Shelly:** *I can't see how it's getting better for me or anyone else, but what can I do about it? Just got to get on with it haven't you.*

An interesting manifestation of this reflection on how economic conditions were making life more difficult for everyone was the desire to assert their autonomy or indeed their character through the denigration of other groups, in particular those who were going to university.

Of the young people interviewed **Billy** was by the far the participant who seemed most articulate in his dislike for other groups, individuals, and in particular authority, or at least what he perceived to be as such. His transition had been smoother than others due to the fact his Uncle had a scaffolding firm and as such he was able to get straight into paid employment. He described that situation as follows:

**Billy:** *A lot of my mates reckon I have been handed an easy one, but where I am sitting it looks like they have. I am up most days working hard and what are they doing other than getting pissed and going to lectures.*

**Researcher:** *Would you say going to university or college is just as important as what you do?*

**Billy:** *Absolutely not, it's a piss take and you know it is.*

This was a common theme among the interview participants, that of hostility towards those who had not done as they had, i.e. left school and looked for work. What they valued in themselves was their desire to go forth alone, thus anyone who had done the opposite was perhaps lesser, though this was only a subtle suggestion with some. This might in turn correspond to some of the more socially conservative attitudes that were displayed regarding benefits and immigration etc. also, though there is a lot of evidence to suggest this is perhaps a growing trait among working class communities (Evans & Mellon, 2016). **David** articulated this most potently when asked '*what do you class as work?*' and referred to his own work as a plasterer:

**David:** *What I do is work, something like that, a proper job*

**Researcher:** *What do you think makes your job proper as opposed to say something like working in an office?*

**David:** *Well what I do helps someone. They want something done, we will do it.*

**Researcher:** *Is it a physical thing then?*

**David:** *Yeah, it's a skill. It's not just something you can drag anyone in off the street or from abroad to do, it's harder than people think.*

**Researcher:** *Would you not go and work abroad?*

**David:** *No, all that gets on my nerves. We should be sorting people out here first.*

The general social conservativeness of the participants in regards benefits was summed up well by the interview participant **Lisa** who had decided to stay on at school and was studying politics for her Highers, when she remarked:

**Lisa:** *I like that one Tory line. 'Hand up, not a hand out'. That's what I want, that's what everyone wants isn't it? To not be held back but to feel like you did it.*

When asked 'Are you at a destination now that you expected to be at 12 months ago, and if not, why not?' **Gloria** remarked:

**Gloria:** *No not at all, I can't get a job and I haven't even had an interview for a while.*

**Researcher:** *What has that been like, looking for jobs?*

**Gloria:** *Well the job centre is crap. Lots of people who are drunk during the day or foreigners talking in their groups, that annoys me – but you won't like me saying that.*

**Researcher:** *Be honest, it's interesting to hear your views.*

**Gloria:** *Well yeah, I think maybe it would be easier for younger people to get jobs if we weren't giving them all away to people from abroad, but there isn't much I can do about that.*

Samantha, who worked in retail but had aspirations to become a designer, expressed strong views about the perceived laziness of the people she lived around, and projected a sense of entrepreneurialism onto herself, whilst people working in non-creative or business focused jobs were viewed as boring.

**Samantha:** *See, in an area like Govan you just have loads of people who are only interested in drugs, drink, or whatever it is they do.*

**Researcher:** *What do you think they should be doing?*

**Samantha:** *Working, starting a business – though can't see that happening. My neighbours have not worked for years and they have a better car than us.*

**Researcher:** *Do you think society could do more to encourage people like that into productive work?*

**Samantha:** *Nah, they would just cheat that system too.*

In many cases these kind of attitudes were attached to control and a sense of finding a reason for why their particular transitions were not going as they had hoped. As identified by the key lexical themes (See Section 4.9) many of the most commonly referred to ideas (e.g. family, money, housing) were pertinent to fairly standard measures of success and when participants made comments related to not having these things it was often in the sense of forces being outwith their control, and this same attitude was attached to the presence of immigrant workers.

Further, a number of participants reflected on their enthusiasm regarding the challenge they had taken on in entering the world of work straight from school. This was framed within their desire for autonomy and hoped for ability to develop within the labour networks they had found themselves in. Most interestingly the enthusiasm expressed was occasionally articulated as a challenge, with participants reflecting on how difficult it was to get by utilising the path they had taken, and this in turn was seen as a source of pride. Both **Billy** and **Graham** made contributions in this regard:

**Billy:** *What do people expect, for everything to just be handed to them? Naw, that's not the way.*

**Researcher:** *Do you think a lot of people your age do think like that?*

**Billy:** *I know they do.*

**Researcher:** *Give me an example, if you don't mind.*

**Billy:** *Well I won't name names but there's a couple of guys I know who are working in shops and that, one lost his job for being a dick and never turning up, and they blame every rubbish bit of it on someone else. Saying it's too difficult to get good jobs, especially at the moment. Well I think that's bollocks and it's all just excuses. If you want something you can get it. The people who are struggling are the people who would always be struggling, like those two.*

**Graham:** *They're always talking about having to let people go at work. I actually think I heard that the second day I was there, I thought 'here we go', but it's worked out so far.*

**Researcher:** *Do you think it's unfair that they are letting people think their jobs are under threat?*

**Graham:** *What can you do, it's their place isn't it?*

**Researcher:** *Does it ever make you regret looking for work straight out of school?*

**Graham:** *Not at all, that's all sob stuff. There's a fella at my work who started out at the same level as me, tills and stacking you know, and now he's maybe the second in charge, and it's a big shop like, must pay alright. Nah I don't worry about that, it's what you make of it isn't it?*

This enthusiasm may come as a surprise in the context of the precariat but it was not rare amongst the participants to look on factors which externally appear to be potentially debilitating as either unavoidable risks or problems not to be concerned about at all.

### 6.2.5 Financial Survival

Financial Survival was also an aspect of earlier themes, yet it was so prevalent to the debate that it is important to include it as a separate entity also, simply due to the vast prevalence it had in many discussions that were had throughout. On its own it is of no surprise to learn that this is a key theme for young working class people during their first year in the labour market, but as an aspect of a wider understanding of the very rigid ideas of work most had adopted it is of note how prevalent an unrecognised neoliberal discourse was throughout. Beyond the direct individual concern of progress was also a distinct anxiety about participants' role as providers and caregivers.

As **Linda**, who cares for her Mother suffering from chronic pain, said:

**Linda:** *"I get worried a lot about money because I saw my Mum going through that, not having any. Sometimes at school I was just thinking about whether they cared about any of that."*

**Researcher:** *"The teachers? Any of what in particular, are you talking about how hard it is?"*

**Linda:** *"Yeah the teachers, but the whole thing I guess. The pressure on people like me just to not be poor. Maybe if more of them had been they might understand it a bit better."*

When the subject of lifelong learning or informal education was raised in response to the questions *'If your education had been more skills based would that have made you more or less likely to stay on?'* and *'Why have you chosen to end your formal school education at this stage and do you ever expect to return to it?'* most participants had no appetite for it whatsoever, expressing a highly economically focused response to the notion. **Robert**, the least talkative of all the participants simply said:

**Robert:** *Waste of time, waste of money. No one's got time for that have they.*

**Researcher:** *I suppose a lot of people believe it will help them grow and maybe even get knowledge that can help them get a better job.*

**Robert:** *Yeah, that sounds like the kind of rubbish you hear at school too*

**Peter**, one of the few participants who had managed to secure an apprenticeship who generally expressed openness to most ideas and was largely positive referred to the concept as:

**Peter:** *That's the kind of thing old people do in a home. I can read, if I want to I will, and how much is that costing? Don't want to be dismissive but those kind of things just don't come up in my world.*

**Researcher:** *Generally it would be free or community based*

**Peter:** *You're not selling it to me*

Finding the concept of alternative work forms incongruous with their wider financial needs was evidenced by several participants who speaking about the possibility of community based work being too much of a compromise with their goals. **Andrew** and **David** who were both working throughout most of their transitional year, gave the following responses to the question, *To what extent do you think voluntary work is valuable as a means of either gaining work experience, or assisting the community?:*

**David:** *I remember actually answering that question when you came round the school, but I only gave a few words to it. When I knew I was coming for this and looking at the email, I thought a bit about that and realise my opinion has actually changed a bit.*

**Researcher:** *How so?*

**David:** *Well once you are getting up 3 days a week in the early hours, [PAUSES] I know – I want 5, but can't get it just yet – what was I saying, oh yeah, getting up to go to work you appreciate a bit more how hard that is. Not that it gets me out of bed on time but it definitely opens your eyes a bit. So I would say anyone who is doing that, whether they get paid or not, is contributing and they're alright with me.*

In a separate exchange with **Andrew** where earlier in the interview the concept of a UBI had been simply explained in the context of how this could help his situation (he had recently lost his job):

**Andrew:** *Well I have actually lost my job and would say that you would have to be mad to do it for free.*

**Researcher:** *We discussed the UBI a bit earlier, what do you think to that, would it make life easier?*

**Andrew:** *Yeah definitely, I guess it would, but it's not like we don't have the dole and that already. I want to work. I don't want to sit about.*

On a connected note of making financial compromises when asked, *If your education had been more skills based would that have made you more or less likely to stay on?* **Patrick** and **Jane** gave the following responses:

**Patrick:** *If they had told me anything like that other than "here's another college course" I would have stayed on. For me it is about getting a flat and a car, and whatever else comes after that I am not that bothered.*

**Jane:** *Anything that gets me a job I am willing to try but I could not hack any more pointless lessons about nothing, you know like I said earlier, I might not be working right now but I am still happier than I was then. I am making my own opportunities, a year from now I think I will have definitely made the right choice by leaving when I did.*

**Jane** further expanded on this point later in relation to alternative work forms:

**Jane:** *It's not that I am not interested in it I just don't see how I am getting paid or who is paying me. It's a bit like when you are at school and they tell you pass this exam, then this exam, and then you'll be alright to do this exam, then you might be able to get a job. How is that benefiting me if I can just go and get a job now? If I am in a normal job and I know what it is then that's better than messing about.*

Beyond these responses however were the more brutally material considerations that stem from poverty which simply did not allow for such concepts to flourish or take root. As an example **Ciaran** offered the view that in reality the travel expenses he incurs to get to his minimum wage job in the city, dependent on the shifts he does, almost annuls the pay he receives from that role.

**Ciaran:** *I work short shifts, yeah, and the pay is just the bottom wage you can get. I don't love it or hate it but it's not exactly worthwhile at times. Last week I made about 60 quid and my travel expenses were nearly 35 quid.*

**Researcher:** *Would you say it is not worth working at all?*

**Ciaran:** *Nah I wouldn't say that but I did ask my teacher once if they would work for the same, which obviously would be more for them – but you know the same percentage – and they said absolutely not [LAUGHS]*

This dynamic was perhaps best exemplified by **Callum's** response, who had lost his father last year and his Mother was unemployed when he responded to the question, 'are you at a destination now that you expected to be at 12 months ago, and if not, why not?'

**Callum:** *Well last week I was at the food bank with Mum and I reckon I will be there again this week. So I'd say no, but that's where things are.*

**Researcher:** *Do you think that's the case more and more for people in your area?*

**Callum:** *We definitely aren't the only ones. I don't understand it on your level but it's pretty obvious things are getting worse and worse, but it takes people to die for things to happen.*

**Shona**, who seemed to have taken on most of the running of her house at a young age due to her mother's illness spoke openly about how money worries had overtaken any desire she had to do more interesting things with her time out of education, and her hoped for job opportunities:

**Researcher:** *As we are on that what's been the biggest struggle for you during this year?*

**Shona:** *The shock of it all I suppose. You think you're just going to walk into jobs, maybe even get a head start over your friends but it's just really really difficult. I am worse off than I was at school and there's no sign it is going to get any better.*

**Researcher:** *Is that why you are considering going back to school?*

**Shona:** *Yes, but I am not sure if that will fix anything, but what else can I do?*

These examples are potent reminder that where the economic doctrine of individualism may have hampered the ability for young people to consider radical alternatives, it has not done many of those in Scotland's most deprived communities any favours in return.

### **6.2.6 Geographical Differences**

Following the thematic analysis a further cross referencing of lexical data and geographic location within the city based on the SIMD groupings detailed in *Table 5.1* was considered as well as a thematic analysis of the various differences referenced by participants resident in each part of the city studied. Though for the most part the particular geographies in which participants lived were relatively similar, there were a few cultural insights offered that are worthy of mention.

Participants living in the areas closest to the old ship building centre of the city, Govan, regularly cited the cultural memory of that industry in relation to their understandings of work:

**Richard:** *That's all they talk about round here, ships and the jobs that went, you'll have seen it all over the school when you came in, that and Fergie [Alex Ferguson, the world famous football manager was a graduate of the school]*

**Researcher:** *Why is that do you think?*

**Richard:** *Better times I suppose.*

**Debby:** *Yep I think both my grandas worked there, can't remember which sites, one was Fairfields I reckon*

**Researcher:** *Do they ever talk to you about what it was like to work there?*

**Debby:** *Well one is dead now, but yeah, they seemed to love it. Worked there from when they were kids until they retired. That isn't going to happen again now.*

This correlates with understandings cited in *Section 2.2.1* about the nature of localised geographies in shaping the perceived identity of each participant. A factor further reinforced by participants who lived in the Carntyne area where St. Andrew's school is, very much identifying with the tag of being from the 'East End' of the city, an area with a long history of deprivation and economic disruption:

**Jennifer:** *Aye, am East End and so are all my mates, round here anyway, that's part of it isn't it.*

**Researcher:** *Part of what?*

**Jennifer:** *Part of the school and what we are all about. Pal if you are from here, you know.*

**Researcher:** *Do you think it is worse here than other parts of Glasgow?*

**Jennifer:** *Don't know about worse, but it's harder, definitely.*

**Shona:** *I like it here, I've always lived here. People think it's dead tough and make jokes all the time but if you're in a place all the time you don't notice.*

**Researcher:** *What do you think about all the stuff about the 'Glasgow effect', you know how people in the city, and particularly this part are much more likely to have health problems etc?*

**Shona:** *You are what you are, people say a lot of this stuff because they never come to places like this, but most folk are proud about it if I am honest?*

**Researcher:** *The health issues?*

**Shona:** *[LAUGHS] No, the area.*

John Paul Academy was in the North of the city around Summerston in an area with fairly stark differences between prosperity and poverty. **Claire** made some interesting remarks regarding this disparity and keenly articulated a class conflict notion without saying so explicitly:

**Researcher:** *And what's it like living round here, you're in Summerston right?*

**Claire:** *Well yeah, though not the old bit, the new flats round the back.*

**Researcher:** *Is the old bit different?*

**Claire:** *Definitely. We don't speak to them and if they can avoid it, they don't speak to us.*

**Researcher:** *Is it that clean cut?*

**Claire:** *Maybe I am exaggerating a bit but when you live in the high flats and someone else lives in a 5 bedroom, well what have you got in common? Even if you do go to the same school – though only a few of them come to ours.*

12 participants in Stage 2 lived in the first decile for highest levels of deprivation in Scotland, 9 participants were in the second, 7 participants were in the third, and 2 participants were in the fourth. The three most common lexical items remarked upon by participants in each SIMD decile in highest prevalence order were:

1. Stress; Money; Job
2. Job; Mother/Father/Sister/Brother; Boredom
3. Stress; Money; Going Out
4. Flat/House; Money; Teacher

Taking on an austerity based analysis of the above it is fair to suggest that those in the areas of highest deprivation expressed concerns which were more directly material than perhaps those resident in lower deciles but given all of the participants were living in relatively deprived areas the disparity was not great.

### **6.3 Summary Analysis and Conclusion**

In this chapter the data from Stage 2 has been presented for analysis and critical commentary. Where possible data has been curated to best speak to the core research questions and emerging themes from the NVivo analysis, with a focus on attitudes to school-to-work transitions, alternative forms of work, the impact of austerity, and geographical differences. Naturally many other points of interest have arisen in the collection and processing of the data that are relevant to the longitudinal element of the research that will be discussed in greater detail in *Chapter 7*.

The collected data in Stage 2 can be understood as a narrative moment within a particular economic period and by utilising the theoretical framework it is possible to understand the relevance of some of its contributions and the new questions its other contributions raise. Taking into consideration the dual society it is clear that a great deal of the participants pursued a transition directly from school to work in an effort to grasp some element of autonomy in their lives. This sits directly within the literature concerning working class identity locations and their strong tendency towards restructured transitions engendering a greater sense of individual autonomy (MacDonald et al, 2005). Equally the majority of the participants encountered significant barriers to that autonomy and found that even beyond the structure of school their autonomy was limited by other forces. This is in line with Whitbread (1985) and Howard's (2016) contention that the dual society is a struggle between spaces of control i.e. our aspirations and desires, and spaces of alienation i.e. power that are enacted upon us.

Spaces of alienation were consistent themes in the interviews, with many participants expressing a sense of lost community once they had left school. This sentiment however did not translate into embracing a more open attitude towards community focused work, or alternative work forms that might rebuild that. Further, a number of participants expressed considerable resentment towards individuals in their educational history, individuals in their immediate locales, or in some cases collective resentment towards certain social groups. The Stage 2 data again suggests that there is very little appetite for alternative work forms among young people in this particular situation, and above that further evidence of generally socially conservative attitudes to benefits and non-working were presented by the participants.

Through the lens of Sennett's craftsman theory (2009) it was observed that though the participants were largely not dismissive of the idea of work in which skill and expression are prioritised, they did not see this as a realistic possibility within the world in which they lived. The sense that the participants' educational experiences had not prepared them well for the world of work was evident and as a result stimulating concerns about more utopian conceptions of work were not well understood. The lens through which the participants saw the world of work was overwhelmingly negative and confrontational, except for those who had immediately found fruitful employment, giving further credence to the idea that risk is individualised in contexts such as this. The two factors of resentment towards educational experience and struggling with the process of finding work were directly connected, suggesting that in the modern employment context young working class people were not well prepared for transitions that cut short educational pathways at an early stage.

Strong local and familial connections were again evidenced, corroborating the findings of Fraser (2013) and Hern (2003) which viewed these connections as paramount in the success of any transitions. The notion that work and employment was and is only about money was one so prevalent as to severely damage any hypothesis which states there is an appetite for alternative work forms amongst the young working class that are not driven by financial gain, a viewpoint that casts dim light over the possibility for tools for conviviality (Illich, 2001). In many cases these attitudes were attached to control and a sense of finding a reason for why their particular transitions were not going as they had hoped. As identified by the NVivo data many of the most commonly referred to ideas were pertinent to fairly standard measures of success (family, money, housing etc.) and when participants made comments related to not having these things it was often in the sense of forces outwith their control.

## **Chapter 7 – Mixed Methods Analysis**

This brief chapter will combine the analyses of the Stage 1 and Stage 2 data to reflect on the mixed methodology of the research and apply the theoretical framework to those results. The sequential design that was employed purposefully allowed for a longitudinal research project in which reflections on development over a one year period could be identified. Further, data were collected in both stages in order to best select participants who could reflect on their personal experience related to the core questions present in Stage 2. In order to assess the effectiveness of the mixed methods approach and produce answers to the two core research questions consistencies and disparities are identified, followed by the utilisation of the theoretical framework in order to contribute to and conclude the research outcomes. Wider reflections on this analysis are included in *Chapter 8*.

The Stage 1 and 2 interventions had successes and failures that reflect the investigative and pragmatic nature of any research project. In Stage 1 a limited, yet in depth look at the sort of immediate perceptions young people have regarding the core research topics was displayed with the conclusion that further investigation was required, whilst depicting a defined population with ample possibility for the intentions of Stage 2. In Stage 2 a thematic investigation of a wide reaching interview project was presented, with the conclusion that the lived reality of young working class people in the age of austerity was one that is inherently difficult and not likely to be conducive to alternative work forms. Further, the data returned showed that the way in which these individuals navigate their specific employment context is fraught with risk, indecision, and insecurity.

### ***7.1 Consistencies***

In Stage 1 a moderate yet significant association between residence type and free school meals, with those living in the social rented sector more likely to be receiving free school meals, was identified. That finding was indicative of a class dynamic that was consistently repeated in Stage 2, where all of the participants except one were living in the social rented sector (N=13) made repeated mention of housing as a key concern for them in the near future. Insecurity of this kind can be understood in the context of meaningful transitions, in particular the need to acquire personal and collective security. As Finlay (2010) reported, this desire for a semblance of security is a strong determinant for those who have NEET family members or are themselves NEET, spurring them further to pursue some form of stability that their better off peers take for granted (Toguchi Swartz & Bengtson O'Brien, 2016). During Stage 2 **John** articulated this desire, but in the converse sense of wishing to leave his home behind to find belonging, in his case joining the Army:

**John:** *I'm signing up firstly to get out and do something, but also my mate's Dad always speaks about being in the paras and how much everyone has eachother's backs and sticks up for the rest, all that.*

**Researcher:** *Is that something that you didn't feel you had at school?*

**John:** *Wouldn't say that, but when you're at school you're not going anywhere. I want to be doing something, going places.*

**Researcher:** *And won't you miss your mates and family here, say if you were sent abroad?*

**John:** *Not at all*

Here **John** is expressing a strong desire for some semblance of purpose in the context of community defined actions, yet doing so outside of the traditional narratives we often hear about in academic research. In line with the theoretical framework this corresponds to notions of Sennett's craftsman theory (2009) and further underlines the conflict between localised connections and the aspirations of young working class individuals.

All of the participants in Stage 2 came from areas identified in Stage 1 as being in the top 4 SIMD areas of highest deprivation in Scotland (1<sup>st</sup>: 12 participants, 2<sup>nd</sup>: 9 participants, 3<sup>rd</sup>: 7 participants, 4<sup>th</sup>: 2 participants). As such the sample of respondents were more closely generalisable to a population of young people in Scotland in relative poverty totalling about 1 in 4 children in Scotland (24%) after housing costs in 2017/18 (Scottish Government, 2018b). Despite this, in common with Stage 1 the participants' desired outcomes in Stage 2 were often ambitious in comparison to what they ended up experiencing during their year in the labour market. The extent to which this was articulated as a consequence of austerity and diminished economic outcomes varied, with a number of participants explicitly stating these experiences through an individualised lens. As articulated by Pimlott-Wilson (2015) the local problems faced by young people in austere situations are a result of much broader economic trends but those results are experienced and negotiated in a very individual sense. Consistent with the Stage 1 data was the sense that aspiration and social mobility were considered largely in the form of desiring outcomes that benefit the self or immediate family, not a wider societal concern (*Section 2.4*). Though there was variance, the idea of generational disadvantage and the understanding that this generation are likely to experience worse standards of living than their parents did throughout their life was equally evident (Corlett, 2017). **Claire** commented on this repeatedly throughout the Stage 2 interview, particularly in relation to how she perceived her father had received an easy ride and he was not even aware of it:

**Claire:** *My Dad talks a lot about me and my brother having it easier but he has never been without a job, at least I think he hasn't. I've put in about 20 odd applications just over a few months. I've had one interview.*

**Researcher:** *How did that go?*

**Claire:** *Well, I didn't get the job and all it has done has knock my confidence about getting other interviews.*

**Researcher:** *Did you ask your Dad for any advice on how to approach it.*

**Claire:** *Yeah I actually did, do you know what he said?*

**Researcher:** *What?*

**Claire:** *That he's never had one. Never needed to.*

Strong tendencies to identify oneself within the context of geographical history and familial connections were evidenced in both stages (*Section 6.2.6*). This is in line with research such as McPherson (2019) who found that interviewees sense of mobility were severely restricted by the area they lived in and the immediate opportunities available to them, a factor that was eventually embraced as part of their identity. Though this was harder to identify in Stage 1 it was clear from the open questions in the survey that a significant number of participants referred to their resentment and pride through location based statements.

A critical data response to the theory of tools for conviviality (tools which 'give each person who uses them the greatest opportunity to enrich the environment with the fruits of his or her vision' Illich, 2001) was articulated by the more in depth responses in Stage 2 on social mobility (*Section 2.4*), but was also observable in Stage 1 when social mobility was considered (*Section 5.1.8*). Social mobility in the Stage 1 data rarely took on the form of desiring outcomes that benefit a wider social good and instead were largely functional and career focused. When similar questions were put to participants in Stage 2 with a year in the labour market behind them these responses had only intensified (*Section 6.2.1*).

Money was reported in both stages as the primary driving force behind young working class people's transitional choices, whether that meant staying in education or not doing so like the participants in Stage 2 (*Chapter 7*), both groups felt their decision was most likely to achieve this goal. This understanding when viewed through the critical lens of how education shapes young working class perceptions suggests a distinct inheritance of viewing transitions through a largely economic lens. Where participants did not express overly aspirational wishes in Stage 1 they were often practical and focused on getting any job, with very little thought given to pursuing work and education together in a holistic sense, or indeed via alternative forms of work. A number of participants referred to the questions asked in Stage 1 when being interviewed for Stage 2 and reflected upon these monetary concerns as being much more debilitating than they had fully considered when first asked.

Above all, the pressures of educational experiences becoming functional and overtly economic cast a long shadow over the participants in both stages of this research. In Stage 1 a number of clear associations were identified in regards teachers, school workers etc. pushing individuals towards higher education no matter how much they might personally feel ill-suited to it. This theme was returned to in Stage 2 when

participants referred to the sense that individual teachers or the school itself simply did not care about what happened to them. This perception was particularly predominant among the group who chose to pursue work straight out of school and it can be argued this was a shared experience amongst most of the participants.

## **7.2 Disparities**

Between the two research stages there were some significant elements in which the results led to differing interpretations of the research questions. Chiefly among these was the general positivity about what opportunities education had offered the participants evident in Stage 1 (*Chapter 5*). This disparity does however have to take into account that in Stage 1 the sample of pupils spoken to was much broader in terms of economic status and prosperity, leaving us to conclude that there is potentially something inherently dysfunctional about the relationship anyone wishing to leave school and go straight into work must have with their foundational educational experience. **Jane**, who reported a marked satisfaction with the advice she had received from teachers during Stage 1 had this to say when it was raised in Stage 2:

**Researcher:** *How do you feel about the things you wrote now, are those still your thoughts?*

**Jane:** *No, not at all, can't believe I even wrote that – actual mad.*

**Researcher:** *Which bit do you disagree with?*

**Jane:** *Well if I had gotten more help I would not be in the situation I am in now [unemployed], or I just wouldn't have bloody left. What was I even on about? I think you just say good things naturally, not thinking about it, but now I am in it I can see the problems better.*

As highlighted in Stage 1 there was no significant difference between group willingness to accept benefits nor indeed on the question of whether they would continue to work if benefits were high, but when encountering the Stage 2 participants this framing had altered (*Chapter 5*). Further, participants expressed some level of regret regarding their lack of qualifications and certification, coming to find that loss as considerably important in the long term success of their transition. This finding is in line with similar conclusions drawn by Evans (2002) and Down et al's (2019) research. A number of participants were open to the idea of a UBI for instance or indeed limited working hours such as a 4 day week, but often expressed misunderstanding about how that could be carried out. This disparity might suggest that the year spent in the labour market, whether successfully or not, had some transformative effect on the participants' opinions on these matters, with 5 of those interviewed changing their minds on the topic between Stage 1 and Stage 2, **Andrew** as an example stated when this was pointed out:

**Researcher:** *You didn't report much approval for these things back when I came to your school last year*

**Andrew:** *I guess working a bit more it opened it up to me, how difficult it can be. I've not had it the worst but others are not getting on well.*

In another question respondents were asked to signal their agreement with various statements regarding hard work, how important work was in shaping their identity and the prospect of taking on benefits themselves. The Stage 1 data suggest that males were much more likely than females to express attitudes in line with traditional definitions of hard work, yet in the Stage 2 data when asked the questions 'To what extent do you think voluntary work is valuable as a means of either gaining work experience, or assisting the community?' and 'What do you think your education has taught you about work?' both genders expressed fairly consistent views supporting the idea that hard work was crucial and the importance of diligence was paramount.

As reported in *Chapter 6*, many participants in Stage 2 reported resentment regarding their educational experience and were subsequently struggling with the process of finding work also. These two factors were explicitly connected in their reports, suggesting that in the modern employment context young working class people are not well prepared for transitions that cut short educational pathways at an early stage. Previously in Stage 1 this outcome had been suggested with most of those who went on to Stage 2 having expressed the sense that their generation was worse off than their parents before them. Young women who took part in Stage 2 were much less likely to express satisfaction with their current work or non-work situations than young men in the same situation. In Stage 1 this disparity was not evident, with young men and women expressing largely equal concerns regarding their hoped for transitional destinations.

The disparities between the two data stages were not great but ultimately significant in understanding the theoretical ideas prevalent in this research. Foremost in this case were aspirations and those who reported a sense of upward social mobility that were articulated in Stage 1 were not in fact carried over to Stage 2 following a year in the labour market. For example **Callum** was quite positive regarding his chances of getting a job during Stage 1 and generally reported upwardly mobile expectations, when the researcher reminded him of this:

**Callum:** *I think it looks like I was a bit stupid there, didn't know what I was getting myself into I suppose.*

**Researcher:** *Why do you think you were so positive about it?*

**Callum:** *It's easy to be positive when you don't know what you're talking about.*

This may be a particularly specific example, but it does speak to a reality that Reay (2017) reflects when she states that we should not expect people to transform their lives if they have not been given the resources

to make that possible. There were enough examples of declining positivity and enthusiasm between Stage 1 and 2 to suggest that the school to work transition when taken so early has a particularly damaging effect on perceived mobility and success.

## **Chapter 8 - Conclusion – Towards Meaningful Transitions**

In the final chapter the summary findings of all three data chapters (5, 6, and 7) will be discussed in relation to the research questions and the theoretical framework encompassing an overview all three analyses. Following this, a discussion of the theoretical concepts that have developed throughout the study will be considered in light of these results and suggestions for future research will be considered. Finally, the significance of the research and its limitations are presented with a view towards further investigations in the future.

### ***8.1 Key Findings***

The research that constitutes this thesis, carried out between 2013 and 2015 in the City of Glasgow, has led to the following key findings in relation to the relevant research questions. Included also are general findings:

#### ***a) How do young people, in particular the working class, imagine and negotiate modern employment contexts and how is this informed by educational experience?***

- Participants in Stage 2 had by and large struggled in their year in the labour market, with only a minority finding relatively reliable work. Those who had did not speak of great difficulty in simply getting by from day to day and a sense of being left behind by society and the economy were in the minority, suggesting that the way in which young people navigate these transitions is fraught with difficulty and precarity. This is of particular note in regards the sense of individualisation and alienation young people experienced having stepped outside of the traditional transitional expectations of our economy.

- Most participants across the study expressed views that an individual's likely destination in terms of work and society is determined by where you are from and who your parents are. Allied to this was a strong perception that this was a generation that had received a difficult hand in the economy, with some evidence of resentment clear, particularly among the Stage 2 interview participants. In particular resentment was recorded regarding the kind of work opportunities individual participants were able to receive. There is therefore evidence to suggest that the period of economic austerity from 2008 onwards has had a marked effect on how young people in this context think about work.

- A sense of failure in the participants' educational history was prevalent, characterised by a lack of self-worth regarding academic capabilities and evident resentment towards individual actors in their educational history in particular. Those participants in the Stage 2 interviews who had gone on to

apprenticeships or skills based employment were generally much more satisfied with their failure to prosper academically than those who had not, with a considerable number of participants expressing regret about not doing so.

- Few of those who had left school in search of work were fond of those who had done the opposite, and there was a clear ambivalence towards higher education, despite participants' own struggles during their year in the labour market. They tended to see themselves as hard workers and those at college or university as being privileged and idle. Many of the participants in Stage 2 cited concerns about the economy as a reason for their decision to not pursue higher education in the long run.

***b) To what extent can it be said that there is an appetite for alternative work forms within the 16-18 age group, in particular the working class, and how is this shaped by educational experience?***

- There was little to suggest in either of the data collection stages that the young people who took part in this study have been exposed to or are cognisant of alternative work forms beyond the classic liberal model of employment and social security. Further, it would seem that young people opting for transitions directly from school to work actively embrace the precarious nature of this process, finding some element of pride in having opted for an ostensibly more difficult path. As such the interest in alternative work forms is at this stage diminished.

- Stage 2 participants expressed greater openness to the idea of more meaningful forms of work removed from the wage labour structure, but for the most part they had no clear conception of what this entailed and reactively felt as if it was not in their best interests.

- Many participants were largely hostile to narratives of welfare or social security, and when radical alternatives such as Universal Basic Income were discussed there was a common tendency expressed to be dismissive of it. Further, there was a generally high prevalence of socially conservative attitudes regarding place, community, and identity across the accounts of many of the participants. This was equally the case in regards lifelong learning, with few of the interview participants expressing any substantial interest in it.

***c) General findings***

- In general participants in both data collection stages of the research still identified with some form of working class self-definition but did not strongly associate themselves with the label as part of their day to day identity. It was clear that participants identified more strongly with the occupational histories of their parents, and the location from which they came, than a generalised sense of class.

- Understanding of the current economic situation was in some senses prevalent, but an understanding of the forces behind it were not, with many participants in both stages opining on a sense of inequality and other forms of discrimination. This manifested as an underlying hostility towards the older generation who they felt were ignorant of the situation young people face.

## **8.2 Analysis of Key Findings and Conclusion**

The key findings of this research conclude a two stage research project based on a mixed methods analysis focusing on the potential for meaningful transitions for working class young people in an age of austerity and how that is influenced by education. In order to understand these results the following analysis will employ the direct application of the theoretical framework, locate the findings within the literature, and relate the resulting insights back to the core focuses of the research questions.

In order to understand the effect education has on participants during their year in the labour market, as detailed in *Chapter 6*, it is key to recognise that the way in which success is measured for young people is underpinned by normative understandings which view the youth period as inherently transitional; as Wexler (1992) states, during this period we become someone. As referred to in the literature review, it is less common however to consider to what extent this becoming is actually a cessation of something fundamental (*Section 3.2.1*) (Breakwell, 1985). The purpose and definition which a job provides is what defines us, (Gini, 2009; Selenko et al, 2017), and for those unable to achieve this definition a vacuum is left behind. In line with the theoretical framework individuals without formal work are understood to be alienated from the wage labour system or in other cases included in it yet failing to benefit materially in a sustainable way. As more and more of us are no longer required by an economy that once promised prosperity (Vermeulen et al, 2018) the ability for the sort of young people detailed in this study to manipulate work into forms which represent tools for conviviality becomes more essential than ever but also increasingly difficult.

Participants evidenced a not uncommon view that they themselves were to blame for the difficulties they were experiencing in the labour market. This phenomenon would appear to correspond to the UK government's focus on individualising the problem of immobility, and as such is consistent with the focuses of the neoliberal turn and educational reforms which have placed the success of the individual at the heart of academic progress (Hargreaves, 1980; 2003; Wiggan, 2012; Thorburn, 2018). Viewing self-criticism of this sort through the lens of the dual society we can see the autonomy of the individual is only envisaged through an economic lens, a process which inevitably reflects back on the participants and shapes their views (Young, 1986). It was to some extent inevitable that a cohort of the sort researched in this study

would possess a sense of negative self-reflection about their educational experience, yet it was not clear this would be characterised by a lack of self-worth regarding academic capabilities and evident resentment towards individual actors in their educational history in particular. Notions of resentment and the feeling of failure can be understood within the concept of tools for conviviality. As articulated in *Section 3.4.1* Illich (2001:7) said that tools for conviviality are “those which give each person who uses them the greatest opportunity to enrich the environment with the fruits of his or her vision”. The participants generally expressed their resentment in terms of being given direction that did not fit in with their own designs, or the sense of being misunderstood by individuals within their school. As such, there was very little of their own vision or expression within the very structured reality of their education. This in turn led to a disengagement with legitimate learning processes and degraded their interest in academic advancement.

Through the theory of the precariat we can understand that some of the difficulties described in the results in *Chapters 6, 7 and 8* are a symptom of a post-labour age (Casey, 1995; Bell, 1999; Strangleman and Warren, 2008). Clearly when capitalism is unable to provide sustainable work for those ready and willing to engage in it, there is at the very least a flaw in the ideal vision of that model (Gorz, 1999). The experiences of the participants in the research provides evidence for a class below even the precariat in terms of work insecurity, one defined by their equal parts educational disadvantage, despite the fact that few of the individuals who took part would see themselves in this way. As is referenced in the literature (*Section 3.2.6*), denial of the economic reality in which we exist is a common requirement to get by and a prerequisite for simply realising subsistence levels of survival within our economy (Bourdieu, 1987). The participants that found work often did so only for a short period with low pay making it difficult for them to foresee a future without either returning to education or spending significant periods in and out of work (Standing, 2014). As identified by MacDonald & Shildrick (2018), the young people in the research were often entering a low pay, no pay cycle that is likely to become the lasting definition of their working life, with their ability to plan a future becoming increasingly limited (McDowell, 2012).

In essence the above described stalled transitions are a problem for the widely accepted belief in social mobility. It appears, as in line with *Section 2.4.1*, the economic and social climate in a city like Glasgow has been particularly poor at allowing mobility for the demographic studied in this research (Gugushvili, 2017; Esping-Anderson & Cimentada, 2018). The cohort were largely accustomed to the idea they may not do as well as their parents (Arnett, 2000), but had also been predisposed to the idea that they were supposed to do better. An expectation which creates a further hurdle over which they cannot jump. The fact participants felt that their likely work destinations were inherently linked to what their parents had achieved in the past cannot be extricated from the concept of the dual society, in particular the sense that individuals are drawn away from their own desires by unsurpassable external forces.

The aspirational goals of children and their parents, despite divergent upbringings, were largely evidenced in both data stages as being very similar. Chiming with research which shows that aspirations have remained consistent across generations with only marginal variance, this speaks to a reality that is apparent in international research also (Erikson & Goldthorpe, 1992; Turok et al, 2009; Batchelor et al, 2017; SMC, 2018). Austerity as a historical force has shaped the contemporary reality individuals in this research will experience during their formative years, embodying a power that is enacted upon them and thus one that is outside of their control. In this sense young people construct their visions of work and education around nostalgic and economic ideals based on what their parents/guardians want for them, only to encounter a historical period which makes it increasingly difficult to achieve those goals. The experience of being influenced heavily by the past is in equal parts significant in this equation, in particular in regards geographical and parental influences, a phenomenon in that sense which is also a class influenced experience and this was evidenced in an interesting way through participants' identification with geographical characteristics above other understandings (*Section 5.2*). The anchoring to a particular geographical area matches MacDonald's (2005) insight regarding local nomadism, a process by which individuals born into disadvantaged communities not only stay within their own urban area but tend to move only within a very localised geography within them.

Aside from those who were active in apprenticeships the general forms of work the participants had found in their year after school were often menial and formulaic. Work of this kind falls under the rubric of utilising the activities of humans until they are part of a process of unbuilding, reducing their contributions down to simple minimal activities. As articulated in *Section 3.2.3*, the prevalence of these kinds of employment are representative of a lengthy policy programme to deregulate and diminish the importance of skill (Levitas, 2012). Clearly there are parallels with Sennett's (2009) concept of craft identified in the theoretical framework, with participants reflecting some sense of the idea that their work outcomes are purely functional for the economy and ultimately devoid of purpose (Furlong & Cartmel, 2006; Bradford & Cullen, 2014). As argued in the theoretical framework, there is space to understand that functional relationship as highlighting an opportunity to unite the ideals of craftsmanship and a skills based education. If we can incorporate this into our modern economic regime in which 'dislocation is a permanent fact' (Sennett, 2009:266), then we can remove some of the limitations of the dual society that restrict the transitions of young people.

As cited in the key findings (*Section 8.1*) there was a strong perception that the participants, and the generation they felt they belonged to had received a difficult hand in the economy, with not insignificant evidence of established resentment towards authority and particular individuals or groups within their life story (Reay et al., 2001; Roberts, 2009). This sentiment matches the findings of Pemberton et al (2016a) who concluded that young people in difficult economic situations largely framed their experience of stalled

transitions as a result of a series of life events that lay beyond their control. The evidence shows that this resentment was in no small way related to the reality of austerity. It is evident that Glasgow has suffered disproportionately from austerity, in no small part due to the heavily post-industrial nature of the city, with many of the once abundant manufacturing jobs relocated due to the prevalence of globalisation unlikely to return, leaving the onset of automation as a direct threat to hoped for new employment (Rifkin, 1997; Autor, 2015; Lawrence et al, 2017; Livingstone, 2018). Despite this, there was very little appetite for alternative work forms evidenced that might go some way to addressing these concerns. Advocates of one example, Universal Basic Income (*Section 2.5*), implicitly accept automation as an inevitability, yet that belief has yet to permeate public consciousness as a whole. The ingrained work related mindset of communities and individuals cannot be surpassed through ideals alone (Carr, 2015) and the traditional bias towards ostensibly conservative ideas of hard work and self-sufficiency will not be easily overcome (Jordan, 2011).

Finally, the general social attitudes of young people in the research were much more socially conservative than media and academic perceptions assume (Grasso et al, 2017). These perceptions, based on the oral reports given in Stage 2, were specific and shaped by educational experience and familial connections (Odair, 2003). The reason this is of importance is that many academic investigations work under the assumption of an inherently more progressive age group when dealing with young people. As clarified by Reay (2017) however, the social experience of class is not reflected in our educational system and thus young people from those backgrounds are much less likely to see their place in it, seeking to blame other factors for any disharmony they experience. Just as would be found in any cross section of society there are those that embrace liberal narratives and those that do not, and when looking at a group such as that studied here, it is understandable why the particular views many of them express develop (Evans & Tilley, 2017). These attitudes further extended to notions like social security benefits, attitudes which were identified in other research also (Shildrick & MacDonald, 2013; Taylor-Gooby, 2016; Kevins et al, 2018). Due to the aforementioned insights it is apposite to conclude that where present attitudes towards alternative forms of work were luke warm at best and by and large understanding of the possibility for an economy not based solely on the wage labour model was sparse.

As cited in the theoretical framework (*Section 3.5*) austerity has only heightened anxiety about the wisdom of changing course in an individual's school to work transitions and as such the participants in this study have evidenced a proactivity regarding work that is uncommon. The entirety of this research, and the reasons for that proactivity, cannot be accurately understood outside of the historical period of austerity which has been unprecedented since the Second World War. Cooper & Dumpleton (2013) believe that austerity has been characterised as a time in which the social safety net is failing in its basic duty to ensure that families have access to sufficient income to even feed themselves adequately, policies Morris

(2016:107) states the UK government see as representing 'coherence and rationality'. Despite this wider economic context, participants by and large comprehended their inability to get onto a firm economic footing as simply part of an ordinary development, a finding equally articulated further in the research of Furlong & Cartmel (2004) and Shildrick et al (2016). This is a result of what Lareau (2011) sees as the accomplishment of natural growth i.e. meeting subsistence requirements is viewed as tantamount to success. When taking this into account and the fraught transitions described in every chapter of this research it is without question fair to say that young people have navigated modern employment contexts with great difficulty and the extent to which this is influenced by educational experience is considerable.

The answers to the two research questions offer as many avenues for further consideration as they do conclusions, but taken together we can conclude that some sense of meaning, or indeed purpose beyond the solely economic, is a worthy consideration in attempts to navigate the after effects of austerity and the economic reality which follows. For the purposes of this project the notion of alternative work forms have not reached the threshold of general understanding with the subject group, but within that investigation crucial insights regarding class perceptions and social mobility have been unveiled. The dynamics by which these observations and assessments have been understood are complex and disputed, but through a unique research project and robust analysis a clear theoretical framework has been identified which can explain the variables present in this research and help contribute to further contemporary study on the subject of youth transitions.

### ***8.3 Significance of the Research***

It is important not only to understand what the research data has shown but also why this research is of significance. Symonds et al (2011:11) note that 'today, the journey from adolescence to adulthood is far more daunting. It takes much longer, and the roadway is filled with far more potholes, one-way streets and dead ends'. Contemplating the road that brought the research to fruition, we have only been able to look at a small number of potholes, but they are potentially terminal points if they are not dealt with in a constructive fashion. Particular generations of individuals experience their youth through a uniquely hostile prism and have been stigmatised by it (McKenzie, 2013). As Levitas (2012) states, austerity constitutes a neo-liberal shock doctrine which has forced through punitive policies which undermine working class communities. The context within which it has taken place, a thirty-year process of redistribution to the rich (Varoufakis, 2017), is like very few others of the last century. In this sense, the need to capture a moment in time and within that a particularly alienated group's experience of that time, the research presented here is of significant importance. The phenomenon of austerity has placed disproportionate pressure on young people and in the process the individuals who have taken part in this research have a unique insight (Bynner & Parsons, 2002).

Research of this kind has been able to question the assumption that wage labour in and of itself has inherent value external to its varied economic benefits for the individual (Ransome, 1996; McCabe, 2007). Skill and meaning have been devalued in the transitional experience, in favour of the dominance of certification and career progression, particularly for those from traditionally working class backgrounds (Yates and Payne, 2006; Maguire, 2018). The educational structures we have built to serve this need cannot however be separated from the aforementioned assumptions. It has been critically raised by many that our schools are now more geared towards producing saleable skills than ever before, with little in the way of skills based lessons available (McCafferty, 2010). Research of the kind presented here questions that process and seeks to analyse the effect it has had in a post-industrial environment such as Glasgow where the cultural character of the city thrived creative skills based employment. In doing so, a unique narrative is presented that is not prevalent in the study of the social sciences.

Largely the contributions detailed in the key findings (*Section 8.1*) contend with the future of work and the viability of alternative work forms. This area of debate is at the heart of flourishing discussions around the gig economy and contemporary political arguments regarding how we use free time (White & Williams, 2016). Foremost perhaps are its contributions on the popular topic of the precariat (Standing, 2014), allowing for a necessary critique of the concept and bringing together research which seeks to more closely represent the reality of precarious transitions (*Section 8.2*). A contribution best represented by the assessment of the individualising effect of austerity and the various roadblocks it creates in the formation of a shared class identity (*Section 2.2.1*).

There is an inherent desire in all people to do a job, a vocation, a family role etc. well, but an austerity laden economy puts pressure on these aspirations. The research has challenged the generalised set of assumptions regarding the social attitudes and economic proclivities of younger people that shape their aspirations, assumptions that are rapidly countered in conversation with individuals who are between the ages of 16-18 (*Chapter 6*). Not only is there a considerable prevalence of views that closely match attitudes of pre-internet generations of young people (Charlesworth, 2000), but there is also an inherent social conservatism that is regularly underrepresented in the wider literature surrounding youth studies (*Section 2.3.3*). Though this has been identified by other contributions, it is uncommon to assess this reality through direct interviews with such a young age group in relation to work, the key site where individuals develop their notions about social class, the economy, and distribution of resources. Further, the research has been able to present a tangible assessment of support for UBI with a key demographic that should in theory be supportive (Jordan, 2011). Much like the notion of a precariat (Standing, 2011) there was no evidence for understanding or a movement behind ideas such as UBI or even cooperative models of employment and ownership. Whilst research up to this point has largely focused on pilot studies of these alternative models,

the research presented here allows for a more fundamental understanding of how these ideas are reactively understood, providing a useful resource through which analysis of their benefits can be reassessed.

On a theoretical level the research has pushed forward a number of debates leading to potential reforms, in particular on the under researched notion of the dual society complemented by more popular viewpoints based around tools for conviviality and craftsmanship (*Section 3.5*). What is required, according to Sennett (2009) is the creation of a skills society where people are allowed to deploy a portfolio of skills rather than nurture a single ability in the course of their working histories, and be given the opportunity to hone these skills and attribute meaning to them. To achieve this would require some semblance of a social movement, an education in democracy, and a struggle for a democratic education (Merrill & Schurman, 2016). From the lessons learned regarding alternative work forms it is clear that any radical agenda for reform must however be more firmly grounded in the lived reality of the working class to gain traction. Academic notions of income guarantees, even when heavily tested in various pilot cases, have to move outside of the sphere of possibility and into the sphere of reality if they are to have any success. The radical political and social thought of Illich (1978) and Gorz (1987) have stayed in the classroom precisely because they have not sought to move beyond it. The work of Sennett (2009) however may have much more latent application for the situation of deindustrialised Britain than the former and it is perhaps in pursuit of this framework that the aforementioned theories should look to reshape some of their elements (*Section 8.2*).

Finally the research presented here contributes to the growing discourse on the transitional challenges left to the young generation via the neoliberal legacy. Massey & Rustin (2014:173) characterise these pervasive neoliberal structures as representing ‘the market economy as virtually coterminous with society itself, as determining its entire system of values...(whereas) the economy should be seen as a means to the fulfilment of broader human ends’. The hoped for understanding of meaningful transitions was not fully realised in the research, but it was seen as having value and foundations for its development were realised. What is clear however is that the contributions in this research do provide evidence for an economy and educational system that see transitions as a means to the fulfilment of broader human ends, and there is growing evidence this can be achieved. As an example, we have seen traditionally liberal capitalist publications such as *The Economist* (2018) and *The New York Times* (Barker, 2018) revisiting the work of Karl Marx and questioning the model of work we are wedded to as a society. It is the contention of this thesis that unless our economy and society can propose a grand agenda of this sort and a compelling vision of a better future ‘that underlies some common goals that members of society can work together to achieve’ (Thurow, 1996:257) then it seems likely it cannot survive in its current form, and key to realising this is the need to redress our misunderstandings of youth transitions and how they promote ideas of work that feed into an unchanging wage labour dynamic and an individualised notion of success.

#### **8.4 Limitations and Improvements**

It was hoped that in this research some semblance of voice could be given to a section of the working class that are particularly hard to reach or entirely ignored. Where that has not been possible some assumptions have naturally been made regarding the role and engagement of class from the researcher's own experience. In particular this manifested in the shaping of the research around the idea of Glasgow being a post-industrial city in decline. As was discussed in *Section 2.3* the city is changing in very deliberate and economically motivated ways, yet the prevalence of service sector jobs has received less attention in this thesis as they are rarely staffed by the age group studied. Were an older age group the subject of the research it could have reflected more acutely this predominant employment sector and allow for broader understandings of the sort of jobs young people are pushed towards and their lack of coherence with educationally navigated aspirations.

It is concerning that in the academic sphere the voices of the working class are largely articulated by privileged insiders who (like the researcher) may well have spent a number of years outside of the precarious education and work practices they are concerning themselves with. Unfortunately this research is not going to change that, but it is hoped that by amplifying the voices of the disenfranchised their views can be predominant in a debate where all too often they are simply subjects rather than actors. Despite this the complexity of potential work situations the young people in this research were engaged in was not fully reflected by the focuses of the research questions. In particular notions of work carried out in much more informal and in some cases criminal senses could not be investigated, yet various interview participants did allude to interesting experiences in this regard.

It is very difficult for any sociological analysis to fully take into account the fact that young people do in many senses navigate their own transitions, but within a very limited and constraining set of economic and social conditions which come to define the extent of the possibilities they feel are likely in their lives. Using two methods on a longitudinal basis has helped to prevent distortion of these results in the long term (Yeasman, 2012), yet staged research even on a mixed methods basis is inherently transactional and limited, failing to accurately portray the wider economic trends and particular ethnographic experiences of young workers in the workplace. This does not mean those problems have been resolved and it would be beneficial to further triangulate this data with wider secondary data sources where available (O'Cathain, Murphy and Nicholl, 2010).

Reflecting on the construction of the questionnaire and the outcomes it is pertinent to question a number of decisions that were made in construction of the tool which would have benefited from amendment. Questions which gave the opportunity for expansive answers were largely ignored by participants with the

same participants giving long detailed answers that were often related to careers based goals rather than ideas about the role of work etc. It has to be stated that perhaps this approach did not work on the face of it, but in terms of helping to identify more accurately useful participants for Stage 2 it did have some application. The teachers are not the subject of the study yet it would have been complementary to the data herein to interview some of the teachers from the participant schools to better understand how they feel about the issues being addressed and in so doing gain further insight to the processes of thought that are going into the classroom. On reflecting on the Stage 2 interview process, it is tempting when reading such insights to assume that the lot of the researcher is one of flowing conversations and insightful articulate discourse, but this of course is far from the case. As is true of all research the notable and relevant stands out and is pushed forward to express commentary and bolster theoretical assumptions. Few researchers are noting the interviews that were non-starters or simply completely ineffective in relation to the research questions, but they too exist, and this research cannot be said to have avoided that. In particular when seeking to gain articulation about where young people saw themselves in the future the drop off in willingness to develop on this question had diminished considerably from Stage 1.

Finally, it is clear that the research would have benefited from a comparative element (Lohmann, 2009; Holte et al, 2019) either a second cohort who had continued in education, or a second cohort in a separate location to ensure validity of the results. The extracted ideas though interesting are taken from a relatively small sample and if the same patterns could be identified on a broader level the veracity of the research findings could be advanced. These hoped for improvements are in some sense a wish list however and many of the limitations addressed in this section are a consequence of the nature of a PhD thesis. Extensive improvements can be made in the future if further research is taken on and the theoretical framework detailed within can be advanced to deal with a wider range of contemporary questions around youth transitions.

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